

damages, received on account of any sexual acts or sexual contact.

A bill (H.R. 5334) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow early childhood educators to take the educator expense deduction, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 8469) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2027, and for other purposes.

Mr. THUNE. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV.

SWEARING IN OF DARLINE GRAHAM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin my remarks this morning, I want to offer a word of welcome to the new Senator from South Carolina.

Later today, we will swear in DARLINE GRAHAM to fill the seat of her brother and our friend Lindsey Graham. I know DARLINE will carry on Lindsey's tireless service for South Carolina, and I look forward to serving with her.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, like many of us, I represent a State with a rich heritage of military service, and South Dakota continues to punch above its weight in our Armed Forces.

Our National Guard is frequently called up for critical deployments at home and around the world, and Ellsworth Air Force Base is a key asset to our national defense. In fact, today Ellsworth is the largest construction site in the Air Force as it prepares to host the first B-21 bombers next year.

During the recent State work period, I was glad to welcome Air Force Secretary Troy Meink—a South Dakota native—to Ellsworth. We met with the base leadership and some of the airmen stationed there, and we saw the progress the base is making as it prepares for its important new mission.

Whether responding to a natural disaster at home or fighting our enemies abroad, the men and women in America's Armed Forces stand ready to answer the call.

They are our most important national security asset, and we have an obligation here in Congress to ensure that they have everything they need for whatever the mission may be. I know Senators on both sides of the aisle take that obligation seriously, and we must.

As I have said so often before, if you don't get national security right, the rest is just conversation.

If we don't make national security a priority here, we run the risk that Americans serving in uniform won't have what they need when they need it.

That is why the National Defense Authorization Act is one of the most important bills that we do each year. It is the bill that helps ensure our military is ready today and prepared for tomorrow, and I am proud that our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee—with the leadership of Chairman WICKER and Ranking Member REED—have reported out a strong National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2027.

For the 66th year in a row, the Armed Services Committee has produced a bipartisan NDAA. And later today, we are going to have a vote to proceed to this important bill.

We have had regular reminders over the last few years that we live in a dangerous world, that America still has enemies—enemies that want to attack us, our allies, and our interests. We have seen too how quickly warfare evolves in this day and age.

This year's NDAA will not only help ensure that America can keep pace with those challenges but also that we can outpace our adversaries.

It puts a heavy emphasis on unmanned systems, especially drones and counterdrone measures. It also continues shipbuilding efforts to strengthen our naval fleet.

As for our airpower, this year's bill will help ensure we maintain a force of at least 1,800 fighters and supports the new B-21 long-range strategic bomber.

There is a lot I could talk about in this bill—from investing in our nuclear deterrent to supporting munitions production—but I will mention just two more important aspects of this year's bill.

First, it builds on efforts in last year's NDAA to reform defense acquisition. That includes allowing multiyear procurement contracts that allow the Pentagon to do business more efficiently with greater predictability and savings for taxpayers.

I need to mention what this bill does for the men and women serving our country and their families who serve alongside them. This year's NDAA supports a 3.6 percent pay raise for our troops, and it invests in a number of quality-of-life improvements for them and their families: investments in education, housing, healthcare, and childcare.

Our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee have put forward a strong bill—a strong bill for our national security and for the men and women who defend our Nation. It is my hope that we will be able to pass this bill out of the Senate soon and begin the process of working with our counterparts in the House and with the White House on a final bill.

Republicans are ready to go. The question is: How will Democrats vote today? Are there enough Democrat Senators who support moving forward with a bipartisan—bipartisan—defense bill?

I see no reason that there shouldn't be. But then again, Democrats have al-

lowed the politics of obstruction to determine so many of their actions for the last year and a half.

I certainly hope that Democrats won't now put politics ahead of support for our men and women in uniform, but that is up to them.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, how long will Republicans let Trump's secret police continue to sow chaos and violence in our American streets?

For the second time in less than a week, ICE agents fatally shot someone, first in Texas and again in Maine yesterday.

There are still a lot of unanswered questions about these two shootings, but what little we do know is disturbing, to say the least. Both cases appear to have involved ICE agents who were not wearing body cameras—killing individuals who were not the subject of the agents' warrant.

Why were these two people shot at and killed? We don't know the answers. There are no body cameras yet. There are no body cameras as we would require. The ICE agents in Texas were also riding in unmarked vehicles. If Republicans had passed our bill, there would be body cameras, proper agent ID, warrant requirements, and other commonsense reforms, and these killings might not have happened.

I hope our Republican colleagues are listening. If they had passed our reforms, these killings might not have happened. With those reforms, we would have at least had a better idea as to what exactly happened so that we could have avoided further killings in the future. Instead, Republicans poured tens of billions of dollars into Trump's rogue Agencies with no strings attached—no strings attached. While every other police department in America has rules, our Republican colleagues and Trump said: No rules. Do whatever you want. And look at the results. Look at what has happened.

It is dangerous to give ICE agents free rein when we expect every other law enforcement agency in the country to follow basic codes of conduct. Allowing unidentified Federal agents to roam through American streets, to

kick down people's doors without a warrant, to shoot people dead in the street without any—any—provocation, as it might well have been here, is an invitation for state-sanctioned violence, not an immigration policy.

I am calling on the Trump administration to release all information related to these two shootings, and we need to conduct independent investigations of each.

The American people need to know how and why this chaos is spreading through their streets. Republicans who refuse to go along with real reforms of ICE—reforms that we see in every police department in the country—should pivot, change their minds, realize these shootings were just awful and work with us to reform this rogue Agency. The American people need to know, of course, how and why this chaos is spreading through their streets, and we need a complete investigation that is independent.

IRAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, on Iran and the NDAA, when all the Trump administration can say about his disastrous war with Iran is that Vietnam was worse—a point Trump made yesterday—he reveals the scale of his failure. This is what Donald Trump said. The only thing he can say is that Vietnam was worse.

Oh my God, a war that killed close to 50,000 Americans, a war that lasted almost a decade, a war that ripped America apart in ways that took decades to recover is what he compares Iran to? Oh my God.

Trump's supposed cease-fire deal has completely collapsed. Our troops are coming under attack. The Strait of Hormuz is a minefield, and gas prices are going back up. Donald Trump is totally out of his depth. In fact, Donald Trump is drowning in the Strait of Hormuz because he has no plan. He had no plan when he got America into this war, and he has no plan on how to get us out. Trump started the war without authorization, without a strategy, without an exit.

The reason that we have war powers acts is to force an administration to think through the consequences of going to war ahead of time. Trump, of course, didn't listen. Finally, after weeks, bipartisan majorities in both Chambers of Congress voted to end it. We had tried and tried. Finally, enough Republicans joined us, but Donald Trump ignored them.

Now the White House has formally notified Congress that hostilities have resumed; that American strikes are underway again; and that our forces remain positioned for more. Yet Republicans want the Senate to take up the NDAA—the Defense bill—as though none of this is happening, as though Congress can debate the Nation's central national security bill while ignoring the Nation's most urgent national security crisis. We cannot.

I will be voting no.

The President is waging an unauthorized war in defying bipartisan majorities in Congress and in refusing to level with the American people about the cost, the mission, or the endgame. The NDAA cannot become a permission slip for that recklessness that we see occurring in Iran. Donald Trump does not get to drag the American people deeper into a war he cannot explain and does not know how to end and then demand Congress look the other way.

Donald Trump and the administration have no authorization, no strategy, no peace, no blank check. Therefore, a day after the President told Congress that his war is back on, I am a no—a strong no—on the NDAA.

ELECTION TASK FORCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on this Trump election task force—it just gets crazier and crazier with this administration. Yesterday, the White House announced that Trump and his election task force will reveal intelligence reports that supposedly corroborate his baseless lies about the 2020 election. Give me a break.

Donald, start focusing on lowering Americans' costs, not on your conspiracy theory that the 2020 elections were stolen from you. You don't have proof. You haven't come up with proof for 6 years because there is no proof, Donald Trump. You haven't come up with the proof because it isn't there. There is no proof.

Trump should get off all of this nonsense, all of this wishful thinking, all of this lunacy and focus on what people actually care about—their higher costs. If Trump thought about November 2026 half as much as he thinks about 2020, maybe his party wouldn't be scrambling right now.

Apparently, Trump also plans to say that Senators OSOFF and WARNOCK were illegitimate because of election fraud. How desperate can Trump get? He is flailing. His effort to overturn what happened in 2020 is a mission impossible. He ought to wake up, smell the coffee, and abandon this frivolous, ludicrous, diversionary effort. Trump's obvious desperation might be amusing if it weren't so dangerous. Without question, it is part of Trump's effort to subvert the 2026 midterm elections.

The whole reason Republicans are in their current mess is that Trump refuses to drop his radical SAVE Act—to strip millions of Americans of their voting rights. Trump has made clear, once again, who plans to force a shutdown—Donald Trump; yes, Donald Trump. Yesterday, Trump said Republicans have to get rid of the filibuster and pass the SAVE Act “otherwise we're going to have a shutdown.” That is what he said yesterday.

So, Americans, hear this: If there is a shutdown, it is on Donald Trump's back.

Donald, do you remember the last time you demanded a shutdown when

Nancy and I were in your office? It didn't work out too well for you then, and it won't work out too well for you now.

America, hear this: If there is a shutdown, it is on Donald Trump's back.

Unless Trump changes his course, realizes the SAVE Act cannot pass, and starts working on more productive things, we could be headed for another Trump shutdown.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Matthew A. Schwartz, of New York, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

REMEMBERING LINDSEY GRAHAM

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to honor my good friend and colleague Lindsey Graham.

Our colleague from South Carolina led an impactful life. He leaves an impressive legacy, and he left all of us important lessons for life.

The great cause to which Lindsey Graham devoted his life was the United States of America. That is what it was from day one all the way to the end. Lindsey Graham loved America. He believed that our Nation is exceptional, as do so many of us. He believed our Nation was worth fighting for. He believed especially in the American people. He fought for the people of his home State of South Carolina and the people of this great country every single day, and he did it with determination. He always believed that America was a nation that he needed to fight for every day to make us safer and stronger.

His life was shaped early on by duty and by love. Tragedy came early. At the age of 21, he lost both of his parents within 15 months. At the time, he began raising his 13-year-old sister Darline. He made sure that she stayed