

but we certainly would agree when we talk about exploitation and human trafficking.

This bill does nothing to address those two issues, which are a major concern for me as well as the sponsor.

I hope we can work together to come up with something meaningful in the weeks ahead, and for that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, so first off, I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Illinois. I look forward to working with him to try to solve this.

Let's remember what this is about. This is not about IVF. IVF has been a very positive experience for my family. It doesn't impact a surrogacy for an American citizen.

Actually, surrogacy has impacted my family and friends, so those are important opportunities for Americans to have children.

What this bill says, though, is if you are a national from people that want to destroy our way of life, you could be Xi in China, you could be Putin in Russia, you could be Kim Jong Un in North Korea, you could be the Ayatollah, you will not have the right to have a child in this country by surrogacy. They don't even have to show up in this country, and they could have a child. Why would they do that when they could do it in their own country? It doesn't make any sense to me.

So this is a problem. We need to resolve it. It has been a problem in this country. It has been a problem in my home State, and I look forward to working with my colleague from Illinois to solve it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

COLORADO WILDFIRES

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, June 27 was one of the worst days in recent Colorado history. As the Knowles fire rolled along the Colorado-Utah border, the Rifle Helitack team put on their uniforms and rushed toward danger. While battling the blaze, one firefighter was badly injured and four others—Nick Hutcherson, Emily Barker, Sydney Watson, and Nathan Matthews—ultimately lost their lives.

There is bravery—and then there is wildland firefighting. The word “hero” gets used a lot. Nick, Emily, Sydney, and Nathan embodied that word.

They came from across the country to Colorado to form a unit united by one common mission: protecting lives, protecting property, and the landscapes we all cherish.

Their commitment to our public lands wasn't a hobby; it was their life's work. Together, they collectively spent decades fighting fires. And as dedicated as they were to their vocation, they were equally devoted to their friends and to their families, making this loss even more devastating.

Our hearts break for these firefighters and their families and all who loved them. These families deserve answers, and we need to understand what went wrong so we can prevent future tragedies.

That is why I am calling on the Department of the Interior to conduct a swift and thorough investigation into what happened, including whether the administration's recent shift to the Wildland Fire Service played any role in this event.

This isn't about playing politics or gotcha, trying to find blame. With wildfires still raging across Colorado, we can't afford to wait months and months to learn lessons that could save lives right now.

Colorado's firefighting community is close-knit. They are almost like an athletic team. The loss of one firefighter is felt by everyone. The loss of four is quite simply unimaginable. So we have to get to the bottom of what happened and do everything we can to make sure that we prevent a repeat tragedy.

As we do that, we are also mourning the loss of Nicholas Dale of British Columbia. Nicholas was a helicopter pilot who was tragically killed while battling a fire near Ouray in southwest Colorado. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family as well.

Last month, I traveled to the Snyder fire command post, and there I met with some of Nick, Emily, Sydney, and Nate's fellow firefighters and heard some of their stories. It brought me back to my time as Governor, standing with crews after a terrible tragedy. The heartbreak never gets easier; it only gets worse over time.

And Colorado's wildfires keep getting worse too. In the 1990s, Colorado averaged 13 wildfires a year. By the 2020s, that number has climbed from 13 to 70 a year. And that is why I am here today—because we have a responsibility, all of us, regardless of politics, to prevent wildfires, to protect our communities, and to help people recover from disasters.

We know we are not going to stop every wildfire, but we also know that many of the worst wildfires could have been less destructive if we had taken certain commonsense steps sooner, both from a shorter and a longer term perspective.

First, we need to treat climate change like the emergency it is, and that is a long-term horizon but an important one. On a visit outside of Leadville earlier this year, one individual told our office that the annual snowpack averaged 240 inches. That is 20 feet. The thinnest snowpack in that equal period, that last 100 years—and, again, these are data collected every March for 100 years—the smallest, thinnest snowpack was 182 inches—not 240, which was the average—but 182 inches, roughly 15 feet. Two-hundred forty inches is 20 feet.

This winter, it was about 60 inches. That is 5 feet. So the average was 20

feet, the alltime low in 100 years was 15 feet, and suddenly this year it is 5 feet.

And this isn't an isolated incident. Colorado is facing its worst drought in 1,200 years, according to sediments from the Grand Canyon. Let me say that again because it is hard to believe. Colorado is facing its worst drought in 1,200 years. That means you have to go back to the 9th century to find drought conditions this bad in Colorado.

Lake Mead and Lake Powell, two of our biggest reservoirs in the West, have now fallen to their lowest levels on record. If the water in Lake Powell falls just another 33 feet, we will hit what they call the power pool, meaning that point where there won't be enough water to generate hydroelectric power.

Not every wildfire is caused by climate change, but scientists widely agree that climate change is making the problem far worse. Heat, drought, a moisture-starved atmosphere all increase wildfire risk, and each of these factors can be connected back to climate change.

Since joining the Senate, tackling wildfires and drought has been among my top priorities. That is why we passed the Inflation Reduction Act, which included the largest climate investment in American history. We won \$4 billion for the Colorado River Basin and \$8 billion for western water infrastructure.

We have brought Senators from seven States together to form the Colorado River Caucus, a bipartisan caucus, to build consensus on how to use our shared resources, and we have introduced legislation that would help manage our forests better as well.

Overgrown woodlands are tinderboxes that let wildfires spread faster and farther, but too often government bureaucracy blocks the projects that we most need in order to reduce that risk before disaster strikes.

Together with Senators ALEX PADILLA, JOHN CURTIS, and TIM SHEEHY, we introduced the bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act. The idea is simple: streamline forest management and speed up new technologies for wildfire prevention, detection, and response.

Our bill has passed through committee, and it is waiting for a full vote on the Senate floor. It shouldn't take another tragedy for the Senate to act. We need to pass Fix Our Forests now.

Solving our drought and our wildfire challenges requires cooperation across every level of government, but recently, that cooperation has been strained. Last year, the Trump administration froze over \$150 million in already-obligated funding for 17 Colorado water and drought resiliency projects. At a time of unprecedented drought, that is quite simply unconscionable.

We refused to accept it, and we pushed the administration to release that money. So far, we have gotten roughly two-thirds of the funds released. We will not stop pushing until Colorado communities get every dollar they are entitled to.

Colorado is also home to one of the world's great scientific resources, the National Center for Atmosphere Research, which is in Boulder, CO. For years, NCAR has given weather, climate, and wildfire forecasts that firefighters and emergency managers rely on to fight disasters. And we are going to keep fighting for NCAR and for science.

And, finally, solving our wildfire problem and responding to disasters requires all of us to work together.

So I want to, for a moment, just speak directly to our President. Last summer, one of the largest wildfires in Colorado history tore through Rio Blanco County. President Trump should know this county well. Can't expect him to know every county, but this is a special county. They love him. They voted overwhelmingly to support him in 2024, but there are now a lot less campaign signs there than there were in 2024.

When Colorado filed a disaster declaration to help these same people rebuild and prevent future tragedies, the White House denied their request. These are people who did everything right their entire lives, only to lose it all in a natural disaster. They paid their taxes, believing that if the worst ever did happen, their government would be there for them.

I think President Trump broke that promise. Disasters should never be political, but this administration has politicized it. And if you are a Republican living in a blue State, you had better hope that disaster doesn't strike your community or, if you live in a red State and our next President happens to be a Democrat, you better hope this new Democratic President doesn't stick to these new rules created by President Trump.

The President has approved 80 percent of disaster requests from Republican Governors but only about 60 percent from Democratic Governors. That is not normal. To my knowledge, that has never happened before at that scale.

Under prior administrations, the approval rate was roughly the same no matter which way a State had voted. And that is the way it should be. That is the way it has to be in a democracy. Politics should never decide whether you can rebuild your house after a fire.

The Aspen Acres fire in south-central Colorado has already destroyed over 300 houses. Colorado is slowly getting that fire under control, thanks to the brave firefighters who are working day and night, addressing it.

It is the seventh-largest wildfire in State history, and we are grateful FEMA has authorized fire management assistance grants for that fire, as well as for the Gold Mountain fire and the Willow fire.

The Aspen Acres fire will likely require a major disaster declaration. If it does, we will push this administration with everything we have to make sure Colorado gets the resources it needs and deserves.

We are also fighting to take politics out of disaster relief. Congress needs to pass our bipartisan Disaster Declaration Transparency Act. It gives Congress the power to review disaster relief denials driven—or at least apparently driven—by politics because disaster relief should never be political.

In the meantime, it is important that every single Coloradan do their part to help reduce wildfire risks. They have got to follow local restrictions, practice campfire safety, and create defensible space around their property.

On a recent trip to Beulah—which was engulfed by the Aspen Acres fire—I saw firsthand the devastation that wildfires leave behind.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator wrap up his comments, please.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, block after block, all that remained was heavy smoke and heartbreak, charred chimneys, and maybe a hearth here and there.

Drought and wildfires aren't going away. Unless we act, they will only become more frequent, more destructive, and more expensive. That is why we need to work together on commonsense solutions to make everything we do safer.

That is why we are fighting here. That is what we are fighting for here in Washington, and I hope my colleagues will join me in this effort.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON S. RES. 817

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on adoption of the resolution.

Ms. BALDWIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 217 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Armstrong
Banks
Barrasso
Boozman
Britt
Budd
Capito
Cassidy
Collins
Cornyn
Cotton
Cramer
Crapo
Cruz
Curtis
Daines
Ernst

Fischer
Graham
Grassley
Hagerty
Hawley
Hoeven
Husted
Hyde-Smith
Johnson
Justice
Kennedy
Lankford
Lee
Lummis
Marshall
McCormick
Moody

Moran
Moreno
Murkowski
Paul
Ricketts
Risch
Rounds
Schmitt
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Sheehy
Sullivan
Thune
Tuberville
Wicker
Young

NAYS—47

Alsobrooks
Baldwin
Bennet

Blumenthal
Blunt Rochester
Booker

Cantwell
Coons
Cortez Masto

Duckworth
Durbin
Fetterman
Gallagher
Gillibrand
Hassan
Heinrich
Hickenlooper
Hirono
Kaine
Kelly
Kim
King

Klobuchar
Lujan
Markey
Merkley
Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla
Peters
Reed
Rosen
Sanders
Schatz

Schiff
Schumer
Shaheen
Slotkin
Smith
Van Hollen
Warner
Warnock
Warren
Welch
Whitehouse
Wyden

NOT VOTING—3

Blackburn

McConnell

Tillis

The executive resolution (S. Res. 817) was agreed to.

(The executive resolution is printed in the RECORD of July 23, 2026, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Alaska.

AGOA EXTENSION ACT—Motion to Proceed

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 320, H.R. 6500.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 320, H.R. 6500, a bill to extend duty-free treatment provided with respect to imports from certain countries in Africa under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, to extend customs user fees, and for other purposes.

TRIBUTE TO LYMAN HOFFMAN

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I come to the floor today to congratulate my friend and former colleague in the Alaska State Legislature. This is an individual for whom I have great respect, Senator Lyman Hoffman.

Senator Hoffman is retiring after nearly four decades of service to Alaska. Few legislators leave behind legacies that are measured not only by their years of service but by the generations of lives they have improved. Senator Hoffman—the alltime longest serving member of the Alaska State Legislature—is one of those rare public servants.

Throughout his nearly 40 years in office, Lyman has dedicated himself to improving the lives of Alaskans, particularly those in our State's most remote and underserved communities. It has truly made a difference for them.

Everyone who has spent time in the capital city of Juneau knows exactly where the center of gravity has been. It has been with Lyman.

We have all come to appreciate and value his experience, his knowledge, and, really, the wisdom the man has. At first, you wouldn't expect it, as he comes across as kind of a quiet guy with a gruff, deep voice. It is true to