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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant bill 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

DIGNIFIED TRANSFER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, over the weekend, I was honored to attend a very solemn but dignified transfer of the remains at the Dover Air Force Base along with President Trump, Vice President VANCE, Secretary Hegseth, and the entire Iowa congressional delegation. We paid our respects to the seven fallen heroes. Barbara and I continue to pray for the safety of our brave military.

NATIONAL SPEECH AND DEBATE EDUCATION DAY

On another subject, Mr. President, since 2016, the senior Senator from Delaware and I have led the Senate to pass a resolution to recognize National Speech and Debate Education Day. This year, our bipartisan resolution designated March 6 as National Speech and Debate Education Day, marking the 10th anniversary of celebration of this important occasion.

However, it isn't just 10 days but much longer. The organization governing these programs—the National Speech & Debate Association—has been around much longer. The National Speech & Debate Association, which happens to be based in the heart of America, which is right there in my home State of Iowa, in West Des Moines, IA—the National Speech & De-

bate Association has served its members for over 100 years.

For over a century, the National Speech & Debate Association has worked to equip young people with the skills to research thoroughly, to construct sound arguments, to listen actively, and to respond thoughtfully. These are not just competition skills; they are life skills.

Particularly when we have so much partisanship in our country and at a time when our public discourse can feel increasingly divided, programs like these matter more than ever. Speech and debate education teaches students that strong arguments are built on evidence; that persuasion requires preparation; and that progress begins, first of all, by just listening.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the National Speech and Debate Education Day, we honor not only an organization with a proud 100-year-or-more history but also generations of students who have stepped up to the podium, found their voice, and strengthened our democracy in the process.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we are more than 3 weeks into the Democrat's DHS shutdown, and Democrats keep telling us that they are serious about funding this Agency, but their actions speak louder than their words. Negotiations have been going now for well over a month, and Democrats have sent two offers to the White House—two offers that were basically the same. No

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord, as we begin today's session, we ask that Your Spirit would guide the deliberations of our lawmakers. Move in their hearts, guiding their thoughts and intentions to noble ends. May they hear Your voice, embrace Your wisdom, and trust Your guidance. Use them to lead the world into a new era of freedom and peace. Lord, help our Nation's leaders to stand tall for righteousness. Bind them together through the power of prayer as they intercede for one another during these dangerous times.

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

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). 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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compromise. No give-and-take. Just take it or leave it.

Then, on Thursday, perhaps realizing that forcing tens of thousands of DHS employees to go without pay isn't great for their brand, Democrats made a new yet equally unserious proposal, and that is selectively funding certain DHS Agencies. That is right. Democrats want to fund the parts of the Department of Homeland Security that they like and keep the rest shut down indefinitely.

Now, this might come as news to Democrats, but the fact is that every part of the Department of Homeland Security is essential. As our colleague Senator BRITT pointed out on Thursday, Democrats' plan would leave Homeland Security investigations in limbo. A lot of Americans might not know it, but Homeland Security Investigations is responsible for some pretty serious law enforcement activities in this country. They look up child predators, drug dealers, terrorists.

And then there is Customs and Border Protection, another Agency that Democrats' plan would leave in limbo. Now, most Americans interact with CBP officers when they come back to the United States from abroad. They are the people who check your passport. They are also the people who prevent illegal immigrants and contraband like drugs and weapons from crossing our borders and getting into the country.

Under President Trump and thanks to the hard work of these men and women, our border is secure, and illegal crossings have shrunk to a tiny fraction of the record-setting numbers of the Biden administration.

The police chief in Sioux Falls recently said this of the drop in fentanyl seizures in South Dakota's largest city:

I think it's safe to say that some of the measures taken within the southern border are paying dividends within our community.

Are Democrats looking to undo these gains and return to chaos at the border?

Well, on top of all this, Democrats' proposal would also leave enforcement and removal operations unfunded—the people responsible for removing gang members, convicted criminals, and other dangerous illegal immigrants from our country.

On Thursday, the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee Senator MURRAY said that Democrats “cannot, we will not, cut a blank check—funding without reforms—for ICE and Border Patrol.”

Well, no one is asking her to. In fact, the DHS funding agreement the Democrats reneged on would have funded de-escalation training for ICE officers, added \$20 million for body cameras, and increased oversight of ICE funding.

The Trump administration has already taken a number of actions to rein in immigration enforcement on its own, and the administration has made two substantial offers to Democrats to legislate reform measures, over and

above the measures that Republicans had already agreed to.

Republicans and the White House are at the table—at the table. It is Democrats who are standing in the way.

Democrats can talk all they want about getting reforms, but the only thing they are accomplishing by dragging this out is protecting the status quo. There is only one way to get reforms signed into law, and that is by passing a DHS funding bill. And if Democrats were really serious about taking action on this issue, they would be working overtime to arrive at a compromise.

But they are not. They don't even want to sit down. Members on our side have reached out to the leaders on the Appropriations Committee on the Democrat's side and been told: We are not interested in having a conversation about this—not even interested in sitting down, which strongly suggests that what they are really interested in is not a solution but a political issue. They don't really want reforms. They want a political issue that they can use in November.

It is 3 weeks and counting on Democrats' second shutdown this fiscal year alone. Tens of thousands of DHS employees are going without pay and critical DHS priorities are going unfunded.

Will this be the week that Democrats actually get serious? I hope the answer is yes. But as of right now, this is what we are getting from the leadership on the Democrat side, the leadership on the Democrat Appropriations Committee—by the way, all of whom negotiated this deal in the first place before they walked away from it. But despite repeated overtures on our side and by the White House to engage with Democrats, they said: We are not even going to talk about it—not even going to talk about it.

So are they going to continue to keep Homeland Security and hard-working Americans in jeopardy?

I guess we will find out soon enough, but I hope that posture changes and they reengage in keeping important Agencies of our government that fulfill important safety and security responsibilities funded and those employees at work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democrat whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week was historic in the Senate Chamber. For the first time, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security came and appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee. She had been in the position for almost a year and had never agreed to publicly appear and account for her mismanagement of that Department until last week—1 day before the Senate Judiciary Committee, on which I serve as ranking Democrat, and the second day before the House Judiciary Committee for a similar hearing.

When the smoke had cleared, President Trump announced, via a social

media post, that he was firing Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem. The reason for the decision was obvious after her 2 days of testimony and 2 days of refusal to respond to important questions.

Under Kristi Noem's disastrous stewardship, the Department was devoid of any moral compass or respect for the rule of law. The city of Chicago was one of the first victims of Secretary Noem's political theater campaign with her so-called Operation Midway Blitz. Instead of targeting the “worst of the worst,” as the President has frequently announced, Secretary Noem unleashed masked, militarized immigration enforcement officers onto our streets.

These officers detained American citizens, green card holders, and community members with no prior criminal records in violent, indiscriminate, and unconstitutional roundups.

Do you remember the President's pledge at rally after rally? We are going after “the worst of the worst.” We are going into the neighborhoods of America. We are going to find the terrorists and the rapists and the murderers and the criminally insane who managed to sneak across our border. We will find them, and we will send them out of the country or to jail, one or the other.

What does their record show so far with that project and campaign under Secretary Noem and President Trump? They found that only one out of seven of the people who have been detained and deported—one out of seven—has any kind of serious criminal record. One out of seven.

So for their best efforts and for billions of dollars in recordbreaking amounts, DHS, with these Agencies, has more money than the U.S. Marine Corps, more money than the FBI. How are they doing? If they were batters in Major League Baseball and hit the ball one out of seven times, they would be not only in the minors, but they would be out of the game. One out of seven people deported has any kind of serious criminal record.

Her roving patrols shot a Chicago resident and citizen, Marimar Martinez, five times. Marimar Martinez is a miracle—“el milagro”—lucky to be alive. What did she do that was so dangerous—worst of the worst—that invoked the reaction from the ICE and CBP agents? She was taking a box of extra clothing to her church on a Saturday morning, driving through the streets of Chicago—Kedzie Avenue to be specific—when she was stopped by these agents of DHS.

When it was all over, they had shot at her car as it departed and struck her with five different bullets. Imagine, she is alive today to tell about it. She miraculously survived, but Renee Good and Alex Pretti of Minneapolis were shot by immigration agents there and did not survive.

That is why we are in a conversation with the Republicans about changing

the procedures of ICE and CBP when it comes to this Presidential campaign. To think that innocent American citizens are being shot and killed in our streets is unacceptable, unthinkable, unimaginable, but it is a fact, and that is why we are standing for the premise that these agents have to be held to similar standards that police and troopers are held to all across the United States.

How many of your State troopers are wearing a mask today to go out and do their job? In Illinois, none; in your State, probably the same. How about your local police? Are they wearing masks? Do they have video cameras on?

The basics of policing that we accept as professionalism have been rejected by the Department of Homeland Security. We are trying to establish a standard for these enforcement officers that is comparable to the standard of your police and State troopers and deputy sheriffs. That is it.

When I talk to law enforcement leaders in Illinois, they shake their heads and say: How many of our law enforcement officers are wearing a mask every day? None—virtually none.

Yet they are insisting that these ICE agents and CBP agents wear a mask. They say it is for their own safety. Let me tell you what is for their safety: to have the confidence of the people you are trying to protect. That, when it comes to safety, is the standard we should have. Wearing a mask and no identification does not instill confidence in the body politic.

Secretary Noem wasted no time in labeling all three of the victims that I referred to—Marimar Martinez, Renee Good, and Alex Pretti—as domestic terrorists, misleading the American public and causing immeasurable pain to their families. They were not domestic terrorists or anything like it. Yet she said it in each of the three instances.

So last week when Secretary Noem finally appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee, my colleagues and I sought to hold her to account. She proceeded, unfortunately, to lie under oath multiple times, including saying DHS followed court orders and had not detained American citizens, despite ample evidence to the contrary.

But Noem's abysmal track record wasn't enough to spur the President into action. What was the tipping point? Well, it turned out she had a multimillion-dollar—in fact, over \$143 million—self-promotional campaign which showed Kristi Noem riding horses at Mount Rushmore while wearing cowboy shoes and outfits, talking about how tough she was. Well, it turned out President Trump got wind of it and said to one of the Senators: She spent more money on her self-promotion campaign than I spent to get reelected.

Think about that.

As we started asking questions about this TV promotion campaign, it turned

out it involved some firms she had been doing business with in her home State. Too many questions.

Donald Trump announced that our colleague from Oklahoma Senator MARKWAYNE MULLIN will succeed Kristi Noem. We will find out how he plans to lead the Department in this perilous moment as the Senate exercises its authority under the Constitution to provide advice and consent on this nomination.

I want to make it clear for the record what happened last week. Senator PATTY MURRAY of the State of Washington, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, came to the floor and made a unanimous consent request that we fund every other Agency under DHS, as we had agreed in a bipartisan manner, and work solely on ICE and CBP to come up with an agreement and establish some reasonable policing standards.

Who objected to funding the rest of this Department? The Republican leader. So he had his chance—and I think he will have it again, I hope, soon—to restore the funding for these critical Agencies at this moment and give us enough time—we certainly have enough time—to work out an agreement on the procedures when it comes to ICE and CBP.

It won't be unreasonable to ask Senator MULLIN, if he pursues this appointment by the President, what he will do to change this Department in those critical areas. What does he think about shooting innocent Americans in the street? What does he think about his officers wearing masks? What does he think about them carrying video cameras to record exactly what happens at these scenes? What does he think about someone bashing down the front door of your home without a judicial warrant, without the permission or the approval of a judge, in accordance with just basic policing across America? These are fundamental questions.

The Republican leader said earlier: We can do something this week.

Yes, we should. We have been waiting for the White House to pitch in in a constructive way. Now is the moment to do it. I certainly hope we can achieve it this week, as Senator THUNE promised.

IRAN

Mr. President, I am afraid to report President Trump has broken yet another campaign promise to the American people.

This is from the New York Times. The headline: "Trump, the Self-Declared Peace President, Goes to War Seeking Regime Change." The article goes on to say:

President Trump has become increasingly willing to assert American power overseas, a decade after propelling himself to the highest office by promising to focus on "America first."

Throughout the 2024 campaign, President Trump promised there would be "no new wars" if he were elected, but early in the morning of February 28,

Americans woke up to a video from the President announcing that the United States had begun "major combat operations" in Iran. President Trump took this drastic course of action without consulting with our allies, the U.S. Congress, or the American people.

The Constitution makes it clear—article I, section 8—that only Congress can declare a war. This President does not believe that.

President Trump has tried to position himself as the peace President, but his actions tell a different story. In the last year alone, he has conducted military operations across three continents and threatened to militarily take over several countries, including Greenland from our NATO ally Denmark.

With Iran, we have seen gas prices spike, American lives lost, and risk and uncertainty in a difficult region—all, I worry, without a strategy or endgame.

In the first 6 days of this war with Iran, the administration and the White House announced six different reasons for the war.

It is apparent when you look at reports of the countless Americans stranded in the Middle East that this administration did not prepare a proper evacuation plan. It is obvious in President Trump's rhetoric as well.

Just last week, when we asked if we should be worried about retaliatory attacks on America, he responded:

I guess.

This is a chillingly callous statement when faced with the prospect of American casualties.

Recent briefings from this administration did little to address the same concerns I had when I was one of 23 Senators in October 2002 to vote against our invasion of Iraq. When I listen to the rationale from the Trump administration for our invasion of Iran, it sounds like the echo of the argument made about Iraq. Remember when we were looking for weapons of mass destruction which threatened our allies and even the United States? We finally invaded the country, took a quick look around, and realized there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Now when it comes to Iran, five or six different rationales have been used to explain why we invaded this country.

First, they said to stop them from developing nuclear weapons. We are all for that. In fact, the inspectors who were making sure they didn't develop them were removed from Iran under the first Trump administration by orders of President Trump. It doesn't make any sense to argue we need inspectors when he removed them in the first place, which he never should have done.

Second, there is an argument that they are developing ballistic missiles that threaten the United States. Those are months, if not years, away from development. How do you justify this current invasion?

Regime change. If the President thinks he can use missiles and aircraft