

arrival legislation, I hope that Republicans will listen to what we are asking for and listen to what their constituents are asking for. We need to see ICE have accountability. Work with us to pass those reforms in order to fund that full Agency.

With that, I want my colleagues to know I will continue to work to get that done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, we would love to listen. That would be great because we passed a continuing resolution for 2 weeks, and to my knowledge, there were no conversations between elected Democrats and elected Republicans to try and find a pathway forward. Then, in the last 2 weeks, we have been asking to have those conversations, and we have been asking to listen because we believe that this is important. So I am calling on my Democratic colleagues to be a part of that, to be a part of the solution. I certainly know that we want to.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 156, H.R. 4553. I further ask that the Britt substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, look, I, too, am frustrated this body has not been able to reach an agreement on the DHS funding bill. In particular, I am frustrated that my colleagues across the aisle and in the White House are still refusing to agree to work with us on commonsense measures to protect our constituents from being shot and even killed by unidentifiable, untrained ICE and Border Patrol agents.

Democrats have been very clear on this for weeks. We want to fund FEMA and TSA, and we want to protect Americans from the violence at the hands of rogue Federal Agencies. This is not complicated. We can and we must do both.

I have always been very clear about what we cannot do, which is cut another blank check for Kristi Noem to terrorize our communities. Unfortunately, that is what the bill from the junior Senator from Alabama would do. It would kick the can down the road and give more money to ICE and Border Patrol to trample American rights. That is not an acceptable outcome.

If Republicans won't agree to the commonsense measures we have been pushing for weeks—measures that police departments across America already adhere to—then I am absolutely willing and ready to fund the rest of DHS while talks on ICE and CBP continue. In fact, that is what the bill did that I just offered.

I object to this measure, and I really hope our Republican colleagues will join me in supporting the bill I called up a few moments ago to fund the TSA and FEMA and CISA while those talks continue. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The majority leader.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed to the Motion to Reconsider

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to the motion to reconsider the cloture vote from February 12 on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 311, H.R. 7147.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 311, H.R. 7147.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

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 legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 311, H.R. 7147, a bill making further consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes.

John Thune, John Barrasso, John R. Curtis, Bill Hagerty, Tim Sheehy, Thom Tillis, Tom Cotton, Joni Ernst, Jim Banks, Markwayne Mullin, Tommy Tuberville, Steve Daines, Josh Hawley, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Jon Husted, Pete Ricketts, Susan M. Collins.

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. 7147, a bill making further consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close, upon reconsideration?

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 Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 47 Leg.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—45

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

NOT VOTING—4

Cassidy	Moran	Tuberville
Hassan		

(Mr. BARRASSO assumed the Chair.)  
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. LUMMIS). On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 45.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion, upon reconsideration, is not agreed to.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, your mic wasn't on. What did you call me? What was the name that you used?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, thank you. I truly appreciate the Presiding Officer.

I hope that was recorded by the stenographer that the Presiding Officer called me a gentleman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Duly noted.

TRIBUTE TO CAROLE DARCHÉ

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, to my colleagues in the Senate, to the Senate President, to all those assembled here, I am rising to give this speech, and I feel such privilege because I get to recognize someone whose work most Americans never see but whose contribution is woven into the very history of this institution.

When a Senator comes to the floor to speak, whether it is daily routine address or a moment that will echo through generations, there is always someone standing just off camera, often unnoticed, a stenograph machine hanging from their neck, capturing every word we say. They record our arguments and our aspirations, our disagreements and our dreams, our long

speeches, and sometimes our longer ones.

The dozens of people who are watching C-SPAN may not realize it, but the words spoken in this Chamber simply don't float away into the air. They are preserved—faithfully, meticulously—by extraordinary professionals who ensure that the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD becomes the living memory of the U.S. Senate and our Nation.

For those of you who do not know about these extraordinary stenographers, their work is not easy. It requires years of training, immense focus and concentration, and a remarkable command of language and speed and accents that range from a southern Texas accent to a Jersey one. And it requires a hell of a lot of patience because, as everyone in this Chamber knows, brevity is not always the defining virtue of the U.S. Senate. Yet, through late nights, historic votes, moments of celebration, and moments of national grief, Senate stenographers have stood quietly at their posts ensuring that what happens here is captured for the American people and preserved in American history for generations yet to come.

Today, I want to recognize one of the very best of them. Today, I want to recognize Carole Darche. Carole has spent more than 45 years as a court reporter, bringing her extraordinary skill to the Senate floor to record some of the most consequential moments in our Nation's history.

Through long sessions, overnight debates, and pivotal moments in our country, Carole has been there—steadfast, precise, and deeply committed to this institution. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the lights of this Chamber have shone a little bit brighter because of her presence.

What has always struck me about Carole is not just her professionalism but the spirit she brings to her work. Day after day, she arrives with warmth and enthusiasm and a quiet pride in serving something larger than herself.

And the dedication required is extraordinary. Each session week, Carole boards the Amtrak from New Jersey to Washington, listening to her audiobooks along the way, traveling hundreds of miles that would make even Joe Biden a little bit jealous, to stand on this floor and serve the American people. This kind of commitment to public service, to this institution of the U.S. Senate, and to the preservation of our democratic record is something we should all aspire to.

While we will deeply miss Carole—I am sure I speak for my 99 colleagues; we will miss her in the Senate—I must admit that I am delighted that her retirement will take her back home to the great State of “New Joisey”—I mean New Jersey; forgive me—where she plans to enjoy the Jersey Shore with her husband Fred, her three stepchildren, and her five grandchildren. She also plans to travel to Paris, to Portugal, and beyond. I have no doubt

that the same spirit of curiosity and joy she brought to this building will accompany her on those adventures.

Carole, the Senate will miss you. We will miss your warmth. We will miss your enthusiasm for this institution. And, yes, we will miss hearing about you, witnessing your humanity, seeing every day the truth that it is leaders in the Senate—often who don't stand in the spotlight, who don't face the camera—it is leaders in the Senate like you that make this institution functional for the American people.

Carole, that is what patriotism is. It is not seen often in one flash or one flourish. Patriotism is steadfast dedication to serving this Nation day in and day out.

What does your service render? I have come to learn that the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD is more than ink on paper; it is the story of our democracy. And for decades, you have helped ensure that story was captured with precision, care, and integrity. For that, the U.S. Senate and the Nation and every one of the Members of this body owe you gratitude.

Carole, thank you for your extraordinary years of service. May your retirement be filled with family, with travel, with laughter, with yoga, and many beautiful sunsets along the incredible Jersey Shore. The truth is, you will be leaving this Chamber, but the history you helped preserve here—your contributions—will endure for generations.

I yield the floor as I give tribute to another great member of this body who herself is yielding this floor and saying her farewell.

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

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

The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, it was the spring of 2019. Public and media interest in Special Counsel Robert Mueller's report into Russia's election interference operation reached a fever pitch.

There had been a steady drip, drip, drip of reporting on the Trump team's cozy and peculiar relationship with Russia since his surprise election victory in 2016.

Ahead of the Mueller report's release, Trump's Attorney General, Bill Barr, issued a letter to Congress, purporting to summarize the report's findings. The letter declared that Russia and the Trump campaign did not collude to steal the election.

The press, ravenous for any news of the long-anticipated Mueller report's conclusion, largely accepted Attorney General Barr's narrow, carefully worded conclusion and, not yet having ac-

cess to the full report, blasted the Attorney General's summary around the world.

Trump himself declared—all caps: “NO COLLUSION!”

He said he had been cleared of the Russia “hoax,” a term he reserves only to describe things that are true, like climate change.

Frustrated, Mueller wrote to Barr that the Attorney General's letter “did not fully capture the context, nature, and substance” of the investigation. But by the time the dense, voluminous Mueller report was issued, the month after Barr's letter, his message had been obscured.

The Mueller report actually concluded that the Trump campaign knew of and welcomed Russian interference and expected to benefit from it. That conclusion was later echoed and reinforced by an investigation led by then-Chairman Marco Rubio's Senate Intelligence Committee, a bipartisan report.

But Barr's scheme had largely worked. Many in the media and in the Democratic Party seemed to internalize that the Russia speculation had perhaps gotten out of hand and that perhaps we had been wrong to believe there was a troubling connection between Trump and Russia after all.

But were we? Let's take a look at a sampling of what Trump has done for Russia just lately, and usually at the expense of American interests. There are many, but here is a “top 10.”

One, after Trump and Vice President VANCE theatrically chastised the heroic Ukrainian President Zelenskyy in front of TV cameras in the Oval Office, last year, Trump paused our weapons shipments to Ukraine.

Two, in July, during the worst Russian bombing campaign of the war to that point, Trump paused an already funded weapons shipment for Ukraine, including the Patriot interceptors that protect civilians from Putin's savage attacks.

Three, that same month, Trump's Treasury Department stopped imposing new sanctions and closing sanctions loopholes, effectively allowing dummy corporations to send funds, chips, and military equipment to Russia.

Four, leaked phone calls show that White House envoy Steve Witkoff and Putin envoy Kirill Dmitriev have worked together closely behind the scenes on a peace deal favorable to Russia.

Five, last summer, Trump rolled out the Presidential red carpet for the Russian dictator on American soil, with a summit in Alaska that yielded, unsurprisingly, no gains toward ending the war in Ukraine.

Six, Trump's Vice President traveled to the Munich Security Conference, last year, to parrot Russia's anti-Western talking points, pushed by right-wing groups that Putin has long funded and used to create political strife in Europe.

Seven, Trump installed Russia apologist Tulsi Gabbard as his Director of

National Intelligence, much to the glee of Russian state media.

Eight, upon the confirmation of Trump's Attorney General Pam Bondi, the Department of Justice shuttered its anti-kleptocracy work that had successfully targeted Putin's Russian oligarchs.

Nine, late last year, Trump unveiled a new so-called National Security Strategy, which abandoned traditional alliances in Europe and favored a transactional foreign policy that the Kremlin praised as "largely consistent" with Moscow's vision and desires.

And, 10, the Trump administration is even paving the way for Russia's return to global sports competition, ending its isolation in those arenas, in the wake of the hostile Ukraine invasion and state-backed systemic doping programs in Russia.

That is a "top 10," but the list goes on. If Trump were purposefully doing Russia's bidding, it is hard to see what he would be doing differently.

The United States is the most powerful nation in the world. Russia is a weak, corrupt regime. My old friend Senator John McCain used to say that Russia is a gas station, run by gangsters, with an army. It doesn't make sense that the President of the United States, who insists—insists—on being dominant in essentially every relationship, is so submissive to one person. And that one person is Russia's dictator Vladimir Putin.

So what is it about Trump and Russia? And could it have any connection with Trump's close friendship with the deceased pedophile Jeffrey Epstein?

Much about Epstein remains unknown. But the survivors who have come forward and the millions of emails released through the bipartisan Epstein Files Transparency Act have shed some light on the operation of the late financier's global pedophile ring, and, over and over, it touches Russia.

When recently asked by a reporter about the Epstein files, Trump said in part:

It's just a Russia, Russia, Russia hoax.

Again, "hoax"—the word he uses for when something is true.

But the most telling part is that Trump's mind, asked about Epstein, immediately went to Russia—"Russia, Russia, Russia."

I should start by pointing out that Epstein's ties to foreign intelligence may never be fully known. It is a murky world. He had links to officials in the U.S., Russian, and Israeli Governments, and many others. But it is worth looking at those ties to Russia, a nation so hostile to the United States.

Epstein's career began in the mid-1970s at the prestigious Dalton School in New York City, where, despite dropping out of college, 21-year-old Jeffrey Epstein was given a position teaching high school mathematics to the children of some of New York's wealthiest families.

Perhaps of note, the outgoing headmaster at the time of Epstein's hire

was Donald Barr, the father of future Attorney General Bill Barr and a former intelligence officer during World War II. The elder Barr was known for making unconventional hires at Dalton.

After a couple of years, Epstein was able to leverage the elite connections he made at Dalton to a job at Wall Street investment bank Bear Stearns, where he rose quickly through the company. However, after getting caught fabricating his résumé, using the company credit card on expensive gifts for his girlfriend, and, ultimately, providing privileged stock information to a girlfriend, among other unscrupulous behaviors, Epstein called it quits and started his own financial firm.

Those early scams were just the start. Shortly thereafter, Epstein fell in with a wealthy man named Douglas Leese, a British defense contractor with connections in the arms industry and the British Government. During this period, Epstein would tell people he was a "bounty hunter" who tracked down hidden money.

According to Steven Hoffenberg, a former business mentor of Epstein's who went to prison for a massive Ponzi scheme that he later said Epstein had designed, Leese introduced Epstein to Robert Maxwell.

Ghislaine Maxwell, who became Epstein's girlfriend and sex-trafficking accomplice after her father's death, was Robert Maxwell's favorite daughter, and he involved her deeply in his work.

An opportunist in pursuit of wealth, the Czechoslovak-born Robert Maxwell had complex, shifting ties to British, Soviet, and Israeli intelligence.

Initially bankrolled by MI6, he accepted secret payments from the KGB through his Soviet-friendly publishing company and was the rare individual who traversed both sides of the Iron Curtain.

In 1992, the British newspaper the Sunday Express wrote that a secret document, signed by the head of the KGB months before Maxwell's death at sea, showed that Maxwell was a political and intelligence asset for the Soviet Union. The newspaper claimed that the document indicated Soviet leadership had instructed the KGB to protect Maxwell's reputation and business activities.

Maxwell's UK foreign office file, released more than a decade after his death, described him as "a thoroughly bad character and almost certainly financed by Russia."

Journalist Vicky Ward wrote the following in Rolling Stone Magazine in 2021. She said:

Hoffenberg told me that Epstein had said he'd worked on several projects with Robert Maxwell, including solving Maxwell's "debt" issues.

The word "debt" is in quotes.

(Maxwell died in 1991, under very strange circumstances, apparently having fallen off his yacht, the Lady Ghislaine, in the middle of the night and it was discovered in the

aftermath that he'd stolen 100s of millions of dollars from the pensions of his employees.)

The story continued:

Epstein had also told Hoffenberg that via Maxwell and Leese he was involved in something that Hoffenberg described as "national security issues," which he says involved "blackmail, influence trading, trading information at a level that is very serious and dangerous."

The story concluded:

Four separate sources told me—on the record—that Epstein's dealings in the arms world in the 1980s had led him to work for multiple governments, including the Israelis.

Epstein's strategies for making money and working intelligence contacts seem to have some similarities to Robert Maxwell's.

For the record, Epstein, a profligate liar, once told Ward that he never met Robert Maxwell or Leese.

At some point in the 1980s, Epstein struck up a friendship with a fellow brash New York businessman by the name of Donald Trump. Author Michael Wolff has said of Trump and Epstein:

They shared everything. They shared their airplanes. They shared women between them. They shared constantly business and financial advice.

There are many photos of the two men together on the New York and Palm Beach party circuits throughout the 1990s. Trump, now famously said in 2002:

I've known Jeff for fifteen years. Terrific guy. He's a lot of fun to be with. It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side.

Alan Dershowitz told the New York Times in 2019 that "in those days, if you didn't know Trump and you didn't know Epstein, you were a nobody."

Dershowitz is the well-known lawyer who served both on Epstein's defense team when he was charged with having sex with minors back in 2006 and on Trump's impeachment defense team in 2020.

The President of Trump's Atlantic City Trump Plaza Hotel in the late 1980s said he saw Trump and Epstein together so frequently that he believed Epstein was Trump's "best friend." That same man described an incident where Trump brought Epstein and a 19-year-old girl to the casino gaming floor.

Epstein once took a model to Trump Tower, where she says Trump groped her while laughing with Epstein. She remarked that it seemed like "a twisted game" between the two men.

One survivor says Epstein summoned her to his offices late one night. Trump soon arrived. And according to the New York Times, "[she] recalled feeling scared as Mr. Trump stared at her bare legs. Then Mr. Epstein entered the room, and she recalled him saying to Mr. Trump: 'No, no. She's not here for you.'" After the men left the room, she said she overheard Trump commenting that he thought she was 16 years old.

In 1992, Trump hosted a "calendar girls competition" at Mar-a-Lago for

dozens of young women. The event organizer was appalled to learn that Trump and Epstein would be the only men present—a private showing.

During Maxwell's trial, one of Epstein's victims said he took her to meet Trump at Mar-a-Lago when she was 14.

Maxwell recruited 16-year-old Virginia Giuffre from the spa at Mar-a-Lago. Giuffre was abused by Epstein and trafficked to other men in Epstein's orbit.

Trump said in 2025:

I think [Giuffre] worked at the spa. He stole her.

"He" being Epstein.

In 1997, the UK tabloid, the Daily Mirror, formerly owned by Robert Maxwell, claimed that Trump was dating a 20-year-old British model and Ghislaine Maxwell had introduced them at a party. The tabloid notes:

[Trump] met [the model] at a party in Manhattan. Several American millionaires already had their eyes on [the model]. But she was there with Robert Maxwell's daughter Ghislaine, who has introduced several of her attractive friends to the property developer, [Trump].

According to the Mirror:

After their meeting, Trump flew Madam Maxwell and the model south to the sunshine state, where they enjoyed a happy weekend together. When they returned to New York, [the model] was installed in one of Donald's many apartments there.

In an interview with BBC "Newsnight," the model stated:

Ghislaine Maxwell did introduce me to him—

That is Trump—

and she introduced me to him with a clear message of my being with him in the same way that she had trafficked me and brought me to Jeffrey Epstein.

She also said:

I can only speak for myself, and this is in no way to negate any other experience that anyone else might have had with him, but, at no time did President Trump behave with any impropriety with me.

The same woman accused Epstein of sexually abusing her when she was a teenager in a 2019 interview with NBC.

From NBC:

The abuse . . . spanned several years and locales. In addition to the estate on his private island, [she] said Epstein preyed on her at his homes in New York and Paris.

According to Craig Unger's book "American Kompromat":

Trump was often the center of Maxwell's attention, and women who entered Trump's orbit sometimes ended up being associated with both Trump and Epstein, spending part of their time living in a Trump Tower condo and part in Florida, at Mar-a-Lago or one of Epstein's homes.

Among them was a Russian model and beauty-pageant contestant . . . whose journey from the world of beauty pageants and modeling to Trump's Mar-a-Lago and Epstein's island retreat is highly suggestive in terms of how Epstein and his associates began manipulating young women.

The story continues:

In the early '90s, before coming to the United States, [the woman] had placed well

in a number of beauty pageants—coming in second in Miss Russia 1993 and winning the 1994 Miss Baltic Sea title that year. In 1995, she left Moscow, spent six weeks learning English in St. Petersburg—

That is St. Petersburg, FL, not Russia—

and was profiled in the Tampa Tribune as "reigning Miss Russia." And before long, she met Donald Trump.

Notwithstanding the fact that Trump was still married to his second wife, Marla Maples, [the woman] moved into a 30th-floor condo in Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue.

There, according to an item in the New York Post, her lavish accommodations were taken care of "courtesy of an unidentified sugar daddy."

[S]he spent time with both Trump and Epstein. Flight logs released by a federal judge in New York in 2019 showed that in February 1999, [the woman], then 27, flew on board Epstein's Gulfstream, the so-called Lolita Express, with Maxwell and Prince Andrew, from Epstein's Little St. James (a.k.a. "Pedophile Island") back to Florida.

Trump has tried to distance himself from his former friend, the monstrous pedophile who is believed to have abused at least a thousand women and girls. It is worth taking a look at how the friendship between Trump and Epstein allegedly soured. There are varying accounts as to whether Trump ever banned Epstein from Mar-a-Lago over his recruitment of spa workers from the resort.

But we know the falling out was at least, in part, related to a bidding war between Trump and Epstein over a Palm Beach mansion in 2004. Trump won and purchased the property for \$41.3 million.

Just 4 years later and after modest renovations, Trump sold the mansion to billionaire Russian oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev for \$95 million. At the time, it was reported to be the most expensive residential property sale in U.S. history, pretty stellar investment for Mr. Trump. The oligarch, for his part, after paying the \$95 million, never even moved in.

That brings us back to Russia. Epstein claimed to have given at least some insight on Trump to the Russians. Epstein met on many occasions with Vitaly Churkin, Russia's representative to the United Nations from 2006 until Churkin's death in 2017. Epstein wrote in an email:

Churkin was great. He understood Trump after our conversations. It is not complex. He must be seen to get something its that simple.

Epstein wrote in 2018 to Thorbjorn Jagland, a former Prime Minister of Norway, who was then head of the Council of Europe:

I think you might suggest to Putin, that Lavrov, can get insight on talking to me.

That appears to be a reference to Sergey Lavrov, Russian's Minister of Foreign Affairs. The email was sent prior to the Helsinki summit between Trump and Putin.

In another email to Jagland, Epstein wrote that he wanted to help Putin and Russia "reinvent the financial system."

A 2017 FBI report based on a confidential human source claims that Epstein was "President Vladimir Putin's wealth manager."

Epstein tried several times to meet with Putin, often via Jagland, although it is unclear if any such meeting took place. But Putin is named almost 1,000 times in the latest tranche of Epstein file documents, and there are almost 10,000 references in the documents to Moscow.

Epstein roped many Russian and Eastern European girls and women into his trafficking operation.

The New York Magazine profile of Epstein published all the way back in 2002 reads:

Indeed, at a party at Maxwell's house, her friends say, one is just as apt to see Russian ladies of the night as one is to see Prince Andrew.

In Ward's 2003 profile of Epstein, a guest described a "cocktail party thrown by Maxwell that Prince Andrew attended, which was filled, she says, with young Russian models."

In a 2010 email, Epstein suggested a young woman as a dinner companion to Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, the former Prince, assuring him that she was "Russian, beautiful and trustworthy."

The Daily Beast recently reported on an alleged classified U.S. intelligence document claiming that "Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor . . . was drawn into Moscow's orbit thanks to his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, which the Kremlin allegedly used as a route into the British establishment."

In another 2010 email to a person whose name has been redacted, Epstein wrote:

Tomorrow I'm organising a dinner for some new Russian girls. . . . [S]ee you at 10.

He received an email from a redacted sender in 2012 that read:

I have 2 Russian girls for you to meet, one 21, another 24.

A message left for Epstein by one of his employees in 2005 claims French model scout Jean-Luc Brunel had found a "teacher" who could give Epstein "free lessons."

He has a teacher for you to teach how to speak Russian. She is two times eight years old. Not blonde.

"Two times eight years old."

According to "American Kompromat":

In addition to whatever legitimate careers Brunel may have fostered, as a "model scout," he also allegedly hired "scouters" to identify, procure, and transport underage girls, many 15 years of age and under, hire them to give "massages" and traffic them.

Brunel was found hanged in his French jail cell in 2022 after being arrested on rape and sex trafficking charges.

Bill Gates appears. He has said he had affairs with two Russian women, which Epstein later discovered.

Somewhere along the way, Epstein struck up a relationship with Sergei Belyakov, Russia's former Deputy Minister of Economic Development and a

graduate of the FSB, Russia's intelligence academy. Epstein introduced him to contacts like Peter Thiel, the tech billionaire who would go on to give \$10 million to the super PAC that helped elect now-Vice President JD Vance to the Senate in 2022.

In 2015, Epstein warned Belyakov that "a Russian girl from Moscow . . . is attempting to blackmail a group of powerful businessmen in New York." It was, Epstein said, "bad for business for everyone involved." Belyakov responded back with information about the woman who he said worked in the "sex and escort" business. The FSB academy graduate said he would meet with someone who knows her.

The following year, Belyakov told Epstein he had a new position at the Russian Direct Investment Fund, the Russian sovereign wealth fund, headed by current Putin envoy Kirill Dmitriev—the same guy who was caught in those friendly leaked phone calls with Steve Witkoff that I mentioned earlier.

Masha Drokova, a former spokesperson for Nashi, the pro-Kremlin youth movement, was in regular touch with Epstein in the last couple of years before his death in prison. She was ostensibly helping Epstein with his public relations. According to the Washington Post, she was "the subject of the 2011 documentary 'Putin's Kiss,' whose title refers to a widely publicized award ceremony in which she received a medal from Putin and spontaneously kissed him on the cheek."

In a 2017 email, Drokova asked Epstein to connect her with "adequate Russian oligarchs." The Post reported in 2022 that her fundraising pitches highlighted her ties to wealthy Russians, although Drokova denied writing those emails and said she did not receive Russian funding.

Epstein advised Drokova as she launched her Silicon Valley venture capital firm, and she introduced Epstein to the contacts she had made in the tech world.

In one email interaction in 2017, Drokova, after claiming to meet billionaire Jeff Bezos, tells Epstein she is "trying to understand what she is not understanding about him." Epstein writes back that Bezos is "smart, fun, and visionary. He is a very nice person. Probalty [sic] the best in the valley among the Bs."

The files also indicate Epstein had dealings with Oleg Deripaska, a Russian billionaire who the Treasury Department identified as a money launderer for Vladimir Putin. Deripaska also cultivated a friendship with Peter Mandelson, a senior figure in Britain's Labour Party. Mandelson tried to use Deripaska's contacts to acquire a last-minute Russian visa for Epstein in 2010.

Correspondence also shows Epstein's assistant trying to set up a meeting for Epstein and Deripaska in Moscow or Paris.

There is also audio of Epstein advising then-Israel Prime Minister Ehud

Barak to have dinner with Putin to line up work after he leaves government.

There is at least one itinerary for a lengthy trip across Russia and photos of Epstein and Ghislaine in what is believed to be Russia, including with people who appear to be Russian soldiers.

Umar Dzhabrailov, a former Russian senator who committed suicide in recent days, described Maxwell as "a soulmate." Epstein had a series of Russian visas between 2011 and his death in 2019.

Epstein's crimes left a long money trail, and that trail winds back to Russia. Ranking member of the Finance Committee RON WYDEN has doggedly sought the truth about Epstein's transactions with Russian banks and Eastern European entities. One suspicious activity report filed by JPMorgan Chase after Epstein's death shows that between 2003 and 2019, Epstein conducted 4,725 wire transactions totaling over \$1 billion. And that is just one bank. Epstein used multiple banks. According to JPMorgan Chase, the wire activity was flagged for the suspicious activity report for being "consistent with . . . alleged sex trafficking of minors" and for involving "the high risk jurisdiction of the Russian Federation."

CNN notes that two accounts included in the suspicious activity report were linked to now-sanctioned Russian banks Alfa-Bank and Sberbank. Also named in the suspicious activity reports were Maxwell, associated entities like Brunel's MC2 Model Management, and various women and girls.

Let's go back to the journalist Vicky Ward:

[S]ources, who range from former arms dealers to former spies—and also Hoffenberg—suggest that Epstein, who lacked any sort of moral compass, decided to . . . compromise influential people by recording them doing things they wouldn't want made public. . . . And once he got out of jail, in the last 10 years of his life, Epstein bragged to various people, including journalists, that he was advising a whole assortment of foreign leaders who included Vladimir Putin, Mohammed bin Zayed, Mohammed Bin Salman, various African dictators, Israel, the British—and, of course, the Americans.

He also told several of the same people that he was making a fortune out of arms, drugs, and diamonds.

I am still reading the same quote:

He was known in the intelligence world as a "hyper-fixer," somebody who can go between different cultures and networks."

Epstein was, of course, known for his parties, which he insisted on hosting in his various mansions where he could completely control the environment. Many of Epstein's victims have said they believe they were recorded.

Virginia Giuffre wrote in her posthumous memoir that Epstein had a "huge library of videotapes" and a room in his New York home where monitors displayed real-time surveillance footage from his properties.

"He explicitly talked about using me and what I'd been forced to do with cer-

tain men as a form of blackmail, so these men would owe him favors," she wrote.

Another survivor said Epstein once walked her through his mansion pointing out pinhole-sized cameras. He boasted that they were in every room.

According to Epstein's emails, in 2014, he directed a staffer to procure hidden cameras, which were installed in tissue boxes.

The New York Times obtained photos of the interior of Epstein's New York mansion, which show a camera installed near the ceiling of the master bedroom and another along the molding of an adjoining room. The Times also spotted cameras near a suite of bathrooms on the same floor as Epstein's bedroom.

When police searched his Palm Beach home in 2005, they "located two covert (hidden) cameras." Both cameras were located inside clocks—one by a desk and the other in a garage.

It is worth noting that Epstein often seemed to get tipped off in advance as to when the Palm Beach police would be dropping by. Epstein is said to have once told an ex-girlfriend:

I collect people. I own people. I can damage people.

The disgraced financier Hoffenberg allegedly claimed to the National Enquirer in a final account before his death that "wherever Epstein was entertaining, he [and Ghislaine] were tapping." That report was only released last summer, as Hoffenberg had asked the Enquirer not to publish his comments until 3 years after his death.

According to the Daily Beast, the former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Alex Acosta, is once said to have claimed Epstein "belonged to intelligence" and that the decision to let him off easy in 2008 was made above his "pay grade."

The Prime Minister of Poland, a country that has extensive experience with Russian intelligence operations, has opened an investigation into potential links between Epstein and Russian intelligence. Prime Minister Tusk said:

More and more leads, more and more information, and more and more commentary in the global press all relate to the suspicion that this unprecedented paedophilia scandal was co-organised by Russian intelligence services.

According to alleged anonymous intelligence sources published in the British tabloid the Daily Mail last month, some believe:

Jeffrey Epstein was running "the world's largest honey trap operation" on behalf of the KGB when he procured women for his network of associates.

I want to stress that we don't have answers here. Epstein was an inveterate liar and criminal who often sought to exaggerate his own power and influence, and the Epstein files need to be viewed through that lens. He could have been working with an intelligence agency or several intelligence agencies. He could have just been what the Russians call a useful idiot. We may never know.

What we do know is that a significant number of powerful men—our current President, some of his Cabinet Secretaries, tech billionaires like Elon Musk, Bill Gates, and others—were very mixed up with Epstein at different times, and Epstein seems to have been very mixed up with Russia.

We also know that there is a coverup afoot at the Department of Justice. The MAGA Department of Justice is trying to shield Trump from something in the Epstein files. We know that documents in the files about President Trump that should be released have not been released. The missing files—first discovered by independent journalist Roger Sollenberger—are alleged to detail claims by an Epstein accuser who said she was also sexually assaulted by President Trump when she was a young teenager.

One of the great forces that Washington runs on is normalcy bias. It is often in the interest of the bureaucratic establishment to look skeptically toward outlandish or extreme stories because, in most cases, the truth is more ordinary than what may first appear. What I have done here today is lay out the facts, as documented by the many brave survivors who have come forward at great personal risk, as well as the many journalists who have tried and continue to try to get to the truth.

As a lawyer, I know that you can prove cases with circumstantial evidence. You don't always need the smoking gun. Here, we have links with Russia, girls from Russia, money from Russia, people from Russia, deals and transactions with Russia, contacts with people with Russian intelligence, news reports exploring contacts with Russia, and an official investigation from the Government of Poland into an Epstein-Russia connection. Sometimes, with a little imagination, you have the chance to see what is right in front of your face.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this document, which is a bibliography of all of the sources that I quoted from in this speech, be printed in the RECORD and appended at the conclusion of my remarks.

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

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Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUDD). The clerk will call the roll. The legislative 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 (Mr. HUSTED). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 655.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of the following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601: to be General, Lt. Gen. Joshua M. Rudd.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented

under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 655, the following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601: to be General, Lt. Gen. Joshua M. Rudd.

John Thune, Bernie Moreno, John Barrasso, Tim Sheehy, John R. Curtis, John Boozman, Ted Cruz, Tommy Tuberville, Jon A. Husted, Marsha Blackburn, Ted Budd, David McCormick, Pete Ricketts, Todd Young, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Ashley B. Moody, Steve Daines.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HOUSING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for substitute amendment No. 4308.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on substitute amendment No. 4308 to Calendar No. 343, H.R. 6644, a bill to increase the supply of housing in America, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Mike Crapo, Jim Justice, Lindsey Graham, Eric Schmitt, Chuck Grassley, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, John Barrasso, Roger Marshall, Tim Sheehy, Markwayne Mullin, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Jim Banks, Joni Ernst, Pete Ricketts, John R. Curtis.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the underlying bill, Calendar No. 343, H.R. 6644.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 343, H.R. 6644, a bill to increase the supply of housing in America, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Mike Crapo, Jim Justice, Lindsey Graham, Eric Schmitt, Chuck Grassley, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, John Barrasso, Roger Marshall, Tim Sheehy, Markwayne Mullin, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Jim Banks, Joni Ernst, Pete Ricketts, John R. Curtis.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the filing deadline with respect to first-degree amendments to substitute amendment No. 4308 to H.R. 6644 and first-degree amendments to the underlying bill be at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, March 9.

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

SERVICEMEMBERS' CREDIT MONITORING ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 2074 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2074) to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to expand the definition of an active duty military consumer for purposes of certain credit monitoring requirements, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 2074) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2074

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Servicemembers' Credit Monitoring Enhancement Act".

SEC. 2. CREDIT MONITORING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Fair Credit Reporting Act (15 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in section 605A(k) (15 U.S.C. 1681c-1(k))—

(A) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

“(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

“(A) ARMED FORCES.—The term ‘armed forces’ has the meaning given the term in section 101(a) of title 10, United States Code.

“(B) ARMED FORCES MEMBER CONSUMER.—The term ‘armed forces member consumer’ means a consumer who, regardless of duty status, is a member of the armed forces.”; and

(B) in paragraph (2)(A), by striking “active duty military consumer” and inserting “armed forces member consumer”; and

(2) in section 625(b)(1)(K) (15 U.S.C. 1681t(b)(1)(K)), by striking “active duty military consumers” and inserting “armed forces member consumers”.