

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

say he is a man of not too many words, but he is also a man who knows just exactly the right thing to say and the right time to say it.

There have been many a legislator who have found themselves in some pretty tense budget negotiations in the senate finance committee. Senator Hoffman holds the gavel there. And in those settings, he can unnerve the most senior lawmaker just by sitting very quietly through an entire committee meeting before offering just a few choice words.

When Lyman does speak, everybody listens because, again, he has this remarkable—almost uncanny—ability to cut through the politics and just focus on what really matters. And that is Lyman. You aren't going to win a staring contest with him, but he can steer an entire negotiation with just a few carefully chosen words.

As the longtime cochair of the senate finance committee, Senator Hoffman has become one of our State's most influential leaders. Through administrations and periods of economic uncertainty, he has earned bipartisan respect for his careful stewardship of public resources, deep institutional knowledge, and the ability to build practical consensus.

And perhaps the accomplishment for which Senator Hoffman will be best remembered is Alaska's Power Cost Equalization Endowment. He worked, actually alongside, my father Gov. Frank Murkowski, and Lyman secured the long-term future of a program that helps make electricity more affordable in rural Alaska. Out in these regions, costs can be astonishingly high and can take up to half of a household's budget. But, today, PCE is a major success. Its endowment exceeds over a billion dollars, and it continues to serve families and schools and health clinics and businesses across rural Alaska.

Lyman is a little bit predictable, and I say that because I could always—always—count on Lyman Hoffman to ask me the hard questions. And I would give my annual address to the legislature, and Lyman would be sitting in the back of the chamber there. He would raise his hand, and he would say "What are you doing to make energy cheaper?" or "What are you doing to help rural Alaskans?"

And I always knew it was coming. I always knew it was coming because Lyman was consistent that way. He was practical and he was purposeful and his clear focus—"What are you doing to help rural Alaskans?" "What are you doing to help lower energy costs?"—that helped guide me here on my own in the Senate.

Because what Senator Hoffman understands is that energy policy is not just kilowatts and price per barrel; it is about whether families can afford to heat their homes, whether elders can stay warm in the wintertime, and whether communities have the opportunity to grow. And, again, this is where Lyman made his mark.

As a leading advocate for Alaska's statewide weatherization program, he helped secure more than \$600 million to make homes more efficient for Alaskans. And, again, his work reflected a very simple belief: that every Alaskan, no matter where you live, deserves a safe, warm home.

From the days that we served in the State legislature to the present, Lyman Hoffman has represented not only his district—which covers Southwest Alaska and out in the Aleutians—but really he helped all rural Alaska with genuine distinction and giving them voice, giving them hope, and delivering real results.

And just as important as those results is the example Lyman has set as a public servant. He has demonstrated that lasting public policy is built through collaboration, rather than division. His influence extended far beyond the bills that he passed, shaping both the great State that he loves, the individuals who have served alongside him, and those that will follow him.

And as I speak to Senator Hoffman's impressive legacy, I also want to acknowledge that no public servant achieves these things alone. Behind every legislative session, every late-night budget negotiation, and every year devoted to serving Alaska, stood some key people—certainly his staff over the years, but always—always—Senator Hoffman's family. His wife Lillian was always there. His children Trina and Douglas—I know that the family made countless quiet, meaningful sacrifices to make all this work possible. So you too deserve to be recognized.

Alaska is stronger because Senator Lyman Hoffman chose to dedicate his life to others, and his work will continue to benefit our State for generations to come.

So congratulations, Lyman Hoffman—my friend Lyman. Thank you. At some point—at some point—the special legislative sessions will end, and you will be able to conclude this incredible chapter of service to our State. And when that day arrives and long into the future, Alaskans will remember you. We will celebrate you, and we will remain grateful for all that you have done.

I yield the floor.

And I thank the Senator from Wyoming for the opportunity to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Ms. LUMMIS. I thank the Senator from Alaska for visiting about a local legislator. They are tremendously important to all of us.

DIGITAL ASSET MARKET CLARITY ACT

Madam President, yesterday I addressed this Chamber because we are wasting time we do not have to get the digital asset market structure bill passed, the bill called the Clarity Act. It is a strong bipartisan path forward that we have, and it is the best way for us to give digital assets, especially in this country, the certainty they need

and ensure the United States leads on digital asset innovation.

The way to do it is through bipartisan support of this bill. And, again, this is a very good bill, a bill created out of necessity because the status quo does not work.

My friend Senator KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND and I released the Lummis-Gillibrand Responsible Financial Innovation Act together in 2022 to give the U.S. industry the regulatory clarity it needs to thrive on U.S. soil, to give consumers the confidence they need to participate in our digital economy, and give law enforcement the tools they need to crack down on illicit finance and hold bad actors accountable.

That 168-page bill would become the foundation for the Clarity Act. A year later, in 2023, we added 100 pages with stronger consumer protection provisions. Yet, we got feedback from colleagues that they wanted more. So, again, we listened.

Today, this bill that was under 300 pages is more than 600 pages. That is hundreds of pages built over 11 months of daily bipartisan negotiations in windowless rooms where colleagues from both parties shared their priorities, and we worked diligently to incorporate them.

Title I alone has 33 separate Democrat-driven edits. We added 23 new sections on illicit finance at Democrats' request. Democrats secured another 30 wins in the CFTC portion of the bill. Plus, we created the three entirely new titles they wanted. And that is all before we even get to ethics, where the President bent over backwards to get my Democrat colleagues to a "yes."

We have 100 clear examples of compromise, and yet for some this still isn't enough. Holding out for a perfect bill stopped being principled months ago. It has become an excuse not to legislate at all, and the people who pay for that excuse aren't in this room. They are the people we are about to talk about: the digital asset industry and the consumers who wish to participate with confidence in this digital economy, not to mention the future generations who will miss out because too many in this Chamber said: Not yet. I am not ready. I have got an election in November. Don't want to do it.

The status quo in this industry doesn't work. It is not working for the digital asset industry or law enforcement or consumers.

We have already watched exchanges collapse with no functioning bankruptcy framework built for this asset class. And we have already watched ordinary people stand in line for years waiting on bankruptcy courts to claw back pennies on the dollar of what they lost.

When Celsius and Voyager went bankrupt, customer deposits didn't stay customer deposits. They became assets in a bankruptcy pool, fought over by creditors who had never even heard of the people who actually owned those assets. More than 4 million

Americans lost access to their own money in 2022 because we don't have the protections the Clarity Act puts in place, and thousands of them are still sorting through bankruptcy claims today.

That is what no regulation looks like. That is not a hypothetical or a talking point. That is real people suffering real losses, real years spent in bankruptcy court fighting for money that should never have been up for grabs in the first place.

Customers will, once again, be put in a nasty fight with Wall Street law firms that they have no hope to win.

If you believe in consumer protection, we must pass this bill to give consumers the protection in bankruptcy they deserve.

Not passing this bill means everyone in this Chamber will have to deservedly hang their heads the next time a crypto exchange collapses—because there will be a next time, absent regulation. No one in this Chamber gets to act surprised by that.

It already happened. And if we don't get our acts together, it is going to happen again to our constituents under the exact same broken rules while we all sit here debating whether a bill with over 100 Democratic wins is still somehow not good enough.

Another FTX is not a hypothetical we are guarding against; it is a guaranteed outcome of leaving this industry with no custody rules, no consumer protections, and no consequences when a platform fails people.

And, by the way, foreign adversaries aren't just waiting around for us to finish deliberating. They are moving money through the exact gaps this bill closes—right now, today—while we hold out for something more perfect than what is already sitting on the table.

To those who have already said they are a “no” vote, let me be clear: A “no” vote isn't a statement against President Trump because he has already given you what you asked for. It is a vote to keep American consumers inside a system we already know to be flawed on a theory that the fix wasn't good enough. It is a vote to drive American innovation, American jobs, and American oversight of this jurisdiction to Singapore or the UAE or whichever jurisdiction is happy to take what we are too foolish to accept.

That is the actual choice that faces us, not Republicans versus Democrats. It is fixed or flawed. It is America leading or America sidelined.

We have served up this win for you and set it in front of you—over 100 wins in the base bill, an ethics agreement no other President in American history has volunteered. And by someone who didn't even have to give an inch but did it because he believes that much in American innovation and what this asset class can bring for generations is worth protecting.

Take it. Take it. Stop finding reasons not to.

I know that if we fail here, this doesn't come back next year or the year after that. The realistic next change at market structure legislation is likely 2030, at the earliest. In the meantime, we will lose businesses to other countries. We lose investment and jobs and tax revenue to jurisdictions moving faster than we are. We inhibit law enforcement's ability to hold bad actors accountable, and we lose our seat at the table to shape how this industry grows. At the exact same moment, we have a chance to guide it responsibly.

We didn't get here by ceding the internet to Europe, and we cannot afford to cede digital assets the same way, especially now that we have already done the hard work—5½ years—putting this bill together.

The window to lead right now is wide open. The end zone is inches away. But that window will not stay open for a body that continues to respond to opportunity with: Not yet. I have got an election. I don't want to take a stand. Opportunity waits for no one.

Let's cinch up. Let's punch the ball into the end zone and pass the CLARITY Act now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT WAYNE FRANKLIN PHILLIPS

Mr. HUSTED. Madam President, I am going to take us back 100 years to August 5, 1926. It was in the midst of the Roaring Twenties. Calvin Coolidge was the President. Babe Ruth was ruling professional baseball. There was no television. Horses and cars shared the streets together. Life expectancy was 57 years. The Great Depression was still off in the future.

On August 5, 1926, a remarkable person was born, and I want to recognize him today. He is a World War II veteran and a loving husband, father, and grandfather. His name is SGT Wayne Franklin Phillips, and he is approaching an extraordinary milestone—his 100th birthday. Pretty amazing. We rise today to honor him, to reflect on his service and sacrifice as part of a generation that secured the freedoms that we enjoy today.

I grew up in rural Northwest Ohio, nearly in the same neighborhood as SGT Wayne Franklin Phillips, and I am always proud of the people of rural Northwest Ohio. SGT Wayne Phillips is from Henry County, where he was born and raised on a farm and became a farmer in an area outside a small town—Hamler, OH—alongside his three brothers and three sisters.

If you are ever in Hamler, OH, it is one of those places that are the heart of agriculture in Ohio. You can see to the horizon in all four directions, and I know the Presiding Officer from Iowa understands what I mean by that. It is just farmland as far as you can see.

He graduated from Hamler High School at the age of 17, and he joined the Army's 81st Readiness Division just

months after receiving his high school diploma. Of course he did. That is what a lot of people his age did during that period of time.

During his military service, Sergeant Phillips was briefly involved in the Battle of the Bulge. I think all of us who study our history know that was one of the largest and bloodiest battles fought by the American forces in World War II and really was the final battle to defeat Hitler's Nazis.

Over the course of 41 days, hundreds of thousands of Allied troops fought to halt that Nazi offensive in Western Europe, and they were successful in winning the final battle that led to the end of World War II.

His service took him to Germany, the Philippines, and Japan. Following Japan's surrender, Sergeant Phillips quickly rose through the ranks and earned the rank of technician fourth grade, becoming the youngest man in charge of a motor pool servicing trucks and military equipment. As you might expect, farm boys from Ohio knew how to fix things, and SGT Wayne Phillips was one of those.

Like so many members of the “greatest generation,” Sergeant Phillips helped defeat tyranny, liberate Europe, and preserve freedom for future generations. Because of the service and sacrifice of many Americans like him, our Nation and much of the world have enjoyed liberty and peace and prosperity for most of his life since then.

We owe an enduring debt of gratitude to our veterans and more than 400,000 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice during World War II.

After being honorably discharged in 1946, Sergeant Phillips married his wife Eileen. Together, they raised three children: Wayne, Paul, and Martha. Today, he is also a proud grandfather, great-grandfather, as well as a devoted uncle.

His commitment to service did not end when he returned home. When service is in your DNA, you serve your country, you serve your family, and you move home and you serve your community, and that is exactly what he did. As a respected civic leader in Henry County, he served 16 years as a Henry County commissioner and 4 years on the Deshler Village Council.

Even as he approaches here in just a few days his 100th birthday—this may be the most amazing thing when I think about it—SGT Wayne Phillips continues to drive to work each day, at age 100, to the Phillips Oil Company, the family business that he founded and continues to operate alongside and with many members of his family. Pretty amazing. He is also a devout man of faith. He is an active member of the Deshler United Methodist Church and also a part of Deshler American Legion and the Maumee Valley Sportsman's Club.

Sadly, the number of our surviving World War II veterans grows smaller each year. I have celebrated 100th birthdays of several of them. I always

love to hear their stories. You know, you put yourself in their position—17 years old and you just graduated from high school, and you decide you are going to go off and serve your country in a war. So many of that generation stepped up and did that. That is why, when we honor someone like Wayne Phillips, we honor him and many others who are part of the most consequential chapters in our Nation's history. It is our responsibility to ensure that their stories and their sacrifices are never forgotten.

I say this often: We should honor what we value. We should honor what we value. And I hope that every time any of us—and I give remarks about veterans and World War II and the sacrifices that many generations of Americans have made—that we honor that so that our children hear that service and sacrifice are valued, are important.

So on August 5, SGT Wayne Franklin Phillips will celebrate his 100th birthday. It is an honor for me to share his story with my colleagues today—a life defined by service, family, faith, community, and in support of our freedom. SGT Wayne Phillips is richly deserving of recognition as he reaches this remarkable milestone.

I thank my colleagues for allowing me to honor this extraordinary Ohioan, and I extend my heartfelt congratulations to SGT Wayne Phillips on his 100th birthday.

Congratulations. We celebrate you and your service. God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, before I begin my formal remarks, I just want to stand here and give a formal apology to John Merlino. I have for years maligned him. I have disrespected, disregarded him. You know how I operate sometimes. And I just want to say he is a man of honor. I have taken him off my list, and now he is on the good list.

So just for anyone who wants to know, the U.S. senior Senator from New Jersey has praised John Merlino—perhaps for his first time because he is not a man that really generates a lot of praise usually.

So I just want you to know, before I go into my formal remarks for the day, that John Merlino—you the man.

Now, I would like for the record to separate a little bit so I can start some of my formal remarks after I have tried to redeem the soul of a friend and colleague.

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

NOMINATION OF TODD BLANCHE

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I really believe there is a reason why some of my Republican colleagues themselves have delayed the Blanche nomination, because this is actually no ordinary nomination. We haven't had a moment like this under Donald Trump where Republicans themselves have

stopped the vote. Because this is not simply a vote about one man; it is a vote about whether the Department of Justice will remain independent of the President of the United States.

The Attorney General of the United States of America has one client—not a political party, not a President, not a wealthy donor, not a political movement. The Attorney General's client is the Constitution of the United States and the American people. That is the sacred obligation of that office. When they are sworn in, they do not swear an oath to the President, to Donald Trump; they swear an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution.

Unfortunately, Todd Blanche has spent months in office demonstrating his allegiance not to our Constitution but to the President. Time and time again, he has shown that he is only capable of serving the interests of one client—Donald Trump. That is why this nomination should not simply be delayed; it should be rejected. The evidence is overwhelming.

Congress came together in a bipartisan way to pass the Epstein Files Transparency Act because survivors deserved answers, they deserved justice, and the American people deserved transparency. Todd Blanche was responsible for carrying out that law. Instead, he delayed and delayed. He was stalling. And there was a release after the date and deadline prescribed by Congress that was so careless that sensitive information belonging to Epstein's survivors was exposed by the very Department that was supposed to protect them—their phone numbers, addresses, images, personal details.

Think about that. The survivors entrusted the Department of Justice with some of the most painful chapters of their lives. They deserved care. They deserved competence. They deserved honesty. They deserved an adherence to the law. Instead, they received delays, excuses, and a terrible, tragic breach of their privacy.

Then came the request of meeting with the survivors. For weeks, Mr. Blanche insisted he could not meet with them unless their attorneys were present. This was not true. A first-year law student knows that this is not true. His own Department's policies and Federal law make that clear.

When he finally did meet with them—the survivors—because a Republican Senator demanded that he do it, the survivors described the meeting as disappointing. They said they felt gaslit. They said they were skipped over. They said Mr. Blanche was condescending to the survivors of sexual assault.

Even then, when the survivors pleaded for continued investigation into the Jeffrey Epstein coconspirators, Mr. Blanche once again hid behind claims that the law prevented him from answering.

So we simply have to ask the question: Who is Todd Blanche serving here? Is he serving the survivors? No. Is

he serving the interests of the Department of Justice? No. Is he serving the American people? No. But we know that he rushed to the Situation Room for high-level members of the Trump administration to strategize on how to protect the President.

It is another clear example that the person he is there to protect is Donald Trump.

(Mr. BUDD assumed the Chair.)

Last week, my Democratic colleagues held a Spotlight Forum to examine Mr. Blanche's record. We heard from a courageous Epstein survivor. We heard from ethics experts. We heard from one of Mr. Blanche's own former colleagues from the Southern District of New York. We heard from a former Justice official appointed under a Republican President—who served a Republican Senator, Senator Hatch, here in this body—who was then fired simply because he had done his job on investigations involving Robert Mueller and Jack Smith.

Different witnesses, different backgrounds, still one conclusion from every one of them: that Todd Blanche is unfit to lead the Department of Justice. And if there were any doubt, the events of recent days erased those doubts.

Mr. Blanche, in his tenure, helped negotiate a corrupt, extraordinary settlement between Donald Trump's Department of Justice and Donald Trump. We have heard from the Federal bench already that there was no controversy. Donald Trump can't be on both sides of a negotiation. That corrupt structure was exploiting the judiciary to create an environment in which there would be a settlement, and out of that settlement, we saw an unjust and untoward creation that outraged Americans all across the political spectrum. They created a slush fund.

Think about what this means: The lawyer who represented Donald Trump now oversees the Department of Justice and negotiates an agreement between Donald Trump and Donald Trump that is not merely an appearance of conflict, that is the definition of a conflict. It is precisely why the Department of Justice must be independent.

If you look at this slush fund agreement, within it, there are immunity provisions that, according to that agreement, are, to the former senior Federal prosecutor—he said that this agreement and the immunity provisions are “mind-boggling in scope.” Donald Trump got a tax liability immunity that is extraordinary—mind-boggling in scope. The immunity provisions alone cover broad categories with no meaningful legal definition.

When asked about those undefined terms during his confirmation hearing, Mr. Blanche effectively acknowledged that they could encompass almost anything—anything. According to Blanche, he negotiated a deal that gave Donald Trump immunity that could cover almost any kind of tax fraud that

Donald Trump or his family committed.

For Donald Trump, with his former lawyer at the head of the Justice Department, it seems like, for the President, justice has no rules, justice has no standards, justice has no limits.

When one man receives special rules unavailable to every other American, this is not justice; it is privilege. It is unjust privilege.

During his confirmation hearing, Mr. Blanche repeatedly promised that he would act independently. But independence is not something you promise; it is something you demonstrate. He has been in this position for months and has had the chance to show us not promises but actions, and at every important decision he has made, the same story comes out. Who was he serving? The Constitution or Donald Trump? The answer is unmistakable.

This vote we have in the Senate on this nominee—every Senator is going to have to eventually cast a vote, but history is going to record something much larger. It will record whether in this moment, the U.S. Senate defended the independence of American justice, the independence of the Justice Department, or did we surrender it.

Long after today's headlines are forgotten, long after today's politics have faded, one question will remain: When the independence of the Department of Justice was tested, where did we stand?

I know where I stand. I stand for a Department of Justice whose only client is the American people; a Department that follows the evidence, not politics; a Department that defends the Constitution, not a President.

No one—not even the President of the United States—is above the law. That principle has guided this great Republic for nearly 250 years. It is our responsibility to preserve it today. It is the oath that we took, the commitment that we made that we will serve the people and the ideals.

To vote for Blanche is to surrender those ideals upon the altar of someone who wants to be a false god, where his interests are superior over everyone else's. That is wrong.

History is watching. We should reject this nominee.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, somewhere in America today, a father kissed his children goodbye before leaving to work, a mother boarded an airplane to attend her father's funeral, a husband drove to his construction job, a woman walked into an airport believing that they were following the law of our land. None of them expected to disappear into our immigration detention system. Yet this is happening all over our country.

Over the last several months, immigration enforcement has accelerated dramatically. In June alone, ICE arrested more than 43,000 people—the highest monthly total in years. People are being arrested outside of their homes, at airports, at workplaces, near

schools, near our churches, across communities throughout our Nation. And many of them—most of them—are non-violent, with no criminal record. Many of them have lived here for years—many, for decades. Many of them are raising American children. Some have American grandchildren, American spouses, and are an integral part of the community. Many of these folks are working jobs, paying taxes, following the legal process toward citizenship.

A woman traveling home to Texas for her father's funeral was detained at an airport while she was pursuing her asylum claim. Two other women, despite being married to American citizens and already in the legal process of obtaining permanent residency, were detained.

These are not people that are hiding from the law; these are people trying to follow it. Yet, instead of helping them complete that process, our government took them, locked them away from their families, from the Americans that love them, the communities that cherish them, the businesses and jobs that sustained those families.

Right now, today in America, roughly 70 percent of the people in immigration detention—often for-profit private companies—have never been convicted of a criminal offense—70 percent. This is not what Donald Trump promised—that he would go after the “worst of the worst.” This is a dragnet.

These, unfortunately, are indiscriminate arrests, not the result of focused law enforcement. They are the consequence of arbitrary arrest quotas and no guiding principles of decency and support of a legal immigration system. It is taking people who are seeking to abide by our laws and throwing them in prisons for the profits of private companies, which also are big supporters and contributors to this President.

When numbers become more important than justice, innocent people become collateral damage. And this doesn't just harm immigrants in our country or violate our values of decency; it harms all Americans.

Too often, this debate is framed as though immigrants are taking from our country, that they are takers. Well, the facts tell a different story. According to the conservative Cato Institute, for more than two decades, immigrants have contributed more in taxes—way more in taxes—than they have received in any kind of government benefit, many of which they are ineligible for. Together, immigrants have generated a fiscal surplus measured in the trillions of dollars. Undocumented immigrants alone paid nearly \$100 billion in Federal, State, and local taxes in a single year. They work. They build. They start businesses. They strengthen our economy. They contribute to Social Security and Medicare. They help build prosperity for all of America.

Yet this administration wants to punish many of the very people that

are helping to strengthen it, violating the commitment to go after the dangerous people, to focus our taxpayer resources on getting criminals off of our street. But no, they are using our taxpayer money to go after people that have been in our country for years and decades, who are contributing to it and are working hard to abide by our immigration laws.

Nowhere is this contradiction more painful than what we are seeing right now with Haitian immigrants in our country. Earlier this year, the United Nations described Haiti as “one of the most complex crises in . . . recent history.” Armed gangs control large sections of the country. Kidnappings are widespread. Sexual violence is used as a weapon. Thousands upon thousands have been killed. Natural disasters continue to deepen an already catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

Trump's own State Department gives Haiti its highest travel warning, level 4; in other words, do not travel to Haiti. Think about that. We tell American citizens “It is far too dangerous for you to go to Haiti,” and then we tell Haitian families “We are sending you there.” How can both possibly be true? How could a nation of decency take people with temporary protected status and send them to the very country our Nation warns us not to go to because of the violence and destitution? Have we no decency in our policies? If a country is far too dangerous for an American to step into, how can it be safe enough for families that are now being forced to go back there?

Temporary protected status exists for precisely this kind of moment. Congress created it. A Republican President signed it into law. It recognizes a simple yet profound moral truth: When extraordinary danger exists, Americans should not force human beings into it.

The values of our country, the values of our collective faiths, the values of the best of humanity are being violated here. We are a moral nation, but forcing people here on temporary protected status back into countries where there is such violence and destitution violates our morals, our values. It cheapens us all. It is wrong. Yet this administration has canceled temporary protected status for more than 330,000 Haitians.

Many have lived here for years and years. Many of them already have had American children in our country. Many of them have married Americans themselves. They have worked here. They have paid billions in taxes here. They built businesses here, served communities in some of the most humble jobs in our hospitals as assistants, helping the ill and the elderly.

There are thousands that I have come to know are in New Jersey, many whom I know personally. They are woven into the fabric of our communities, but now from a callous President they face deportation into one of the most dangerous places on Earth.

I ask my colleagues: Can we look these families in the eye and honestly

say this reflects the best of who we are, this reflects the values of our faiths?

Most of us here in this body are Christians. Would Jesus send someone from our Nation into danger, rip them away from their communities? Is that what our faiths dictate? Is that what our ideals dictate?

Even some Republicans have been raising alarms. Members of the House voted to extend protections. The Republican Governor of Ohio called those deportations “a mistake” because this is not simply an immigration debate; it is a moral test.

America has always been strongest when our laws reflected both security and humanity. These are not conflicting ideals. In fact, they are interwoven.

When we violate our humanity, we violate our security. We can secure our borders, and we should. We can enforce our laws, and we must. But we can also distinguish between those who threaten America and those who have spent years here in our country strengthening it.

This is not weakness. The Haitians in our community—keeping them here amidst the crisis in Haiti—it is not weakness; it is wisdom. It is justice. It is morally right.

It is long past time that we, in Congress, modernize an immigration system that virtually everyone agrees is broken. I can’t tell you the conversations I have had with Republican colleagues of mine.

The late Lindsey Graham is a great example about how our immigration laws are so broken, it makes it hard for anyone who wants to follow the rules to be able to, in any timely way, become a citizen of our country.

The Cato Institute calls it more likely to win the lottery than it is to come into our country. This is one of the reasons why our population is declining.

We need laws that reflect our values, laws that are orderly, laws that keep us safe and secure, laws that protect the border, laws that affirm our values.

We can have all of that. Do not listen to the false choice of a President, who wants to send people back to a human version of hell, rip people from our communities all in the name of safety and security. That is a lie.

We must create laws that offer a realistic pathway for people who have lived, worked, contributed, paid taxes, invested their lives in this country for decades, especially those with American families and American children.

The question before us is so much larger than immigration; it is about whom we are becoming as a society when we turn our back on our neighbors being thrown in private detention facilities that are profiting off of their pain, who we are as a nation when we want to rip people away from their families and their children and send them to modern-day’s hell, who we are as a nation when we take those people that are good enough to work in our

hospitals to take care of our elderly, but then we want to turn our back on them and let them be dragged out of our country even though they have been here for years, followed our laws, and are working toward a pathway to citizenship.

Who are we if we continue down this road that creates false fears, that spreads lies about immigrants, that turns its very back on the fundamental precept to love your neighbor?

Well, I still believe in America. I still believe we are strong enough to create safety and security and to embrace those who love our Nation and serve her faithfully even though they are not citizens. I still believe in an America that is big enough and bold enough to protect its borders and love the stranger.

I still believe in a nation whose immigration laws can affirm our dignity and decency and not be an assault on it. I still believe in a nation that honors its faith traditions and knows that we have to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger, especially when they are fleeing persecution and hate and violence.

I believe in the highest ideals of our Nation. That is why we have laws like temporary protected status in the first place. It reflected the best of us. But I fear this administration is showing the worst of who we are. I honor Republican think tanks, the Republican Governors who all have the courage to stand up and say: This is wrong.

We need that kind of chorus of conviction here in the U.S. Senate. I ask my colleagues to not let this President so violate our collective values. This is not a right or left issue; it is a right or wrong issue.

I pray for our Nation. I pray that we live our ideals and don’t just talk about them. I pray that we teach our children whom we are not by what we say but by what we do.

I pray that in this crisis, we do not allow a President to undermine decency and grace and send innocent people back to environments where they will face nightmares and violence.

We can be the America we say we are, but this Chamber must stand up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the 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 purpose.

John Thune, Tim Sheehy, John Barrasso, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, Mike Crapo, James Lankford, Kevin Cramer, Steve Daines, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Tom Cotton, Roger Marshall, Thom Tillis, John R. Curtis, Jon Husted, Pete Ricketts, Cynthia M. Lummis.

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following resolutions, which are at the desk: S. Res. 821, S. Res. 822, S. Res. 823, S. Res. 824, and S. Res. 825.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 878 through 880, Calendar Nos. 882 through 892, Calendar Nos. 894 through 898, Calendar No. 881, with the exception of Stephen P. Snelson; and all nominations on the Secretary’s desk in the Air Force, with the exception of PN970-2 and PN1151, Omar Vargas; Army, with the exception of PN1015-2, Mark R. Berube and Mandi A. Samples; PN1017-2, Joel A. Arends and Michael D. Thompson; PN1061-2, Theresa M. Long; PN1065-2, Samuel A. Smith; PN1072-2, Philip T. Buckler; PN1104, Austin D. Roberts and John A. Goodwin; PN1105, Justin M. Smith; Navy, with the exception of PN835-2, PN925, PN990-2, Robert J. Moreno and Joshua Q. McCright; PN1029-2, Kelly Cruz; and Space Force; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Air Force to the