

promotes public safety in communities across America, invests in critical infrastructure projects, and it supports efforts to unleash American energy to provide affordable energy supply to the American people.

There is one more thing about this package that is significant. It spends less money than a continuing resolution. That is right. This bill spends less taxpayer money than if we passed another CR or continuing resolution to fund these Agencies. That is not an accident. That is what we can accomplish when we make appropriations a priority, when we put in the work, make tough choices, and put it up for a vote.

Appropriations is one of our core responsibilities, but it hasn't always been treated like the priority that it is. In too many cases in the past, massive omnibus bills were being written behind closed doors. That is not how I want to do things. When I became majority leader, I made it clear that I wanted appropriations to get the attention that it deserves, and we made some solid progress on this front in this Congress. We considered appropriations bills through regular order and passed three Senate appropriations bills before the August work period, something that hadn't been done going back to 2018.

We should be considering bills through regular order, a process that allows all Senators an opportunity to make their voice and the voices of their constituents heard. It is not just a better process; it creates a better product too.

When we receive this next package from the House, there is no reason that we can't take it up and pass it quickly here in the Senate. As I said, this bill was written with input from both parties in both the House and the Senate. It has the backing of the Trump administration. It advances a number of important priorities, and it actually spends less than if we just expended Biden-era spending levels for these same Agencies.

Once we finish this package, we have more work to do. Appropriators are working to finish the remaining bills for fiscal year 2026. One of those is the Defense appropriations bill—which is an especially important priority—to ensure that our military has the funding and certainty it needs to maintain and modernize its capability, support Americans serving in uniform, and protect our national security.

We don't have time to waste. It will require cooperation to ensure we can keep making progress as the end of the month approaches. I want to be clear that January 30 means January 30. We can't afford another extension. As soon as we finish, work will begin on the next appropriations cycle, starting with the President's budget request for fiscal year 2027.

We have done a lot of good work on appropriations this past year. I want to thank our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee, especially Chair COL-

LINS, for their hard work throughout the year. This work isn't easy, but it is important, and it is a responsibility we need to take seriously. I know they all do. Let's get fiscal year 2026 funding done and keep up the progress as we begin the process for fiscal year 2027.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

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

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

VENEZUELA

Mr. REED. Mr. President, for 4 months, my Democratic colleagues and I have come to the floor to warn against President Trump's military operations in South and Central America. We pointed out that his boat-strike campaign was strategically incoherent, legally questionable, and, ultimately, not about narcotrafficking at all. We have argued that the administration's shifting legal justifications, refusal to give Congress straight answers, and, in particular, the failure of the Department of Defense to provide information to Congress, which is required by law—all of these things—together with a massive military buildup, pointed toward something larger than narcotrafficking. Indeed, we warned that these actions were always directed at the government and economy of Venezuela.

That campaign has now culminated in a military raid on Caracas, the capture of Nicolas Maduro and his wife, and President Trump's extraordinary declaration that the United States will "run" Venezuela and seize control of its oil reserves.

Let me be very clear about something, at the outset: Nicolas Maduro is a brutal dictator who has destroyed Venezuela's economy, crushed democratic opposition, and fostered widespread corruption. He will not be missed. But this operation was not designed to restore peace in Venezuela or protect America from the ravages of drugs. Indeed, this operation is not about democracy. It is not about the suffering of the Venezuelan people. It is not even about narcotrafficking, despite the administration's killing more than 100 people in its strikes on alleged drug boats. In the President's own words, this campaign is simply about seizing Venezuela's oil and profiting from it.

The people of Venezuela have suffered extraordinary hardship under the Maduro regime. They have voted in multiple elections for new leadership and have been denied their choice through fraud and repression. After everything they have endured, the people of Venezuela deserve to choose what

happens next in their country. They do not deserve to have their future dictated by President Trump, Secretary Rubio, or anyone else in Washington.

Yet that is precisely what this administration plans to do. The plan presented by the White House is to simply force the remnants of the Maduro regime to grant the United States exclusive access to Venezuelan oil or face the consequences of a blockade. That is it. That is the plan.

Not in the plan: positive change for the people of Venezuela. There is no framework for elections or democratic transition, no serious assessment of the rival political factions inside Venezuela—factions that have been waiting for precisely this moment to seize power.

I have seen no contingency plan for what happens when China, Russia, Iran, or Cuba—nations with deep economic interests in Venezuela—decide to block or back proxy groups in a country we have just destabilized, nor have I heard any proposal for the next steps for countering narcotrafficking.

The administration's goals are aspirational at best, and aspirations are not enough when the stakes involve war and the future of millions of people.

One of the first lessons I learned as an Army officer is that hope is not a plan. Over my career, both in uniform and in the Congress, I have seen the United States hope that its military interventions abroad would succeed. I have seen regime changes, nation-building efforts, and elaborate reconstruction schemes launched with confident predictions of success, only to have them collapse when encountered with the reality on the ground.

And the reality is this: When we rely on the U.S. military as our primary tool of foreign engagement, we generally set ourselves up for failure. We have persistently misunderstood and misjudged the cultures, histories, and politics of the nations in which we have intervened because we assume military might is enough. We imagine outcomes that align with our military and economic objectives but are surprised when those outcomes fail. We consistently fail to plan for the "day after."

Unless the Trump administration gets serious, Venezuela will be no exception.

This isn't about our military capabilities. We have the most formidable fighting force the world has ever seen, and I am proud and, frankly, not surprised that all elements of our military worked together to successfully execute such a dangerous and difficult mission in Caracas. The skill, professionalism, and courage are beyond question of these men and women.

But military capability is not the same as strategic wisdom. The ability to achieve tactical objectives does not guarantee beneficial long-term outcomes, and executing a successful raid does not constitute a plan for governing a nation of 28 million people.

Congress exists to provide oversight and scrutiny of the executive branch, not to cheer from the sidelines. I commend our servicemen for their performance last weekend, but I am deeply concerned about the Trump administration's lack of serious planning for the next phase. That is why this War Powers Resolution is necessary.

The Constitution vests the power to authorize war in Congress, not the President. President Trump has claimed this was just a law enforcement mission. That is absurd. No matter how he describes it, the President waged war on a foreign nation without authorization, without notification to Congress, and without any explanation to the American people about what this operation will cost or what success will look like. This is a profound constitutional failure, and it must be corrected.

I hope I am wrong about these dangers ahead. I hope this administration is right, and the transition in Venezuela proceeds smoothly. I hope that the Venezuelan people embrace this outcome and see their lives improve quickly. I hope the violent factions in Venezuela choose peace over conflict. I hope the economic recovery for the people of Venezuela justifies this enormous gamble. But as I said before, hope is not enough, and history suggests we should prepare for a far more difficult reality.

The question before us is whether Congress will fulfill its constitutional duty or whether we will abdicate our responsibility and allow this President to commit American military resources, credibility, and, potentially, American lives to an open-ended entanglement without authorization or accountability.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

VENEZUELA

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, for months, the Trump administration claimed that its campaign of blowing up boats in the Caribbean was about stopping drugs like deadly fentanyl coming to the United States—never mind that fentanyl doesn't really come from Venezuela; it comes from precursors made in China and is predominantly smuggled in through Mexico; never mind that there are well-established, well-practiced operations for interdicting the drugs and apprehending alleged drug traffickers, not killing them; never mind that we don't even have clarity on what was on these boats or who was on these boats and where they were headed. No. Even as the U.S. military amassed unprecedented military firepower off the coast of Caracas that included multiple warships, thousands of troops, and the largest aircraft carrier ever put to sea, the administration still claimed this was about drug boats.

You heard the administration say that time and time again to the public and to Congress until last weekend when the objective became clear: This was about Venezuela's oil, and if we could have that, we would leave the drug-running regime in place, albeit with its No. 2 corrupt leader instead of its No. 1, Nicolas Maduro.

The rightful leadership of Venezuela, Maria Corina Machado and her election surrogate Edmundo Gonzalez—the ones who won the last election there—would have no place, no role in the new government because this was no more about democracy than it was about drugs. It was about oil.

Just yesterday, the Secretary of Energy said that the United States intended to maintain significant control over Venezuela's oil industry, including by overseeing the sale of the country's production indefinitely—indefinitely—and Donald Trump has promised to use the revenue from these oil sales to create a fund that he would control. He is literally meeting with oil executives on Friday to try to divide up the spoils of this military campaign.

Now, some of my colleagues may believe that using the U.S. military to depose Nicolas Maduro and seize Venezuela's oil is well worth the risk to our troops and the danger of our becoming mired down in that country. I disagree, but if that were the case, let them seek an authorization from Congress to do so.

We have so many urgent problems that need addressing here at home with life being barely affordable for millions of Americans and the cost of living rising—with people struggling to cover the rent, with families barely able to afford the cost of groceries, to say nothing of the skyrocketing healthcare costs. But now, instead of putting Americans first, we are stepping into a foreign nation and promising to run it for the foreseeable future. An administration that had promised to end foreign wars has begun a new one. A President who had decried the use of force for regime change or to engage in nation building has just committed our country to both.

No doubt Russia and China see opportunity in this American about-face, with Russia to indict Ukrainian leaders and to seize them and with China to do the same in Taiwan. We are not only at risk of reestablishing the idea that might makes right and military conquest is acceptable in your sphere of influence, but there is the very real prospect of destabilizing a world order post-World War II that has made us safer and more prosperous.

Now, when it comes to Congress's role in checking this President, in asserting its war powers given to us by our Founders and the Framers of our Constitution, if we do not assert this power, we will lose it and not just to constrain this President but any President and for all time. The American people have said clearly and repeatedly they do not want us dragged into new

foreign wars, especially wars of our own making, and we have the power to make good on that instruction. We are a coequal branch of government and the only branch endowed with the power of the purse and the power to declare war or to refuse to do so.

But if we do not assert these powers, if we don't stand up not just for our branch of government but for the American people, there is no telling and no stopping what comes next because the administration has made it clear that Venezuela is the opening salvo. Will it be Cuba next or Colombia or Mexico or Greenland, for crying out loud?

This is the moment when we need to stand up and exercise our powers as part of the government that is closest to the people to make it clear that no President can commit our military forces absent an attack on our country or imminent threat of an invasion without the approval of Congress and certainly not to help industry chase new profits or revenue in oil or minerals around the globe. We have a duty to our constituents, to our Constitution, and to posterity. Let us uphold it. Vote yes on the resolution.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VENEZUELA

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, fellow Senators, we are about to vote on a War Powers Resolution, which is becoming common around here—and way too common, as a matter of fact.

But I think the first thing we ought to talk about is what we are actually doing here, from a 30,000-foot standpoint, as far as what the resolution actually says. As usual, there is a lot of setup in here, but there are 2½ lines that say what we are trying to do here—not we, but what the other side is trying to do here.

It says:

Congress hereby directs the President to terminate the use of the United States Armed Forces for hostilities within or against Venezuela.

Let me say that again: We are directing “the President to terminate the use of . . . Armed Forces for hostilities within or against Venezuela.”

There isn't anybody that has any information that the President is using Armed Forces against Venezuela. He did for about 47 minutes this last weekend, but he is not in the process of doing this. And the resolution says that he should stop it. He is not doing it.

Now, if the resolution were drawn to say, “Mr. President, you can't do this