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Senate

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HOUSING ACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT—Motion to Proceed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 6644, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 343, H.R. 6644, a bill to increase the supply of housing in America, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

CRIME VICTIMS FUND

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am going to refer to billions of dollars. I am not referring to billions of taxpayer dollars. I am visiting with you about billions of crime fines that are not collected.

For many years, I have addressed and pressed the Justice Department to ensure that the Crime Victims Fund has sufficient resources. That fund supports victims and survivors of crime in our hometowns and all across America. Congress established the fund to be taxpayer-neutral. Its balances are filled through criminal fines and penalties that the Justice Department collects and deposits in that Crime Victims Fund.

Last Congress, my oversight revealed that the Biden Justice Department failed to collect and deposit more than \$1 billion in fines and penalties. The Biden-Harris administration was weak on crime and weak on protecting victims. Since my oversight, the balance of the fund has increased from \$1 billion in 2023—the lowest in over a decade—to its current balance of \$3.5 billion.

Last April, this Senator, along with Senators ERNST, CRAPO, and RISCH, sent a letter to the Justice Department. In that letter, we urged the Justice Department to avoid the failures

of the Biden administration. In June 2025, the Justice Department updated its policies to prioritize vindicating the rights of victims. It is a step in the right direction.

According to the Department of Justice statistics, at the end of fiscal year 2024, the Department identified over \$10 billion in outstanding criminal fines and penalties that remain uncollected. That money could help many victims and survivors of crime.

On February 11 of this year, I, along with Senators COLLINS, ERNST, CRAPO, and RISCH, wrote to the Justice Department about their efforts to collect that money. Our letter highlighted two main points: First, collecting the money would hold criminals accountable. Second, collecting the money would provide a substantial boost to the Crime Victims Fund.

We Senators urged the Justice Department in our letter to prioritize collecting these funds and to keep our offices updated on how those efforts to collect that money go. I look forward to hearing from the current Department of Justice about the status of these efforts so we can make sure that victims of crime are benefited from the bad aspects of criminal activity.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call in relation to the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 343, H.R. 6644.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let's pray.

Mighty God, we do not even know what tomorrow holds, but we know You hold tomorrow. In these turbulent times for our Nation and world, our eyes are on You.

As our lawmakers attempt to protect, defend, and declare as it relates to their constitutional responsibilities, grant them wisdom, courage, and faith for the living of these days. Lord, keep them within the circle of Your prevailing providence.

We pray for our brave military personnel who are willing to give the last full measure of devotion to pay the price for freedom. Lord, we pray for their families who are following the news of their loved ones experiencing the ferocity of combat.

Remind us all once more that Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUDD). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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IRAN

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, over the weekend, American forces took action against the longtime threat posed by the mullahs in Tehran.

For decades, Iran has fomented terror throughout the Middle East, endangering U.S. servicemembers, U.S. citizens and personnel in the region, and many of our allies.

In addition, Iran has relentlessly pursued the development of its own nuclear program, despite repeated violations identified by the international atomic watchdog, the IAEA.

Iran is also aggressively growing the range and inventory of its ballistic missiles and launchers, an inventory that is already the largest in the region. Combine that with a Navy that aims to threaten a key shipping channel, and it is clear that Iran poses a serious risk to America's national security interests, as well as those of our allies and partners.

President Trump and his administration relentlessly pursued a diplomatic solution to the threat posed by Iran, but the Iranian regime refused diplomatic off-ramps, so now the President is taking action.

My prayers are for the success of the mission and, above all, for the safety of U.S. personnel in harm's way. Four U.S. servicemembers have lost their lives as a result of Iranian attacks. My thoughts and prayers today are with their families and loved ones and with their fellow servicemembers.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. President, ask a group of people what they think of when they think of the American dream, and home ownership is pretty likely to come up: a house, a neighborhood, a yard for the kids or pet to play. Getting the keys to a place of your own, that is a part of the American dream for a lot of Americans, but it is a part of the American dream that has been out of reach for many.

A lot of Americans, particularly younger Americans, are simply being priced out of the housing market. Home prices have risen sharply in the past few years, surging roughly 50 percent since the pandemic, according to the New York Times.

A 2025 report from the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard reported:

The US median existing single-family home price hit a new high of \$412,500 in 2024, according to the National Association of Realtors. . . . This is a shocking five times the median household income and significantly above the price-to-income ratio of 3 that traditionally has been considered affordable.

With numbers like these, it is no wonder that the age of first-time home buyers has risen sharply as well—to an alltime high of age 40.

The American people have been through a lot over the last few years, notably the historic inflation crisis that defined the Biden administration. And since we took office last January, Republicans' priority here in Congress

has been easing the burden on hard-working Americans.

That started with preventing a massive \$2.6 trillion tax hike that was scheduled to hit Americans making less than \$400,000 a year. And it continued with a slew of new tax relief for hard-working Americans in the Working Families Tax Cuts, which Republicans passed last summer. There is nothing like having more money in your pocket to make it a little easier to deal with financial challenges and unexpected bills.

In January of this year, we took aim at healthcare costs with a bill that included multiple measures to lower the price of prescription drugs at the pharmacy counter. And this week, we are tackling the challenges of home ownership and beginning work on the most significant housing bill in a decade or more.

The ROAD to Housing Act, the product of extensive work from the Senate Banking Committee, particularly from its chairman TIM SCOTT, packages together a number of bills focused on lowering housing costs and increasing housing supply, and it takes aim at these goals in multiple ways.

One primary focus of the bill is removing unnecessary regulatory barriers that drive up the costs of housing or complicate construction. The bill's Housing Supply Expansion Act, for example, which is the product of Senators BRITT, TILLIS, CRAPO, and others, removes the outdated chassis requirement for manufactured housing. This will not only lower the cost of manufactured homes, but it will also allow for more innovation in the manufactured home design process, such as two-story houses.

Manufactured homes are already substantially less expensive than site-built dwellings, and removing the outdated chassis rule will further increase their affordability and create more manufacturing options that suit more families. And that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Senator ROUNDS has multiple bills in the ROAD to Housing Act that will increase supply by streamlining the environmental review process. The Choice in Affordable Housing Act—the work of Senators CRAMER, SULLIVAN, MORAN, and CURTIS, as well as others, will streamline inspection requirements for affordable homes financed by multiple government programs.

And I could go on. There are a lot more measures in the ROAD to Housing Act to eliminate or streamline regulations. And with regulations accounting for around 25 percent of the costs of constructing a single-family dwelling and for roughly 40 percent of the costs of multifamily projects, anything we can do to streamline and simplify can go a long way toward making housing more affordable.

But the ROAD to Housing Act does a lot more than simply targeting unnecessary regulations. The act is also designed to unleash private sector investment in more affordable homes. ROAD

Act legislation from Senators SCOTT, MORENO, MCCORMICK, CASSIDY, and CRAPO, for example, will increase the statutory cap that limits banks' ability to invest in more affordable housing and other community development projects.

The Build Now Act from Senator KENNEDY creates a pilot program to incentivize a wide variety of housing development in communities that participate in the Federal Community Development Block Grant Program.

There is a lot more in the ROAD to Housing Act than I can discuss in one speech. There is much more I could say on the way these bills will streamline regulation and unleash investment, and I haven't even mentioned the bill's provisions to help veterans or increase the supply of housing in rural communities or help Americans living in government-assisted housing build the savings that they need for home ownership.

There is a lot in this bill. And I want to extend my thanks to Banking Committee Chairman SCOTT and Ranking Member ELIZABETH WARREN for putting in the work to assemble so many good pieces of legislation and to get the final product to the floor.

The ROAD to Housing Act doesn't spend a single taxpayer dollar. But by removing barriers to affordable housing construction and unleashing investment, this bill stands to open the door to affordable homes for hard-working Americans around the country. I look forward to passing this legislation in the very near future.

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.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

IRAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Well, Mr. President, today the Senate grieves the deaths of four U.S. servicemembers who were killed in action this weekend. We hold their families in our hearts; we pray for all American families who have loved ones serving right now in uniform; and we pray for everyone across the Middle East who are right now in harm's way—many who have relatives here in America, including relatives who have fled the regime in Iran and all who are worried for their families and friends back home across the region.

Today, many Americans across the country and across the political spectrum are wondering: Why are our troops back in conflict in the Middle East? That is what Americans are wondering: Why has Donald Trump started a new war with Iran?

Let me be clear. I will not shed a tear for Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader

of Iran who was killed in the initial rounds of airstrikes over the weekend. For decades, Khamenei sponsored terrorist attacks against American troops. He called for the destruction of Israel and America. And under his rule, the people of Iran have suffered immensely.

But no matter how you feel about the Iranian regime, we stand at a dangerous moment for our troops and for the Middle East and even, perhaps, for the world. Donald Trump has just launched America into a full-scale conflict against one of our most fervent adversaries without a plan, without an endgame, and without authorization from Congress or even a debate in full view of the American people. The consequences are already mounting. As I have said, four American servicemembers have been killed, several others have been wounded, and the President says many more casualties are likely to come.

This is not what the American people want. The American people want more effective action to address the rising costs that are crushing them. They want more access to affordable healthcare and to buy homes and to get good-paying jobs. They don't want a war that leads to lost American lives and that costs billions and billions of taxpayer dollars. They don't want a war that raises the price of gas at the pump.

Make no mistake about it, this is a war of choice, not necessity. And regardless of whether you are a Democrat or a Republican or an Independent or even if you don't pay attention to politics, there is one thing almost everyone agrees on: We are sick and tired of endless wars in the Middle East. And there is real danger that this is the road we are on right now.

Americans are sick of Donald Trump paying so much attention to military escapades while costs keep going up here at home—Venezuela, Somalia, Iran, and on and on. Where is Donald Trump going to strike tomorrow? He is one of the most trigger-happy Presidents in all of American history.

Donald Trump ran for office on the promise to wind down America's endless wars. What he is doing is exactly—exactly—the opposite. He is picking military fights all over the world and not taking care of business here at home. One year into office, Donald Trump has broken his promise to end forever wars again and again and again, from Venezuela to threats against Greenland to, now, a new war with Iran.

Congress must act to rein in Donald Trump's belligerence. Very soon, the Senate will vote on a bipartisan War Powers Resolution I am leading with Senators KAINE and SCHIFF and PAUL. Our resolution affirms what the Constitution already says: The President cannot send U.S. forces to fight a war in Iran without congressional approval. As soon as our resolution comes to the floor, Senators need to pick a side:

Stand with Americans who don't want war, or stand with Donald Trump as he singlehandedly starts another war.

I urge my colleagues to support our resolution. The American people will be watching how Senators vote, and they will remember those whose thumbs pointed yea and whose thumbs pointed nay.

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.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, over the weekend, President Trump launched a military attack on Iran. While there has been bipartisan backing for stopping Iran's development of nuclear weapons for many years and its support for regional terrorist proxies to also come to an end, there is no consensus in America for another interminable war in the Middle East.

A war in Iran could create another long-term military commitment with deadly consequences. Already, we see the tragic death of four U.S. servicemembers and serious injury of others, as well as attacks in nine countries around the region.

The impulsiveness of President Trump, particularly without congressional approval on matters of war, is of further concern. Article I, section 8 of the Constitution says the American people should make this decision through their elected Members of Congress. The power to declare war in our Constitution is an explicit power of Congress.

I think back to a statement made on the floor by my colleague and friend Senator TIM KAINE when he discussed this section of the Constitution. He made note of the fact that the person who was leading that discussion at the time was George Washington, the most famous general in the history of the United States, a military leader whose prowess brought us to this moment of opportunity in history.

And yet, here was George Washington at the Constitutional Convention, endorsing a document which said, when it came to the decisions of war, it was beyond the President; it was for the American people to make through Congress.

Under the law, the President—Congress overwhelmingly affirmed this provision when it passed the War Powers Act of 1973, over the veto of President Nixon. I remember that era very well. It was the controversy of the Vietnam war and the decision of Congress to stand firm on the proposition that the Constitution would prevail and that Congress would ultimately make the decision.

President Nixon challenged that decision by Congress, vetoed the bill, and

the Congress rallied enough troops—congressional troops, that is—when it came to Democrats and Republicans, to override President Nixon's veto of the War Powers Act.

There are many critics of the War Powers Act today. I am not one of them. Certainly, it can be improved, but it came at a time in our history when Congress stood up as an institution and said to the President: You are wrong. You are asking for more power than the Constitution gives you.

Under the War Powers Act, the President has the authority to approve military attacks as it responds to an imminent threat or with the expressed authorization of Congress. Neither of those things apply in the situation today with Iran.

Let me be clear: The Iranian regime sponsors terrorism, wants to destroy Israel, and undermines U.S. interests. They have pursued nuclear weapons, and they are guilty of brutal repression of their people.

These issues are troubling, but they don't result in our ignoring the Constitution. They shouldn't.

I support Senator KAINE's War Powers Resolution requiring congressional approval for any further war with Iran. Our Founders were very wise with this point: One should never send our sons and daughters into war without the consent of the people.

I have made this argument throughout my congressional career, regardless of whether the occupant of the White House was a Democrat or a Republican.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. President, on a separate topic, tomorrow, the Senate Judiciary Committee will convene an oversight hearing where it will finally hear from DHS Secretary Kristi Noem. We have seen her on television. We have seen her on Capitol Hill. We have never seen her officially in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Tomorrow will be the first time.

I want to thank Chairman GRASSLEY for holding onto the hearing after months and months of stonewalling by the Secretary. She said she was just too busy to come and appear before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

When I was chair of that committee, I restored the longstanding tradition of regular oversight hearings with the DHS Secretary because holding the executive branch accountable is one of our constitutional responsibilities.

Under Secretary Noem's leadership, DHS is operating without a moral compass or any respect for the rule of law. Tomorrow, she must answer for this recklessness.

The administration has claimed that it is targeting the "worst of the worst." But DHS's own data shows that during the President's first year back in office, fewer than 14 percent of those arrested had charges or convictions for violent offenses.

Think of that. This is supposed to be an effort to stop deadly, criminal, illegal aliens—immigrants—in this country, and yet when we look at the record

of the ICE operation and DHS, in this current scene, what we find is that six out of seven people detained and arrested by this effort have no criminal record—six out of seven—including many who have been American citizens swept up in this paramilitary operation.

Here is the reality: The administration has not backed down from Stephen Miller's arbitrary quota of 3,000 arrests a day. A number like that cannot be met if you focus on stopping the "worst of the worst" living in the United States.

To meet that number, ICE is casting a wider net, sweeping up American citizens, people with legal status, Dreamers—DACA—and people with no criminal record—people who built their lives and raised their children here, becoming valued members of our communities.

The administration says it is going after the gangsters. They are going after the gardeners. Let's call this for what it is—political theater and deliberate cruelty intended to terrorize our communities.

My home State of Illinois saw it play out in the streets with dangerous consequences.

Last month, I met Marimar Martinez, a U.S. citizen and a teacher in a Montessori school in Chicago. On a Saturday morning in October, she was taking a load of clothes to her local church to share with people who needed them. She was stopped on Kedzie Avenue. During a Capitol Hill spotlight hearing, she told us the story of what happened next.

She didn't do anything provocative, and ICE agents turned their weapons on her and shot her five times—five times. Miraculously, she survived, but the agent involved in shooting her bragged about shooting her and covering up the evidence in his post to his friends.

The administration brought trumped-up charges against her. And what happened several weeks later? They dropped all the charges. After shooting this innocent woman five times in the streets of Chicago, saying that she was a domestic terrorist, they dropped every charge against her in the weeks that followed.

Judges appointed by both political parties have ruled against the government in thousands of cases, challenging detention of immigrants after these aggressive, many times unnecessary, enforcement options. But the administration continues to violate hundreds of court orders.

The American people are sick and tired of seeing this campaign of terror and lawlessness unfold before our very eyes. That is why Senate Democrats have drawn a hard line in the DHS funding negotiations, demanding commonsense, basic police reforms to rein in ICE's lawlessness.

These reforms include removing the masks, displaying identification, stopping roving patrols, obtaining judicial

warrants to enter private homes, and following the same use-of-force standards that law enforcement agencies across America already follow.

Tomorrow, Secretary Noem will finally come in before the Senate Judiciary Committee and answer for what happened on her watch. Believe me, she has a lot to answer for. Under her leadership, DHS has become President Trump's de facto paramilitary force, an Agency determined to violate court orders, lie to the American people, disregard our amendments and the Bill of Rights, and racially profile immigrants and U.S. citizens alike with the Kavanaugh stops.

The American people are demanding answers. It is the duty of the Senate Judiciary Committee to ask these important questions. My Democratic colleagues and I intend to do just that.

I yield the floor.

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

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

IRAN

Mr. KIM. Madam President, I rise today to give voice to the American people. It is the American people who have had their sons and daughters sent to war. It is the American people who will worry and sacrifice and suffer because of the decision made with little regard for them. It is the American people who deserve to have a say when we send our servicemembers into harm's way. It is the American people whose voice has not been listened to as we woke up yet again this weekend to a new war in the Middle East.

I am proud to stand with my colleagues and cosponsor this resolution. This isn't just a resolution that pits one branch of government against another. Yes, Congress has a constitutional responsibility to declare war, which is what the President called this—in his own words, he said that this was a war—but Congress has a deeper responsibility to speak on behalf of the American people. We are here to speak on behalf of the American people because the Trump administration hasn't been listening to them.

I was a college student a generation ago when our country invaded Iraq. In the weeks before the invasion, George W. Bush delivered a State of the Union Address where he said—falsely—that Iraq was hiding efforts to produce weapons of mass destruction, and he spoke about proving America's "resolve."

Less than a week ago, President Trump came here to the Capitol to deliver his State of the Union Address. He made little effort to make a case to the American people of the need for a military operation in Iran—just a few words in the longest ever State of the Union Address—but he did speak about proving America's "resolve."

We have seen this before. A President manufactures an imminent threat,

chooses to start a war with unclear objectives, and uses America's resolve as an excuse for war without end because they have no plan to end it.

But unlike 2003, President Trump refused to make the case to the American people. Right in his State of the Union Address, he refused to make the case. And he refuses to seek approval from Congress for the use of military force, as President Bush did in 2003.

I believe that this is unacceptable. More importantly, the American people believe it too.

A week and a half ago, with rumors of war circulating, I held a townhall in Asbury Park, NJ, and I asked the people there: Raise your hand if you want Donald Trump to order an attack on Iran.

Nobody did.

I asked them—a couple hundred people were in attendance—to raise their hand if they believed the American people should have a say in any decision that sends American sons and daughters into harm's way in Iran.

Everyone's hand went up.

Before being elected to Congress, I spent much of my career in national security—at the Pentagon, in Afghanistan, Iraq, in the White House National Security Council—working on countering Iranian terrorism. I know that the threat from Iran demands a serious approach, and I know that the approach this administration is taking is not a serious one and is risking long-term damage to the United States and its interests, not to mention the short-term harm and tragedy that we have seen as now the death toll of American servicemembers is up to six.

President Trump and his administration made no serious attempt to find a diplomatic solution to the threat Iran posed to the world. He sent negotiators who are already tasked with negotiating with Russia and Ukraine, with Israel and Palestine. Avoiding war through diplomacy cannot be a part-time job. He took no real steps to bring our allies and partners into the effort that could create a safer world without the use of military force.

President Trump had no meaningful strategy for pressuring Iran through sanctions that actually targeted the regime, not the Iranian people.

Donald Trump's administration and the Republicans in this Congress have actively cut programs, like internet freedom efforts, that undermined Iranians who were speaking out in their own attempts to bring freedom and stability to the country.

While failing to pursue a more sustainable solution, President Trump planned to put Americans in harm's way with this military operation. That is where the planning clearly stopped.

Asked yesterday how long this war will go on for, Donald Trump said 4 weeks, then 4 to 5 weeks, while also saying "As long as we want it to."

This morning, the President refused to rule out the use of American ground troops in Iran. He said:

I don't have the yips with respect to boots on the ground.

This came after he said multiple times that he expects servicemembers to be killed in this operation.

An open-ended war isn't just antithetical to what the American people want, it is dangerous and unpredictable. We have seen this path before. Pursuing regime change can have significant unintended consequences, and there is no guarantee that what comes next will be better.

Trump's shifting of objectives raises questions about whether it will be enough and whether our military will be back at this again in just a few months, as they are today following the strikes last summer that Trump claimed obliterated the nuclear program he now calls a threat yet again.

Beyond the near term, this military operation will have lasting consequences even after the bombs stop falling. Donald Trump may think that "might makes right," but history proves him wrong. We have the benefit of a generation of time from the last time we were in this situation. Might may have led to regime change in Iraq, but it made our country less secure by doing lasting damage to America's reputation and spawning new threats while weakening our ability to engage globally. It led to more than 4,400 Americans killed. It cost our country trillions of dollars—not just in military spending but in the cost of caring for the tens of thousands of servicemembers wounded and injured during that war. It is why, in a Pew survey of recent years, 62 percent of all Americans said that the Iraq war was not worth fighting.

That number, by the way, was higher with those who fought in it. Sixty-four percent of veterans of the war said it was not worth it.

That is why it is so important that we take actions right now. Let's be clear. Donald Trump chose this war, but it was not his choice to make. It is the American people who deserve to have a say.

With this vote that we are pushing forward on, we not only have an opportunity to ensure that the voices of the American people are heard, we have an obligation to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

I urge my colleagues to join in this bipartisan effort and vote yes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I received a text just a couple of hours ago from a Connecticut serviceman, serving in the Middle East directly in harm's way, who asked me a very simple question: What is the vision of success? And I am trying to formulate for him an answer that does justice to his sacrifice, that keeps faith with his family and the tens of thousands of other service men and women whose bravery is unquestionable. Their skill is undoubtable. Bravery and skill

are not a strategy and, alone, are not a vision of success.

We have said countless times that war must be a last resort, never a first choice. Yet the administration seems to be engaging in a war of choice that is needless and reckless, conducted chaotically, and, most alarmingly, spreading and widening throughout the region. It is no longer a conflict involving only the United States and Iran or the United States and Israel with Iran; it is now a regional conflagration.

War demands precision and discipline in formulating goals and strategy, in conducting the kinetic operations that are the foundation for success. But in this war, which has been rejected while diplomacy is still within reach, the administration has failed to present the American people with a clear objective, an end game, or an exit strategy, and it shows exactly why the Founders said that the Congress should have the power to declare war.

Not only does the Congress speak for the American people, and they must be the ones to approve war, but an arbitrary and reckless use of war power is more likely when it is done by an autocrat who claims and seizes authoritarian power.

There is a discipline imposed when democracy functions, and democracy demands passage of the War Powers Act. That is the reason that I will vote for it and why I have supported it.

What is the vision of success? The President has been all over the place in his statements on Truth Social, earlier today on TV—snippets of conversation, 1 or 2 minutes long, with reporters individually. It may be deposing a regime, but so far, there has been change within the regime but no regime change. It may be stopping nuclear capacity, but the President said just last June that its capacity had been obliterated.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said just half an hour or so ago that the goal was to destroy the ballistic missile capability of Iran before they "cross the line of immunity in . . . a year or a year and a half." Crossing the line of immunity in a year or a year and a half is no imminent threat. Iran has had ballistic missiles for years and the capacity to produce them.

The simple fact is, there is no imminent threat, and my colleagues have said publicly that their intelligence briefings indicate there was no imminent threat either to the homeland or to our allies in the region that justify this attack on Iran.

The simple fact is, Donald Trump is workshopping a war. He is making it up as he goes along in real time. He is inventing and discarding and reviving objectives as though he were a child playing with a puzzle, trying to fit the pieces into a coherent whole. There is no coherent whole right now, and it ought to anger the American people that lives are put at risk, that resources are spent, that the region is now on fire without a strategy or an

explanation from the President to the American people.

Maybe most alarming, the administration continues to talk about regime change. Well, history teaches that regime change almost inevitably leads to boots on the ground and prolonged American involvement.

The simple fact is that regime change cannot be achieved at 30,000 feet. Airpower alone has never delivered regime change. It is a matter of simple common sense. Bombing cannot achieve a change in the governmental structure of a country.

The President has asked that the people of Iran rise up and change their regime. It is an invitation to slaughter innocent lives, potentially lost because of a President that seems to promise relief that he cannot or will not deliver, unless our sons and daughters in uniform are put on the ground in Iran with the burden on them in blood and years lost away from home and wounds that last long after the fighting ends.

The President has thrust our Nation into a widening war that risks almost inevitable expansion without making the case to the American people, without seeking congressional authorization, without explaining how the conflict ends, and maybe, most egregiously, without building support among the American people.

We sat in the Chamber last week for a speech lasting 108 minutes. Only 3 of those minutes were devoted to Iran and in a very cursory, superficial way. He has failed to build support from the American people because this war is against their wishes. He knows it is against their wishes because he promised he would not engage in such a war; that he would end wars, not start them; that forever wars would be an anathema. Yet that is the risk we face now, a forever war. Whether it is short or long, a war must be approved by this body.

I want to be clear, a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable. Iran's malign activities throughout the region, its support for terrorist proxies, its killing its own people, its killing Americans—this regime has blood on its hands, not just the group that was killed in the attack most recently, but the entire regime. Its destabilizing actions impose a severe danger to us and to our allies, and its terrorist proxies will continue to cause death and destruction throughout the region.

So the broad concern about this regime and the threat it imposes is well-justified. The President stopped negotiations that might have achieved the same ends that he is seeking here. And we have seen this story before, the absence of a clear end state, disregard for diplomacy, military action for regime change. The President risks repeating some of the most painful chapters in our history, conflicts that were entered with great confidence and bravado but prolonged without defined purpose or exit—unilateral action without lawful authorization. This is not how constitutional democracies decide matters

of war, and we must not underestimate our adversaries amidst this uncertainty.

Iran is weakened, but it is far from incapable. Iranian strikes have already killed six servicemembers and the President himself has said there will be more casualties. It is not a narrow engagement. It is a regional conflict touching many countries, many domains, and, potentially, many fronts.

My foremost concern is for the safety and well-being of the men and women in our Armed Forces, like the one who texted me earlier today, along with their families who are now in harm's way. I salute their bravery. I pray for their protection. But bravery is not a strategy. Hope is not a strategy. We must remember that civilians are also caught in the crossfire: Families in Iran, in Israel, across the region, these lives have been tragically changed by this widening conflict.

After 20 years of war in the Middle East, after all the lives lost, trillions spent, and promises of quick victory that stretched into years and years of sacrifice, we should be cautious, not reckless, about another potentially open-ended conflict.

Iran's pursuit of nuclear capability, its support for terrorist proxies, its repeated attack on American personnel are dangerous, destabilizing, destructive. They have armed militias across the region. They have threatened Israel's security. So we must be vigilant and resolute, but vigilance is not a strategy either. Wars are unpredictable. Vigilance does not mean impulsiveness. Vigilance requires strategy and objectives clearly defined. The Constitution is clear: Congress alone has the authority to declare war and approve it. It is a necessary part of the process.

The War Powers Act requires that the President inform and consult Congress when introducing American forces into hostile facilities. These requirements are not optional. They are not procedural niceties. They are the constitutional requirements that must be obeyed. The question is raised by many: How long will this conflict be prolonged? The simple fact is the President has said 4, 5 weeks, maybe longer, maybe shorter.

We know for sure that the President alone can't answer that question. The enemy has a vote. The enemy can prolong this war. President Trump has chosen the path of war that could lead to American men and women on the ground in Iran without explanation, without imminent threat, without clearly defined objectives. This decision carries consequences that will long outlast his Presidency. We have a duty constitutionally to act on the War Powers Act. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting it.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, this is a war of choice. It did not have to

happen. There was no imminent threat from Iran. The indications right up until the attacks were that negotiations were actually trending well. And remember, if Donald Trump hadn't pulled out of the JCPOA to begin with, Iran's nuclear program would have continued to be managed. This is the President of the United States asserting that he can do whatever he wants, wherever he wants, with the most powerful military in history at his disposal.

It is important to point out that a lot of people put Donald Trump in office because he promised to oppose forever wars. It was central to his foreign policy pitch as a candidate for over a decade. But what we have seen over the past 2 months alone is a President that is eager to use kinetic force as a first option and then figure it out from there. The challenge with the Venezuela action was that our men and women in the military and intelligence agencies executed that thing so efficiently and effectively that I think Donald Trump got it into his head: This is great. What else you got? This is great. Are we doing this in Cuba? Are we doing this in Iran? What else you got?

So he gets on an airplane, and he starts shooting the breeze with Members of the Republican Congress, and he decides in that moment on Air Force One to start a war—to start a war. In the days after capturing Nicolas Maduro, the administration offered up confusing and contradictory claims. They said the United States was going to run Venezuela indefinitely but then left most of the illegitimate Maduro regime in place.

They said American companies would go in and build the refineries, even though most of the American companies said they wanted nothing to do with it.

Maybe, most confusingly, they said the United States would control oil sales but not the revenue of those sales.

Two months later, we still don't know what their plan is. And that was easy compared to this. That was easy compared to this. There is no coherent strategy, much less an attempt to even explain it.

I want everybody to understand how unique this is in American history—maybe world history—to have a leader say: I declare war, and I will let you know why later. I am going to send Secretary Hegseth out there to say some things that are kind of indecipherable, then Secretary Rubio, certainly a better communicator, but also indecipherable. Then the President of the United States has a press conference, presumably to explain himself, and he is personally so distracted by the ballroom renovation that it makes me sound like I am some person who is so obsessed with Donald Trump that I watch MSNBC, I have an IV drip of MSNBC and TikTok to make me hate this President. But actually, that is

what he did. He took a kinetic action against another country and then when it was his time to explain why, he sort of talked a bit about it, but then he was really passionate about the curtains that he chose, about the color of the ballroom, about the jackhammers running from 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. That is his passion, and he is letting these neoconservatives run wild within his administration.

I want to make a very specific point about tomorrow's—hopefully tomorrow's—War Powers Resolution introduced by Senator KAINE and others to block the use of American forces in Iran. I will support that, of course. But make no mistake, if a War Powers Resolution is defeated, that does not constitute an authorization of the use of military force.

The way this works is that a President has some flexibility to basically take a kinetic action to use the U.S. military to protect American interests if there is an imminent threat. What do we mean by imminent threat? It is what it sounds like. They are about to attack us. And Secretary Rubio—again, very good communicator and I talk to him all the time—he said it about an hour and a half ago. He said it. The imminent threat—I want you to listen to this logic chain—the imminent threat to the United States was that Israel was going to attack Iran, and we anticipated that in retaliation, Iran was going to attack our interests, therefore, imminent threat. That is not what we mean by imminent threat. There are no bank shots when we are describing an imminent threat.

If we want to conduct a war of choice—and we have in the past—we need hearings, we need briefings, we need a proper debate, and then we need a vote on the authorization of the use of military force that is foundational to the oath of office that we took when we became U.S. Senators. This is actually not a particularly controversial point, except that we are in this very weird moment where I think the public was sort of not tracking at all that maybe the President was going to wake up one morning and go: Why don't we go to war with Iran? I will explain it to you over a period of time. I understand that his method of communication is, if nothing else, rather unconventional and meandering and contingent and that he thinks he is preserving his optionality: Maybe it will be short. Maybe it will be long. We will see what happens—all that stuff.

You can't do that with the American people. The American people are not his negotiating counterpart. They are the foundation that you need if you are going to take military action. If you are going to go to war, you need the American people behind you, and you need them to understand: Why in the heck are we doing this?

Do I think Iran is a malevolent actor in the region and even across the planet? Of course, I do. But that is not the question at hand. The question at hand

is, Why in the world are we trying to do another regime change?

Iraq, Libya, Vietnam—I don't care what you think should happen. This is a question of what is very likely to happen based on what always happens when our best designs and our extraordinary, trained, courageous military executes well. In the first couple of days, there are two things that everybody does. They correctly praise our U.S. servicemembers, and then they say—if anybody raises any objections, they go: Oh, do you want that bad guy still in power? Is that what you want?

Of course, I don't want a bad guy in power. However, the world is full of bad guys in power.

So the question at hand is not "Do I wish there were better people in charge of other countries?" but, rather, "Has it met the threshold for the U.S. Government to declare war against another country, especially in a region where we keep screwing it up?" That is not a rhetorical question.

I sound like Donald Trump a year and a half ago. He just is so fixated. I don't know if it is the ballroom or his legacy or some sort of revenge fantasy about Iran, but this man is not thinking clearly either politically or geostrategically. Geostrategically, this is a terrible decision, and he has no plan for what happens next.

His view is just like it was in Venezuela: We are going to decapitate the person we don't like. We will get a client state—not so easy in Iran, not so easy in Iran. And these things have a terrible tendency to metastasize. They really do.

After the Iraq war—my goodness—I thought there was going to be bipartisan consensus that we are not going to go into a war of choice again. Congress has a duty not just to check a reckless President but also to represent the will of the people, and the American people—left, right, and center—do not want another regime-change war in the Middle East. It is about time our President started paying attention to the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam President, we are at war once again—this time with Iran. It is a war that the President declared, incidentally, almost accidentally when he talked about the prospect of casualties among our brave servicemembers being a possible outcome—an outcome that has already, all too tragically, come to pass with the deaths of six of our troops and the grave injuries of others.

The massive size of the deployment also makes clear this is war in a real sense, in a constitutional sense—the scale of the bombing, the danger to not only our forces in the region but to all of our regional partners, the Iranian retaliation through the Persian Gulf, the closing of the Straits of Hormuz, the bombing of our bases, the bombing of ships—Iranian ships and those of our

allies. As for the length of the deployment, the President says it could be weeks—at least a month or more. He is unwilling to rule out the threat of boots on the ground—American boots on the ground. The President says he may go there.

All of this inescapably points to the fact that we are at war. We are at war once again. Once again, we are at war without an imminent threat of attack on the United States.

The President said the Iranian nuclear capability had been obliterated. That was false, but there was no evidence presented by the President that the Iranians were making a mad dash to develop the bomb, no evidence that the centrifuges were spinning out weapons-grade uranium, no evidence they were close to developing the mechanism of a bomb—none.

Despite the President's bizarre claim they were 2 weeks away from having a bomb, there is no evidence to support such a baseless, intelligence-free claim, nor is there evidence that the Iranians had developed a missile capability that could hit the United States—none. To suggest such things brings painfully to mind the false claims and the overhype of intelligence that got us into the war in Iraq.

Have we learned nothing?

We are at war once again. We are at war once again without congressional authorization. The Constitution gives Congress alone the power to declare war. That power was placed in our hands by our Founders, not by accident but by design. They feared an Executive grown too fond of warmaking. And given that now this is at least the third broad use of military force by this President, I believe the Founders' worst fears have come to pass. He is too fond of going to war to gain the oil assets of one country and to engage in the regime change of another.

Have we given up any semblance of allegiance to that part of our Constitution—the war power—even as we appear to have surrendered our other great power—the power of the purse?

Are we now a mere constitutional afterthought—not a paper tiger—indeed, not a tiger at all—unable to constrain a runaway Executive, unwilling to even demand a vote on an authorization to use force when our troops are getting killed, uncomprehending of the long-term damage we do to our system of checks and balances, of the license we are giving a future President to do as they please, to make war as they will, and be confident that Congress will not make a peep of the license we give to other powers around the world to use force, not diplomacy, in Ukraine, Taiwan, or elsewhere?

We are at war once again. We are at war once again over regime change. We have killed the Ayatollah Khamenei. Good riddance. He was a brutal dictator who slaughtered his own people and sponsored terrorism around the region for decades that claimed American lives and threatened to wipe Israel

off the map. Good riddance. Our military attack killed him and over 40 other leaders of the regime. This may have only rid the world of part of the regime, but make no mistake, this war is about regime change.

The President has urged Iranians to rise up and take control of their country. He has told them that this may be the last chance they have to do so. He has bragged that no other President has given them this opportunity.

Pete Hegseth may try to deny it, but this is what regime change is all about. And regime change is messy. Don't take my word for it. Take his, the President's—this President's—who says that regime-change wars unleash chaos. Yes, they do, and that is what this war has unleashed.

And what of the brave Iranian people, who have been urged to rise up against their rulers to bring down armed IRGC goons without having the arms themselves to do so? If they do—if they rise up—are we prepared to support them? If they are mowed down, will we come to their rescue or will we simply mourn their passing?

What is the plan? What are the contingencies? Why has the President left our country and the Iranian people in the dark? Could it be because there is no plan, and there is only hope?

Have we learned nothing from Afghanistan? Have we learned nothing from Iraq and elsewhere that it is difficult, costly, dangerous, time-consuming, and deadly to try to change a country, to try to change a culture, to build a new nation in our image or any other, and that it is impossible to do so through the dropping of bombs, the firing of missiles, even long-term occupation?

My fellow Americans, we are at war once again, and I join my fellow cosponsors of this War Powers Resolution, once again, to urge your support; to demand that this President, if he believes the threat is imminent, that war is justified, that the deaths of our troops are justified, that the expenditure of billions—not on the American people, not on their healthcare, their groceries, or their housing—is worth the cost, to come before this Congress, this Senate, the American people, and make the case for a war authorization; to make the case now before other servicemembers are killed or, if not, to cease and desist from further hostilities.

I urge a "yea" vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINÉ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MERKLEY and I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

Mr. KAINÉ. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague from California and my cosponsor on the War Powers Resolution, which will be heard within the next 48 hours or so.

I spoke on this at some length on Thursday, before the President launched the U.S. attack on Iran on Saturday morning, and I asked the question: Have we learned nothing from 25 years of war in the Middle East? Have we learned nothing? Have we learned nothing from nearly two decades-plus of war against Iraq and Afghanistan?

And I wanted to go into: What did the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan mean? Because they mean some things that should compel us to learn some lessons. And then I will talk about, at least, a couple of lessons we should learn.

In Afghanistan, 2,324 U.S. servicemembers were killed—uniformed troops and DOD civilians—and 3,917 U.S. citizens who were contractors were killed. So 6,241 people were killed—American servicemembers and contractors—and 20,913 military personnel were injured in Afghanistan. The injuries among our contractors is unknown. There was a number that it was up to 2,500 by March 2007, but we were there until 2021. So the actual number is much higher.

So 6,241 Americans were killed in Afghanistan, and as far as we know, probably more than 25,000 U.S. military personnel and contractors were injured. Afghan civilians: 46,319 Afghan civilians' deaths have been directly attributed to the war in Afghanistan.

What was the cost to the American taxpayer of the war in Afghanistan? It was \$2.3 trillion in total cost, including the interest and the future obligation for veterans care for the veterans who served so honorably.

So when I ask about "Have we learned anything in the last 25 years from the war in Afghanistan?" those 6,241 deaths, 25,000 injuries, and \$2.3 trillion should have taught us something.

Iraq: 4,598 U.S. military personnel were killed in Iraq.

I remember, early in my time as Governor, going to Iraq to visit the Virginia Guard troops who were deployed there and going to the base where somebody I went to church with, who was a State employee at our department of social services, had been killed.

So 4,598 U.S. personnel were killed, and 3,650 U.S. contractors were killed in Iraq, totaling 8,248 American servicemembers and contractors killed in Iraq. The total killed in both Iraq and Afghanistan: 14,489 Americans lost their lives. Each one of them had a name; each one of them had a family; each one of them had a life of experience; each one of them had a future that was never to be. We ought to have learned something from this.

In Iraq, 32,000 of our troops were injured, and another 10,569 contractors were injured—that should teach us something. And in the Iraqi civilian population—this was a harder one to analyze and estimate—but the estimates are somewhere between 185,000

to 208,000 Iraqi civilians were killed. And the total cost of the Iraq war, to add to the \$2.3 trillion of the war in Afghanistan, was \$2.9 trillion, and that is the military costs, plus the veterans' care.

If you add up the cost of both of these wars—the cost of the war, the cost of the veterans' care, and then the interest on the debt we incurred to pay for the war—the total cost to American taxpayers of 25 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan was nearly \$8 trillion.

Here is a statistic that stunned me: As of 2021, nearly 31,000 U.S. servicemembers and veterans who served in the 9/11 era—post-9/11 era died by suicide, four times the number of servicemembers who were killed. We should have learned something. We should have learned something.

What are the lessons that we should learn from this carnage? From 14,489 of our Americans killed, from 66,000 of our troops and contractors injured—all this civilian death, all this money, what should we learn? First, that we should not be going into a war in the Middle East, or anywhere, without a good, solid reason that has had its tires kicked and that has demonstrated that it is of a magnitude sufficient to warrant losses that could reach this scale.

So what is the reason asserted for going to war with Iran? The President has asserted many reasons: We are doing it to stop their nuclear program. But he obliterated it 6 months ago, and he had a diplomatic deal that controlled it that he tore up 7 or 8 years ago. So it is not about the nuclear program.

We want to protect Iranian protestors. But wait a minute. This President is deporting to Iran Iranian refugees living in the United States, including Iranian refugees who will be persecuted in Iran because of their religion. He doesn't care about Iranians being mistreated by the regime.

We need to go to war to stop a ballistic missile program. But the intelligence, as publicly reported, suggests that the missile program does not pose a danger to the U.S. mainland for at least a decade.

The President tweeted the other night: We should go to war with Iran—or suggested because they interfered in the 2020 election. He is blaming them because he still can't admit that he lost the—is that what we should send our sons and daughters into war for, because the President can't admit that he lost the 2020 election?

Or maybe it is about oil. What are the two nations that the President has invaded? Venezuela and Iran. Boy, they are really different nations, except there is one thing about them that is in common: They are both oil-producing nations. This President has asserted no real reason that is clear to the American public, and that is why the American public, so far, is so against this.

And then the other thing is, we shouldn't go in and run this risk with

no reasons; and even if you have a reason, you shouldn't go in without a plan. So what is the plan? The President has said it would be 2 or 3 days. The President has said it will be 5 or 6 weeks. The President said: I am not going to rule out boots on the ground. The President has said: We will bomb until we are done and then, Iranians, take over your government. That is the plan? We are going to bomb until we stop and then it is a jump ball for whoever wants to take over? That is not a plan.

It is not a plan that is well-designed when Kuwait shoots down three U.S. F-15s. Kuwait is an ally. We are working together with Kuwait. And in the opening days of this, if an ally is shooting down three U.S. F-15s because: Oh, wow, we didn't realize they were U.S. planes, what kind of a plan is that? There is no rationale, and there is no plan; and without a rationale or a plan, why would we ignore the lessons of the last 25 years?

Look, I pray, just like we all do, that the consequences of Iran will not be those that I read to you earlier: the consequences of Iraq and the consequences in Afghanistan. But Iran is a bigger nation than both with a bigger population than both and a more powerful military than both. We went into Iraq and achieved what many thought was a very prompt victory: Mission accomplished. We will be viewed as liberators. It seemed like it was smooth sailing a month in, and then 10 years later, those numbers kept racking up and racking up and racking up. To use Lincoln's words from his second inaugural address, "Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray"—that consequences of a war against Iran will not be what were the consequences of wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, but we would be foolish to stand here and say we know they will not be. We have to have the humility to acknowledge, with the fact that U.S. servicemembers have already lost their lives and been injured, that we could face serious consequences—serious consequences in the loss and death of our troops, serious consequences of instability in the region, serious consequences in rising energy prices for Americans.

Who in the world will be the chief beneficiary of energy prices going up—the cost of oil going up? I will tell you who: Vladimir Putin. Russia has an economy that is very centered on oil exports and on the prices of natural gas, and Vladimir Putin has just seen a massive surplus likely come into the Russian state treasury for a significant period of time, as long as energy prices are elevated by this war in the Middle East.

We will have this War Powers vote within the next 48 hours or so, and every Member of this body will do the most solemn thing any of us ever do: Vote on whether the United States should be at war. That sounds like an abstraction. Vote on whether we want to send our own kids—our own sons and

daughters, the most precious resource we have in this country—into a war that could end up like the wars we have just recently exited in the same region.

I pray so hard for my colleagues to exercise the judgment that this is not the right time for more war. If more war with Iran would be the answer, we have been at war with them essentially since 1953 when we toppled their democratically elected government, and it has been back and forth for 70 years—us striking them, them striking us, us striking them, them striking us. Hundreds and hundreds—thousands of people killed. If more war were the answer, we would have found it before now. It is not the answer now. I pray that my colleagues will support the War Powers Resolution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I so much appreciate the studied and thoughtful words of my colleague from Virginia, and I appreciate his leadership on the War Powers Resolution that we will be voting on, as he put it, within the next 48 hours.

My question is: Is the United States still a republic? Do we still have a Constitution that means anything? That Constitution assigns taxation authority to Congress, but this body sat idle while President Trump stole the taxation authority through his tariffs for a year. No other President even considered the possibility of stealing the power of taxation. They always came—including for tariffs—they always came to Congress because that is what the Constitution says. The responsibility is here.

The power of the purse is assigned to Congress in the Constitution. That is the defining difference between an authoritarian strongman government and a democratic republic. It is the representatives of every corner of the land coming together and designing the programs and deciding how much those programs should be funded, and it is the responsibility of the President to carry out those programs.

But this President decided not to. He canceled program after program that was authorized and funded by Congress—by law—with the words: I am canceling this program because it doesn't align with the priorities of this administration. Under our Constitution, the President doesn't get to do that, but this body sat idle allowing the President to steal the power of the purse, and yet we took an oath to the Constitution and did nothing to defend it when the President violated it.

And now the power of war. The Constitution assigns that power directly to Congress. Madison noted:

[The Executive is the branch of power most interested in war, and most prone to it. [The Constitution] has accordingly, with studied care, vested the question . . . in the legislature.

And yet President Trump just launched a war. He didn't call it a strike or a limited strike. He launched a war. He called it a war. It is a war. It was a surprise attack. I was thinking about how we felt when Japan launched a surprise attack on Hawaii. Now, we have done that to Iran. Consider that parallel. And we did it while we were in the middle of negotiations. We did it while we were saying negotiations were going very well, and yet we launched a surprise, devastating attack that the President says he will pursue for week after week until the job is done. But what is the job? There was no imminent threat to the United States of America.

Now, on the way walking over here from my office, a reporter said: Marco Rubio has clarified there was an imminent threat and that the imminent threat was that Israel was going to strike Iran and Iran would retaliate against bases in the region so we had to go to war. Are we now such an enfeebled Nation that Israel decides when we go to war? And we couldn't just say to Netanyahu: Hell no, you are not going to strike Iran. Are we, like, on the leash—we are the puppy dog on the leash held by Binyamin Netanyahu? Is that what has become of the great United States of America?

And yet, if the information that I was told on the way here, that the argument now is the imminent threat that we had to respond to was that Netanyahu was going to strike Iran and thus the risk of retaliation and thus we needed to strike Iran first, well, what about the option of telling Binyamin: Hell no, you are not going to do that. We are in the middle of negotiations that are going quite well to end the threat that Iran poses in developing nuclear weapons. And by the way, they aren't developing nuclear weapons. And by the way, we had a diplomatic path that was pretty phenomenal.

Shouldn't it always be diplomacy before war? And we had diplomacy. Diplomacy—setting out an agreement in which Iran dismantled its plutonium reactor and filled it with concrete, in which they exported all of their more highly enriched uranium outside of Iran, an agreement in which so much was removed and so many inspectors were present to make sure that there was no nuclear weapon program. But who tore up that treaty? The same man who just launched a war in violation of the Constitution of the United States.

When Madison spoke and said “the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war,” he prefaced it by saying, “The constitution supposes, what the History of all Governments demonstrates, that the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war.”

What was he talking about? He was talking about the fact that a head of state may want to write their name in history by conquering land, a head of state may want to write their name in

history by eliminating some foreign leader they don't like, and that, so often, those justifications are not in the interest of the country as a whole, and, therefore, there has to be a debate of the representatives of the country as a whole as to whether to engage in such a war. That was the wisdom, with studied care, the Founders vested in this Chamber.

I powerfully disagreed with President George W. Bush's war on Iraq. It was justified by an argument that there were weapons of mass destruction. And the inspectors in Iraq said: We will go anywhere and look at anything that you—the United States—think that there is a depot of weapons of mass destruction.

And the Bush administration said: Well, you are not looking in the right places.

And the inspectors said: We will go anywhere you want.

And the United States said: They are sneaking them out the back gate when you come in the front gate.

And the inspectors said: We will cover the back gate.

It seemed like the argument was terribly flimsy and yet possibly true, but at least George W. Bush came to Congress in the preceding year, in 2002, and said: I want an authorization for the use of military force because I am concerned about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. And there was a significant debate here, and eventually it passed in October of 2002. And that debate carried the Senate to a favorable outcome of creating an AUMF by a 77-to-23 vote.

I do not think Congress reached the right decision on that day, but at least, as the Founders intended, it was debated here in this Chamber so that one person who might want to write his name in history by conquering some other foreign leaders, changing the dynamic in the world, conquering new lands—at least such an authoritarian leader must have their ambitions tempered by this Chamber.

But there was no tempering here. There has been no debate on an authorization for use of military force, as there should have been and as the President should have requested. And I hope, had we had such a debate, we would have come to a better, wiser conclusion than our predecessors did back in 2002.

This is an extraordinarily dangerous moment for America because we have a President who has repeatedly shredded the Constitution. He shredded it on taxation powers allocated to Congress by the Constitution. He shredded it by canceling the power of the purse, assigned programs developed by Congress under the power of the purse and ending them without authorization. And now he has shredded it by going to war in Iran without an authorization for the use of military force.

So we will use the one tool we have, the War Powers Resolution, to say: Mr. President, hell, no. And we should say

“hell, no” at a minimum to say: Mr. President, if you want that power, come and put before us a proposal for the authorization for military force so that it will be properly debated in advance.

Presidents who squander the blood of our children and the wealth of our Nation should never ever be allowed to do so without the studied consent of Congress to address an extraordinarily dangerous situation.

Think about how many people died in Afghanistan and Iraq. Think about the 8,000 who died. How about the 50,000 who were so seriously injured. How about the \$8 trillion—blood and purse. We must vote for the War Powers Resolution to say: Hell, no, Mr. President; end this war.

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 executive 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. 343, H.R. 6644, a bill to increase the supply of housing in America, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Katie Boyd Britt, Jim Banks, John Barrasso, John R. Curtis, Kevin Cramer, Joni Ernst, Pete Ricketts, Bernie Moreno, Markwayne Mullin, Mike Crapo, Ted Budd, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, Chuck Grassley, Cindy Hyde-Smith.

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 motion to proceed to H.R. 6644, a bill to increase the supply of housing in America, and for other purposes, 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 Indiana (Mr. BANKS), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 84, nays 6, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 44 Leg.]

YEAS—84

Alsobrooks	Barrasso	Blumenthal
Baldwin	Blackburn	Blunt Rochester

Boozman	Hirono	Padilla
Britt	Hoeven	Peters
Budd	Husted	Reed
Cantwell	Hyde-Smith	Ricketts
Capito	Justice	Rosen
Cassidy	Kaine	Rounds
Collins	Kelly	Sanders
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Schatz
Cramer	Kim	Schiff
Crapo	King	Schmitt
Cruz	Klobuchar	Schumer
Curtis	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Daines	Lujan	Shaheen
Duckworth	Lummis	Sheehy
Durbin	Markey	Slotkin
Ernst	Marshall	Smith
Fischer	McConnell	Sullivan
Gallego	McCormick	Thune
Gillibrand	Merkley	Tillis
Graham	Moody	Warner
Grassley	Moran	Warren
Hagerty	Moreno	Welch
Hassan	Mullin	Whitehouse
Hawley	Murkowski	Wicker
Heinrich	Murray	Wyden
Hickenlooper	Ossoff	Young

NAYS—6

Johnson	Murphy	Tuberville
Lee	Scott (FL)	Van Hollen

ANSWERED “PRESENT”—1

Booker

NOT VOTING—9

Banks	Cornyn	Paul
Bennet	Cotton	Risch
Coons	Fetterman	Warnock

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). On this vote, the yeas are 84, the nays are 6. One Senator responded “present.”

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

AUTHORIZING THE USE OF EMANCIPATION HALL IN THE CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER FOR A CEREMONY AS PART OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE OF VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 72, which was received from the House.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 72) authorizing the use of Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center for a ceremony as part of the commemoration of the days of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust.

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

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and the motion 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 concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 72) was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

BERTA CACERES

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, today marks 10 years since the murder of Honduran environmental leader Berta Caceres. She lost her life after rallying her indigenous Lenca community to halt construction of the Agua Zarca Dam project.

Berta’s killers were hired by the corrupt DESA hydroelectric company, financed by national and international banks. Some have been convicted. All are appealing. Others remain at large, while Berta’s organization, the Council of indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras, continues to receive threats.

Throughout her life, Berta Caceres not only fought for the rights of Hondurans; she also built networks of solidarity across the hemisphere, organizing opposition against destructive policies, including the militarization of law enforcement and resource-extractive projects that harm indigenous communities and the environment.

Impunity for killings of Honduran social activists is endemic, but Berta’s case shows that accountability is possible. The new Honduran Government can demonstrate that it is committed to truth, justice, and the rule of law by ensuring that all those involved in her assassination are severely punished, as well as those responsible for the hundreds of killings of other human rights and environmental activists in that country. It should study the findings in the recent Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts’ report on Berta Caceres’ murder and publicly commit to vigorously implement its recommendations.

RECOGNIZING IDAHO OLYMPIANS

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, with my colleagues Senator JIM RISCH, Representative MIKE SIMPSON, and Representative RUSS FULCHER, I congratulate five Idaho-connected athletes who competed in the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milano-Cortina. Qualifying for Team USA is an accomplishment in and of itself, and we commend these five incredible Idahoans for their hard work and commitment that resulted in them representing our great State and country on this world stage.

Now three-time Olympian Chase Josey, of Sun Valley, competed in snowboarding in both the Olympic Winter Games in Beijing 2022, earning 7th place in the snowboard halfpipe, and he earned 6th place in the snowboard halfpipe in the Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang in 2018, before his return to the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milano-Cortina, where he earned 11th in the halfpipe. He took 5th in the halfpipe at the 2021 FIS Snowboard World Championships, and most recently 12th in this competition in 2025. Team USA notes that Chase’s father Bill taught him to snowboard at age 5