

Let's take an example. The average Social Security check now is around \$2,400 a month. If you reduce that by 22 percent, it means that people receiving Social Security will receive about \$450 to \$500 less a month.

If this is your only source of income, imagine for a moment that \$2,400—just lopped off \$400, \$500 from your monthly payment. How does it affect you? Paying your rent; paying your mortgage; paying your utility bills; paying what it might take at the grocery store to get by. It is going to be a real hardship.

As Senator CASSIDY said, for the senior citizens of America, it means that those under the poverty level will increase by 50 percent. We can't let that happen. We have to do something about it.

And the bill that I have introduced with Senator CASSIDY basically doesn't pick a solution—although we can come up with a couple. It doesn't pick a solution. It just says: Don't waste any time. Start talking about it; start debating it; let the American people engage in this conversation with you; and vote on some alternatives.

Now "vote" is a word that used to be part of being a Senator. Not so much anymore. Except when it comes to nominations, there aren't a lot of votes on substantive issues around this Chamber.

I know a little bit about this. I have given more than half of my life to Congress: 14 years in the House, 30 years in the Senate. I know what you are saying: It sounds like a career politician. Well, maybe I am—and proud of it and particularly proud of serving in this Chamber.

I have seen some glorious things happen in this Chamber on a bipartisan basis, but it takes a couple Senators, maybe more, to stand up and say: We have got to do something that is risky and controversial but important.

This is not the first time I have faced Social Security. When I was a Member of the House elected in 1982, came to serve in 1983, I was told that in a matter of months Social Security would run out of money.

Imagine that. You are a brandnew Member of Congress scared to death you won't be reelected, and they tell you, you have got to make a big change in the biggest social program in America. It scares you to death. But you know what? We did it.

Our goal was simple: 50 years of solvency in Social Security. Can we change Social Security and guarantee 50 years of solvency? We made a lot of changes. And you know what we got for it: 2032—1983 to 2032, we kept our word—50 years.

It is not too much to ask this Congress to fix Social Security and keep it solvent for 50 years. We can do it. And the longer we wait to do it, the more difficult it becomes.

I look back on voting for that, and I thought it was the end of my political career, which was only a few months old, but it turned out no Member of

Congress—Democrat or Republican—in 1983 and 1984 lost an election because they voted for Social Security changes.

The American people expect us to make the best choices we can, and they accepted what we did. We bought 50 years of solvency—that is an amazing thing when you consider how important this program is.

And so what Senator CASSIDY and I have suggested is a process which basically says we won't go by the old Senate rules.

I might add—I was going to show it, but I think it violates the Senate rules. The Senate is a Chamber of tradition. Down here, a few of you can see it, is a brass spittoon—a brass spittoon. It has been held onto as part of the tradition of the Senate.

Well, we have traditions in the rules that make things almost impossible to pass except after a long period of time. Weeks go by sometimes; days certainly go by, trying to get from a measure on the floor to an actual vote. The Senate rules are not kindly. They are tough.

So the bill that I introduced basically cuts through some of this redtape and delay and says we will move after several weeks to consider alternatives to Social Security. The bottom line is: It isn't enough to get a majority in the Senate under the current rules, and it isn't changed at all under our proposal. We still need 60 votes to ultimately pass any change to Social Security. Well, Democrats don't have 60 votes; Republicans don't have 60 votes; but together, we think we can reach that goal.

Now, I have been a little disappointed, but not surprised, that some of my colleagues that I have talked to about this said they thought it was a good idea, but on reflection they have decided it is too risky, that we are moving things too fast.

The Senate has never been accused successfully of moving too fast on almost anything. We take our time. That is why we are here. The Senate is different than the House, and I served in both and respect both.

So to my colleagues who oppose this approach and say we need more time to do it, I want to back up Senator CASSIDY. It costs money over time. It costs benefits over time. The solution becomes more expensive over time.

The longer you wait, the more expensive it becomes to save Social Security. And we absolutely, positively have to save it. Too many people are counting on it.

I bet you the folks who gathered here today have many relatives of their own who count on Social Security—either because they are disabled or elderly. I understand that in my own family. I think everybody does.

So it is a great day in the Senate when a Democrat and a Republican stand on the floor and don't criticize one another but actually talk about working together. It has been a real pleasure for me, I would say to Senator CASSIDY, to be part of the CASSIDY-DURBIN team.

We are both ending our Senate careers on January 3 of next year. We hoped that this would be one of the things we could achieve before we left. I am still not giving up completely. Miracles do occur. But I had to step up and make a proposal with Senator CASSIDY to get my colleagues into conversation.

The conversation about Social Security has increased dramatically since we started this effort, and I think it should. The sooner, the better. The more expensive it becomes the longer we wait.

I yield back to Senator CASSIDY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, Senator DURBIN is referring to what's called the PROMISE Act. Again, it is a bill which sets up a process to come to a solution. It doesn't dictate what the solution is.

We have colleagues who are objecting to coming up with a process, and so it is important for our country that Congress tackle this issue. And when I say "our country," I mean the people who live here. And the people who live here, whether they are older or whether they are younger, they are relying upon Congress to step up to its responsibility.

Thank you, Senator DURBIN. We will continue to push on this. It is important for our Congress, important for our country, important for our people.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. BRITT).

AGOA EXTENSION ACT—Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

RECOGNIZING THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY WRESTLING TEAM

Mr. MCCORMICK. Mr. President, Pennsylvania is wrestling country. The sport fits the character of our Commonwealth. From smalltown school gymnasiums to the biggest stage in college athletics, generations of Pennsylvanians have learned on the mat that nothing is given and everything is earned.

Our proud tradition is embodied by a team that has once again set the standard for intercollegiate wrestling and is here with us in the Gallery today. So I rise to honor the 2026 NCAA national championship Penn State Nittany Lions and submit a resolution congratulating them on their fifth consecutive national championship and their 13th title in the last 15 NCAA championships. This recognizes the

dedication, the teamwork, and the perseverance that made this historic achievement possible.

When I watch wrestling, I see the best of Pennsylvania and the best of America: hard work, courage, resilience, humility, and respect. In this remarkable group of young men, those virtues are on full display.

I grew up wrestling across Pennsylvania—from Shikellamy to Shickshinny, from Selinsgrove to Schuylkill Haven—and years later, I had the privilege of serving as the co-captain of the Army wrestling team at West Point. Last year, I sat in the front row in Philadelphia at the NCAA national championships, alongside President Trump, as Penn State defended its title.

I have spent much of my life around wrestling mats, and what I learned there is simple: Wrestling reveals character. For 7 minutes, there is nowhere to hide. No teammate can take your place. No excuse can score a takedown. The work you did or didn't do when nobody was watching shows up under the lights. That is why wrestling is more than a sport. It teaches the virtues that have always sustained America, and no program—no program—in the country embodies those virtues more consistently than Penn State wrestling.

This season, the Nittany Lions went 15 to 0. They completed their sixth straight undefeated season and extended dual-meet winning track record to 86. Then they went to the national championships in Cleveland and raised that standard again. The team scored 181.5 points, breaking the NCAA record that Penn State had set just the year before.

This is not just a good weekend; this is sustained excellence. Six Nittany Lions reached the national finals, tying the school record. Luke Lilledahl, Josh Barr, Levi Haines, and Mitchell Mesenbrink returned as champions, and Mitchell delivered one of the tournament's most defining performances, winning in the finals by a technical fault and earning the second straight national title for him and the tournament's "Outstanding Wrestler."

But the most compelling statistic is that every one of Penn State's 10 NCAA qualifiers scored points toward the record total, and 8 became All-Americans. That is teamwork. That is excellence.

There is so much discussion these days about how boys become good men, and Penn State wrestling has found a winning formula: Demand excellence, teach discipline and humility, and bind individual ambition to a purpose larger than oneself.

That is why Coach Cael Sanderson's legacy is bigger than 13 national titles. He has built more than a championship program; he has built a culture that forms young men into the kinds of leaders our communities and our country needs.

Cael often points to the Old Testament story of Nehemiah, who was re-

building Jerusalem's wall when the enemies repeatedly tried to lure him away. Nehemiah's response was simple:

I am doing a great work, so I cannot come down.

Coach Cael and his fellow coaches and the Penn State wrestling team are doing great work. As America celebrates its 250th anniversary, we in this body are striving to do great work too: preserving the liberty we inherited, renewing the character that sustains it, and proving that a free people can accomplish hard things together. But to be a champion, as this group knows, each of us needs to renew that great work every single day. The Penn State wrestling team understands that, and America sometimes needs to be reminded of it.

I ask my colleagues in this body to join me in this resolution recognizing what this remarkable team has accomplished.

To the Penn State Nittany Lions, congratulations on another historic championship. Pennsylvania is proud of you. The Senate honors you.

We are Penn State.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

RECOGNIZING THE ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, I speak today in recognition of the bravery, courage, and valor of nearly 9,000 men and women in the Arkansas National Guard.

Day in and day out, the heroes of our National Guard protect our communities and our homeland, stand at the ready to respond to natural disasters, and defend our freedom around the world. Their work is having a huge impact on many fronts.

In Little Rock, our National Guardsmen recently participated in the Pentagon's largest unclassified cyber defense exercise, known as Cyber Shield, alongside more than 1,000 participants from 44 States and nearly two dozen countries.

Down at the southern border, Arkansas National Guard troops are working to keep illegal aliens out of our country and stop the flow of deadly, illicit drugs into our communities.

Additionally, Arkansas National Guardsmen on the homefront have provided 15 percent of the targeting information for Operation Epic Fury, while guardsmen deployed overseas work on the ground in support of this critical mission.

Last but certainly not least and most recently, the National Guardsmen stationed in Washington, DC, as part of the President's "Safe and Beautiful" mission are cleaning up our Nation's Capital for all Americans to enjoy.

Earlier this summer, just a couple of miles from the Capitol Building, Arkansas National Guardsmen intervened in a violent assault and stopped a potential shooting. While out on patrol earlier, SGT Memphis Perez, SPC Edwin Martinez, SPC Christian Diaz, and PFC Gabriel Oliva encountered a

woman with a bloody face, multiple groups of people yelling and arguing, and a suspect threatening to shoot a group of women. These brave guardsmen of Team Razorback stepped into action, detained the suspect with flex cuffs after he attempted to retrieve a Glock pistol from his car, provided medical assistance to the victim, and secured the scene while waiting for Metropolitan Police Department officers to arrive. The heroism of these men saved lives, and because of their courage, they received the Joint Service Achievement Medal.

I would like to extend my gratitude and admiration to Sergeant Perez, Specialist Martinez, Specialist Diaz, and Private First Class Oliva for doing, as my drill sergeant used to say, the hard right over the easy wrong.

You did your duty with honor and integrity in a very dangerous situation. I commend you for your brave actions and congratulate you on earning this distinguished award.

On the ground, in the air, in cyber space, and right here in the Nation's Capital, Arkansas National Guardsmen are always ready and always there.

To my fellow Arkansans who have answered the call to serve in the Guard, I say: Thank you. Your example of selflessness, courage, and patriotism has made our country and our State proud. May God bless you and protect you. May God bless the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

RUSSIA

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I know you are well aware of this, but the Senate needs to pass the Russia sanctions bill, and we need to do it now. We have the votes. Let's vote.

Ukraine has Putin down and is choking him. We need to help Ukraine choke him to death. I am sorry that the people of Russia are having to undergo what they are undergoing. I am doubly sorry the people of Ukraine are, but it is not going to stop until Putin understands—and we make him understand—that the costs of his barbarism outweigh the benefits.

For the first time since 2022, through sheer will and some big brains and help from Europe and help from the United States, Ukraine has Putin on the back foot. It is truly remarkable.

I remember when Putin invaded in 2022. All the experts said Putin is going to roll through Ukraine like thunder on a summer night; headed toward Kyiv, he is going to take it over.

In fact, President Biden then asked President Zelenskyy if he needed help evacuating. And I will never forget what President Zelenskyy said. It was one of his finest hours. When President Biden asked him if he needed a ride, needed help getting out, he said: I need ammunition.

I need ammunition, not a ride.

We should have known then that the Ukrainian people are tough as a pine

knot. And I guarantee you, in his heart of hearts, Vladimir Putin wishes he never started that fight.

Putin thought time was on his side. It is not on his side anymore. Russia has had, unfortunately, 1.4 million soldiers die. He is having a hard time recruiting new ones. His flow of voluntary soldiers has dried up. He is now having to pay people to fight, and he may have to impose a draft on the good people of Russia.

Why? It is not hard to figure out. It is grit. It is guts. It is determination. And it is drones. Ukraine is now the drone master of the universe. They started with nothing. They are now the drone master of the universe.

Ukraine is producing more drones. They are producing better drones. They are producing long-range drones. They are going to produce 7 million drones in 2026. That is up from 2.2 million only a few years ago.

Some of those drones can travel up to 2,000 miles. Ukraine is using those drones to overwhelm the Russian air defense. Now, normally, when you send a drone into Russia, Russia has an air defense.

What does that mean? That just means missiles on the ground or other drones that will shoot down that foreign drone invading Russia. Ukraine has figured out a way to overwhelm Russian air defenses so that some of those drones get through. And boy, are those getting through.

No part of Russia is safe right now because of these drones by Ukraine. In late June, Ukrainian drones took out two oil refineries in a city called Ufa—I am probably mispronouncing it. That is a thousand miles behind frontlines.

As a result of these drones, as of late June, Russia had lost 30 percent of its refining capacity.

What does that mean? It means they don't have any gasoline. It means they don't have any diesel fuel. If you are a Russian in Crimea, you can't buy gasoline. They have said no more consumer sales; they are running short. There are long lines in Moscow, as we speak, as I know the Presiding Officer knows, to get gas. The war has finally come to the people of Russia.

Just recently, Ukrainians sent in drones to bomb Wildberries. What is Wildberries? Wildberries is Russia's Amazon, and they keep all these consumer goods in big warehouses. Ukraine used drones to take out two of them—about \$2 billion.

But everybody in Russia has felt the impact. They have seen it. Once again, the war has come, unfortunately, to the people of Russia.

Recent polls—it is hard to get good data out of Russia because Putin has turned Russia into China. You can't speak freely. Internet is isolated. They will put you in prison and kill you and hurt you the entire time you are dying if you speak out of turn.

But the good people of Russia still have feelings, and a recent poll showed that only 21 percent of the people of Russia support its government policies.

So now is the time. What this Russia sanctions bill would do is say: If you want to buy Russian oil and gas, you can't use the dollar. And, by the way, you also can't sell your goods in America.

Why are we doing that? Because between 30 and 40 percent of Russia's budget and Putin's budget—they are one and the same right now—comes from oil and gas. So if you cut off your oil and gas, you cut off your cash flow. If you cut off your cash flow, you stop your ability to prosecute the war.

This will not require any American money.

I want to thank the European countries. It took them a while. But they finally faced reality, and they have stepped up and financially supported Ukraine. And the American people generously supported Ukraine for a long time, and we still are sharing intelligence with them. So I want to thank the leadership in Europe and the good people of Europe.

But this will cut off Putin's cash fund—one simple bill. We need to do it, and we need to do it now. And we need to vote. We just need to stop talking and start voting.

ELECTION INTEGRITY

Madam President, No. 2, let me talk about election integrity.

Let me tell you what I think of when I think of the SAVE Act. I think of integrity in American elections. Now, you don't have to be a senior at CalTech to know that the American people, no matter what your political philosophy is—Democrat, Republican, Independent, socialist, communist, whatever—you wonder about elections now. You wonder about the integrity.

I mean, I don't know how widespread, if at all, this is, but in New Jersey, we just discovered that the entire population of Bolivia is registered to vote in New Jersey. That is a bit of an overstatement. But after saying there is no problem with our voter rolls, we discover stuff like this.

And we just witnessed elections in California that take months to resolve. When it takes a month to declare a winner for the good people of California, what do you think they are going to think—particularly, the loser?

Look, if America is going to survive, in terms of your party, you have got to be willing to lose and accept that you have lost. And in order to do that, you have to trust in the election.

So when I think of the SAVE Act, I am thinking of election integrity. And, really, what the SAVE Act means to me is two things: It means you have to prove you are who you say you are in order to vote and in order to register to vote. It is very simple. Rule No. 1, you have to prove you are who you say you are in order to register to vote and to vote.

And, No. 2, we need to go back to having an election day and not an election month. We need to know who the winner is on election night. And if it is a really close race, I can understand it bleeding over until the next day.

Frankly, I don't care how you vote. That is up to the States. The President does not want voting by mail. He is entitled to his opinion. I just disagree with him.

If the people of Alaska or the people of New York or the people of Florida want to vote by mail, that is up to them and their State legislatures. So within reason, I don't care how you vote. I just want to require those votes to be tallied by election night—on election night.

Now, this is all really easy for me to say, but the States run elections, and they run Federal elections. And it is really easy for me and all of us in the Senate to give them orders, but they have to have money to implement these rules.

And we have a budget resolution that was sent over to us by the House—a budget resolution can only deal with money—and I think we should take it up.

I am on the Budget Committee. Senator RON JOHNSON is our chair. He is going to be a very able chair. We talked about it this morning. I think we need to take up that money bill, and I think part of it needs to be election integrity.

And I think we are going to have to—the whole purpose of that bill should be, and hopefully will be, to give our States—it is a money bill; it is a money issue—to give our States the financial resources to implement these two simple rules: You have to prove you are who you say you are in order to vote, and you have to get those votes counted by election night.

The States are going to need resources, and that is the whole purpose of the so-called SAVE Act in the budget resolution. And we need to take it up now—now.

Now, it may be that we can put in a provision—I don't know; some big brains tell me it will work—that if we provide money to the States to implement election integrity, that if enough States participate, that it will become not just custom but law that these two rules apply.

Did I mention the two rules? You have to prove you are who you say you are in order to vote, and that we need to have an election day not an election month.

It may be that the money provision can be crafted to provide that if enough States agree, that is going to become the policy for all States. I don't know if that is possible under the Budget Control Act, but I do know that the SAVE Act, right now—in addition to the two rules of election integrity that I talk about—involves money, and that is what we are going to try to do. It is to provide the States the money within the parameters of the Budget Control Act.

But we can't do it unless we can vote, and it would be nice if we could all agree. It would be nice if we could all have meetings and talk about it and give and take. I am all for that. But,

right now, it is not realistic because people have differences of opinion.

Do you know what you do when you have a difference of opinion? You vote. That is why God made votes. That is why God made the U.S. Senate.

We can continue to sit around. It is also true of the Russia sanctions bill, but it is especially true with respect to election integrity. And I am not criticizing anybody. I know the way the Senate works, and the Presiding Officer does too. Senators will stall and restall and cuss and spit, and we need one more meeting.

I can't tell you how many meetings I have been in, in the last 6 months, that should have been an email, that could have been an email, to talk about the Russia sanctions bill and to talk about election integrity and to try to get a consensus. It is not going to happen—not in my natural lifetime, not in the Presiding Officer's, though you will live longer than me, and not in yours, our friends in the Gallery.

We have got to vote, and we need to vote right now. And the American people expect it.

And if there is a motion made on this floor to have us remain here until we get our work done, I am going to vote yes. I am going to vote yes. I can tell you right now. And what is the work we need to get done? In no particular order, we need to pass the Russia sanctions bill; we need to pass the budget resolution, which will include election integrity; we need to confirm Todd Blanche; we need to pass the continuing resolution to keep government open until December 11; and we need to vote on the cryptocurrency bill, which we have spent years on. And if we are waiting to take those votes to get a consensus, it is not going to happen.

Did I mention that is why God made votes? When reasonable people disagree, that is what we need to do.

Did I leave anything out, Madam President?

We need to get our business done, and then we can go on about our business.

I am not saying that people go home in August and just lie around the pool. I know that. I don't. The Presiding Officer doesn't. We go back, and we meet with constituents. Some people run for reelection. I am planning on being in all the battleground States, and I am anxious to get there to help my colleagues.

But we have to stay here and get our business done.

And that is it. My work here is done. I can show myself out.

And I may be wrong, but I doubt it. I think the American people are going to be really disappointed if we don't get our work done because it is not our work. It is their work.

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. JOHNSON. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1306

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, my fine State of Wisconsin has a gray wolf population problem, but that was not always the case. Back in the eighties and nineties, we had the opposite problem. We had an endangered wolf population, as probably most of the lower 48 States did. So back in 1978, under the Endangered Species Act, the gray wolf was listed as one of those endangered species.

The good news is, it worked. You can see from the chart here—that starts in 1980 to about the year 1999—our wolf population slowly started coming back, to the point that in 1999, the Wisconsin DNR agreed that once we hit 250 gray wolves in Wisconsin, that would be the point at which we could delist the gray wolf as no longer an endangered species.

We didn't delist them. The population continued to grow and grow, and unfortunately, as much as we all value a healthy and sustainable gray wolf population, there is a point at which it gets too large and it starts threatening livestock, starts threatening people.

I think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognized that fact, and so in 2007, the gray wolf was actually delisted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The problem is, in 2008, it was relisted by a Federal court here in DC. So in 2009, we took action once again. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisted the gray wolf. That same year, that same court relisted it. Three years later—again, looking at the science, looking at the growing population—in 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisted it. Three years later, the same DC court relisted it. In 2021, again, you can start seeing the explosion, quite honestly, in population. Our Wisconsin DNA states that about 1,250 is really the most population of gray wolf that the State can sustain. We had already hit that level, so U.S. Fish and Wildlife delisted it again, only to be overturned in 2022 by a Federal court decision in California this time, not DC.

Why is this a problem? We get report after report of families, farmers in Wisconsin who are bearing the burden of this back-and-forth, of the fact that the gray wolf is protected and the populations are really at the maximum level right now.

It is threatening livestock. I mean, throughout Wisconsin, wolves are killing cows, horses, goats, sheep, cats, dogs. We have a sheep farm in Wisconsin, and a multigeneration herd of sheep was all wiped out except for one sheep, in one night. In Price County, a dairy farmer had to sell his entire herd because the wolves kept killing his cows. Wisconsinites have to carry firearms just to walk their dogs. A Wood County resident was forced to drive their children to school because the bus route changed because wolf tracks were there at the bus stop.

So, Mr. President, you know, I am just asking what makes sense when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has—one, two, three, four, five—four times taken the gray wolves off the endangered species list, which, again, we all agreed was required. We should have all agreed it was successful. We are way past the delisting baseline established by the Wisconsin DNR. We are at the maximum sustainable limit here.

I am asking consent to pass a bill that would simply delist them so that Wisconsin farmers, Wisconsin families, and Wisconsin children can feel safe in their residences, in walking about their properties.

So, Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be discharged from further consideration of S. 1306 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). Is there an objection?

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, look, my esteemed colleague from Wisconsin—I don't mean to use any onomatopoeia here, but he is howling about the gray wolves and seeking to pass legislation to remove Federal protections under the Endangered Species Act for gray wolves across the entire United States.

A hallmark of the Endangered Species Act is the requirement that decisions be made solely on the basis of scientific data. Congress is supposed to rely on that data.

This act was brought to bear in 1973 under a Republican President with a very important mission: to protect species at risk of extinction and to promote the conservation of ecosystems and habitats necessary for the survival of those species.

For a species to be considered recovered, science must show that it has returned to suitable habitats with durable populations that can persist safely and enduringly into the foreseeable future. That is the law. Today, wolves have returned to only 10 percent of their historic range and do not meet the Endangered Species Act requirements for delisting. That is the law.

Gray wolves once numbered in the millions across North America, from forests and plains to deserts and mountains. But wolves, with insatiable, rapacious cruelty, were hunted, trapped, and poisoned—and other actions to kill and eradicate them—to near extinction by the mid-20th century in all of the lower 48 States.

There is this growing sympathy and empathy in the American public for a species that has endured such cruelty and ruthlessness at human hands over the centuries—a species that is the forbear of the dogs we love and cherish in our lives.

As apex predators, gray wolves, we now know, play a vital role in keeping

the entire natural ecosystem in America healthy. When wolves were brought back to places like Yellowstone National Park, it transformed the park. More birds, beavers, and fish returned.

Research from Wisconsin, my colleague's home State, reveals the overwhelming net benefits of healthy, wild wolf packs to our landscapes.

My colleague cites that there are problems in Wisconsin. There are so many Wisconsinites that speak out, especially the scientists, and some of those scientists are actually economists. Wisconsin economists proved that wolves are protecting human safety. One of the big ways they protect human safety—and they enumerated this—is by reducing vehicle collisions with the deer population, with deer. Other independent research in Wisconsin suggests that chronic wasting disease is suppressed where wolf packs hunt. And there are so many other benefits.

But it is not just his State that this would affect; it would be so many other States.

Look, we have a crisis in our country. We are living through a biodiversity crash. Some people call it the sixth mass extinction. This mass extinction is unique because it is being driven not by natural disasters but primarily by human activity and decision making. Current extinction rates are estimated to be hundreds to thousands of times higher than the normal background rate.

We need to do better for what wildlife remains in our Nation, including the gray wolf. We need to stand up for the role of science in influencing our decisions, for expertise influencing the outcomes, and not harmful legislation like this. That is why I will not allow it to move forward, Mr. President. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I only stand to point out that Wisconsin DNR is not exactly an organization that is not willing to protect wildlife. It certainly is. It set the delisting baseline at 250. We are at five times that level.

From my standpoint, whether this legislation affects other States—this ought to be looked at State by State and allow States to decide that. Wisconsin would certainly like this delisted, and it is just regrettable that my unanimous consent request was objected to.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 558

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, simple fact: Climate change is real. It is actually pretty widely known. I think it is a true statement that every person knowledgeable about climate science who is not on the payroll of the fossil fuel industry or its denial operation agrees with that. Actually, a lot of people knowledgeable about climate science who are on the payroll of the

fossil fuel industry agree with that. In fact, scientists from Exxon, from Chevron, in a report for API 30, 40 years ago, acknowledged climate science, predicted the harms, and indeed quite accurately predicted the harms we are seeing now.

Given that, I came to the floor to ask my colleagues if they could simply agree on that simple scientific fact—climate change is actually real. Well, unfortunately, to no one's surprise, Republican colleagues could not. So I came back to the floor and broke down the big question—the scientific fact that climate change is real—into some of its component truths, the smaller truths that make up the big truth that climate change is real. Each time faced with simple, well-documented truths, such as sea level rise and economic fallout from climate change, Republicans objected.

Objectors have protested that they are not climate change deniers. Well, you would never know that from their willingness to consider solutions. Indeed, the objectors are stridently opposed to any—any—climate solutions, and they have made their opposition clear. The problem is that that comes with consequences.

So I will try another simple truth today. It is actually a pair. One, climate change-driven extreme weather events are increasing, and at the same time, the government is dismantling weather monitoring and alert systems. I will ask you to accept those two truths together. I don't think either one is subject to much debate, so I hope we can all agree on that.

As I have explained repeatedly and as anybody knowledgeable in this space pretty well knows, climate change exacerbates extreme weather and disaster events. You can see on this chart the billion-dollar disasters from 1980 to today. It gets worse and worse. It includes winter storms, wildfires, hurricanes, and other severe storms; freezes, flooding, and drought. But to make the chart, it has got to be a billion-dollar disaster. Climate change increases both the frequency and the intensity of these events. Scientists have known this to be true for decades now. It has actually developed to the point where the National Academies could release a report just this month making clear that the attribution science—linking extreme weather to climate change to emissions—is advancing. It is now quite well established.

So what do we know?

We know that the fossil fuel industry is making extreme weather worse. Now we have an even better sense of how much worse; how it is attributable to those companies.

I mentioned flooding. Climate change drives flooding in several ways: wetter hurricanes, for one; sea-level rise for another. And I say this as a Rhode Islander: It is not just our coastal communities that are at risk; climate change increases rainfall intensity—powerful rain bursts—that deliver un-

precedented upland flooding. That happens because a warmer atmosphere, just as a matter of simple physics, holds more water.

This chart shows that, from 1970 to 2025, average rainfall intensity increased by 28 percent. That is a lot more water, and it results in more frequent and intense extreme rainfall, which can occur far away from coasts. Ask Asheville, NC.

So how can communities like Asheville know when floods like that are coming?

Well, the answer is, government warning systems from our National Weather Service, which is part of the NOAA.

Most of us use National Weather Service data every day because smartphones rely on Weather Service data to power the weather apps that we look at. If you have gotten a thunderstorm warning, a tornado warning, or a flood alert on your smartphone, that is the Weather Service and its hundreds of civil servants diligently doing the science, tracking the data, and putting out the warnings.

Well, since President Trump took office and unleashed Elon Musk and his team of little DOGE boys, the Weather Service has lost about 600 employees—600. Half of those employees were meteorologists and hydrologists—the people who work on doing the forecasting and the warnings.

As climate change-driven extreme weather continues to worsen these dangers, well, that spells trouble, and people need warnings. We can trace the impact of those DOGE losses to the Weather Service already.

For instance, at the time of the deadly flooding in Kerr County, TX, last year, the Weather Service's San Angelo office was missing a senior hydrologist, a staff forecaster, and a chief meteorologist. They are just not there anymore. The San Antonio office was missing a science officer and a warning coordination meteorologist. What could possibly go wrong? Well, they found out in Kerr County, TX.

In April of this year, East-Central Kansas got a Weather Service tornado warning out with just minutes to spare. Weather forecasters can usually issue tornado warnings hours in advance and then update. They can do those early warnings because, when the government is properly staffed and hasn't had Elon Musk's little minions wrecking it, it can release daily weather balloons in the predawn hours to build the dataset of what is going on. Well, due to staffing cuts, several Weather Service offices now don't have the people to do the predawn launches, so the balloons don't go up until regular office hours. By then, when those balloons went up on April 13, the storms were already on the move. This time, Kansans were warned to seek shelter just in the nick of time, but that is not an acceptable gamble for the U.S. Government.

You know, it is pretty basic government stuff to fund and maintain weather monitoring and alert systems, including adequate staff at the weather Agencies. If we can't do that, well, we will see more lives lost as ever more frequent and dangerous climate-driven weather events catch people by surprise because our Weather Service is understaffed and underfunded. We should certainly be able to agree on that. Climate-driven extreme weather is worsening, and the administration is taking down the capabilities for weather forecasting and warnings. Both are true. I hope that we can agree to this one.

So, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be discharged from further consideration and that the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 558. I further ask consent that the resolution be agreed to; that the preamble be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, I guess today is my day to refute the Democrats' false assertions and claims.

Earlier today, when chairing the Budget Committee hearing and Democrats falsely accused the Republicans of cutting and slashing Medicaid, I repeatedly had to remind them that the year that ObamaCare kicked in, in 2014—the first year of Medicaid expansion—we spent \$300 billion on Medicaid. Five years later, which was the year before the pandemic, in 2019, we spent \$400 billion on Medicaid. This last year, we spent \$668 billion on Medicaid. Medicaid spending is up 10 percent, year on year, and we will probably spend about \$735 billion. That is more than double the amount we spent the year that Medicaid expansion kicked in.

They apparently didn't like my correcting the record and refuting their false assertions; so they complained in the Budget Committee hearing that I was turning the committee into a debate society. Well, I don't know. I thought this was supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body.

So now I have come to the floor to rebut, once again, the false claims of the Senator from Rhode Island. He said he is making two true assertions here: that climate events are worsening because of climate change.

First of all, I will state that I am not a climate change denier. The climate has always changed, and it always will. The last time I was objecting to one of his false assertions—again, to one of his resolutions—I pointed to the Vostok ice core sample, which were four or five distinct cycles over 440,000 years of 22.7 degrees Fahrenheit variation. Yes. So climate has always changed. The question is, To what extent does mankind cause it? But the

assertion that these climate events like hurricanes or wildfires are being driven to greater extremes because of climate change is just false. I mean, there is reputable science that completely debunks those claims.

The Senator from Rhode Island talked about billions of dollars' worth of property damage. Well, when you build multimillion-dollar homes right on the coast of hurricane regions, you are going to have higher dollar losses with normal hurricane activity. When you are as sloppy as California is at wildfire mitigation—there is an excellent article written by Representative MCCLINTOCK, from California, saying that, back in the 1800s, I think it was like 2½ million acres of California that routinely burned, but through proper mitigation efforts, they reduced that to, I think, 250,000 acres per year; but then they stopped doing them under Democrat governance, and they are back up to over, you know, millions of acres burning a year. That is not because of climate change; that is just because of bad Democrat governance, bad Democrat policies. So that is the first assertion.

The second assertion is easy to rebut, which is that we are not funding the National Weather Service.

I mean, again, here are the figures. I know they don't like facts, and they don't like figures, but here are the facts: In 2014, the budget for the National Weather Service was \$1.34 billion. The next year—again, when Joe Biden was President still for fiscal year 2025—he did only increase it by 0.7, but it increased to \$1.35 billion. In fiscal year 2026, it is up 8 percent to \$1.46 billion. In the House, I think the President's budget calls for the fiscal 2027 spending of \$1.6 billion. That will be a 9.5-percent increase.

So, again, we are not cutting or slashing Medicaid. We are not cutting or slashing the National Weather Service. Both claims in this resolution are false.

I also have to quote Secretary Chris Wright: "We are in the midst of the greatest malinvestment in human history"—\$10 trillion on a global basis has been invested nominally on fighting climate change. What do you get for \$10 trillion? Well, to be very specific on energy sources, you get solar up to 1.2 percent of global energy and wind at 1.4.

As a quick aside, in 1973, global oil, gas, and coal energy consumption was 84 percent. In 2024, it was 83 percent. We spent \$10 trillion on all of this renewable energy, and the mix hasn't changed at all.

And we certainly haven't satisfied the Chicken Littles claiming disaster. I have actually got a long list of these experts.

By the way, I think last week in Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, we tried to get answers out of one of these experts, Dr. Fauci, who directed our miserably failed response to COVID. He won't answer my questions.

But I have got a long list of these experts going back to the seventies, you know. Harvard biologist George Wald estimated: Civilization will end in 15 to 30 years unless immediate action was taken.

Let's go up to climate change, 1980, ecologist Kenneth Watt predicted the world would be 4 degrees colder—colder—in 1990 and 11 degrees colder in 2000. That didn't happen.

No, this then started—this global cooling, right? That was the fearmongering. Then it was global warming. Then when they couldn't decide, they just turned it into generic climate change.

In 1989, Noel Brown, a U.N. environmental official, said entire nations would be wiped off the Earth if rising sea levels from global warming were not reversed by the year 2000. It is 26 years later; I haven't seen these entire nations wiped off the Earth.

In 2007, head of the U.N. climate panel claimed it would be too late unless drastic actions were taken by 2012, and that is 14 years ago.

In 2004, a Pentagon climate change report said Britain will be Siberian in 2020. Didn't happen.

In 2008, Al Gore cited a claim from another climate researcher that the North Pole may be ice free by 2013.

Again, there are literally dozens of these Chicken Little scaremongering claims. Just not buying them.

These resolutions aren't harmful. There is a point to them. They are trying to lay a documentary record to promote more of this malinvestment—\$10 trillion. Just think of what we could have done with \$10 trillion that we just frittered away on climate change alarmists.

So, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, just a few quick things. First of all, Medicaid, from the budget discussion this morning, is facing a trillion dollars in cuts. Second of all, that is being done by a redtape bomb being dropped on Medicaid recipients that will fall the hardest on the people least capable of the additional redtape and paperwork who have—you know, are in addiction recovery, have severe mental health issues, have such disabling physical health issues that it is hard for them to take on the new project of keeping up with the Republican redtape and bureaucracy.

And the question of whether it is real or not, you don't have to go any further than looking at the organizations, hospitals, doctors groups, nursing homes, that are having to prepare their finances for that cut. They are not preparing their finances for level Medicaid funding; they are preparing their finances for massive cuts. So that is just the truth of the matter.

With respect to the Weather Service, 600 employees are gone. They were driven out by Elon Musk and his little

minions, and there are vacancies in meteorological, hydrological, and weather forecasting positions as a result. That is just another fact.

And, last of all, my colleague from Wisconsin's view of what is happening with climate change is certainly entertaining in certain circles. But if you want to take a look at what is real, you might want to consider going to the universities in Wisconsin—like the quite renown University of Wisconsin—to see that legitimate climate science is what is taught in Wisconsin's own universities, not the entertaining version that we just heard here on the Senate floor, but the real stuff, taught by the people who really know to students who want to know what the truth is. That is the choice Wisconsin made in its universities. They teach the real stuff, and there is no way you can reconcile the real stuff with the entertaining version of climate that we just heard from the distinguished Senator from Wisconsin.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

WASHINGTON WILDFIRES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today with a very heavy heart because, right now, huge swaths of my State are being confronted by some of the worst fires that we have ever seen. This weekend, three fast-moving wildfires exploded across Spokane County.

In a matter of hours, entire neighborhoods were told: Leave now. This may be your only notice. Over 65,000 people I represent have been forced to evacuate their homes. At least 700 homes, businesses, and buildings have been destroyed already.

Families are sleeping in the Spokane Convention Center tonight, not knowing whether they even still have a home to go back to. And as of this morning, these fires are still not contained.

The photos and videos tell the story: Houses reduced to ash, families embracing outside the burned remains of what they once called home. It is heartbreaking. Smoke so thick over Spokane that the air itself has now become a health hazard.

To every family in Spokane and across eastern Washington who has lost a home or a business or a lifetime of memories, hear me: I promise you I am with you today, tomorrow, and for as long as it takes to rebuild.

And amid this devastation, I also want this Chamber to hear about the extraordinary courage on display in my State right now. Within hours of the evacuation orders, neighbors were opening their doors to strangers. Families who had room to spare simply said: Come stay with us. Volunteers worked through the night at the convention center, handing out blankets, serving hot meals, sitting with frightened kids. Local restaurants showed up with food for evacuees and for the fire crews who are coming off the line. Churches and community groups collected clothes

and diapers, pet food. Whatever people needed, someone in Spokane found a way to provide it.

Firefighters have been on the lines around the clock in brutal heat against dangerous winds. Local fire crews, crews from across the State, the Washington National Guard—all mobilized within hours. Incident management teams and firefighters who actually came from out of State all the way from Florida to Alaska—there are even firefighters from Australia and New Zealand—because of them, because of the sheriff's deputies and police officers who went door to door to get people out, because of the emergency managers and dispatchers and shelter volunteers, tens of thousands of people got to safety. These are real-life heroes, and, on behalf of the people of Washington State, "Thank you."

But gratitude is not enough. The people of Spokane need action, and they deserve to know their government has their back.

So here is where things stand as I see them: Our firefighters must have every resource they need to contain these fires—every aircraft, every bit of equipment, every dollar. So far our State has gotten the resources we need from the Federal Government, and I deeply appreciate that. That is how it should be.

Yesterday, I led our congressional delegation in urging the President to approve the Governor's request for an expedited emergency declaration. The President has approved part of that request; that is good, and I will be watching closely to ensure the full request is approved.

The next few days will no doubt be difficult as local fire crews do their best to try and contain these fires.

Looking ahead, it is important to say: Spokane's recovery will not be measured in days or weeks; it will be measured in months and years. Rebuilding homes, rebuilding businesses—it will take a long time, and it will not be easy.

But as vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I want the people of eastern Washington to know they have a voice in the U.S. Senate who will speak up for Spokane. I am not someone who will simply write letters to this administration asking for support. I help write the bills that fund the government across every Department and every Federal program, and I will make sure Spokane's recovery is a priority at every opportunity. There is not a single dollar I won't pursue if it means helping Spokane and communities across the State as they rebuild from these devastating fires. Whatever it takes, for as long as it takes.

Spokane has been hurt and is being badly hurt by these fires, but Spokane is not broken. A community that takes care of each other in the way we have seen cannot be broken. Spokane will rebuild; Eastern Washington will recover; and I will be standing with them every single step of the way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Ms. LUMMIS assumed the Chair.)

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MOODY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, in accordance with Public Law 99-498, Section 1505(a)(1)(B)(ii), appoints the following Senator to the Board of Trustees of the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development: The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico.

RECOGNIZING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consideration of S. Res. 830, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 830) recognizing the 80th anniversary of the Fulbright Program.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 830) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

ACCELERATING ACCESS TO CRITICAL THERAPIES FOR ALS REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2026

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 461, S. 4472.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4472) to amend the Accelerating Access to Critical Therapies for ALS Act to reauthorize the provisions of such Act through fiscal year 2031, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which