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Senate

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HOUSING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

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

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6644) to increase the supply of housing in America, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Scott (SC)/Warren Amendment No. 4308, in the nature of a substitute.

Thune (for Scott (SC)/Warren) Amendment No. 4307 (to Amendment No. 4308), to require the Comptroller General of the United States to submit to Congress studies on workforce housing, housing for persons who are elderly or disabled, proximity of housing to Superfund sites, and residential heirs property.

Thune Amendment No. 4310 (to Amendment No. 4307), to change the enactment date.

Thune Amendment No. 4311 (to the text proposed to be stricken by Amendment No. 4308), to change the enactment date.

Thune Amendment No. 4312 (to Amendment No. 4311), of a perfecting nature.

Thune motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, with instructions, Amendment No. 4313, to change the enactment date.

Thune Amendment No. 4314 (to the instructions of the motion to commit), of a perfecting nature.

Thune Amendment No. 4315 (to Amendment No. 4314), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

HONORING ARMY RESERVE SOLDIERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Last night, we received the sad news that two more Army Reserve soldiers from the 103rd

Sustainment Command, based out of Des Moines, IA, were killed in Kuwait amid Operation Epic Fury. That includes MAJ Jeffrey O'Brien, who is from Indianola, and he has family in Waukee, IA.

Their heroism should be remembered forever. These soldiers represent the best of Iowa and the best of the United States. We should never forget their sacrifice and their service. Barbara and I are praying for their loved ones in this time of grief, and we also pray for the safety of all soldiers serving in harm's way.

H.R. 6644

Mr. President, on another matter, before the U.S. Senate now is what we call a housing bill.

Every year, as I travel to all of Iowa's 99 counties, I do that to connect with constituents and to understand Iowans' needs of their various communities across our State. Whether the community I visit is large, small, or rural, all regularly express concerns with the lack of affordable housing. So you can understand why I am excited that the Senate, after a long period of time, is finally working to pass the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act.

I want to emphasize that this is the most significant housing package to be considered by Congress in decades. This bipartisan bill includes a wide range of proposals focused on increasing housing supply by cutting redtape and unlocking private capital. It updates Federal housing laws and empowers communities to address local housing needs. Most importantly, it includes—this is most important because Iowa is a rural State—the bill includes key reforms to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural housing service programs that will preserve and expand affordable housing operations in Iowa's rural communities and throughout rural United States.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, Your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature. Make us always thankful for Your prevailing providence, matchless wisdom, and precious love. Enable us to remember the account we must one day give to You.

Lord, empower the Members of this body to be faithful stewards of Your good gifts. May they use their influence and power to bring glory to Your Name in all the Earth. Inspire them to live lives that provide exemplary models of excellence, integrity, and faith for others to follow.

And Lord, protect our military people in harm's way.

We pray in Your strong 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. MULLIN). 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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CORRECTION

S855

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 order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO CLAUDIA KOSTEL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin today, I would like to take a moment to honor Claudia Kostel, the Senate's chief counsel for employment, who is retiring this month after serving this institution for more than 25 years.

Senators may get the limelight, but we wouldn't last a day without our staffs, and they also wouldn't last a day without the many institutional staff who keep the Senate functioning—people like Claudia.

For more than 25 years, Claudia has provided Senators and staff alike with counsel on employment and labor law. She is known for providing scrupulously nonpartisan, high-quality legal advice and for maintaining the highest standards for her own work and that of her office.

She is also known as a mentor to—and an advocate for—her employees and is the kind of leader who, in the words of one staffer, “never asks others to do what she is not willing to do.”

And in addition to providing the highest quality legal advice, she also keeps writing standards high, with one coworker noting:

She never met a draft she couldn't make tighter or a brief she couldn't shorten.

As I said, Claudia has served the Senate for more than 25 years. Only the second chief counsel for employment in the Senate's history, she served under seven Secretaries of the Senate and has been witness to a lot of history. It is hard to overstate the value of that.

She doesn't just bring legal acumen and a commitment to excellence; she also brings a tremendous amount of institutional memory and institutional knowledge. We are lucky to have public servants like her who are willing to dedicate so much of their working life to this institution.

Claudia, my warmest congratulations on your retirement, and thank you for your service.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. President, it is another Thursday here in the Senate, and it should be just another payday for employees at the Department of Homeland Security, but thanks to Democrats' shutdown, a lot of DHS employees are only receiving a partial paycheck today. Democrats will have an opportunity to fix that this afternoon.

Republicans will again try to pass legislation to fund DHS so employees can get paid and DHS can operate at full capacity, but I suspect Democrats will once again oppose this common-

sense measure. And having kept DHS shut down now for 3 weeks and counting, Democrats will once again leave Washington today and head to the airport, where they will walk past some of the 50,000 TSA agents who are missing part of their pay because of Senate Democrats.

One TSA agent told CNN recently, “You're going to see TSA officers in the food bank lines in a couple of days,” and he noted that several of his colleagues have taken out payday loans.

And it is not just the TSA. Civilian Coast Guard employees, FEMA employees, cyber security professionals, and others are missing pay because of Democrats' shutdown.

Like Democrats' first shutdown, a few months ago, this shutdown is causing a lot of financial stress, uncertainty, and pain for hard-working Americans. It is also making it harder for those working to keep America safe.

Right now, less than half of the Americans who work for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency are on the job. Think about that. The rest have been furloughed, and the Agency has had to cancel vulnerability checks on certain infrastructure.

Now, you would think that that might raise some concern among Democrats, especially given the current threat environment, but, apparently, it doesn't.

The FEMA GO system, which is how State and local governments and other grantees access funding that they have been awarded, is offline. So grantees can't access the funds that they need for critical programs in their communities.

Officials report that the Disaster Relief Fund is being “rapidly depleted,” which jeopardizes our ability to support disaster recovery efforts and respond to future emergencies. And a number of American cities that are hosting World Cup games, in a few months, are concerned about funding for security preparations being frozen due to Democrats' shutdown.

This is the second time in 6 months that Democrats have subjected thousands of workers to the pain and uncertainty of a government shutdown, and like their record-setting 43-day shutdown in the fall, this DHS shutdown is entirely unnecessary.

Just to review, we had a bipartisan agreement in January that included deescalation training for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as well as \$20 million for body cameras for ICE officers. When Democrats decided that wasn't enough, Republicans and the White House agreed to reopen negotiations. We understood that negotiations take time, and we wanted to ensure that Federal employees would not be impacted by this ongoing work. So we suggested a temporary funding extension for several weeks to allow the negotiations to continue. Democrats in-

sisted on no more than 2—2—weeks, and when those 2 weeks came and went without an agreement, we tried to get another temporary extension through. Again, Democrats blocked it.

Here we are, 3 weeks later, and Democrats, apparently, don't care that a whole lot of Federal employees are working without pay—Federal employees, I might add, who have nothing to do—nothing to do—with immigration enforcement—FEMA, TSA, cyber security offices.

Let's be clear. This is not some principled stand by Democrats in the face of a refusal to negotiate—not at all. Republicans are at the table and have been now for weeks. The White House sent a very serious offer to Democrats almost a week ago. It is Democrats who don't seem to be interested in reaching an agreement.

In fact, from where I stand, it is looking a lot like Democrats just want to keep this alive as a political issue. If Democrats were really interested in putting reforms in place, they would be doing everything they can to get a bill, but they are not. They are interested in politics, not policy.

And if public safety ends up suffering as a result of their decision to shut down the Department of Homeland Security, if hard-working Americans have to go without paychecks, well, apparently, that is just fine with Senate Democrats.

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. 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.

FOOD COSTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I just came back from an event at the National Press Club, hosted by the American Economic Liberties Project, on the plague of high food costs that are maddening to so many Americans. People are fed up.

Donald Trump promised to bring food costs down, and instead, they have gone up.

Last month, the Secretary of Agriculture said:

It can cost around \$3 a meal for a piece of chicken, a piece of broccoli, a corn tortilla, and one other thing.

This is nonsense. So this morning, as part of Democrats' lowering costs agenda, I was proud to join my colleagues to introduce the Family Grocery and Farmer Relief Act.

There are many reasons why food costs have risen, including Trump's tariffs, including supply chain problems, but there is a deeper structural problem under the surface too—monopoly power.

A handful of powerful corporations have turned food and farming into a rigged game. Today, only four companies control 85 percent of the market for beef, 67 percent of the market for pork, and 60 percent of the market for poultry. When so much market power is concentrated within so few corporations, Americans at the grocery store see prices go up while farmers see their profits go down, and corporate players have free reign to rig the system.

Today, a pound of ground beef is more expensive than ever at \$7 a pound. The price of beef in general has risen 16 percent in just a year, to \$6 a pound. This is not sustainable.

So my bill rests on a simple idea: To lower costs, we need more competition, and to create more competition, we have to break the stranglehold of these monopoly corporations. We have done it before; we can do it again. Fighting monopoly power is a tried-and-true tradition in the American ethos of progress.

Over 120 years ago, Upton Sinclair published "The Jungle," and it opened the eyes of the Nation to working conditions in meatpacking plants and to the awful monopoly powers that dominated the industry.

Soon after, the FTC was created—the Federal Trade Commission—to investigate monopolies and anti-competitive behavior that raised prices and made it harder for small and medium businesses to compete and thrive.

A few years after that, the Congress responded to these findings by passing the Packers and Stockyards Act, which curbed the power of the meatpacking giants and gave the Federal Government tools to restore competition and protect producers.

Well, history is repeating itself. Those monopolies are dominating the food industry—and particularly the meat industry—as they did 120 years ago, and we should follow the path that occurred back then when we curbed the power of monopolies. We have to do the same in our day and age, and history gives us a great example.

Americans love the free market and open competition, but they don't love it when just one or two companies can dominate an industry and make fair competition impossible. That is not American. That is not a free market. That is how costs go up for something as basic as a pound of ground beef.

Our bill will break the monopoly power that has played a sinister role in raising the prices of beef and groceries, and I thank my colleagues who have joined in this legislation.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS TO S. 4007

I will ask unanimous consent to add the list of cosponsors. It keeps growing.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Joining Leader SCHUMER are the following members:

Cosponsors: BOOKER, WELCH, WARREN, SANDERS, GALLEGO, MERKLEY, SCHATZ, DURBIN, MARKEY, KIM, MURPHY, and WHITEHOUSE.

TARIFF REFUNDS

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on tariff refunds, yesterday, a Federal judge sent the Trump administration a very clear message: Mr. President, refund the tariffs.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling invalidating a large portion of the President's tariffs, the U.S. Court of International Trade in New York said yesterday that importers are entitled to refunds. But let's be very clear: The people who deserve a refund from Donald Trump's trade war are American households and small businesses, not large corporations.

When the tariffs hit, large companies often passed the buck over to their customers. They are the ones—the customers are the ones who are owed the refund. So today, Senator WYDEN and I are calling on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to tell their members to pass savings of any tariff refunds to American consumers. If any refunds happen, large companies should not keep them but, rather, pass them back to consumers.

It is simple fairness that the financial burden borne by small businesses and working people should not become a windfall for large corporations' balance sheets. American consumers and small businesses didn't choose this trade war and therefore should not have to pay for this trade war. They are owed a refund. They need to be made whole.

I am glad that some companies have already announced they will pass refunds over to customers, and I urge the Chamber of Commerce to push more of their members to do the same.

IRAN

Mr. President, finally, on Iran, yesterday was a disappointing and low moment for the U.S. Senate. With war in the Middle East escalating by the day, Senate Republicans chose to get behind Trump's military escapades despite overwhelming opposition from the American people. Shameful. Americans don't want war—not Republican voters, not Independents, not even many of Donald Trump's MAGA base. They feel betrayed by what is happening in the Middle East, and they feel betrayed by the Senators in this Chamber who refuse to stand up for the Constitution and refuse to put a check on Donald Trump's belligerence.

The war is widening. There was fighting as far south as the Indian Ocean and drone attacks, perhaps as far north as Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, there is no strategy. Donald Trump's story and rationales keep changing by the day.

If you listen to Pete Hegseth, to Marco Rubio, to Donald Trump, it is very, very obvious they are making it up as they go along, and Americans are worried. Gas prices are starting to go up. The national average is now \$3.25 a gallon, up from \$2.99 from a week ago.

There is a story in POLITICO from this morning that Susie Wiles, Donald Trump's Chief of Staff, is "[sounding] the alarm on gas prices." Apparently,

the White House is scrambling to find something positive to say about gas prices to change the narrative of high costs. Here is an idea: If Donald Trump doesn't want gas prices to go up, he should not have unilaterally started a war with Iran. It is yet another sign that this administration seems allergic to having a plan and thinking about the consequences in advance.

So shame—shame on Senate Republicans for not standing up to Donald Trump and his unpopular war. Senate Republicans had their chance to do something that would have been overwhelmingly popular—to say no to Trump's war. Instead, they enthusiastically said yes, and now they own this war with Iran just as much as Donald Trump does.

TRIBUTE TO CLAUDIA KOSTEL

Mr. President, finally, a farewell. Today, the Senate bids farewell and offers our deep thanks to Claudia Kostel, who leads the Office of the Senate Chief Counsel for Employment and who has served this institution with distinction since 2000. After more than 26 years, Claudia will be moving on to her next adventure. The Senate is lucky to have had someone of her caliber for so long.

Claudia earned her law degree from the College of William & Mary. She has briefed cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and before the Third, Tenth, and DC Circuits.

In the Senate, Claudia is only the second person ever to have served as chief counsel for employment. In that role, she has provided exceptional legal advice and counsel to Senate offices and to Senate employees. She has served with excellence, fairness, and an unwavering commitment to this institution.

We hope this next chapter affords Claudia perhaps a little more time—time to ride her bike along the Mount Vernon Trail, time to put her legendary baking skills to even greater use, and most importantly, time with her family.

Claudia, thank you for your service to the Senate. We wish you the very best.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today having just listened to the minority leader talk about a number of topics. What he didn't talk about is the fact that his party has shut down the Department of Homeland Security.

There is a poll that is out by Gallup, and it says: What is very important in terms of U.S. foreign policy goals? And

the No. 1 thing is to prevent future acts of international terrorism.

Well, how do we prevent it? Who is it in this country that counters the terrorism? It is the Department of Homeland Security, which the Democrats—and they are going to have to vote again today—are likely, as they have announced, to vote to keep it shut down. That is a betrayal of the American people.

He used the word “betrayal.” To me, that is where it fits—with what actions the Democrats are likely to take today.

What is the No. 2 very important purpose of U.S. foreign policy as a goal from the Gallup poll of the American people? No. 2 is preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

So what did we hear the minority leader talk about? His opposition to the efforts to show peace through strength and undermine the ability of Iran to develop and use and deploy nuclear weapons. Once again, a betrayal by the Democrats of the American people.

Today, the Senate is going to vote on a bill to fund the Department of Homeland Security. This vital Department needs to be funded immediately. The Democrats have been blocking it for weeks. Protecting the American people is not optional. It is the first duty of government. For 3 weeks, the Democrats have held hostage the Department of Homeland Security. The Presiding Officer knows the reason. It is because the Democrats in this body and across the Capitol Building in the House of Representatives prioritize illegal immigrant criminals over American citizens, and they have done it repeatedly through their votes and their actions. Democrats have shut down the Department of Homeland Security because they want to end enforcement of our immigration laws and end immigration enforcement in America. They have been very clear about that. They refuse to fund the Department of Homeland Security because they want to turn America into a sanctuary country. That is where they are.

Those in this Chamber would rather oppose President Trump than protect the American people, and they have repeatedly shown it. Let me say it again: Senate Democrats would rather oppose President Trump than protect the American people. This shutdown is a cheap publicity stunt. They are doing it for the radical left, and it is, at the same time, a costly danger for our country and our citizens.

Now that America has struck Iran, the No. 1 threat to our homeland is the threat of terrorism. Last week, in Austin, TX, a lone-wolf terrorist opened fire in a crowded establishment, killing three Americans and wounding over a dozen more. The shooter was wearing a T-shirt. The T-shirt bore an Iranian flag, and it was under a sweatshirt that said “Property of Allah.”

The warning lights are flashing red. Look, we know that Iran exports its

terror abroad. They have been doing it for the last 10 years with the \$56 billion that Barack Obama and the Democrats gave to the Ayatollah 10 years ago.

For 4 years, Joe Biden and the Democrats opened the border, and we don’t know who is in our country today. When Joe Biden was in office, 1,500 illegal immigrants from Iran were arrested at the southern border. Do you know what the Democrats then did? They released half of them into the United States. This was what was known as the Democrats’ catch-and-release program. Who are they? Where are they? What are they doing today? No one knows. And these are just the people that we know about that were released into the country. Think about the thousands and thousands of “got-aways” during the time Joe Biden was President of the United States. They are in communities in all 50 States. Iran’s tentacles stretch all the way to small communities in our Nation.

Now, the Department of Homeland Security is warning law enforcement nationwide about the elevated risk and threat from lone-wolf attacks like we saw in Texas last weekend, and yet at this very moment today, Democrats in this Chamber are continuing to block the funding for the very Agency that is tasked with stopping these terrorist attacks.

Senator CHRIS MURPHY, a Democrat from Connecticut, said funding for the Department of Homeland Security is—his word—“ridiculous.” That is the way the Democrats perceive this. I will tell you what is ridiculous. What is ridiculous is to shut down the Agency responsible for finding the terrorists in this country and stopping them before they act. That is what we are dealing with. It is ridiculous to refuse to pay the men and women who protect our homeland. That is what the Democrats are doing. It is ridiculous to cripple our cyber defense. That is what the Democrats are doing and continue to do.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security—they protect our Nation’s critical infrastructure, including our energy infrastructure. CHUCK SCHUMER was on the floor talking about energy. Why isn’t he protecting our energy infrastructure in this country? Why is he continuing to make it vulnerable to attacks? It is awful what they are doing. Today, only 800 of over 2,000 employees are on the job in this Department, and they are working without pay. The others have been furloughed due to the Democrat shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security. And because of this shutdown, the Agency has canceled both physical and cyber security assessments to detect vulnerabilities within our system.

No wonder we are on high alert. We need to be on high alert because of the Democrats who have put us there. This is a direct threat to our Nation’s security. Shutting down the Department of Homeland Security, as Democrats in

this Chamber have done repeatedly, makes our country less safe and makes our citizens more vulnerable. But I expect to see, when the Democrats come in, them once again continue to keep the Department of Homeland Security shut down.

As the Presiding Officer knows, Republicans tried to negotiate with the Democrats in good faith. The President has sent offers to the Democrats to say: Look, let’s be reasonable here. Open the Department of Homeland Security. Yet, they refuse. They cling to their love of illegal immigrant criminals rather than to the love of this Nation and the safety and security of the people here.

This is all about safety, national strength, and national security. And the shutdown by the Democrats endangers each and every one of these as well as each and every American citizen. The next cyber attack on our homeland—Democrats are going to bear full responsibility. The next lone-wolf terrorist—Democrats will bear full responsibility. The next criminal who crosses the border illegally and kills an innocent American—fully on the Democrats. Blood will be on their hands because we don’t have a functioning Department of Homeland Security that is funded with people on the ground in every position receiving their paychecks.

The Democrats seem to think it is a bargaining chip. American safety and security is not a bargaining chip, and I am going to vote with my Republican colleagues today to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security without delay.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Texas.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, there is an old saying that you can tell a lot about a person by who their friends are. It is also the case you can tell a lot about a person by who their friends are not, and this could easily be said about many within the Democratic Party at this time.

It continues to amaze me the way that the widespread phenomenon of Trump derangement syndrome has led many Democrats to take what is so obviously the wrong side on almost every occasion. This pattern of behavior touches on matters across the policy spectrum, from refusal to participate in patriotic celebrations to deliberately siding with some of the worst human beings on the planet.

This bizarre conduct was on full display a few weeks ago at the President’s

State of the Union when many Democrats couldn't even find it within themselves to stand up and celebrate the U.S. Olympic hockey team who had just won a gold medal in an epic victory against our neighborhood to the north.

Very, very strange.

But this refusal to celebrate the victory of the U.S. men's hockey team was not limited to the State of the Union: Somehow the Trump derangement syndrome has sustained an entire internet controversy around this group of young hockey players who should be celebrated by all Americans, regardless of politics.

The fact that Democrats are incapable of checking their politics at the door on literally any topic speaks volumes about their mindset.

Now, it is only common sense—and this has been something that has happened since Ronald Reagan first started recognizing individuals for their accomplishments and their patriotism in the audience at the State of the Union. It is only common sense that President Trump would recognize these Olympic athletes who won the gold medal. It shouldn't have been controversial, but yet thanks to Trump derangement syndrome, it was. But this strange behavior doesn't stop with hockey.

We heard the same message loud and clear in January following Operation Absolute Resolve. President Trump pulled off an impressive feat, along with the incredible demonstration of professionalism and competence by the U.S. military, in apprehending Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro in the dead of night, with no American lives lost in the operation.

Somehow, Democrats' response was reflexively to criticize the President for conducting what they called a violation of international law. But it is astounding to me that anyone who cares about law and norms would side with a dictator like Maduro. And the President was, in fact, enforcing U.S. law, making sure that this fugitive from justice was called to respond in Federal court in New York to an indictment that was issued against him for drug smuggling.

Maduro and his close associates conspired with the Sinaloa Cartel and Tren de Aragua, using their power to facilitate the flow of drugs into the United States and making themselves rich off of the trafficking profits. Maduro also gave America's enemies a foothold in the Western Hemisphere, including providing safe haven to Lebanese Hezbollah, partnering with Iran and Russia to evade U.S. sanctions, and partnering with China to procure military equipment and other tools used to repress the Venezuelan people.

Under his rule, the Government of Venezuela rapidly devolved from a democracy into an authoritarian dictatorship. How is it the very people who claim to care about democracy and protest in the street with signs that say "No Kings" are cheering, are siding

with a literal dictator in order to demonstrate their opposition to the democratically elected President of the United States just because his name happens to be Donald J. Trump? It makes no sense at all.

But the leftwing outrage goes on. We saw it again last week in response to Operation Epic Fury. President Trump and our brave military servicemembers successfully eliminated another dictator who literally murders his own people in the streets of Tehran, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ali Khamenei. Once again, the Islamic Republic of Iran, under his leadership, was far from a beacon of democracy and human rights, as I said.

The United Nations, which is not a model of courage when it comes to calling out abuses, has repeatedly found that his regime engaged in excessive use of force, systematic torture, enforced disappearances, and pervasive persecution of women and young girls.

Even the liberal bastion known as the Human Rights Watch has criticized his regime for persecution of religious minorities. While others have decried the widespread and systematic killings, imprisonment, and torture of civilian protesters, all this adds up to their status, the regime's status as the world's largest state sponsor of terror, funding the Houthis, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Shia militias. We know the Houthis have attacked U.S. owned and operated ships passing through the Red Sea.

And Hezbollah, which has been estimated to receive 70 to 80 percent of the funds from Iran's patronage accounts, has repeatedly set up criminal operations in the United States and the Western Hemisphere.

And most significantly, Iran has long pursued nuclear weapons, maintaining a stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60 percent purity, just a step away from the 90 percent weapons-grade uranium.

After President Trump dealt a severe setback to Iran's nuclear sites through Operation Midnight Hammer, Iran quickly began to rebuild these sites, including ballistic missile facilities. If Iran were to obtain a nuclear weapon, it would massively destabilize the Middle East and cause substantial harm to U.S. security and threaten the very existence of our ally Israel.

President Trump has always been right in his long, repeated insistence that Iran must never—never—get a nuclear weapon. This world would be a safer and less violent place if the Islamic Republic of Iran fell tomorrow. And yet our friends across the aisle seem to want to side with the Iranian regime strangely.

The Democrat Party's favorite darling, mayor Zohran Mamdani of New York, condemned President Trump's "escalation" of this "illegal war of aggression." These are the same people that have American blood on their hands from the IEDs and roadside bombs that were used against our troops in the Middle East.

At the same time, many of Mayor Mamdani's own residents, with firsthand experience of the Iranian regime, lambasted him on social media for his defense of the Supreme Leader. It takes a delusional person to sympathize with these terrible dictators who are finally receiving the justice they deserve under President Trump.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg with regard to the madness that leftwing agitators will embrace in order to register their opposition to the President. As my colleagues here all know, we are currently in a partial government shutdown, with no path forward to passing appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security.

Supposedly, this was to register their objection to immigration law enforcement by ICE, but this bill funds the Coast Guard. It funds the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Transportation Security Agency that operates at all of our airports.

We are one natural disaster away from a very severe emergency while FEMA is out of money, and while none of us enjoy waiting on the line at airports for security, defunding the workers who perform this essential service to keep us safe while we travel is nothing short of absurd.

Now, this comes on the heels of a record-long full government shutdown by our Democratic colleagues when so many of our essential workers were forced to work without pay. If Republicans pulled stunts like that to register their opposition to President Biden, you can only imagine what the media would do and say.

It speaks volumes about where our Democratic colleagues' true loyalties lie when we observe whom they are willing to cheer for and who was met with callous indifference.

This is not just my imagination, but Democrats are more willing to rally behind Nicolas Maduro and the Supreme Leader of Iran than to stand alongside of Republicans and show their appreciation for the U.S. men's hockey team.

And they would rather sustain a government shutdown than make sure that the men and women who keep our airports and skies safe have the resources that they need. I can't understand it.

President Trump, at the State of the Union, said these Democrats, at least the ones who were in the Chamber at the State of the Union, were crazy. Certainly, they are misguided, and they need to come to their senses.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, today marks the 20th day of what has been a

completely unnecessary, incredibly harmful, and politically motivated shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security, an Agency whose core is to protect our citizens from terrorism, from crime, from cyber risk, and from natural disasters.

The question is, Why are we here? Why is the entire government not open?

We find ourselves at this moment because my colleagues on the other side of the aisle oppose our efforts to clean up the immigration crisis that they created. This is purely about politics, not policy.

At a moment when global tensions are high and President Trump is rightly carrying out a strategic operation in the Middle East to make America more secure, it is more important than ever to ensure that the Agency tasked with defending our homeland remains fully funded and fully operational without delay.

The situation in Iran has direct ties to the security of our southern border. Think about it. More than 1,500 Iranian nationals were detained trying to enter this country illegally under President Biden. And do you know what? The Biden-Harris administration released about 50 percent of those individuals into our homeland, many of them with suspected ties to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, also known as the IRGC. If you think about this, the open border policies of the Biden-Harris administration brought these 1,500 Iranian nationals, and 750 of them were released into the interior of our homeland.

Those are the ones that we know were apprehended. We don't even know how many people from Iran—or other countries that have our worst interest at heart—invaded during the time our border was collapsed under President Biden.

There is a nonzero chance, clearly, that the feckless open border policies of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle let people in who want to do harm to America. We shouldn't sit back and just wait for something to happen.

We, as U.S. Senators, should lock arm in arm and fund the hundreds of thousands of dedicated men and women who fight every single day to keep our homeland safe. From our Coast Guard and TSA officers to cyber security officers and natural disaster first responders, these selfless Americans continue to show up for work to protect our country and carry out their duties, all while not knowing when their next paycheck will arrive. They are doing their jobs, and it is more than past time for Congress to do ours.

The legislation before us today is not new. It is the very same bipartisan agreement that this body negotiated and agreed upon just weeks ago. Yet, for the second time in 6 months, Democrats have chosen to obstruct necessary Federal funding rather than to negotiate in good faith.

Therefore, I have to ask my colleagues: What exactly are we waiting for? Are we waiting for our adversaries to exploit this inaction? Are we waiting for the next natural disaster to strike a vulnerable community? Are we waiting for a violent extremist attack to occur?

The American people are paying attention. The American people understand what is at stake.

Supporting this bill means funding the security of our airports, strengthening our borders, defending our critical infrastructure, and ensuring our Nation is prepared to respond to natural disasters the moment that they occur. Weakening those capabilities, especially during a time of heightened global tension, is beyond unacceptable. It is irresponsible.

Instead of allowing politics to undermine our national security, we should strengthen the various institutions that keep Americans safe. Ensuring the Department of Homeland Security has the resources it needs to properly function should be one of the most basic duties that we have as Members of Congress serving this Nation.

By voting in favor of this legislation today, we have the opportunity to lock arms as leaders and to do the right thing. That is why I would strongly encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill without delay. Let's do what is right for the citizens and take care of this great Nation right here at home.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). The Senator from Massachusetts.

CHILDREN AND TEENS' ONLINE PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, in a moment, I will ask unanimous consent that the Senate pass the Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA 2.0, bipartisan legislation that would finally update our children's online privacy law for the modern internet age.

More than 25 years ago, I passed the original Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. At that time, the internet looked very different than it does today. Only birds tweeted 25 years ago. TikTok was the sound that a clock made. But one thing that has not changed, children and teens deserve privacy, they deserve safety, and they deserve protection online.

Unfortunately, Big Tech's business model has evolved far faster than our laws. Today, the largest online platforms collect enormous amounts of personal data from the users, including from children and from teenagers. That data fuels an advertising machine designed to keep young people clicking, swiping, and scrolling for as long as possible.

These ads are big business for Big Tech. In 2022, the major Big Tech platforms earned nearly \$11 billion from U.S. users 17 and under. This model has

real consequences for the well-being of our young people—\$11 billion.

And we are facing a youth mental health crisis in this country, driven in part by social media platforms.

I have said these statistics on the floor before, but they bear repeating. According to the Centers for Disease Control, one in four teenage high school girls in the United States seriously considered suicide in 2023.

At least one in eight high school girls in the United States in 2023 attempted suicide. Among LGBTQ+ youth, the number is more than one in five who attempted suicide in 2023.

Congress has a responsibility to respond. COPPA 2.0 does exactly that. It brings our children's privacy law into the 21st century and gives young people and their families meaningful control over their personal information.

First, COPPA 2.0 bans targeted advertising to children and teenagers. The days of building detailed behavioral profiles on young people in order to serve them manipulative, hyperpersonalized ads—that era must come to an end. That is what we are talking about in this legislation here today—ending that era in our country.

Second, the legislation creates an “eraser” button, allowing children and teens and their parents to delete the personal data that platforms have collected about them.

Third, COPPA 2.0, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act 2.0, establishes strong limits on the collection of personal information from minors. If a platform, for example, does not need a child's or a teen's data to provide the service, it should not be collecting that data in the first place.

These are simple, commonsense protections, and they have broad bipartisan support.

I am very, very proud to have worked over the last 3 years with my friend Senator CASSIDY from Louisiana on constructing this legislation and moving it to the floor here today. He is a physician, and he is someone who believes in preventive care. That is what this bill is today. It just avoids much of the harm that otherwise will be imposed upon teenagers and children in our country.

I also want to thank Chairman CRUZ, Ranking Member CANTWELL, and many other Members in this body who have helped move this legislation forward.

This effort has also been driven by parents, by advocates, by young people themselves—families who have experienced firsthand the harms that can result when online platforms prioritize profit over the safety of children.

Passing COPPA 2.0 today would represent the single most significant update to children's online privacy protections in a quarter of a century. It is long overdue. We know there is a crisis, and it would send a clear message that Congress is prepared to stand up to Big Tech and put the interests of kids and families first.

I would be remiss if I did not note what is happening across the Capitol