

THC can have very serious consequences for adults. It can trigger psychosis, addiction, manic episodes, bipolar relapse, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. And having assessed those risks, it makes it utterly irresponsible to turn around and put those same THC substances within reach of our kids.

It is also impacting our workforce. Able-bodied adults, they are unable to hold jobs that require them to take a drug test. Stores near military bases sell these products to men and women in the armed services, making them ineligible for military service. And that is also no accident.

I can't tell you how many times that I have sat down with a family in my office that has tragically lost a son or a daughter because they became addicted to these disguised substances, and it is just heartbreaking to witness. It is heartbreaking to have those conversations, and, yet, they keep coming to my office. We keep hearing their stories.

There are young people who no longer walk this Earth. They will never graduate. They will never go to college. They will never start a career. They will never get married. They will never have children. And they will never get the chance to experience the life that was ahead of them because these dangerous substances robbed them of their future.

And I am appalled at the well-oiled, slick lobbying machine—which is very well connected in this town, by the way—that has chosen to wage this surreptitious war against our efforts to protect American children.

So let me be clear to my colleagues. I am not going to back down on this. I am not going to waver. I am not going to stop until this life-threatening loophole is closed permanently.

And we are going to have this fight before the end of this Congress, and I can assure you that I am not going to stop fighting to protect American children.

And I have already had numerous conversations with the White House about this issue, and I am willing to have a larger conversation about marijuana. We may not agree, but I will have the conversation.

But I want to make one thing really, really clear: Making THC intoxicating substances readily accessible to our kids is an entirely different issue from the medical marijuana movement.

Today, we are talking about unregulated hemp products being sold on the shelves of nearly every corner store in America. These intoxicating substances—they are hiding in plain sight, and they are putting our kids at risk.

Parents should never have to face the fear that sending their child into a convenience store for a snack or a treat could mean that that child walks out with a product that can get them high.

And that is not too much to ask. It is just common sense. And it is our responsibility to make sure that the mil-

lions of parents that we represent—that they can trust the product sitting on store shelves, that they are safe for their kids.

I am not here to obstruct the Senate for the sake of obstruction. I am here because I have a duty to the millions of parents in North Carolina who have sent me to Washington to be their voice and, above all, to protect their children.

To every parent in North Carolina: I hear you. I stand with you. You have my word I am not going to back down, and I am not going to stop fighting until we get this right.

This is a public health crisis that deserves this Senate's immediate attention. Our children should never be the testing ground for an industry willing to exploit a loophole in Federal law for profit.

We need to strip this amendment from the continuing resolution and regulate these harmful substances for exactly what they are, not what the industry wants to call it.

So if substances cause intoxication—like marijuana—then it should be regulated as such, not given a free pass as hemp. There is no loophole worth putting a child's well-being at risk.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON SCHWARTZ NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Schwartz nomination?

Mr. BUDD. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McConnell).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0), and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 220 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Armstrong	Fischer	Moran
Banks	Graham	Moreno
Barrasso	Grassley	Murkowski
Boozman	Hagerty	Paul
Britt	Hawley	Ricketts
Budd	Hoeven	Risch
Capito	Husted	Rounds
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Kennedy	Sheehy
Cramer	Lankford	Sullivan
Crapo	Lee	Thune
Cruz	Lummis	Tillis
Curtis	Marshall	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young

NAYS—44

Alsobrooks	Bennet	Blunt Rochester
Baldwin	Blumenthal	Booker

Cantwell	King	Schiff
Coons	Lujan	Schumer
Cortez Masto	Markey	Shaheen
Duckworth	Merkley	Slotkin
Durbin	Murphy	Smith
Fetterman	Murray	Van Hollen
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Warner
Hassan	Padilla	Warnock
Heinrich	Peters	Warren
Hickenlooper	Reed	Welch
Hirono	Rosen	Whitehouse
Kelly	Sanders	Wyden
Kim	Schatz	

NOT VOTING—5

Blackburn	Johnson	McConnell
Gallego	Klobuchar	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is consider made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

S. RES. 817

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the en bloc nominations process and in opposition to almost all of these nominees.

While the en bloc process unfortunately means that I have to cast a single vote for or against all 74 nominees today, I do want to reaffirm my strong support of both Democratic nominees that were reported with unanimous approval out of the Commerce Committee, Thomas Chapman and Karen Hedlund.

Thomas Chapman was renominated to the National Transportation Safety Board. He is an industry veteran who previously served on Commerce Committee staff and has a demonstrated commitment to fact-based investigations into aviation and other transportation disasters.

Karen Hedlund was renominated to serve on the Surface Transportation Board. She has served with distinction since 2022. The Surface Transportation Board is currently evaluating the largest proposed rail merger in our Nation's history. Given her prior experience at STB and years of service at USDOT, I am confident Ms. Hedlund will continue putting the public's interest first and foremost.

While I strongly support these Democratic nominees, I have more significant concerns about other nominations in the bloc.

Unfortunately, the en bloc process means that I have to cast a single vote today. Even though I support some of the nominations in the bloc, I must stand up today to speak against the other nominations and the lack of bipartisan representation at independent agencies.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure qualified candidates from both parties are appointed in the future.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant 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 and the provisions of S. Res. 817 (119th Congress), do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Executive Calendar Nos.: 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 739, 740, 746, 747, 748, 749, 757, 759, 761, 762, 764, 766, 781, 782, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 826, 832, 834, 835, 836, 837, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 899, 900, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909 en bloc.

John Thune, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Tim Sheehy, John Barrasso, Mike Crapo, John Boozman, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Pete Ricketts, Tommy Tuberville, Alan Armstrong, Joni Ernst, Eric Schmitt, Bernie Moreno, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, John R. Curtis.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the en bloc nominations, provided for under the provisions of S. Res. 817, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH), and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGGO), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 221 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Armstrong	Fischer	Moreno
Banks	Graham	Murkowski
Barrasso	Grassley	Paul
Boozman	Hagerty	Ricketts
Britt	Hawley	Risch
Budd	Hoeben	Rounds
Capito	Husted	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Justice	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sheehy
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Cramer	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Lummis	Tillis
Cruz	Marshall	Tuberville
Curtis	McCormick	Wicker
Daines	Moody	Young
Ernst	Moran	

NAYS—44

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Lujan	Slotkin
Coons	Markey	Smith
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murphy	Warner
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Fetterman	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—6

Blackburn	Hyde-Smith	McConnell
Gallagher	Klobuchar	Warnock

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 44. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked pursuant to the provisions of S. Res. 817, the nominations listed therein are pending en bloc.

The Senator from Kansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 738

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I rise today to ask the Senate body to join me in the stopping of the funding of viral gain-of-function research.

Viral gain-of-function research is what led, of course, to the COVID virus being developed and, of course, the COVID epidemic. I think it is important to pause and stop and think why this is still important—what is it now—5 or 6 years later.

We all know we lost 1 million Americans to this COVID virus. Twenty million Americans still suffer from long COVID. Many, many Americans died alone—maybe at a nursing home, maybe in their own home. But they weren't allowed to have their own children, their spouses come visit them in those last moments of their life.

We had tens of millions of students miss their senior year of high school, their senior year of college. Maybe it was the State track meet. Maybe it was the State softball team they had been working on their whole life.

We have kids that still have learning disabilities or are lagging in their learning—specifically reading—not to mention their social interactions and their social development. This COVID virus left a huge physical, economic, and emotional scar on America.

And that is why I am asking that we stop this viral gain-of-function research. I am so proud that the President, recently, has agreed to stop the funding. I have been calling for the stopping of this since 2021 as well.

And I think it is important to realize how Anthony Fauci evaded the intentions of Congress and the rules from his own White House. Even President Obama asked him to stop doing viral gain-of-function research, but, of course, Anthony Fauci had more attorneys than Carter has pills, and they always found some loophole. Then, when they couldn't do it here, he offshored the funding of this.

Make no mistake about it, the United States was funding viral gain-of-function research for decades. This was Anthony Fauci's baby. He thought that this was his ticket to a Nobel Prize.

You know, whether you are a physician, like myself, or a mom or dad or a businessperson, a military officer, you always had to sit there and weigh the benefits and the risks of something like this.

I mean, what the benefits are, I am not sure of. You know, maybe they said

it was so that if some unknown organism appeared, that we would be able to develop a vaccine. But, of course, the downside was always the fear of risk of a virus they made in a laboratory, of it escaping.

And, of course, why wouldn't there be? Multiple times in history, viruses, microorganisms have escaped from laboratories. It is practically impossible to control it. In 1978, a smallpox virus escaped from a lab in the United Kingdom. In 2007, foot-and-mouth virus accidentally released from a United Kingdom lab. In 2014, the CDC had an anthrax issue. Again, in 2014, NIH-FDA, there were unsecured smallpox vials seen.

These mice they were doing experiments on and infecting them with these monster viruses, from time to time, escaped.

So it seems like we were set up for failure. And, again, despite scientist after scientist, President after President, warning Anthony Fauci to stop doing this research, he persisted and he persisted and he persisted, until finally COVID-19 was accidentally released from a lab in Wuhan, China. And the rest is history.

And that is why I think it is so important that we stop the funding for this once and for all. Let's codify what the President has done here and make sure—at least until someone can come to this Congress and say: Look, we have a foolproof system for keeping this in control.

But when you are making monster viruses, the worst-case scenario is probably some type of terrorism; that it would be so easy, once these are made, to be replicated and turned into a terrorist weapon—much more of a serious consequential threat to America than nuclear warheads are.

Think about this: This virus alone has exponentially been more lethal than all the years of nuclear weapons.

This bill does one simple thing: It stops Federal tax dollars from funding the kind of research that could turn a virus into a weapon—no more offshoring risks to avoid oversight, no more asking permission from the very Agencies that created the problem.

Mr. President, that is why today, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 738 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Mr. KIM. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Iowa.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 2069

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, during my 12 years in the Senate, I have exposed many outlandish examples of government waste.