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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose power moves in the changes of the seasons and in the beauty of the stars, let Your gentle strength live in our hearts. Today, infuse our Senators with Your wisdom so that they will walk in the path of Your will. Lord, keep them faithful. May Your love empower them to grow in knowledge and judgment so that they will be able to choose what is best. Amid the haste and hurry of their labors, remind them to spend time with You in order to experience the joy and strength of Your presence. Make their lives gifts of Your love to a hurting nation and world.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 26, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WELCH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Joshua David Jacobs, of Washington, to be Under Secretary for Benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, for months, the President has been clear that he will not allow the full faith and credit of the United States to be taken hostage. He has rejected brinksmanship, hostage-taking, and asked for what is the only way to solve this problem given where we are at right now, which is clean, clean, avoiding default—clean to avoid default.

To avoid default, Democrats have asked Speaker MCCARTHY and Republicans to present a credible plan, but last week Republicans instead released an extremist, hard-right agenda, written in a backroom, in secret, to win support from the Freedom Caucus. The GOP's ''Default on America Act,'' as we call it, does not bring us any closer to avoiding a first-ever default. In fact, it only brings us dangerously closer to defaulting.

The ''Default on America Act'' would mean fewer jobs, higher costs for the American people, and would leave policemen, first responders, Border Patrol, and our brave veterans all hanging out to dry.

For those who worry about gun violence and crime and keeping our communities safe, the ''Default on America Act'' will wipe out nearly 30,000 law enforcement while also gutting critical resources to secure the border. Donald Trump told House Republicans to defund law enforcement, and so the ''Default on America Act,'' on cue, does just that.

That is what the ''Default on America Act'' does. And not just that; it would eliminate over 142,000 new jobs, including 18,000 manufacturing jobs that have been created since the Inflation Reduction Act was passed.

If you are a parent struggling to pay for childcare, the ''Default on America Act'' will eliminate more than 105,000 childcare slots across the country, making it harder for parents to find work, finish their education, or even provide for their families.

If you know someone who struggled with addiction, this bill would also worsen the opioid epidemic by cutting critical HHS programs by over $10 billion in the next decade. That is the definition of cruelty.

If you want to go to college, the Republican package will slash Pell grants for all students by $1,000 and even eliminate Pell grants entirely for tens of thousands of Americans.

And for those who worry about gun violence and keeping our communities

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

safe, the ''Default on America Act'' will wipe out nearly 30,000 law enforcement positions while gutting critical resources to secure the border. Again, Donald Trump told House Republicans to defund law enforcement, and the ''Default on America Act,'' on cue, does just that.

Put plainly, the House Republicans are hell-bent on default one way or another—either a default on the debt or a default on everything else: on our future, our children, our promise to care for our kids and veterans and law enforcement and first responders. No matter what happens, Republicans are promising real pain for American families.

And what happened just a few hours ago in the wee hours of the morning? Plainly, Speaker MCCARTHY capitulated even further to the hard right. Again, if anything, this revised bill is even more extreme, more radical—a more radical version of the ''Default on America Act.'' It brings us no closer to avoiding a default on the national debt.

Let me be clear. Democrats cannot and will not allow the Republicans's ''DOA Act'' to ever become law. It is DOA, plain and simple. And if Republicans refuse to level with the public about the terrible things their ''Default on America Act'' will do to them, Democrats will do the work ourselves. We will let America know how bad this is because Republicans are intent on hiding it. They know how unpopular it would be.

In the meantime, Speaker MCCARTHY needs to recognize that all the energy he is putting into passing the ''Default on America Act'' will be wasted effort. The Speaker should drop the brinksmanship, drop the hostage-taking, come to the table with Democrats, and pass a clean bill to avoid default. Given where the Republican proposal is, that is the only way to go. Time is running out.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Mr. President, on the ERA, tomorrow, the Senate will have a chance to take the next major step on an effort a century in the making: ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment under the Constitution.

The story of American democracy has been an uneven but inexorable march toward greater equality for all people. America's foundation contains a simple premise: No matter who you are, where you come from, you too deserve equal treatment under the law.

The Senate will have a chance tomorrow to bring our country one step closer toward greater equity by voting on a bipartisan resolution regarding the Equal Rights Amendment. The measure is simple. It will recognize that 38 States have now legitimately ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, meeting the threshold required under the Constitution. It would remove an arbitrary deadline set decades ago that invalidated the ratification that occurred in a few States. The States did the work, just not in the required time that was imposed on them a very long time ago. I believe the Senate should now remove that obstacle.

And we must act now because the Equal Rights Amendment has never been more necessary than today. To the horror of hundreds of millions of people, women in America have fewer rights today than they did even a year ago. The protections of Roe v. Wade are gone thanks to the MAGA majority on the Supreme Court. Over a dozen States have near-total abortion bans, and tens of millions of people have to travel hundreds of miles just to access reproductive care. That is sickening.

We cannot claim that America is a nation of equal justice when half of its citizenry languishes on with fewer rights, less dignity, and limited recourse under the Constitution. That is why the Senate must vote in favor of advancing this ERA resolution tomorrow, so we can bring our Nation one step closer to greater justice, greater equality, and equal rights for all people, regardless of gender.

Thank you to Senators CARDIN and MURKOWSKI for championing this resolution. I look forward to voting in its favor tomorrow.

ELIZABETH DOLE VETERANS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. President, finally, the Senate will take the first procedural vote on legislation to care for our Nation's veterans, spearheaded by my good friend Senator TESTER, head of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The Elizabeth Dole Veterans Program Improvement Act of 2023 is the union of a number of important and impactful bills that will strengthen the VA, improve its caregiver program, expand home- and community-based services for vets, and ultimately bestow greater dignity on those who defended our Nation.

The bipartisan veterans bill is precisely the sort of legislation the Senate should be working on to build on our success on the PACT Act last year. This is bipartisan, far-reaching, and will make an enormous difference in the lives of our veterans across the country.

I want to thank Senator TESTER, Senator MORAN, and Members from both sides of the aisle for working on this important veterans package.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ISSUES FACING AMERICA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in the last several years, Democrats have given many dramatic speeches about our country's norms and institutions, about the rule of law and the health of democracy. But the sad irony has been this: The same political left that shouted so loudly about norms, institutions, and the rule of law has kept trying to steamroll these principles themselves.

Look at recent events at the State capitol buildings in Tennessee and Montana—angry liberal activists in shoving matches with law enforcement, shouting down proceedings. I myself am on the record as a firm critic of rioters and disrupting legislatures, across the board, no matter who is doing it. Why can't the left be as consistent?

And look at their side's growing hostility to the very independence of our judicial branch. A few weeks ago, when one Federal judge issued a ruling with policy outcomes that Democrats didn't like, they started suggesting that politicians should just openly disobey—just openly disobey—the judge's rulings.

Those suggestions are toxic and, frankly, anti-American. It was wrong when President Andrew Jackson tried to ignore the Court way back in the 1830s, it was dead wrong when Governor Faubus defied the Court on civil rights in the 1950s, and it is wrong also when today's Democratic Party brings all of that back.

The attacks on the judiciary don't stop there. In 2020, our colleague the Democratic leader stood on the very steps of the Supreme Court and threatened Justices by name—by name—with a ''whirlwind'' of retaliation if they failed to rule the way he wanted.

Then, after top Democrats encouraged mob outrage over a leaked draft opinion, President Biden's Attorney General failed to enforce clear Federal law and put a stop—a stop—to illegal protests that sought to intimidate the Justices at their private family homes.

Recently, a number of Senate Democrats have gone so far as to propose defunding security needs for the Justices and their families if Chief Justice Roberts doesn't reorganize internal matters the way Democrats would prefer. So after fanning the flames of violence against an equal branch of government, Democrats now want to defund the Justices' ability to protect themselves and their families if certain Senators don't get their way.

They are trying to turn impartial judges into partisan hostages. This is really beyond irresponsible.

And then, of course, there are the desperate and never-ending attempts to smear and defame Justices appointed by Republican Presidents, going back years and decades. Over the last few weeks, two Justices have been particularly subjected to a carousel of character assassination. I am sure it will be another Justice's turn again before too long. This is simply how the far left treats the rule of law.

Let me just repeat that I have total confidence in Justice Gorsuch, Justice Thomas, and all seven of their distinguished colleagues, no matter who appointed them—no matter who appointed them. Just yesterday, all nine Justices explained in a statement their joint approach to maintaining their high ethical standards. Unlike the activists and elected Democrats trying to

tear them down, the Justices have proven their sobriety and judicial temperament over their long and distinguished careers.

VEHICLE EMISSIONS

Mr. President, now on another matter, today, the senior Senator from Nebraska will advance a resolution to push back on the Biden administration's war against American energy and American industry.

Senator FISCHER's resolution responds to the Biden administration's new plan to hike already stringent vehicle emission standards even higher. This latest rule on nitrogen oxide emissions takes direct aim at the sort of trucks and heavy equipment that literally drive our entire economy.

Back in 2021, climate activists got the President to invoke ''environmental justice'' in an Executive order rolling out its so-called Clean Trucks Plan. The same bureaucrats who can't control inflation or secure the border want to even more closely micromanage the heavy vehicles allowed on our roads. Never mind that the nitrogen oxide emissions of new trucks on the market are already—listen to this—already 98 to 99 percent lower than they were as recently as the late 1990s.

By the EPA's own estimates, the new technology required to meet the latest arbitrary benchmarks could jack up truck prices by as much as $8,304 each—each.

Listen to what the truckers themselves have to say:

> If small business owners can't afford the new, compliant trucks, they're going to stay with older, less-efficient trucks, or leave the industry entirely.

Leave the industry entirely? Higher priced trucks, fewer drivers, higher costs for consumer goods—that is an outcome working families and supply chains simply can't stomach.

So I want to express my gratitude to Senator FISCHER for bringing this resolution forward. I would urge each of our colleagues to support it.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

INFLATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, one of President Biden's favorite things to talk about is giving families ''a little bit of breathing room.'' It is a phrase he uses frequently, just as he also frequently talks about growing the economy ''from the middle out and the bottom up, not from the top down.''

He used both phrases in a speech just last week. And, frankly, it is somewhat staggering to me that he continues to talk like this, because the Biden economy is the story of taking away Americans' breathing room. It is a story of declining purchasing power for lower and middle-income families, of wages that don't keep pace with increased costs, of stretched budgets and difficult spending decisions. President Biden has presided over a historic inflation crisis that has left American families struggling just to keep up. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture in February 2023, a cost-effective nutritious meal plan for a family of four cost $979.40 per month.

Two years earlier, that same family would have had to spend $674.80. That is a 45-percent increase—a 45-percent increase. The Biden economy is costing that family of four an additional $304 a month for groceries, or $3,655 per year more. And, again, that is just on groceries.

I don't need to tell anyone that prices have risen across the board, 15.4 percent on average since President Biden took office, and American families are feeling the pinch. A recent CNBC survey found that 70 percent of Americans are feeling financially stressed—70 percent—and that the majority of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck. And it is no surprise, given that inflation has outpaced wage growth for 24 straight months—meaning that under the Biden administration, Americans have received a de facto pay cut.

Americans are cutting back on spending, dipping into savings, or charging expenses to their credit card to help make ends meet. Bloomberg reports on a growing trend of relying on ''buy now, pay later'' apps for everyday purchases, noting that and I quote:

> U.S. consumers are increasingly using such installment loans to pay for everyday items like groceries, highlighting the financial pain wrought by the worst inflation outbreak in four decades.

Credit card debt hit a record high in the final quarter of 2022, and nearly half of Americans are carrying balances now from month to month. More than two-thirds of Americans are saving less than they did a year ago. And the list goes on. Put simply, if President Biden wanted to create more breathing room for Americans, he has failed. In fact, President Biden has taken away Americans' breathing room, and there is little relief in sight.

Now, I don't need to tell anyone that one of the main reasons we are in the midst of this inflation crisis is because of Democrats and the President's decision to pass the so-called American Rescue Plan Act, which was a massive and partisan $1.9 trillion spending spree that flooded our economy with unnecessary government money.

Democrats were warned that their bill would cause inflation, and they proceeded anyway. And the economy overheated as a result. Even worse, despite steadily climbing inflation in the wake of their bill, Democrats seemed determined not to recognize their mistake. Instead of acknowledging their oversized spending bill helped set off inflation, Democrats kept pursuing more spending and more damaging economic policies.

There is the $5 trillion big government vision they called Build Back Better but should probably have been named more aptly ''Build Back Broke'' or ''Bankrupt,'' the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, which has done nothing to address inflation but has imposed a series of new taxes that are driving up Americans' energy costs.

The President's reckless student loan giveaway, which could end up costing American taxpayers close to a trillion dollars. And there is more. And the bad ideas just keep coming.

The President recently released his budget proposal, which would increase spending every year until the Federal budget reaches an eye-watering $10 trillion in the year 2033—$10 trillion. For comparison, let me just point out that the entire Federal budget for 2019—and that is the last budget before the pandemic—was $4.4 trillion—$4.4 trillion.

President Biden wants to more than double that: $4.4 trillion to $10 trillion. And then there is the latest idea from the White House, which is punishing Americans with good credit scores if they purchase a house. That is right. Think about this one: The Biden administration has announced a new policy which is set to go into effect on May 1st that would impose higher mortgage fees on Americans with higher credit scores, and the highest fees on Americans who make a substantial downpayment.

Now if you save and are able to make a 20 percent downpayment on a home, you are going to pay more under the Biden administration plan.

These higher fees would then go to subsidize mortgages for Americans with lower credit scores. In other words, think about it this way: The Biden administration is targeting hard-working Americans who save, diligently pay their bills, and build good credit, in order to subsidize mortgages for higher risk borrowers.

It is the microcosm of Biden's big government policies. Punish hard work, punish financial discipline, punish success, and redistribute the wealth. Squeeze middle-class Americans. Force hard-working taxpayers to fund Democrats' socialist visions.

We literally are socializing mortgage payments. That is what it amounts to. Nothing more, nothing less. Because, let's be very clear, President Biden likes to talk about forcing better-off Americans to pay for his policies, and he likes to claim that he isn't going to raise taxes on Americans making less than $400,000 a year. But this new mortgage policy is going to hit thousands and thousands of middle-class Americans making ordinary salaries whose only crime is that they worked hard, saved money, and have been responsible with their debt.

The President can talk all he likes about making wealthy Americans pay

their fair share, the truth is that it is lower and middle-income Americans who are suffering as a result of the President's economic policies.

This summer another big economic issue will come into play: The debt limit. Sometime in the next few months, the United States will reach the limit of its borrowing capacity, and Congress will have to pass—and the President will have to sign—legislation to raise the debt ceiling to enable the United States to pay our debts. Needless to say, that will require negotiations between the President and Congress, something the President has so far refused to engage in.

Why? Because the President doesn't want an increase in the debt limit to be paired with any measures that might cut spending or actually do something to reduce the debt.

I suppose that is not a surprising position from someone who wants to grow government, increase the size of the Federal budget to a staggering $10 trillion, but it is a deeply problematic position—both because it ignores the increasing danger represented by our ever-increasing national debt and because it is an unrealistic position.

In a divided government, a refusal to negotiate cannot be an option. And if the President doesn't want to go down in history as the President who forced the United States to default on its debt, he needs to start engaging in negotiations.

House Republicans are putting forward a serious bill to restrain excess spending while protecting the full faith and credit of the United States. The President needs to join the Speaker at the negotiating table. Responsible spending reforms might not undo the economic damage the President has done, but they could put us on a more sustainable and less-damaging path for the future. And they could spare Americans some of the economic pain that would result from more of President Biden's reckless government spending.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL ZAMORE

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, it was John Quincy Adams who once said:

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.

For the last 14 years, the members of my team have had an outstanding leader in our chief of staff, Michael Zamore, who has constantly and consistently inspired the team and me to dream, to grow, to strive to do better every single day for ourselves and the people we serve.

But after nearly a decade and a half, as the heart and soul of Team Merkley and more than 22 years on Capitol Hill, Mr. Zamore has decided to close this chapter of his life and career and set off to begin writing the next chapter. I know I speak for many when I say how hard it is to imagine our office or the Senate without Mike Zamore.

Mike has been with me from the very beginning. He was one of the small crew working out of the temporary basement office the day I was sworn in. Five new Members of the Senate and a couple of staff members crowded into a single, little, expanded room downstairs, trying to figure out what we were doing, how to get around.

Where are those hearing rooms? How do we get the paper for the printers? How do we get staples for the staplers?

He has been a pivotal part of every success that our team has achieved since, and there have been a lot of legislative highlights in the time that he has led Team Merkley—to name just a few: outlawing predatory mortgages; passing financial reform to shut down the Wall Street proprietary trading casino; winning Senate passage of ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, to end job discrimination against our LGBTQ+ community; drafting and introducing the Equality Act to end LGBTQ discrimination across the board; leading the effort to end the horrific Trump policy of ripping children out of their parents' arms at the border; ending the importation of Chinese products produced with slave labor; and so many more and so many different initiatives to improve healthcare, to establish more decent and affordable housing, to expand quality education, and to increase the number of good-paying jobs for working Americans.

But it isn't just policy that is relevant to the role of a chief of staff. Mike has worked to ensure that our team has the best operation for answering constituents' letters to be found on Capitol Hill, to empower the Oregon half of our operation to build a fabulous constituent services team and an excellent set of field representatives to work with Oregon's counties and cities to address the challenges and opportunities within our State, and to keep our DC team and our Oregon team working closely together as one.

He did this through many trips to the State and by encouraging staff here in DC to travel and be in Oregon as well and by ensuring we connected and coordinated through weekly all-staff meetings and that we connected through biannual retreats: getting everyone together face-to-face with the Oregon team and the DC team, spending time together to know one another, enjoy each other's company, and expand the connections that lead to successful progress forward on issue after issue.

And because we like to be a team that not only works hard but plays hard, Mike always had a little special presentation for those occasions when we were all gathered together, on one occasion dressing up in colonial garb to perform a special Team Merkley rendition of a song from ''Hamilton'' or, on another occasion, doing a sea shanty during our nautical-themed virtual retreat. In doing these presentations, he proved himself to be a far, far braver man than most of the rest of us, but I know that that extra bit of effort has always been beloved by everyone on the team.

His most lasting legacy will be through the talented individuals he has carefully recruited to be members of our team over the last 14-plus years and the way that he inspired them and led them, with heart and humility, imbuing them with the same passion for public service that has guided Mike throughout his entire career.

I believe we have had one of the most energetic, capable, and motivated teams ever assembled on Capitol Hill, and that is because we have had one of the most energetic, capable, and motivated chiefs of staff in Mike Zamore.

As chief, Mike worked hard to champion and reinforce specific values. One of them that has resonated over the years is the idea of continuous self-improvement—the idea that none of us are perfect and never will be and that we should always be striving to be better ourselves as individuals and as a team.

Mike never exempted himself from that same spirit of continual self-improvement. He sought out and welcomed honest feedback from everyone, from the newest intern to the most senior staffer, on how he was doing and how the office was doing and how we could do better.

Jack Welch, the former head of GE, once said:

When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.

Mike has always cared deeply about helping the members of our team grow. That is why he has always loved outside-the-box thinking, like when a staff member suggested that I should hop on a plane and go down to the border to find out for myself what was really happening with the administration's zero-tolerance family separation policy. It is why he enthusiastically embraced and championed our office's mission of inclusivity and was so supportive of the creation of a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee. Our DE&I team members have created learning opportunities, and they share information to educate and inform the rest of the team about a wide range of issues, and they work to inspire honest, open, and sometimes uncomfortable dialogues so that we can all be the best versions of ourselves and so that we can serve all of the people of Oregon with the highest level of respect and responsiveness.

It is why his door was always open for what he called ''Z hours,'' when folks would come in and talk about anything whether it was work related or not.

The office and Team Merkley won't be the same without Mike. It won't be the same without the ringer on his phone quacking like a duck and interrupting meetings. It won't be the same without our office mascot—Mike's loving husky, Juneau—around to brighten everyone's day.

The writer Walter Lippmannn noted:

The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind in others the conviction and will to carry on.

And I can tell you that the values of service, compassion, and humility that Mike has enshrined in the heart of Team Merkley will carry on because the folks whom he has painstakingly brought together have the conviction and will to do so.

Thank you, Mike. Thank you for all you have done for the team, all you have done for the Senate, and all you have done in advocating for policies to make our State, our country, and the world a better place. We wish you and your family the best as you start writing that next chapter of your life.

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

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

VEHICLE EMISSIONS

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to a resolution that has been presented to overturn the EPA's lifesaving heavy-duty NO_X rule.

Across the country, heavy-duty vehicles, including trucks and buses, make up one-third of all transportation NO_X emissions. Now, this is the same source of smog and soot that darkens skies in many communities and certainly poisons the lungs of too many Americans.

In an effort to address those real challenges, the EPA's heavy-duty vehicle pollution rule is projected to cut NO_X emissions from the heavy-duty sector by nearly half over the next dozen years. This represents a monumental investment and significant step forward in our Nation's health and air quality that will benefit all Americans. But instead of supporting this rule, some Members have suggested that we reverse course and instead leave in place an outdated pollution standard—a rule that even the heavy-duty vehicle industry acknowledges is too weak—and, in so doing, endanger the lives of thousands of Americans. This makes no sense.

Consider the Inland Empire in Southern California. Truly this region, this geographical area, is the heart of our Nation's supply chain. No one in the Inland Empire wants the economy to shutter, but residents in the region know all too well the dangers that surround them. Children's playgrounds, veterans health centers, schools, and entire neighborhoods are surrounded by warehouses and distribution centers. Now, the warehouses in and of themselves aren't threatening our air quality or public health, but think about the emissions from the trucks that carry goods to and from those warehouses. As a result, communities throughout the Inland Empire, which happen to also be mostly Latino and low-income communities, experience higher rates of asthma, decreased lung function in children, and higher rates of cancer. It is not hyperbole. The data is there. Statistics are clear.

It is not just the Inland Empire. I raise that as the most significant example. In fact, it is communities all across the country near freight corridors that are impacted—almost 72 million people who live near freight routes.

So yes, Mr. President, I am standing up for the fundamental human right to clean air for all Americans.

Now, truth be told, I actually wanted the EPA to be more ambitious in its final NO_X rule and to align more closely with California's stringent heavy-duty vehicle rules. California proudly leads the Nation in decarbonization and emissions reduction, and we have done so by working thoughtfully and collectively with industry and communities to cut deadly NO_X and other pollution from vehicles while we transition to zero-emission vehicles.

So to my colleagues who claim negative business or economic impacts, California is doing this while having just grown from being the fifth largest economy in the world to the fourth largest economy in the world. Economic growth and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive. Economic growth and protecting public health are not mutually exclusive. We can and must do it all together.

Last I checked from business leaders whom I talked to—I mentioned industries at the table and also at the State level—they actually appreciate that regulatory certainty that I know you and I have talked about, Mr. President, where we lay out a rule, an agenda, a policy objective, and work together to create a plan to achieve it and keep that plan, not ripsaw back and forth about what regulations are going to be in place from one year to the next, from one congressional majority to the next, et cetera.

I am also continuing to push the EPA to finalize a strong phase 3 heavy-duty vehicle rule with my clean air and clean transportation partners in the Senate, including Chairman CARPER of the Environment and Public Works Committee and Senator MARKEY and others.

But, at the very least, we can't undercut two decades of progress we have already made, and this CRA undermines the scientific and technical expertise behind these important standards and public health protections. And we know that the CRA is part of a bigger effort to stop the bold action we are taking to tackle the climate crisis.

So, colleagues, for the sake of clean air, for the sake of our environment, and for the sake of the health of all communities across the country, I urge you to oppose this repeal.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would ask unanimous consent to be able to complete my remarks before the vote.

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this week, the House is expected to vote on legislation to begin to rein in Congress's out-of-control spending and avoid a debt default. As the American people know, this is a critical task that has become more urgent by the day.

The United States hit its debt limit, basically maxing out on our national credit card. We maxed out on our credit card in January, and the Treasury Department has been using what they call ''extraordinary measures'' to prevent the government from defaulting on its debt. Because it depends on how much revenue is coming in the front door from taxes, we don't know exactly when these measures will be exhausted, but experts say it could happen as soon as June, which is only 1 month away. So clearly it is time to get serious about solutions.

From the beginning of this discussion and debate, two things have become abundantly clear: One, default should be avoided at all costs. This is something that Republicans and Democrats both agree to. Our economy is still stabilizing from the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, our banking system has endured two high-profile collapses, and inflation continues to wreak havoc on family budgets.

The latest RealClearPolitics average for the Biden administration's handling of the economy says that only about 37 percent of the American people believe President Biden has done a good job on the economy. So clearly they are feeling vulnerable to any shocks to the economy that might occur should the debt limit not be passed.

We know that if the United States defaults on these debts, all of our challenges will only get worse. Social Security and Medicare benefits would be delayed. Members of the military and Federal employees would not get paid. We could see skyrocketing mortgage rates, sinking stock prices, and an instability all across our economy.

In short, this is not a time for a game of chicken; this is a time for responsible people to step up and to do their job. A default is the very last thing our country needs, and Congress and the administration need to act before it is too late.

I am glad we agree on that point, but the second point is where there is clearly a difference of opinion. It is clear that America's borrowing and spending are unsustainable. With $31

trillion in national debt and almost $1 trillion a year being spent on interest to pay the bondholders who hold that debt, we know we can't continue down this path. National debt has catapulted from $3.2 trillion in 1980 to $9.7 trillion in 2000. Today, it is $31.7 trillion. Those numbers are so big, I am sure most of us have difficulty grasping them, assuming we could at all—$31.7 trillion in debt.

While the national debt poses a significant economic risk, it also invites significant security risks. Every day, America is spending more and more money on interest payments—like I said, about $1 trillion for the bondholders who own that debt. Each dollar that goes toward servicing the debt is a dollar that can't be spent on other priorities, like keeping America safe.

For years, our top defense officials have warned about the risk of the national debt continuing to grow. In 2010, I remember then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Michael Mullen said:

The most significant threat to our national security is our debt.

Since then, our national debt has more than doubled. That trend is not going to change on its own. It requires a change of behavior—behavior by the administration and by Members of the U.S. Congress. We need to act as soon as possible to rein in out-of-control spending and protect America's long-term financial stability and our national security. Future generations are going to have to pay that money back, and we ought to do everything we can to avoid that result, if there are things we can do at least to mitigate it.

So these are the two basic truths that the majority of Americans agree on: A default is unacceptable, and secondly, we need to get our fiscal house in order. Unfortunately, President Biden refuses to engage on either one. This is really unbelievable to me. The President of the United States, the leader of the free world, and he said: Eh, not my problem. How irresponsible, how reckless is that?

From the beginning, President Biden drew outrageous redlines and tried to dictate what a solution would look like. And, actually, it wasn't a solution; it was just a patch. The President ruled out any negotiations over spending reforms and said he expected Congress to raise the debt limit with no conditions attached.

We know that any bank or credit union in America that issues a credit card—that once you have maxed out on your credit limit, they want to know: OK, if you want us to raise that limit, you are going to have to tell us how you are going to pay the money back that you already owe. But President Biden said: No, we want to keep spending, and we want to keep raising the debt limit, but we don't want to do anything about reforming spending or changing the curve when it comes to reining in spending.

These unrealistic declarations by the President don't make him look tough; they just make him look out of touch. Just because President Biden wants something doesn't mean it will happen.

As the President knows, Democrats no longer control both Chambers of Congress. During the first 2 years, the President could snap his fingers and expect Democrats to advance his agenda without a single Republican vote. And that happened, most recently on two bills which are partisan bills that added $2.7 trillion to our national debt. And now the President says: It is not my problem.

Well, this isn't a monarchy. We got rid of a King a long time ago. This isn't the Biden empire, and the President's wishes can only count for so much.

The reality of the situation is that any solution to the debt ceiling must be bipartisan and bicameral. It has to be approved by a Republican-led House and a Democrat-led Senate and a Democrat President. Right now, President Biden's clean debt ceiling increase simply has no way to pass.

So we are at an impasse, and there is only one way forward; that is, the President must do what Presidents have always done before this time, and that means come to the negotiating table. That is the only way to avert a debt crisis that both political parties want to avoid.

For months, Republicans have urged President Biden to sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY and hammer a compromise.

Other than a single meeting where they literally touch gloves and then walked away, like two boxers in a ring, the President has been completely absent without leave. He has been AWOL.

He continues to parrot demands that he knows are unreasonable and impractical, and he refuses to acknowledge the reality of the problem.

Well, since President Biden took office a little over 2 years ago, he has been on a spending bender. He pushed Democrats in Congress to pass two massive partisan bills that I mentioned a moment ago, totaling about $2.7 trillion. These were strictly party-line votes by Democrats, with no Republican support, that added $2.7 trillion to the debt, and now President Biden said: Not my problem once the debt ceiling has hit.

He stuck taxpayers for a ridiculous set of pet projects, everything from handouts for labor unions to subsidies for wealthy people so they would buy electric vehicles, even though most Americans can't afford one.

President Biden didn't just rely on Democrats to indulge his spending habits; he also ran off with the taxpayers' credit card by himself.

The President single-handedly claimed to be able to spend $460 billion in an Executive order erasing student loans off the books for tens of millions of borrowers. That case is now pending in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Clearly, he does not have that authority, but he claimed to have it, and now we have a case pending before the Supreme Court to decide that.

So President Biden, in addition to the $2.7 trillion in partisan spending bills, has no trouble adding to that debt by another $460 billion. But he doesn't want to negotiate the debt ceiling increase. He doesn't want to talk about how do we get back on a glidepath to more responsible spending habits.

Despite the President's record of spending like there is no tomorrow, he refuses to talk about spending reforms—at least so far. He said he won't even entertain the idea that this is a topic worth discussing with the Speaker of the House.

As I said, that is a completely reckless and irresponsible position to take, and even members of the President's own party are lining up to criticize him. The Senator from Minnesota, Senator KLOBUCHAR, recently said that President Biden should sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY. Senator KLOBUCHAR is right. Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL, in the House of Representatives, said that the administration can't keep waiting. Senator MANCHIN, from West Virginia, went so far as to criticize the President's refusal to sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY as a deficiency in leadership.

With a potential default on the horizon, it is time for President Biden to change his tune. He needs to abandon this reckless ''my way or the highway'' attitude and sit down and do what Presidents have always done, and that is to negotiate a solution.

From the beginning, it was obvious to everybody that a bipartisan compromise was the only path forward. That is the most fundamental tenet of divided government. Nobody can do it by themselves, so you have to work out solutions together.

It is simply unacceptable for any President to stand by with these kinds of outrageous redlines when we are potentially just weeks away from a possible default, considering, especially, the fragility of the economy as it currently exists. And this would make it catastrophic.

So President Biden has wasted months already with his reckless position, and it is time to get moving. I appreciate Speaker MCCARTHY's efforts to break the stalemate and get President Biden to join him at the negotiating table.

I will repeat, in closing, the only way to avoid a debt crisis is through a bipartisan negotiation. Republicans have known that all along. Many Democrats are now acknowledging that as well, and it is time for President Biden to get the message.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON JACOBS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senate and advise the consent to the Jacobs nomination?

Mr. COONS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 74, nays 25, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 96 Ex.]

YEAS—74

Baldwin	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Hagerty	Reed
Blackburn	Hassan	Romney
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Rosen
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Boozman	Hirono	Sanders
Britt	Hoeven	Schatz
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Schumer
Budd	Kaine	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kelly	Sinema
Capito	Kennedy	Smith
Cardin	King	Stabenow
Carper	Klobuchar	Tester
Casey	Luján	Thune
Cassidy	Manchin	Tillis
Collins	Markey	Tuberville
Coons	Marshall	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warner
Cotton	Merkley	Warnock
Cramer	Moran	Warren
Cruz	Murkowski	Welch
Duckworth	Murphy	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Fetterman	Ossoff	Young
Gillibrand	Padilla	

NAYS—25

Barrasso	Johnson	Rubio
Braun	Lankford	Schmitt
Cornyn	Lee	Scott (FL)
Crapo	Lummis	Scott (SC)
Daines	McConnell	Sullivan
Ernst	Mullin	Vance
Fischer	Paul	Wicker
Grassley	Ricketts	
Hawley	Risch	

NOT VOTING—1

Feinstein

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

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

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

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for 3 minutes.

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

CONFIRMATION OF JOSHUA DAVID JACOBS

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, last summer this body delivered on a promise to our toxic-exposed veterans. We passed a bill called the SFC Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act.

With a historic number of veterans newly eligible for long-overdue benefits, the VA needs a steady, accountable hand to lead VA benefits and its more than 25,000 employees in delivering quality, timely benefits now more than ever.

About an hour and a half ago, we confirmed a person by the name of Josh Jacobs. He is that person who is going to be heading up VA benefits. He is that person with the steady hand. I am glad that this body came together in a bipartisan way to make him the permanent leader of the VBA.

The fact is, having a permanent leader in this role ensures that we can hold the VA accountable to their job, and that is critically important. I can't be prouder of this body to tell you that we have a person who not only understands benefits but has worked in this capacity for the past several months.

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

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

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I want to thank you for the recognition.

I would like to speak for 4 minutes, max.

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

VA MEDICINAL CANNABIS RESEARCH ACT OF 2023

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I want to thank the body for this.

So we had a chance to do the right thing here, folks. We did the right thing with Josh Jacobs and veterans' benefits. Now we have the opportunity to pass the Elizabeth Dole Veterans Programs Improvement Act of 2023.

This legislative package includes five veterans bills that were considered and unanimously approved by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee back in February and delivers on many of our longstanding priorities for our veterans and leading veterans services organizations. I am going to tell you what it does, and then I am going to talk about something specifically.

It expands home- and community-based support for aging and disabled veterans—home- and community-based support.

Among other provisions, it also helps Native Americans and Alaskan Native veterans achieve homeownership by lowering interest rates on VA Native American direct loans and reforming this program so it can work for our veterans—particularly, our Native veterans.

The part that I understand that is controversial is that it directs the VA to explore medical cannabis as an alternative treatment for veterans experiencing chronic pain and symptoms of PTSD.

Why? So that we—but more, importantly, the veterans—have a better understanding of the role medicinal cannabis plays in treating the wounds of war.

The jury is still out on this. This adds a 2-year retrospective study that will take place prior to the VA's beginning clinical trials outlined in this legislation. It grants the Secretary of the VA authority to cancel clinical trials should the VA deem them to be unsafe, based on that retrospective study that I just talked about. It allows the Secretary the authority to cancel trials in the event that it is determined that the trials were exposing participants to excessive risk.

Quite frankly, as I said in my opening, it allows veterans the access to relevant information to make informed decisions about their own health and will shine light on an understudied topic, which is already being used by our veterans nationwide.

So the real question here is, Do I want our veterans to understand the benefits or possibly the nonbenefits of medicinal marijuana or do we want to leave them out in the cold, not understanding what is going on?

The truth is, we all understand the impact opioids have had on this country, and if, in fact, it shows that medical marijuana or marijuana can have impacts that help people in chronic pain, we should know that information so we can pass it along to the veterans. It is as simple as that. The rest of these bills are absolute no-brainers, and I will tell you, I think the cannabis portion of this bill is a no-brainer.

Today, it is time to put political differences aside and do what is right for our veterans.

Look, don't let the haircut fool you—I did not serve in the military. I don't use marijuana. But the truth is, those people who think it works for them, they ought to know, and that is what this bill does.

I would encourage a vote for cloture on this bill. It is a good bill. It is a bill that the veterans service organizations have fought for and want to see happen.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The senior Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to address the Senate for up to 5 minutes.

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

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, the legislation that is before us, the Veterans Programs Improvement Act, just came out of the Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee. It is S. 326, as amended.

We are here on a motion for cloture, and this bill will be, as amended, a

combination of bills that are both Republican and Democratic bills, including one from the Senator who is presiding today. It includes a bill from Senator ROUNDS of South Dakota dealing with the loan process for Native American veterans. It includes a couple of pieces of legislation: the RESPECT Act, to help veterans with mental health or neurological conditions to get caregiver care; the Elizabeth Dole Act, to expand home- and community-based, long-term care programs so that veterans have more choices as they age; and the bill of the Presiding Officer that provides grants to county veterans service officers for outreach to veterans. In addition, it includes what has been perhaps the most discussed aspect of this piece of legislation: a bill that creates the authorization to allow for medical research for marijuana to be conducted—for cannabis to be conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs. But it requires retrospective research to take a look at the research that has already been conducted and to go and conduct research with veterans who are currently using cannabis. The outcome of that study is unknown, but this is an effort to make certain that veterans are not doing something that is harmful to them and to make an informed decision several years from now about the relationship between veterans and cannabis.

The point I would like to make in my few comments today is that I have encouraged my colleagues to offer amendments. There are a lot of items that my particularly Republican colleagues—I understand there are Democratic colleagues who have amendments. While we have had some success this year in amendments coming to the Senate floor, I want to make certain that is the opportunity Republican colleagues and Democratic colleagues have as this bill—if it proceeds, that we have that opportunity.

I had those conversations with both the majority and the minority, and I look forward to enforcing as best I can the capability to make certain my colleagues have that opportunity. If that is not the case, I reserve the right to then oppose this legislation.

I yield the floor.

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. 32, S. 326, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a study and clinical trials on the effects of cannabis on certain health outcomes of veterans with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Jon Tester, Alex Padilla, Christopher Murphy, Jeff Merkley, Michael F. Bennet, Tammy Baldwin, Richard J. Durbin, Mazie K. Hirono, Gary C. Peters, Margaret Wood Hassan, Brian Schatz, Tammy Duckworth, Catherine Cortez Masto, Cory A. Booker, Jack Reed, Raphael G. Warnock.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 326, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a study and clinical trials on the effects of cannabis on certain health outcomes of veterans with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 57, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 97 Ex.]

YEAS—57

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rounds
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Brown	Kelly	Schatz
Cantwell	King	Schmitt
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Luján	Sinema
Casey	Manchin	Smith
Cassidy	Markey	Stabenow
Collins	Menendez	Sullivan
Coons	Merkley	Tester
Cortez Masto	Moran	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Hassan	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hawley	Peters	Wyden

NAYS—42

Barrasso	Fischer	Paul
Blackburn	Graham	Ricketts
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Braun	Hagerty	Romney
Britt	Hoeven	Rubio
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Schumer
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Cramer	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	Lummis	Tuberville
Cruz	Marshall	Vance
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	Young

NOT VOTING— 1

Feinstein

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). On this vote, the yeas are 57, the nays are 42.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, to just inform folks, in our arcane processes in the Senate, I have to switch my vote from yes to no—even though I am a strong yes—in order to be able to reconsider this vote.

So I enter a motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it is regrettable that this bill, which so much helps our veterans, went down. Our veterans need it. It was supported by all of our veterans groups. It had bipartisan, unanimous support in committee, and I hope that some of our Members on the other side of the aisle who didn't vote for it will reconsider.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session; that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 11; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that at 4:20 p.m., the joint resolution be considered read the third time and the Senate vote on passage without any further intervening action or debate; and that, upon disposition of S.J. Res. 11, the Senate resume the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 4, the Equal Rights Amendment.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY RELATING TO ''CONTROL OF AIR POLLUTION FROM NEW MOTOR VEHICLES: HEAVY-DUTY ENGINE AND VEHICLE STANDARDS''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Committee on Environment and Public Works is discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 11, and the clerk will report the measure.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 11) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to ''Control of Air Pollution From New Motor Vehicles: Heavy-Duty Engine and Vehicle Standards''.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

JUSTICE FOR JANA ELEMENTARY ACT OF 2023

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, in October of this past year, the parents and students of Jana Elementary School in Florissant, MO—that is in the greater St. Louis area—woke to find news of an independent study that had found nuclear radioactive contamination inside the school building at Jana Elementary. Now, sadly, this probably didn't come as a total shock to those residents who have lived in Florissant and in the surrounding area because for

years now—for years—this community has had to deal with the fallout of the Federal Government's own nuclear program and the waste left over from it dating back to the 1940s, which was then effectively dumped in St. Louis, made its way into the water, into the soil, and now into a stream that runs right by this elementary school.

So the school board wisely said: We should do a study. Let's find out if it is in the school.

Independent results came back and said it was in the dust, on the windowsills of the school—radioactive material. The school board met. They shut down the school. Parents had kids at home for months.

Then comes the first of this year. The school board said: We can't in good conscience reopen it.

Now what is happening? The school is closed. The kids are having to be bused to other locations, driven to schools outside of their neighborhood.

This a working-class community. These are hard-working folks. They don't have the resources lying around to send their kids to other schools or to pay to move. If they did, they would. They don't. They are just trying to live their lives, work a job, get their kids a decent education. And, instead, they have had to deal with this.

The worst part about it is the Federal Government refused to clean it up. When this news broke, the Army Corps of Engineers said: Oh, there is nothing wrong with the school. We have tested it a million times. It is fine.

In fact, they held a press conference today in which they said the same thing: Trust us. It is fine. It is fine.

I don't think any of them are sending their kids there. But trust us, they say; it is fine.

When I and the school board and the parents said to the Army Corps of Engineers: You need to retest; you need to test the entire school district—then they pointed fingers and said: Oh, no, it is the Department of Energy; it is their problem.

So then, when we went to the Department of Energy, they said: Oh, no, we can't do anything. It is the Army Corps' problem.

The Biden administration has spent the last 8 months now pointing fingers at each other, saying why they can't do this; they can't do that. The kids are just out of luck.

I just notice this. When that bank in California full of billionaires—who are also, not incidentally, major political contributors—had a problem, boy, this government moved lickety-split to bail them out. How many billions did this government spend to bail out the SVB shareholders and stakeholders and depositors? They got their bailout in no time flat.

These kids? Nothing. Can't even get a response. Do you know the Biden administration won't even respond to me? So fine. We will do it ourselves.

I have introduced legislation that will order testing in the entire school district, that will mandate a cleanup of the school, and, if necessary, build these kids a new school.

The Federal Government caused this problem. The Federal Government should fix this problem. And just because these kids aren't billionaires or big-time political contributors or connected politically doesn't mean that they can be ignored. It doesn't mean that their lives don't matter.

I would just note this. Last week, the Secretary of Energy, Jennifer Granholm, when I talked to her about this bill in a public forum—I asked her in the hearing—she said that she would support the legislation.

And who couldn't, Mr. President? Who couldn't support having the Federal Government clean up its own mess and getting some justice for these kids at Jana Elementary?

And I will just say this. This community in St. Louis has been asked to live with the fallout of the Federal Government's actions for decades—this is just the latest instance—for decades. The cancer rates, the rates of disease, autoimmune disorders, they are off the charts in this community, and for years these folks have been told: Just shut up, and it will be fine.

Well, it is not fine, and today we are going to get some justice for these kids. Today we are going to start the cleanup process that should have happened decades ago.

So I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be discharged from further consideration of S. 418 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 418) to provide financial assistance to schools impacted by radioactive contaminants, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. HAWLEY. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the bill, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 418) was passed as follows:

S. 418

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 ''Justice for Jana Elementary Act of 2023''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) COVERED SCHOOL.—The term ''covered school'' means a school that is part of the Hazelwood School District in the State of Missouri.

(2) FUND.—The term ''Fund'' means the Radioactive School Assistance Fund established under section 4(a).

(3) IMPACTED SCHOOL.—The term ''impacted school'' means a public elementary school or secondary school—

(A) that closed on or after January 1, 2020; and

(B) where the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program of the Corps of Engineers detected radiation above background levels—

(i) on school property; or

(ii) otherwise, within 1000 feet of a building containing classrooms or other educational facilities of the school.

(4) JANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.—The term ''Jana Elementary School'' means the school located at 405 Jana Drive in Florissant, Missouri.

(5) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—The term ''local educational agency'' has the meaning given the term in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

(6) NATIONAL CONTINGENCY PLAN.—The term ''National Contingency Plan'' means the National Contingency Plan—

(A) prepared and published under section 311(d) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1321(d)); or

(B) revised under section 105 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9605).

(7) PROGRAM.—The term ''Program'' means the Radioactive School Assistance Program established in accordance with section 4(b).

(8) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Energy.

(9) VICINITY PROPERTY.—The term ''vicinity property'' has the meaning given the term in the Engineer Regulation ER 200–1–4 of the Corps of Engineers entitled ''Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program'' and dated August 29, 2014 (or a successor document).

SEC. 3. REMEDIATION OF JANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

Consistent with the requirements and obligations under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program of the Corps of Engineers, the Secretary of the Army shall—

(1) not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, establish new remediation goals for Jana Elementary School that will result in the removal of all radioactive contamination at Jana Elementary School such that no portion of the site is subjected to radiation above background levels; and

(2) after establishing remediation goals under paragraph (1), carry out activities necessary to achieve those goals.

SEC. 4. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR SCHOOLS WITH RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION.

(a) RADIOACTIVE SCHOOL ASSISTANCE FUND.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the Treasury of the United States a fund to be known as the Radioactive School Assistance Fund to carry out the reimbursement program described in subsection (b).

(2) FUNDING.—The Fund shall consist of amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under section 7.

(b) RADIOACTIVE SCHOOL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall establish and implement a program to be known as the ''Radioactive School Assistance Program'' to provide financial assistance in accordance with subsection (c) to

local educational agencies that have been financially impacted by the presence of radioactive contaminants stemming from the atomic energy activities of the United States Government.

(c) APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.—

(1) REIMBURSEMENT FOR TESTING.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide financial assistance to each local educational agency that submits to the Secretary an application that includes—

(i) a certification that the local educational agency incurred expenses while testing for radioactive contaminants at an impacted school;

(ii) proof of such expenses; and

(iii) proof that such testing—

(I) led to further testing under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program of the Corps of Engineers; or

(II) was undertaken following testing by a private entity that found radioactive contamination.

(B) LIMITATIONS.—Financial assistance provided to a local educational agency under this paragraph shall not exceed the amount expended by such local educational agency to test for radioactive contamination.

(2) FUNDING FOR CONSTRUCTION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide financial assistance for the construction of a new school building to each local educational agency that submits to the Secretary an application that includes the following:

(i) A plan for the construction of a new school building.

(ii) Documentation that a school under the jurisdiction of the local educational agency is an impacted school.

(iii) A budget for the construction of a new school building.

(iv) A certification that the local educational agency shall only use financial assistance provided under this paragraph for 1 or more of the following purposes:

(I) To purchase land for the construction of a new school building.

(II) To construct a new school building to replace an impacted school.

(B) LIMITATIONS.—

(i) AMOUNT OF FUNDING.—Financial assistance provided to a local educational agency under this paragraph shall not exceed $20,000,000 for each impacted school.

(ii) USE OF FUNDS.—A local educational agency that receives financial assistance under this paragraph may only use such financial assistance for 1 or more of the following purposes:

(I) To purchase land for the construction of a new school building.

(II) To construct a new school building to replace an impacted school.

(3) CONSIDERATIONS.—The Secretary may not reject an application submitted by a local educational agency for financial assistance under this subsection due to prior remediation by the Corps of Engineers or any other relevant Federal agency of an impacted school under the jurisdiction of such local educational agency.

(d) REPORTS.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the Program, which shall include—

(1) a description of the number of applications submitted under this section; and

(2) a description of the amount of financial assistance provided to local educational agencies under this section.

SEC. 5. INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOLS IN HAZELWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR CONTAMINATES.

(a) DESIGNATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, each covered school shall be designated as a vicinity property of the St. Louis Airport Site of the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program of the Corps of Engineers.

(b) INVESTIGATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Army shall investigate and characterize each covered school in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9601 et seq.) and the National Contingency Plan, including, at a minimum, carrying out a preliminary assessment and site inspection of each covered school.

(2) INCLUSION.—An investigation of a covered school under paragraph (1) shall include on-site investigatory efforts and sampling in accordance with section 300.420(c)(2) of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act).

(c) REPORTS.—The Secretary of the Army shall develop and make available to the public, for each covered school, a report that includes the results of the investigation under subsection (b), including—

(1) the results of the on-site investigatory efforts;

(2) a summary of the results of sampling under paragraph (2) of that subsection for contaminants of concern, including the average and highest detected levels of each contaminant of concern; and

(3) an evaluation of the danger posed to students and employees of the covered school by the levels of contamination.

(d) COMMUNITY RELATIONS.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary of the Army shall comply with all applicable requirements relating to community relations and public notification under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9601 et seq.), section 311 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1321), and sections 300.415, 300.430, and 300.435 of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act).

SEC. 6. REVIEW AND REPORT OF RADIOACTIVE TESTING AT JANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

(a) REVIEW.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall review the methodology and results of all tests for radioactive contaminants conducted at Jana Elementary School, including—

(1) tests conducted by the Corps of Engineers;

(2) tests conducted by Boston Chemical Data Corporation; and

(3) tests commissioned by the Hazelwood School District in the State of Missouri.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 45 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the review required by subsection (a).

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) for each test described in subsection (a), an evaluation of—

(i) the reliability of the methodology used—

(I) to conduct such test; and

(II) to evaluate the results of such test; and

(ii) the reliability of the opinions contained in any report summarizing the test; and

(B) an evaluation of the danger posed to children by any radioactive contaminants found at Jana Elementary School.

SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2023 $25,000,000 to carry out this Act.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Mr. HAWLEY. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

UDALL FOUNDATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1311, a bill to reauthorize the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Trust Fund, which was introduced earlier today.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1311) to reauthorize the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. KELLY. I further ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (S. 1311) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 1311

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 ''Udall Foundation Reauthorization Act of 2023''.

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE UDALL FOUNDATION TRUST FUND.

Section 13 of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation Act (20 U.S.C. 5609) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking ''2023'' and inserting ''2028'';

(2) in subsection (b), in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking ''2023'' and inserting ''2028''; and

(3) in subsection (c), by striking ''5-fiscal year period'' and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting ''5-fiscal year period beginning with fiscal year 2024.''.

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, this legislation would reauthorize a Federal foundation, the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation Act, which was established to honor the legacy of two great Arizonans: Morris and Stewart Udall.

The Udall Foundation honors the legacy of the Udalls by awarding scholarships, fellowships, and internships for study related to the environment and for American Indians and Alaska Natives to study healthcare and Tribal public policy. The foundation also supports the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy and the Native Nations Institute to conduct research on environmental policy, American Indian and Alaska Native healthcare issues, Tribal policy, and training.

My predecessor, Senator John McCain, was a longtime supporter of

the foundation and its work, and the foundation has honored Senate McCain's legacy through the John S. McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution.

This legislation does not increase authorization levels for the foundation. It simply extends current levels through the end of fiscal year 2028 to allow the foundation to continue its important work.

I yield the floor.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY RELATING TO ''CONTROL OF AIR POLLUTION FROM NEW MOTOR VEHICLES: HEAVY-DUTY ENGINE AND VEHICLE STANDARDS''—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today in strong opposition to S.J. Res. 11, the Congressional Review Act resolution to disapprove of the Biden administration's clean air standards for heavy-duty trucks.

If enacted, this resolution would wipe away EPA's most recent final rule that addresses smog- and soot-forming pollution from our largest trucks and engines. The resolution could also prevent the Agency from ever issuing similar standards in the future.

This Congressional Review Act resolution is bad for public health. It is bad for our economy.

As many of us know, the transportation sector is one of our Nation's largest sources of nitrogen oxides, also known as NO_X emissions. Heavy-duty vehicles—such as our schoolbuses and long-haul trucks—make up a third of mobile source NO_X emissions.

Nitrogen oxide pollution is one of the main contributors to ozone pollution, or smog, and also contributes to soot pollution. These harmful air pollutants are linked to increased risks of asthma attacks, respiratory disease, and, sadly, in some cases, premature death.

In December 2022, I joined clean air advocates, labor leaders, and EPA Administrator Regan as he signed the final rule to reduce this pollution from new heavy-duty vehicles starting with model year 2027. This was the first time in more than 20 years that EPA had updated the heavy-duty vehicle NO_X requirements. It should not be confused with EPA's recently proposed greenhouse gas emissions standards for vehicles.

During the event, Administrator Regan told attendees that this rule would result in 48 percent reduction in NO_X by 2045—48 percent reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions by 2045. These reductions will improve air quality nationwide, especially in areas overburdened by air pollution and diesel emissions.

Reducing vehicle pollution nationwide is especially personal for us in Delaware, where more than 90 percent of our air pollution comes from outside of our State.

The Heavy-Duty Vehicle NO_X Rule is good for our health and good for our economy. With that, I want to give my colleagues three reasons why they should vote against Senator FISCHER's CRA resolution.

First, the Heavy-Duty NO_X Rule enables States to better meet EPA's health-based ozone air quality standards. Without the rule, States would have to make costly decisions and find more expensive ways to further reduce NO_X emissions to meet ozone attainment. That is why many States and local air quality directors, including those in Arizona, Ohio, and Nevada, petitioned EPA in 2016 to take action on NO_X emissions from heavy-duty vehicles.

In the same vein, I would like to ask unanimous consent to submit for the RECORD a letter opposing S.J. Res. 11 from the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, which is an association that represents the State's clean air offices.

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

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CLEAN AIR AGENCIES,
Washington, DC, April 25, 2023.

Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER,
Senate Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. TOM CARPER,
Chair, Committee on Environment & Public Works, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Senate Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO,
Ranking Member, Committee on Environment & Public Works, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS SCHUMER, MCCONNELL, CARPER, AND CAPITO: We write to you today on behalf of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA) regarding S.J. Res. 11, introduced in the U.S. Senate on February 9, 2023, under which the U.S. Congress would disapprove the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) final rule, ''Control of Air Pollution from New Motor Vehicles: Heavy-Duty Engine and Vehicle Standards,'' published in the Federal Register on January 24, 2023 (88 Fed. Reg. 4296). NACAA is the national, nonpartisan, nonprofit association of 157 state and local air pollution control agencies in 40 states, the District of Columbia and five territories. The views expressed in these comments do not represent the positions of every state and local air pollution control agency in the country.

On May 16, 2022, NACAA submitted written comments to EPA on the agency's proposed rule to set cleaner standards for nitrogen oxide (NO_X) emissions from heavy-duty (HD) trucks. These comments emphasize the importance of EPA's final HD truck NO_X rule to state and local efforts across the nation to protect people's health, achieve and maintain clean air, and advance environmental justice goals.

Americans in every part of the country urgently need improvements in NO_X emissions from onroad HD vehicles. Among our comments to EPA, NACAA included specific examples from state and local air agencies of the array of circumstances necessitating NO_X reductions. Below, we highlight some of the other key points made in our comments.

During the nearly eight years before EPA promulgated this final rule NACAA urged the agency on multiple occasions to set more protective HD truck NO_X standards. Prior to the 2023 rule, EPA last set federal HD truck NO_X emission standards in 2001. Given the interstate nature of trucking—both cross-border operations and downwind atmospheric transport—federal standards are necessary to achieve the broad NO_X reductions needed across the nation. Over the past two decades, technological advances to reduce HD truck NO_X emissions have grown significantly as has the potential for even further advances. At the same time, emission limits for most other major NO_X sources, such as power plants, generators, and industrial facilities, have repeatedly become more restrictive. Unless EPA took this federal action, HD trucks were on course to remain one of the largest contributors to the national mobile source NO_X inventory in 2028.

There is a looming crisis facing many state and local clean air agencies across the nation. Currently, more than one-third of the U.S. population lives in an area that does not meet the health- and welfare-based National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone, particulate matter (PM) or both. Many of these areas are over-burdened communities whose citizens are exposed to a disproportionate share of harmful environmental conditions. The excessive emissions from HD trucks are a primary cause, contributing substantial emissions of NO_X—which are linked with a large number of adverse impacts on the respiratory system. In addition, NO_X is the key pollutant contributing to the formation of ozone and $PM_{2.5}$ and exposure to elevated levels of ozone and $PM_{2.5}$ are associated with significant respiratory and cardiovascular impacts, including premature death.

While state and local air agencies have made great strides in reducing emissions from stationary sources. However, many state and local air agencies lack the authority to regulate mobile sources and never have the authority to regulate mobile sources upwind of or outside their borders. The regulation of mobile sources is an authority that lies almost entirely within the purview of the federal government. While some states and localities may be able to pursue ''California'' standards under Clean Air Act sections 209 and 177, most are precluded by state policies or legislation from adopting standards more stringent than those of the federal government.

Unfortunately, emission standards for this highway heavy-duty ''federal source'' did not keep pace with standards for the light-duty motor vehicle sector or stationary sources, and fell far short of what is needed to meet clean air, public health protection and environmental justice goals. As large swaths of the country slip deeper into nonattainment, or teeter on the cusp of it, many state and local air agencies are left with few remaining mechanisms to achieve the emission reductions the Clean Air Act demands. Areas that miss their attainment deadlines face the threat of ''bump-up'' to a more demanding classification of nonattainment—if they are not already classified as Extreme—and statutorily required economic sanctions if they fail to meet their attainment deadlines. On October 7, 2022, EPA bumped up over 25 areas in nonattainment of the 2008 and 2015 ozone NAAQS, meaning the citizens of these areas continue to suffer the detrimental impacts of unhealthful air.

Our nation is in need of a strong, sustainable transportation strategy with top priority placed on new federal programs to continue to protect people's health and reduce

emissions from the mobile source sector. As this strategy is developed, the need for meaningful reductions in criteria pollutant emissions, especially NO_X and PM, cannot be overlooked. Regarding attainment and maintenance of the ozone NAAQS, most areas of the country are ''NO_X-limited,'' meaning that reducing NO_X emissions is the key to success. In addition, research shows that in some areas of the country, such as much of the East Coast, NO_X reductions are now ''supercharged,'' meaning that a one-pound reduction in NO_X emissions equals more than one pound of ozone reduction. Failure to adequately address transportation-related NO_X sources will have a direct and consequential impact on state and local air agencies' abilities to protect the health of the public they serve and their ability to fulfill their statutory obligations to attain and maintain federal health-based air quality standards by mandated deadlines and achieve their environmental justice goals.

EPA has now taken essential federal action that will result in significant NO_X reductions from HD trucks. Cleaning up this sector is imperative to putting our nation on a path to attaining and maintaining the health-based NAAQS and protecting our nation's most vulnerable communities. Without this rule, many areas will be forced to adopt severe limits on stationary sources, for which they have authority to control, at ever-increasing costs to businesses. Even with these severe limits, there may not be enough NO_X reductions available to protect people's health and meet federal air quality standards.

We thank you for considering the information provided in this letter and NACAA's May 16, 2022, comments to EPA on the HD truck NO_X rule. If you have any questions or would like further information please do not hesitate to contact us or Miles Keogh, Executive Director of NACAA.

Sincerely,

TRACY R. BABBIDGE,
Connecticut, State Co-Chair, NACAA Mobile Sources and Fuels Committee.

ERIK C. WHITE,
Placer County, California, Local Co-Chair, NACAA Mobile Sources and Fuels Committee.

Mr. CARPER. Second, these standards are achievable, and they provide predictability for industry, which the blunt tool of the CRA would undercut.

Companies such as Cummins and others in the heavy-duty vehicle industry support the Heavy-Duty NO_X Rule. The CRA would reinstate a decades-old standard based on outdated air pollution control technology, while potentially blocking EPA from ever—from ever—adopting stronger standards.

Finally, if enacted, this CRA would negate the cumulative $200 billion in net benefits that the rule would generate between 2027 and 2045. These are the annual health and economic benefits that, by 2045, include: up to—listen to this—up to 2,900 fewer premature deaths—in 1 year—in 1 year; also, in 1 year, 6,700 fewer hospital admissions and emergency room visits; also, in 1 year, 18,000 fewer cases of childhood asthma; and, finally, in 1 year, 3.1 million fewer cases of asthma.

These improvements will be especially beneficial for the 72 million people living near truck freight routes, where many historically disadvantaged and underserved communities are disproportionately exposed to harmful ozone pollution.

Let me conclude by saying that the Heavy-Duty NO_X Vehicle Rule protects public health and benefits our economy. That is a good combination. These protective and achievable Clean Air Act standards reduce dangerous smog and soot pollution and provides certainty for our Nation's heavy-duty vehicle manufacturers and for our State.

Walking away from all the benefits generated by this rule doesn't make sense. That is why I call on my colleagues to join me in opposing S.J. Res. 11.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 3 minutes.

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

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, today, the U.S. Senate will vote on my Congressional Review Act resolution to overturn the Biden administration's rule establishing stricter emissions standards for heavy-duty vehicles.

My Republican colleagues have joined me in this effort. Senator MANCHIN announced today that he is cosponsoring my legislation. I hope more of my Democratic colleagues will join us as well.

This Environmental Protection Agency rule is an aggressive mandate on truckers that would force them to purchase new, expensive equipment, burdening their work and livelihoods. The irony of this rule is that it would undermine its own stated goal of reducing emissions.

New emissions standards will increase demand for newer, environmentally cleaner trucks. But there are only so many of these new trucks, so the massive increase in demand will cause the prices of trucks and manufacturing equipment to spike.

Truck dealers and manufacturers say the rule will ''worsen an already-tight equipment market.'' And the EPA itself estimates that the technology required to meet this new rule's standards will cost between $2,568 and $8,304 more per vehicle.

The irony is, the prices of newer vehicles will escalate, incentivizing truckers and businesses to hold onto their older, higher-emitting trucks.

Todd Spencer, President of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, said, ''If small business truckers can't afford the new, compliant trucks, they're going to stay with older, less efficient trucks, or leave the industry entirely. Once again, EPA has largely ignored the warnings and concerns raised by truckers in this latest rule.''

This expensive rule won't just negatively affect truckers. It will have a negative impact on our economy as a whole.

The EPA's own economic analysis projects that the costs associated with the new regulation could reach up to $55 billion from 2027 to 2045—$55 billion.

During this administration, inflation has hit record highs. Additional inflationary burdens on the trucking industry will mean that any product transported by trucks—whether it is food, clothing, or other commodities—each one of those products will cost more.

Smaller, more affordable trucking businesses will close up shop, and the ones that can afford higher prices will raise their rates. This means consumers will be paying more money to a smaller group of businesses.

Every American consumer will feel the effects of this rule and its price increases. Every agricultural producer and every local business will feel these effects.

If you are an ag or energy heavy State, like Texas, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, or Illinois, Nebraska, California, or Montana, your local economy would be especially impacted by higher freight costs.

That is not to mention the 3 million Americans who work as commercial truckers. Many truckers work for ''mom and pop'' operations—small businesses that simply don't have the financial resources to handle a spike in costs. These businesses and the jobs they create will be jeopardized by this rule.

In my home State of Nebraska, 1 in 12 people are employed by the trucking industry. The livelihoods of real Nebraskans—and real Americans—are at stake here.

During a period of high inflation and supply chain disruptions, the last thing this country needs is more expensive freight costs and fewer truckers.

The Biden administration is yet again trying to push through a rule that sounds nice but has wide-ranging negative implications for regular Americans.

My CRA will stop this rule in its tracks—before it has the chance to damage the livelihoods of truckers and consumers across our country.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in prioritizing the economic well-being of Americans over this politically charged and ineffective topdown regulation from the EPA.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON S.J. RES. 11

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

Under the previous order, the clerk will read the joint resolution for the third time.

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third

time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

The yeas and nays were previously ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

[Rollcall Vote No. 98 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Blackburn	Grassley	Ricketts
Boozman	Hagerty	Risch
Braun	Hawley	Romney
Britt	Hoeven	Rounds
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Collins	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lee	Sullivan
Cotton	Lummis	Thune
Cramer	Manchin	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Vance
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	Young
Fischer	Murkowski	

NAYS—49

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schumer
Booker	Kelly	Shaheen
Brown	King	Sinema
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Cardin	Luján	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	Menendez	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warnock
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Ossoff	Welch
Fetterman	Padilla	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	
Heinrich	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—1

Feinstein

The joint resolution (S.J. Res. 11) was passed, as follows:

S.J. RES. 11

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress disapproves the rule submitted by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency relating to ''Control of Air Pollution From New Motor Vehicles: Heavy-Duty Engine and Vehicle Standards'' (88 Fed. Reg. 4296 (January 24, 2023)), and such rule shall have no force or effect.

REMOVING THE DEADLINE FOR THE RATIFICATION OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 4, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 3, S.J. Res. 4, a joint resolution removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 734

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, last week, the House voted for a commonsense proposal that is supported by a majority of Americans. The House voted to protect female athletes. This week, it is time for the Senate to do the same thing.

Before my time here, I spent many years as a coach, educator, and mentor. I have seen how sports can change people's lives. Athletic scholarships open up a lifetime of opportunities for men and women alike. Yet, today, those opportunities for women are being threatened by a radical political agenda that is being forced upon the American people.

When I was growing up, there were a lot less opportunities for female athletes. Fifty-one years ago, Congress passed title IX to ensure that male and female athletes both had access to lessons, life skills, and opportunities for advancement that come from participating in sports. It has been one of the most successful pieces of legislation ever to come out of Congress.

As a coach, I saw its impact firsthand. One of my first jobs out of college was coaching junior girls' basketball—what a thrill. Title IX was just starting to be implemented when I took the job. I was there to see the incredible impact it had on young girls all over this country.

For the first time, young women I coached had equal access to facilities, resources, and competition. I saw those hard-working athletes go on to earn college scholarships, start careers, and become leaders in their own communities.

I still keep in touch with a lot of them. I am deeply proud of them. I wonder if they would have had the same opportunities without title IX. Would they have had the same access or ability for success?

Before title IX, at a lot of schools, there was no such thing as college women's athletics. Very few collegiate championships for women's sports existed, limiting opportunities for female athletes to achieve greatness.

Before 1972, when title IX was enacted, there were only about 30,000 female athletes in college sports and only around 290,000 in high school sports. For comparison, at the same time, 3.7 million males were playing high school sports. However, after title IX's enactment, that changed very quickly.

Because of title IX, female participation at the college level has risen more than 600 percent. Yet now female athletes are again being told to give up their ability to compete—and settle for second place.

Women and girls are suffering at the hands of an ideology. The Biden administration is taking a sledgehammer—a big sledgehammer—to title IX.

A few weeks ago—on Good Friday, of all days—Joe Biden's Department of Education issued a new rule completely reinterpreting title IX. As usual, the Biden administration is trying to legislate from the White House—the executive branch—because they know their radical ideas would not—and I repeat, would not—make it through this Congress.

This type of change should require a bill, but Biden, again, wants to change Federal law by simply publishing a new rule. Biden's rule change says schools cannot ban boys from participating in women's sports or else they will lose their funding.

I can't believe we are even talking about this.

The proposed rule is 116 pages long. It is so vague that schools are not going to know what to do. They are not going to know how to interpret it. The vagueness is going to let the Biden administration selectively enforce rules and intimidate schools into taking the most cautious position.

It is a backdoor national mandate to force schools to allow biological males to play in women's sports. Schools that choose to protect female athletes would face punishment from the government if they didn't allow it.

The rule is expected to go into effect this coming fall 2023. That means teachers and coaches would have to begin opening their girls' and women's teams, fields, and locker rooms to biological males. It is unfair, it is unsafe, and it is downright wrong. To be honest, it is moronic.

As a former coach, I can tell you that coaches will do what it takes to win. Coaches want to keep their jobs. The only way to keep your job as a coach and to deal with the pressure is to win games.

College athletics is a big business—a big, big business. There are conferences that make near $100 million per school a year just for television rights. So there is a lot at stake.

Under the Biden rules, all of the incentives are for biological males to dominate women's sports. They are only a very small percentage today. One study shows trans athletes make up about 0.00025 of athletes in women's college sports today—a very small percentage.

But, frankly, one championship or opportunity ripped away from a female by a biological male is one too many. The Democrats are here to argue differently. If they do that, it is shameful.

Ten years from now, I suspect the situation is going to be very, very different. The Supreme Court last year voted to allow college athletes to get paid for their name, image, and likeness. A few years from now, coaches and players would stand to make millions through playing biological males against women. It is only common sense that that is going to happen because winning is the only thing that counts in college and professional athletes. That is the only thing that counts.

Biological males will and would dominate in virtually every women's sport. Women's sports, as we know it, would be over. Biological girls would simply drop out of sports or never choose to play in the first place.

Is this really what the Democrats want? Is this really their plan? Do Democrats really want to end women's sports? Do Democrats really want to ruin the dreams of young girls who

want to be the next world-famous gymnast, like Suni Lee, or tennis player superstars, like the Williams sisters, or Olympic swimming legend, like Katie Ledecky? Is that what they want?

I am grateful that many courageous female athletes are speaking out. I spoke with one of the greatest athletes in history, Caitlyn Jenner, who is fully supportive of this bill for keeping men and boys out of women's sports, because we have all seen women like Riley Gaines, who had to watch her national championship dreams get taken away by a biological male. This was after she was forced to share a locker room with that adult biological male against her will.

Riley Gaines was at the University of Kentucky on an athletic scholarship. But what would happen if a young girl is forced to compete against a male in high school? She could watch her dreams taken away.

Already 28 championships have been taken away from girls and women at the hands of biological males. You have got to be kidding me. Males have 40 to 50 percent greater upper body strength and 20 to 40 percent greater lower body strength. It is dangerous to put them on the same field with women. This is basic biology.

What did we see from the ''Party of Science'' last week? Exactly zero Democrats in the House voted for this bill—zero. The ''Party of Science'' seems to have skipped biology class.

Now the question is, Will any Democrat in the Senate show a little bit of courage and stand up for women—just a little bit? Will any Senate Democrat vote to protect their daughters, their granddaughters, or great-granddaughters? I am anxious to see this. Will any of them do that today?

Democrats have been talking a lot about women on the Senate floor lately. Democrats seem to think the only thing women care about is abortion, ending the life of a child. What about women and girls who want to be athletes or go to school on an athletic scholarship? Does that matter?

Not a single House Democrat voted to protect girls and women in sports. Today, we are going to find out where Senate Democrats stand.

The bill the House passed last week would stop this administration from forcing schools to let biological males compete against women. In fact, the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act does just the opposite. It prevents a school from receiving funds if it lets boys compete in women's sports.

Americans do not want the Federal Government footing the bill for a policy that is a slap in the face to women who have worked so hard to become athletes.

A clear majority of Americans support this bill—a clear majority. Poll after poll has proven that. It is time to act before the situation gets worse, and it is going to get much worse. So now I am going to give this body a chance to stand up for women athletes.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 734, which was received from the House; further, 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. Is there objection?

The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I rise today in opposition to S. 613, legislation that would ban transgender women and girls from participating in sports consistent with their gender.

My Republican colleagues falsely claim that allowing transgender women and girls to play sports is harmful to cisgender women and girls. They continue to hurl insulting lies about transgender girls dominating sports. But what is true is that these bans are deeply harmful to transgender girls, particularly transgender girls of color, girls who are gender nonconforming, and cisgender girls as well. These ''sex tests'' invade every girl's privacy and open the door to harassment for anyone who is perceived as ''different.''

If my Republican colleagues were actually worried about women and girls in athletics, they would join in our efforts to address unequal athletic opportunities in school, unequal pay, sexual abuse and harassment, and more. But this isn't about supporting women and girls; this is about power and control. My Republican colleagues are obsessed with controlling women's bodies and our lives, as we are seeing yet again today.

But instead of being honest about what they are doing, many on the other side claim that this bill is somehow a defense of title IX. That couldn't be further from the truth. Title IX says:

> No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

As someone who knew and was friends with Patsy Mink, the author of title IX, I can tell you she would be standing right next to me to say title IX in no way or shape supports what my colleague is attempting to do. Patsy spent her entire life fighting to advance equal opportunity for women and girls. It would pain her to know that the bill she fought so hard to make law is being twisted by Republicans to discriminate against the very people it was designed to protect.

Republicans have the wrong priorities. We shouldn't be banning anyone from playing sports. We should be fighting the discrimination that all women and girls—trans, cis, or otherwise—continue to face in athletics, in the classroom, and in the workplace.

For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I am truly disappointed but expected that the Democrats were going to block this legislation to protect young girls and women. Again, it is shameful. It really is.

I see my colleague from Iowa is on the floor, and I want to thank her for joining me in this effort to protect women.

I yield the floor to Senator ERNST.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, I would like to thank the Senator from Alabama for leading this effort.

Iowa has a celebrated history of exceptional girls' sports programs. We recently saw the Iowa Hawkeyes women's basketball team make it to the national championship after taking home their fifth Big Ten Tournament title just days after cheering on the high school girls competing in the State tournament. Last year, the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union proudly sanctioned girls wrestling, opening up new opportunities for girls to be part of a team and recognized for their achievements.

Title IX not only makes these events possible; it guarantees an opportunity for our female athletes. Whether it is growing as a leader, winning a championship, or securing a scholarship to college, sports opens doors for young women. But right now, President Biden is working overtime to force institutions to allow biological males to share spaces with females and compete in women's sports. Doors that were opened over 50 years ago are being slammed in the faces of girls across the country because of the progressive left's gender ideology. Girls' locker rooms have now become a battleground for the Democratic Party, and parents continue to be iced out of the issue.

Thankfully, last year, Governor Reynolds protected girls' sports across Iowa, from elementary school all the way up to the collegiate level.

Here in the Senate, I am proud to join my friend from Alabama and our colleagues in supporting the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act. Under this legislation, any athletic program that receives Federal funds and permits a biological male to participate in competitions designated for women or girls would be in violation of Federal law. The House just passed this commonsense bill last week, and we should not waste any more time in passing it here in the Senate.

Payton McNabb is a senior in high school. She loves volleyball but was severely injured last fall because a biological male spiked the ball into her face.

Riley Gaines Barker, a 12-time NCAA All-American athlete, was forced to compete against a biological male, Lia Thomas, in the 200 freestyle. The two tied—they tied—for fifth place, with Thomas taking home the trophy. No kidding. Thomas took home the trophy. The NCAA told Riley it was necessary for photo purposes.

Lia Thomas is a 6-foot-4-inch biological male who swam on the men's team at the University of Pennsylvania for 3 years before switching to the women's team for his final year. Thomas beat female 2020 Olympic silver medalists and American record holders to win an NCAA Division I title.

Man, you might feel like a woman, but you aren't one.

We must protect our young girls and make sure they aren't pushed off the podium. Title IX is the law of the land whether the far left likes it or not. The law was created to offer the same playing field to female athletes as their male counterparts, not to subject women to second place and the sidelines.

In defense of our Iowa daughters and female athletes across the Nation, I am standing with Riley Gaines—who was recently attacked by radical activists on a college campus—and her message: Biological men should not be allowed to compete in women's sports.

Our female athletes deserve fairness, safety, and the ability to win those top scholarships and titles, as title IX intended. No amount of harassment from the radical left will stop strong women from standing up for the truth and for what is right.

If Senate Democrats pushing the so-called Equal Rights Amendment were really interested in equal rights for women, they would protect women's sports and spaces from biological men.

Madam President, every time a girl steps onto the mat, onto the court, the field, or the track, she should know that she has every opportunity to compete and win.

I am proud to work with my friend Senator TUBERVILLE and my colleagues in fighting to pass the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act.

With that, I will yield the floor to Senator TUBERVILLE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. I thank Senator ERNST for her comments. Now I would like to yield the floor to my colleague from North Carolina, Senator BUDD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Madam President, I rise today to support Senator TUBERVILLE's Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act.

For more than half a century, title IX has expanded opportunities for women and girls from the classroom to the playing field. According to the Women's Sports Foundation, our country went from a ratio of 1 in 27 girls playing sports in 1972 to 1 in 5 today. We went from fewer than 30,000 female collegiate athletes in 1972 to nearly 230,000 female athletes today. That is progress that should be celebrated.

However, women's sports are fundamentally undermined when biological males are allowed to compete against them. There are biological differences between men and women. If we ignore those differences, we threaten future opportunities for female athletes and the entire notion of women's sports. It is unfair, it is unsafe, and it is unacceptable. That is why Senator TUBERVILLE's bill is so important. It simply ensures that title IX protections are clearly defined by a person's reproductive biology and genetics at birth.

The bottom line: Female athletes should compete against other female athletes. It is that simple.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I thank Senators ERNST and BUDD for their comments today. I also want to thank the 25 cosponsors we have signed on to my bill in the Senate. Rest assured, this is not the end. We will continue to fight for this legislation for all the girls and women across this great country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. First, Madam President, I thank my colleagues who are on the floor today—Senator TUBERVILLE for his leadership, Senator BUDD, and Senator ERNST—for their efforts in the protection of women and girls in sports. As a doctor, I share their concerns, share their passion in terms of fairness, in terms of safety, and I congratulate them on their efforts and continue to join them in those efforts to provide the protection for women and girls in sports.

ENERGY

Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the high price of Democrats' misguided energy agenda. It is a high-price crisis entirely of President Biden and the Democratic Party's own making.

Last year, when energy prices were already at historic highs, what did Democrats do? Well, they voted 10 times—time after time after time—against increasing American energy production. Instead, Democrats jammed through the Senate and the House the largest climate bill in American history. The climate extremists applauded this.

Let me just say, hold the applause, because the American public is suffering. Families all across this great land are hurting. Democrats' reckless spending in the past 2 years has driven up the cost of energy and, of course, as everyone knows, this has fueled inflation.

Inflation reached a 40-year high because of Democrats' spending. Prices today are over 15 percent higher than they were the day Joe Biden took office. Energy prices have gone up even more than that. Americans are paying 36 percent more for energy today than they were in January of 2021. Gas prices to fill the tank are up 46 percent. That is a 5-month high. They are going to continue to go up during this summer's driving season.

The lower gas prices that the administration desperately and irresponsibly depleted our Nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve to achieve last year has hurt our economy and has hurt our country and has hurt our national security.

Democrats were wrong to raid our emergency supplies of petroleum products in a desperate attempt to lower gas prices leading up to the November 2022 elections.

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is our Nation's emergency reserve. Now it is out of gas. It is down to the lowest level it has been at in 40 years. Not refilling it. Oh, no.

Joe Biden knew we needed more energy than that. So he went on bended knee to foreign dictators, begging them to produce more oil to help lower gas prices here in America but not letting us produce it here at home—and we have plenty.

This President did everything he could to try to lower gas prices except the thing the American people know would work, and that is to produce more American energy. So American families are once again facing that double whammy of an energy crisis coupled with an inflation crisis.

Democrats are doing absolutely nothing to help solve the problem. Remember, the Biden administration began working on day No. 1 to choke off America's energy resources: killed the Keystone XL Pipeline, canceled oil and gas leases.

America's energy revolution turned us into the world's energy superpower. Our economy had a wonderful, competitive advantage. It is good for families, good for workers.

We challenged dictators without having to worry about our energy supply. We had affordable, reliable, and available American energy. This administration and the Democrats in this body squandered the gains that we had achieved.

They attacked American oil, natural gas, and coal at every turn along the way. Then they raised taxes to make it even more expensive. They instituted burdensome regulations to make it more difficult to produce the American energy.

They have put up roadblock after roadblock on every type of American energy. And yet Joe Biden and the Democrats, open-mouthed, looked with surprise: Why have the prices skyrocketed?

Anybody could have predicted that choking off our energy supply would lead to record-high energy prices and to increase dependence on our adversaries—Russia, China, Iran, Venezuela.

Last week, Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm testified before the Energy Committee. I specifically asked her about the administration's plan to lower gas prices and energy prices across the board, because they are up across the board. They are up for heating energy; they are up for driving energy.

Her solution: government mandates, phase out anything powered by oil,

natural gas, or coal. Take away our gas stoves, take away our gas-powered water heaters, force-feed us expensive electric cars that don't work for many people across the country.

They may be OK for rich people in the big cities who don't have to drive very much, who can afford to pay $16,000 more for a vehicle than for a traditional car. But for Wyoming families and Wyoming farmers and Wyoming ranchers, they just don't work.

People want affordable, reliable vehicles. And for people all around rural America, electric cars are not it.

Americans don't support the Democrats' climate extremism. Look at the polls. Nearly two-thirds of Americans say they don't want to buy an electric car. They don't want to be force-fed by Joe Biden. They don't want to have the government in the driver's seat.

They say the price is too high. It is $64,000 on average. The batteries are unreliable. Charging them is inconvenient. It is time-consuming. It takes a long time to get a battery charged, and it can't go all that far.

And then who benefits from all of this? China. That is because most of the critical minerals that are needed to build these batteries come right out of China. Just look for the ''made in China'' sticker on the batteries of the electric vehicles.

This country should be focusing on strengthening our energy independence, not finding ways to become more dependent to China or Russia.

So the reality of Secretary Granholm's so-called solution to lowering prices is that Americans will just pay more; not really concerned about affordability, but I didn't hear that word at all.

The way to lower prices is to unleash American energy. Now, the House recently passed legislation to do just that. And I support their efforts.

Senator CAPITO and I are going to soon introduce our own legislation in the Senate. The Energy and Natural Resources Committee is going to hold a hearing on the critical issues in the coming weeks.

We can only unleash American energy if we fix our broken permitting system process. Right now, new energy projects are bogged down by a maze of redtape and lawsuits.

Our legislation is going to include enforceable timelines on environmental reviews and filing legal challenges. We are going to move forward faster with an all-of-the-above American energy agenda. We need it all.

My Democratic colleagues have stated before that they do want permitting reform. Well, we will see. They are going to have an opportunity to speak up and to vote; because if they are serious, real reform is possible. If they are serious, we can tell the American people that real relief is on the way.

We do need a long-term commitment in this country to American energy. Making life more affordable for every American should be a bipartisan priority. It hasn't been for the first 2 years in the Biden administration and now going into the third.

We need to get back to a point where we can make energy affordable, available, and reliable—instead of focusing, as the Democrats do, on only renewable energy, regardless of the cost and regardless of the consequences.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

REMOVING THE DEADLINE FOR THE RATIFICATION OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I take this time—and I am going to be joined by several of my colleagues—to talk about a vote that we are going to have tomorrow on S.J. Res. 4. This is the resolution that would rescind the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

This is an issue that I have been working on for a long time, including during my time in the Maryland General Assembly in 1972, when the Maryland legislature ratified the Equal Rights Amendment.

So this goes back a long time, and it is time to finish the work. I want to thank Chairman DURBIN for his leadership on this issue, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, for the work he did so that we could reach this moment where we have a chance to take the step that is critically important, removing any ambiguity in regards to the ratification process.

I also want to thank Leader SCHUMER for making this time available so we will be able to vote on this issue tomorrow.

I particularly want to acknowledge the extraordinary leadership of Senator LISA MURKOWSKI, my coleader on this resolution. The two of us have worked together. This should never be a partisan issue. Equality should enjoy support, I would hope, from both Democrats and Republicans.

There is no time limit on equality. The 28th Amendment to the Constitution, the Equal Rights Amendment, was approved by the U.S. Congress in both the House and Senate by a two-thirds vote, as required in the Constitution, and has been ratified by 38 States—that is, three-fourths necessary for the ratification of a constitutional amendment.

The sole purpose of S.J. Res. 4 is to remove any ambiguity, to remove the time limit that was included originally in the 1972 act of Congress of 7 years and previously extended to 10 years.

I want to acknowledge the help I have received on this through the incredible staff we all have here in the U.S. Senate. Bill Van Horne, who is my chief counsel, has been working on this issue since my days in the House of Representatives, and I thank him for his leadership in bringing all the groups together. Helen Rogers has helped a great deal in this effort. I just want to acknowledge the work both of them have done on the Equal Rights Amendment.

The ERA simply states:

> Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.

That is it. That is exactly what the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution says. Ratification would affirm women's equality in our Constitution, enshrining the principle of women's equality and explicit prohibition against sex discrimination in our Nation's founding document.

Currently, the only explicitly guaranteed right in our Constitution based upon sex is the 19th Amendment, which is the right to vote.

Existing legal protections against sex-based discrimination fall well short of addressing systemic sex-based inequality in our society.

As the 28th Amendment, the ERA would serve as a new tool for Congress, for Federal Agencies, and in courts to advance equality in the fields of workforce and pay, pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment and violence, reproductive autonomy, and protection of LBGTQ+ individuals. Enshrining this protection in our Constitution also ensures enduring protections for all Americans across the country.

Existing legal protections against sex-based discrimination fall well short of addressing the systemic sex-based inequality in our society.

It is also a signal to the courts that they should apply a more rigorous level of review to laws and government policies that discriminate on the basis of sex.

That is what the ERA is all about: equality—the most fundamental of American values.

We need to finally get the job done. Last Congress, a bipartisan majority in the Senate cosponsored this joint resolution, and the House of Representatives has already passed this legislation on two occasions—first in the 116th Congress and then in the 117th Congress.

Virginia became the 38th and final State required by the Constitution to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment on January 27, 2020.

Our resolution, S.J. Res. 4, would clarify once and for all that the Equal Rights Amendment has met all the requirements of article V of our Constitution.

Let me read what it says:

> That notwithstanding any time limit contained in House Joint Resolution 208, the 92nd Congress, as agreed to in the Senate on March 22, 1972, the article of amendment proposed to the States in that joint resolution shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution, whenever ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States.

It is a clarification resolution. Congress has the power to do it. Congress approved it by more than the required two-thirds majority in both Chambers, and three-quarters of States have now ratified it. Article V of the Constitution has been complied with.

You are going to hear legal arguments surrounding whether a Senate

joint resolution can remove a deadline, so let me talk about some of these issues.

First, in the Constitution, there is nothing in the Constitution that sets a time limit on ratification. Read Article V. It talks about the votes necessary in Congress—we have had that—and the votes of ratification by the States—we have done that. There is no time limit in the Constitution.

The 27th Amendment effecting congressional pay raise was ratified after two centuries, after being initially proposed by Congress as part of the Bill of Rights in 1791, two centuries before—over 200 years before it was ratified.

Congress has the authority to act. There is precedent for Congress to extend the deadline for ratification of an amendment, as it did once before for the ERA. Note that the ERA deadline was contained in the preamble to the text of the constitutional amendment, not in the constitutional amendment itself.

There is precedent for Congress to declare that the requisite number of States have ratified a constitutional amendment, as the House and Senate did in 1992 by resolutions affirming the validity of the 27th Amendment regarding congressional pay raises. That is the one that took over 200 years to ratify.

In terms of Article V, the only question is whether a State has ratified. Ratification is something that happens at a moment in time. It either happens or it doesn't happen. History tells us that once a State has ratified, it can't take it back. The 14th Amendment became part of the Constitution after the Civil War even though two States had attempted to rescind prior ratifications. Those States were included on the list of States that ratified. The effectiveness of a rescission is ultimately a question for Congress. S.J. Res. 4 answers that question.

Then the most recent opinion by the Department of Justice, the opinion by the Office of Legal Counsel, noted that Congress, as a coequal branch of government, is not precluded from taking further action regarding the ratification of the ERA.

So we have all of the legal requirements. We can act.

Now let me lay out a few more things here.

Most Americans believe the ERA is already part of our Constitution. Just ask them. They think it is there. Most of our States have provisions in the State constitutions to provide equal rights based upon sex. So we already have it in States, and it is working.

Most democracies—in fact, every constitution that has been written since World War II contains an equal rights amendment. The United States is an outlier on this issue. We are the leader of democratic values in human rights globally, but we don't have an equal rights amendment in our Constitution.

The Pew Research Center did a survey on this. Seventy-eight percent of Americans support the Equal Rights Amendment being added to the Constitution. This is overwhelmingly popular among all of our constituents—Democrats, Republicans, Independents, men, women. Two-hundred fifty national and local groups support the ERA, including the League of Women Voters, the National Urban League, the National Council of Jewish Women, the SEIU, and many, many other civil rights, labor, and civic groups.

This resolution language removes any doubt of ratification, and it is the right way to go under our Constitution. We had the advice of constitutional scholars who support what we are doing—Erwin Chemerinsky, Larry Tribe, Kathleen Sullivan, Catharine MacKinnon, Victoria Nourse, former Senator Russ Feingold. All have endorsed the way we are proceeding.

The ERA is needed not only to keep progress moving forward but also to protect against incursions on the progress we have already made. Based on recent decisions by the Supreme Court, some Justices ascribe to the view that the meaning of equality under the equal protection clause should be frozen in time in 1868 when the 14th Amendment was ratified. That approach may cast in doubt even the limited precedents currently holding that the equal protection clause applies to sex discrimination.

It has been more than 100 years since women won the right to vote and nearly 100 since the effort to enshrine the ERA in the Constitution began. Generations have fought to achieve major points of progress in our laws and our society since then. However, it is undeniable that work remains.

Finally, enshrining the ERA into the Constitution would be one major step that we could take towards a society that is truly equal on the basis of sex.

I therefore urge my colleagues to vote yes on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 4. The women of America have waited long enough. Don't filibuster equality. You don't want to be on that side of history.

There should be no time limit on equality. Let us use this opportunity to complete the action of equality based on sex in our Constitution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 121.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Michael Farbiarz, of New Jersey, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Jersey.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 bill 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. 121, Michael Farbiarz, of New Jersey, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Jersey.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, John W. Hickenlooper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Gary C. Peters, Mark Kelly, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Mazie K. Hirono, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jeanne Shaheen, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr., Alex Padilla, Robert Menendez, Michael F. Bennet.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 122.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Robert Kirsch, of New Jersey, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Jersey.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 bill 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. 122, Robert Kirsch, of New Jersey, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Jersey.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, John W. Hickenlooper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Gary C. Peters, Mark Kelly, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Mazie K. Hirono, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jeanne Shaheen, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr., Alex Padilla, Robert Menendez, Michael F. Bennet.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 123.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Orelia Eleta Merchant, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 bill 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. 123, Orelia Eleta Merchant, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, John W. Hickenlooper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Gary C. Peters, Mark Kelly, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Mazie K. Hirono, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jeanne Shaheen, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr., Alex Padilla, Robert Menendez, Michael F. Bennet.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. 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.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for cloture motions filed today, April 26, be waived.

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

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA ON OCTOBER 1, 1953

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to S. Res. 175, submitted earlier today.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 175) recognizing the importance of the 70th anniversary of the signing of the mutual defense treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea on October 1, 1953.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 175) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tomorrow, it will be a great honor of the House and Senate to welcome President Yoon of the Republic of Korea to the U.S. Capitol.

Ahead of President Yoon's visit, Leader MCCONNELL, Chair MENENDEZ, Ranking Member RISCH, and I wish to welcome him through a bipartisan resolution reaffirming the strong support that exists for the U.S.-Korean relationship. Seventy years of this partnership have made both our nations safer, more prosperous, and more intertwined than ever. Today, millions of Americans know and love Korean music, Korean cinema, Korean food, and Korean goods and products. K-pop now goes viral in our country, and for many Americans their favorite movies are not in English but in Korean.

The Korean-American community embodies what the American dream has always been about: coming to our country and building something of yourself, building strong families who enrich our communities and make our Nation more prosperous. New York is proud to have one of the largest and most dynamic Korean communities anywhere in the country, and I have been proud to fight for them here in the Senate. They are a wonderful addition to New York, and the more Koreans there are in New York the better we are going to be.

And make no mistake, the United States and the Republic of Korea need each other more than ever. As we continue to compete with China, the Republic of Korea is one of our closest partners. And as we confront a belligerent North Korea, we must work with the Republic of Korea for our mutual safety.

I also want to applaud President Yoon for beginning the process to revitalize his nation's relationship with Japan. When we work together, we can make real strides to ensure security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Again, I thank my colleagues for working with me on this resolution. We thank President Yoon for coming to the Capitol.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, first of all, I have to thank my colleagues, Senator CARDIN along with Senator MURKOWSKI, for bringing S.J. Res. 4 that we will be voting on tomorrow. We need the Equal Rights Amendment today more than ever.

What we have been seeing across the country, the far-right using every opportunity they can to roll back women's rights. We are seeing this happen in real time with access to abortion care, and we know it won't stop there.

So it is shameful that in 2023 there are so many extremists who want to make women second-class citizens, but that is why we need a constitutional amendment to protect women from discrimination and guarantee their equality under the law.

Few States understand this better than my home State of Nevada. Nevada put the Equal Rights Amendment back on the table when it became the first State in the modern era to ratify the ERA in 2017.

Nevadans stood up and made it clear that our State believes men and women should have equal legal rights. And they didn't stop there. In 2022, Nevada adopted the most comprehensive ERA in the country in its State constitution, putting protections in place to ensure equal rights for all.

Over and over again, Nevadans have led the charge for equality and women's rights at both the State and the Federal level. Now, since Nevada kicked off the push in recent years to ratify the ERA federally, we now have the 38 States we need to codify the Equal Rights Amendment in the U.S. Constitution. The only thing that is stopping us is a deadline Congress made up in 1972 that was already extended once. That is why we must vote to remove this deadline and adopt the Equal Rights Amendment into our Constitution because, quite honestly, there is too much at stake and to let an arbitrary time limit hold women's rights hostage is just wrong.

So with that, along with my colleagues here this afternoon, I, too, urge the adoption tomorrow of bipartisan S.J. Res. 4.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I am so proud to be here with my colleagues today—Senator CORTEZ MASTO and all of our colleagues and with our leaders Senator CARDIN and Senator MURKOWSKI—on this bipartisan resolution that is, frankly, long overdue.

You know, there is a sign you often see at rallies for reproductive rights. A woman my age or older will often be holding it, and it reads something like this: ''I can't believe we are still fighting for this crap.'' Now, it usually has a different word on it than ''crap.''

As I stand here on the Senate floor in the Year of Our Lord 2023, I can't believe we are still fighting for equal

rights for women under our American Constitution. We are 100 years out from when the Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced in 1923—a full century, 100 years—since it was first introduced. And a lot of things have changed since 1923, for sure. Women are CEOs and astronauts, professional athletes and chemistry professors, Governors and a Vice President of the United States. A quarter of the Members of this Chamber are women—not nearly enough, but we are getting there. Yet, still, 100 years later, women are not guaranteed equal legal protections, equal legal rights under our Constitution. That needed to change in 1923, and it certainly needs to change 100 years later in 2023.

Michigan was ready for change back in 1972. That is when my State ratified the ERA. A Congresswoman from Michigan helped lead the way. Congresswoman Martha Griffiths of Detroit was the first woman in history to serve on the House Ways and Means Committee.

In 1970, she filed a discharge petition to send the legislation to the full House of Representatives for consideration. It passed, only to die in the Senate. We have heard that story before. But Representative Griffiths was undaunted. She introduced an amended version. The House and Senate both passed it, and it was sent to the States for ratification in 1972.

Congresswoman Griffiths later served as Michigan's first elected Lieutenant Governor and became known as the Mother of the ERA. Congresswoman Griffiths, sadly, didn't live to see her amendment written into the Constitution.

But there is no doubt we need it today, even more than we did in 1972. Women in this country are watching our reproductive freedoms be dismantled. The Dobbs decision attempts to ban the abortion pill, and harsh abortion restrictions in States have left women in this country with fewer freedoms than our mothers and even our grandmothers enjoyed.

The ERA is really simple. It simply says:

> Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Equal rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. That is it.

And this resolution is equally simple, the one before us. All it would do is remove an arbitrary deadline that was included when this was passed in Congress, preventing the ERA from being ratified.

The ERA is simple, but its protections would be profound. It would protect all people, regardless of sex, from discrimination. It would defend against the rollback of our fundamental rights and freedoms.

Congresswoman Martha Griffiths, from Michigan, passed it. The States ratified it. Now we just need to add it to our Constitution. Our daughters and our granddaughters can't wait another 100 years. They deserve equality now.

So I hope colleagues would join with us to pass this resolution and finally ensure all people are equal under our laws.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. I want to thank Senator STABENOW for her leadership in the Senate and in our community on these issues. I serve with her and Senator CORTEZ MASTO on the Finance Committee, and I see the duo there fighting for removing a lot of the discrimination we have in our healthcare system—again, that women are discriminated against. Both of these Senators do a great job being here, protecting the rights.

But it is so important that we have in our toolbox the constitutional amendment to help us in fighting discrimination so that we have a fairer playing field in the courts to protect the rights of women. So I thank her.

We are also joined by Senator KLOBUCHAR. We were elected at the same time to the U.S. Senate. She has been an advocate on behalf of equality for all communities, but particularly her efforts on behalf of women is known throughout the Nation, and I am glad she could join us today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to join Senator CARDIN, thanking him for his leadership for so many years, as well as Senator MURKOWSKI and my colleague Senator STABENOW in support of this bipartisan resolution to remove the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment so we can finally enshrine equal rights for women into our Constitution.

What are people afraid of?

Minnesota ratified the ERA 50 years ago. Since then, women and men who stand with them have never rested in the fight to guarantee equality in the Constitution of the United States of America.

After a half century of overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles, that long-fought battle for equality has come down to an arbitrary deadline.

Passing the resolution will bring us one step closer to ratifying the ERA and finally enshrining permanent protections for women and girls in our Constitution.

The Equal Rights Amendment would make clear, once and for all, that women are guaranteed equal rights under the U.S. Constitution.

The core of the amendment is only 24 words long, guaranteeing that ''[e]quality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.''

In 1972, the amendment passed both Houses of Congress with bipartisan support. The Senate voted to send the amendment to the States by a vote of 84 to 8, with 7 not voting, and the House passed it 354 to 24. Congress initially set a 7-year deadline for the required three-fourths of States to ratify the amendment, and it later extended the deadline by 3 more years.

By the time that deadline expired, only 35 States had ratified, leaving the amendment three States short of the 38 needed. But the deadline did not stop the growing support for the ERA and women's equality. Since then, three additional States have voted to ratify the ERA, including Nevada, Illinois, and Virginia.

It is long past time that equality of women be enshrined in the Constitution.

I have been proud to join a bipartisan group of Senators in cosponsoring this resolution. This resolution is part of a long tradition of bipartisan support for the ERA. The past year has made it painfully clear that protecting equality remains fundamental to the lives of each and every American. As my colleagues have noted, the women of this country still face a gender pay gap that leaves them economically behind. Women still earn around 82 cents of every dollar a man makes, and for women of color, it is even less.

Ten months ago, we saw the Supreme Court issue a rule shredding nearly five decades of precedent protecting a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions. Now women are at the mercy of a patchwork of State laws governing their ability to access reproductive care, leaving them with fewer rights than their moms and grandmas.

Every branch of government has a responsibility to protect people's rights, and if one branch fails to do so, the Constitution gives Congress and the people the power to step in by proposing and ratifying a new amendment.

Ratifying the ERA would affirm that sex discrimination is inconsistent with the Nation's core values of equal protection under the law.

We know that the majority of Americans are on our side—78 percent of Americans, according to the Pew Research Center—support the ERA being added to the Constitution—78 percent of Americans. We know this proposal is common sense.

This year marks the 101st anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, a critical milestone in our democracy. At this moment in our country's history, I am as committed as ever to fighting to ensure that all Americans are guaranteed equality under the law. Let's show the world that the United States of America is a place where equality is the law of the land.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Minnesota, and I especially thank my colleague from Maryland. The Senator from Maryland has been working on this issue for a long time.

BEN, thank you for your leadership,

I thank LISA MURKOWSKI for making it a bipartisan effort.

I have a good speech here, but I want to tell you a story. The story goes back to my graduation from law school and the first job I ever had.

I was working for the Lieutenant Governor of the State of Illinois—a man named Paul Simon, who went on to be elected to Congress and to the U.S. Senate. Simon, as the Lieutenant Governor of Illinois, presided over the Illinois State Senate. We had met one another. He said he was going to offer me a job when I graduated from law school, and lo and behold, I became parliamentarian of the Illinois State Senate. I was fresh out of law school. I skipped my graduation ceremony because I desperately needed some money to pay off some bills. I started working in Springfield, IL, as the parliamentarian of the State senate.

Simon mistakenly believed that there was a course in law school called parliamentary law. There wasn't. I had to learn it by just reading the rule book over and over again until it became familiar, but eventually I was pretty good at it. I needed to be because we had a big debate going on in Springfield, IL, in the early 1970s about something called the Equal Rights Amendment. It was different than the debate in many State capitols because there was a real confrontation. There was no party identity behind or for the Equal Rights Amendment. Some Republicans supported it, and many Democrats supported it, but there was opposition in both parties too.

What fired up the troops in that particular debate was the presence of a woman from Alton, IL, named Phyllis Schlafly, who was leading the national effort to stop the Equal Rights Amendment. I reflect on that this evening because I remember what she used to say: If you pass the Equal Rights Amendment, men and women are going to use the same bathrooms. Not only that, women are going to be forced to fight in combat in the military. They will be drafted, and they will all be fighting in the military.

I look back on those arguments now and say: Was that it? Was it really that the debate on the equality of women in America came down to those two issues?

I thought of it the other day when I went to a school that I was visiting that had a same-gender restroom. It was a single restroom, but either gender could use it. I thought, Phyllis Schlafly's dream came true in that we are sharing the same restrooms in some places. When it comes to combat in the military, many women across the United States fought for that right to do so and have served our country honorably.

But those were the arguments and the differences of the day which led to the debate and led to Illinois's not ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s. That didn't happen until very recently.

We had a hearing on this, as the Presiding Officer knows, in the Senate's Judiciary Committee, and I listened to the critics of the Equal Rights Amendment today. I didn't hear anything about same-sex restrooms and nothing about combat in the military, but one lady raised the prospect that if we pass the Equal Rights Amendment, it would ruin her daughter's field hockey team in high school because there may be some transgender individuals wanting to play on her daughter's team.

I thought to myself, so now it has come to that. It is no longer restrooms or combat pay; it is a question of field hockey for young ladies.

Well, I know that is an important part of their lives, and she told us as much, but when I reflect on what the reality of this amendment does, it seems that those things pale in comparison. The language of it is so expressed and so clear that most people in the United States really would be surprised to know it is not already in the Constitution: no discrimination against people on the basis of sex. Most people assume that is a fact, but it is not. We have to do something about it.

Tonight, we are seeing the Senate at its best—a bipartisan effort on the floor of the U.S. Senate to finally make this right by America. The Equal Rights Amendment is literally a century in the making, and over the years, generations of Americans have done their part to push it forward. They have marched on Washington, and they have met with Congressmen and Senators. As of 2020, they crossed a crucial threshold: the ratification of the ERA in 38 States. That is the exact number of States needed to certify it as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

So now it is time for lawmakers in Congress to do our part in supporting the ERA. We need to clear a path for equality, and this proposal—this bipartisan proposal from Senator BEN CARDIN of Maryland and Senator LISA MURKOWSKI of Alaska—is our chance to do it. It will remove the arbitrary deadline Congress imposed on the ERA ratification more than 50 years ago, and removing that deadline has never been more important.

As we learned over the past year, there is no room for uncertainty when it comes to protecting equal rights. Right now, women all across America are living with the reality that their fundamental freedoms are under attack. In the months since the disastrous Dobbs decision, millions of Americans have been robbed of their reproductive rights. Activist judges and far-right politicians have replaced the will of the people and the expertise of medical professionals with their own radical beliefs. Women living in States like Texas, Oklahoma, and most recently Florida and North Dakota have fewer rights today than their parents and grandparents did decades ago.

All of this chaos and confusion is jeopardizing the lives of women and upending our healthcare system. We had another hearing today. There was testimony in that hearing by a young lady from Texas who went through an awful ordeal at the end of a pregnancy—a pregnancy which she wanted desperately. It was her first child. It would have been her first daughter, and Willow was the name she had given her. Then, late in the pregnancy, complications arose. Willow, unfortunately, couldn't be born, and the mother almost died while waiting to comply with the new Texas law on abortion.

I am going to remember that testimony for a long time.

Without ERA protections, even basic rights like reproduction are on the chopping block. We need protection against discrimination in the workplace, in the classroom, even in the courtroom. Unless women's rights are explicitly protected under the Constitution, there is nothing stopping the rightwing majority on the Court from ripping them away. That is why Congress must restore and protect women's rights in all facets of life. We can do it this week by clearing the way and finally enshrining gender equality in the Constitution.

I had the honor of presiding over a hearing on this very proposal in the Senate Judiciary Committee several weeks ago. During that hearing, we heard from a young woman whose name was Thursday Williams—a first-generation American, a board member of the ERA Coalition, and a senior at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. Ms. WILLIAMS is planning on attending law school after she graduates from college. She says she developed a passion for the law when she ''fell in love with the U.S. Constitution in high school.''

In her words:

> What I love the most about the Constitution is how brilliantly it was designed to adapt to the changing needs of its people, and, today, we deserve a Constitution that guarantees equality regardless of sex, a Constitution that we can use as a tool to fight discrimination.

That was her testimony.

Ms. WILLIAMS concluded by asking members of the committee a question. It is a question I would like to now ask every Member of the Senate: How can we be the beacon of freedom and democracy we claim to be if we do not declare that sex discrimination contradicts the American dream?

That was Thursday Williams' question to the Senate Judiciary Committee. It is my question to the Senate on her behalf.

If we want to live up to the promise of America, we need to protect the rights of every American. Let's start with the ERA.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first, I want to thank Senator DURBIN, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, for his leadership on this issue but, just as importantly, for his leadership on so

many human rights and civil rights issues.

Thank you for the hearing that you conducted in the Judiciary Committee. It shed light on a lot of the ridiculous arguments that some have made against the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. More importantly, it showed why it is important for us to remove any ambiguity on the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. I also want to just acknowledge your extraordinary leadership around the world.

When there is a human rights struggle, Senator DURBIN is going to be the spokesperson for those who would otherwise not be heard. I have joined him many times in those efforts, and I am proud to be on his team. I thank him for really giving us the leadership here in the U.S. Senate and the best values of America here at home and abroad. I thank him for his leadership on this issue and on so many other issues.

I am joined by a couple of my other colleagues—first, Senator BLUMENTHAL from Connecticut. I also want to acknowledge Senator VAN HOLLEN from Maryland. Both have been real leaders in regard to the equal rights of women but also in regard to civil liberties and civil rights. Both are good friends. One I have the honor of representing the State of Maryland with, so I have seen him in action for equal rights in our State. As for the other, we have been together on the Helsinki Commission, fighting globally for human rights. So I thank them for being here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am so honored by that introduction and to be here on the floor with a great colleague—a champion in the House as well as now in the Senate—CHRIS VAN HOLLEN of Maryland.

I thank the senior Senator from Maryland—we are both senior Senators from our respective States—for yielding first to me. More importantly, I want to thank him for his leadership on human rights and civil rights here in the United States. He has been such a powerful advocate. But also, around the world, through the Helsinki Commission, I have had the great privilege of working with him and serving with him on that Commission, where he has put front and center the crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine as well as in other parts of the world where the rule of law, unfortunately, is lacking. So I am very, very proud to be with him on the floor today.

Like my colleague Senator DURBIN, who has been rightly lauded by Senator CARDIN for his work on rights, I rise to ask this body and all who are hearing this message to commit to making the Equal Rights Amendment the law of our land—part of the Constitution.

Outside of the right to vote, the Constitution has no mention of gender equality. It was enshrined—the right to vote—just over a century ago with the 19th Amendment, but the U.S. Constitution does not include an explicit provision on equal rights for women, and that is a sad omission that cannot be allowed to stand. We must fix it.

The ERA, as you know, was introduced to Congress in 1923 by suffragist leader Alice Paul, who believed that after securing the right to vote, women needed legal protection against discrimination. That fact is no less true today than it was then. In 1972, the ERA was passed by Congress. In 2020, Virginia became the 38th and final State required by the Constitution to ratify it. In January 2022, we passed the 2-year waiting period. President Biden has supported making it the law of the land. We should heed President Biden and this body in doing so—in recognizing the importance of a resolution ratifying the ERA.

Now, the hard, blunt truth here is that significant progress in sex equality has been made thanks to a generation of advocates—actually, several generations—but women and girls still face horrendous, life-changing barriers and challenges derived from structural sex discrimination every day. I became more aware of it as a dad to a young woman, listening to her, seeing the world through her eyes, as well as my wife, Cynthia—both of them strong advocates and, thankfully, my three sons as well, who are ardent champions of gender equality.

In the workplace, the gender gap has hardly budged. You are, I am sure, aware that women now earn about 84 cents for every dollar a man earns. That is a statistic from the Department of Labor. The disparity is even larger for women of color. For every dollar a man earns, Native American women and Latinas earn 57 cents and Black women earn 67 cents. That is in the greatest country in the history of the world. We should be ashamed and embarrassed—ashamed and embarrassed.

The ERA is a critical step toward ensuring equality and protecting women's fundamental rights, including the right to abortion and contraception.

The Supreme Court overturned five decades of precedent and eliminated the constitutional right to abortion in Dobbs saying Roe was wrong—a decision that will go down in infamy as one of the most destructive to the Court's credibility, as I mentioned today, and a tribute to the disingenuousness of three nominees before this body—the three most recent nominees—who said they would respect precedent and then voted to completely overturn Dobbs within a couple of years.

About one in three girls and women in the United States of reproductive age are living in States where abortion is either unavailable or severely restricted, and the adverse consequences of poor women's health are already clearly visible.

Amanda Zurawski today testified before the Judiciary Committee about how she nearly died, nearly perished from sepsis because of Texas's cruel, barbarous prohibitions against women's healthcare through abortion.

Without the freedom to control their own lives, bodies, and futures, the true meaning of equality will remain elusive and out of reach. As Justice Ginsburg put it, full and equal citizenship ''is intimately connected to a person's ability to control their reproductive lives.''

The ERA would also provide additional tools against violence committed all too often against women. Gender-based bias is a form of sex discrimination as well as a violation of human rights. Thirty-five percent of all women who are killed by men are a result of violence from intimate partners with guns. One in three women has experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner. One in five women in the United States has been raped.

You can dispute the specific numbers, but the overwhelming truth of sex discrimination in violence, in denial of healthcare, in job inequality, in pay discrimination is there for all to see. We all know it exists. We must act against it.

That is why I am proud to stand here with my colleagues and argue that ratification is an idea long overdue. It is not an idea whose time has come; it came long ago. We have an obligation to act as a matter of conscience and conviction. If we care about women in the United States of America in the 21st century, we need to bring the law into the 21st century and do what should have been done long ago to protect women's health and security, as well as fundamental equality.

Let me just close with a favorite quote of mine from Susan Anthony. She stated:

> The true republic—men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less.

Sex equality deserves a permanent home in the Constitution. The time to make it happen is now.

I yield the floor to my colleague from Maryland, Senator VAN HOLLEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, let me thank my colleague from Connecticut for his words in support of the Equal Rights Amendment and for his fight for justice.

Let me also thank my colleague, my Maryland partner and friend Senator CARDIN, for teaming up with Senator MURKOWSKI to push for passage of this legislation year after year. It is long overdue that we take this up and that we pass it in the U.S. Senate.

If you look at our history during the darkest of times and against the longest of odds, Americans from all backgrounds have stood together to insist that America live up to its promise—the promise of equality, the promise of equal rights for all.

In fact, if you think about the story of America, it really is the story of the struggle to make good on that fundamental promise to ensure that every individual receives equal dignity.

We talk about how we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that is true. There are not more rights for men and not supposed to be more rights for any particular group. It is supposed to be about equal dignity, and equal dignity should include equal treatment under the law.

In their fight for voting rights, our Nation's suffragettes faced unjust arrest. They faced persecution. They faced resistance from a nation that was not yet willing to fulfill that full promise when it came to voting rights. Despite it all, through protests, through demands, through arrests, the suffragettes prevailed and made sure that we passed the 19th Amendment, at least fulfilling the right to vote for women.

But we have a lot of unfinished business. It is not just all men who are created equal; it is all people who are created equal. We have accomplished that when it comes to the ballot box. Although, as we in this body know, we also have a long way to go to make sure that that is made real in practice on the ground. That is why we have been fighting to pass voting rights legislation. But we also need to make sure that, when it comes to women's rights, we enshrine it in the highest law of the land in order to give the rhetoric legal teeth and legal backing.

Alice Paul, who really is the founder of the movement for the Equal Rights Amendment, knew that a century ago when she said:

> I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me, there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality.

There is great truth in the simplicity of that statement, and that is what equal rights is all about. It is not a lot of words, but they are the rightly chosen words:

> Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

That is it; a simple statement but a powerful statement because it is a true statement if we really want to live up to our full promise.

That is why the overwhelming majority of the American people support it. Seventy-five percent of our fellow Americans support the ERA. Thirty-eight States have ratified it, enough to make the ERA our 28th Amendment. Yet 100 years after the proposed amendment was first introduced to Congress, despite this broad support and the ratification of a necessary number of States, we have not yet made that part of our Constitution.

The results are painfully clear every day. My colleagues have talked about some of them: the persistent pay gap, which disadvantages not only women but also the families that they support. Recent rulings by the Supreme Court on reproductive rights have shown that the lack of an explicit protection against gender discrimination puts women's fundamental rights at risk and on the chopping block. So this is the moment to finally get this done.

I, again, want to thank Senator CARDIN and Senator MURKOWSKI for their efforts to move forward on this. I want to thank the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

As I close, I do want to say a few words about my friend and colleague from Maryland's long-term fight for this and applaud him for over a decade of working to make sure that we get the ERA across the finish line.

It has been one very important aspect—in fact, the cornerstone of many of his efforts here in the United States—but it is a reflection of his fights for civil rights, for women's rights, for racial rights, and for human rights around the world. I want to thank him for his persistence on this and so many issues that call upon us to be what we say we are as Americans—people who believe in the equal dignity of every individual and the rights of every individual. I want to thank my colleague. I want to thank him for teaming up with Senator MURKOWSKI from Alaska and thank her for her efforts.

I said at the beginning that we have been defined as an American story by our struggle to make good on that original promise, the idea of equal rights. Many people have tried to interpret it in different ways, but I think we all understand, at the end of the day, the North Star is equal rights. It means equal rights for everybody, not just equal rights for some people over here, because that is not equal rights.

That is as simple as what brings us here to the floor. I want to thank my colleague, again, from Maryland for keeping this fight going.

I really hope my Republican colleagues will take this moment, despite what we expect, to enshrine that simple proposition into the Constitution of the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am glad today to stand with my colleague to support S.J. Res. 4, affirming the validity of the Equal Rights Amendment.

We have heard from Senator CARDIN and Senator MURKOWSKI why it is so important for Congress to pass this resolution and enshrine protections against sex-based discrimination in our Constitution.

The ERA would bolster efforts to ensure equality in the fields of workforce and pay, pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment and violence, reproductive autonomy, and protections for LGBTQ individuals.

Although we have indeed made strides in each of these areas, we know how fragile these gains can be without the durability of a constitutional amendment.

Take, for example, the current Supreme Court's approach to the Constitution. As the Dobbs decision makes clear, a majority of the current Court believes that the meaning of equality under the equal protection clause was frozen in 1868 when the 14th Amendment was ratified.

Well, in the hundred years after 1868, the Supreme Court has adopted and permitted all sorts of State laws that excluded women from jury service, that excluded women from admission to the bar as lawyers, that excluded women even from employment as bartenders, and allowed all of those laws under the 14th Amendment. This business now of the Supreme Court, looking back at history and tradition, is a backward look to bad history and regrettable tradition.

So with the Supreme Court, it is particularly important that we not rely on its interpretation of the 14th Amendment alone to guarantee equal rights. Congress needs to stand up and act, and we have the power to do so.

Congress has broad authority over the amendment process. If Congress has the power to impose a time limit, Congress has the power to extend or remove that time limit.

I join my colleagues to urge swift passage of this resolution. As one witness at the Senate Judiciary Committee on the ERA eloquently put it, gender equality is not a zero-sum game, and ''we are all uplifted when everyone's rights are protected.''

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for his leadership on the Equal Rights Amendment. He is our leader on protecting our democratic institutions, which include equality for all. Senator WHITEHOUSE's leadership in protecting the election process and protecting us against dark money and an independent judiciary will go down in history as one of the great contributions made.

I thank him for his help in regard to the Equal Rights Amendment, and I thank him for his leadership on so many issues here in the U.S. Senate.

Let me just conclude this part of our discussion. We will have a chance tomorrow to vote on this.

What we are asking is very simple: to put the Equal Rights Amendment in the Constitution without any ambiguity and remove the time limit. We have already done everything necessary for its ratification.

This document is a precious document: the Constitution of the United States. Most Americans believe the Equal Rights Amendment is in this document. It is not. The consequences are that we are not protecting women's rights and discrimination against sex in the manner we should be protecting them.

Now, the vote tomorrow is going to be on a cloture motion. You see, the majority of the Members of the Senate support the resolution that Senator MURKOWSKI and I are bringing forward. And the way the minority can stop it is by denying us an opportunity to vote up or down on the resolution.

This is a matter of rights. I would hope that my colleagues would support the resolution or they will at least allow the majority of this body to make the decision on this resolution.

I hope my colleagues will vote for the cloture motion so that we can have a vote on the floor of the U.S. Senate on this resolution, which will, once and for all, make it clear equal rights are part of the American Constitution, part of our commitment to future generations.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am back now for the 288th time with my trusty, battered ''Time to Wake Up'' poster to call attention to the climate crisis.

Over the 10-plus years that I have been doing these speeches, I have shown how climate change affects our ecosystems, industries, economy, public health, kids, workers, our elderly. I have even conducted a science experiment right here on the Senate floor, to the dismay of the Senate staff.

One near constant in these speeches has been the oily, often covert hand of the fossil fuel industry lurking behind the opposition to climate action through its campaign of climate denial, delay, and obstruction.

From the late 1980s, when Congress first became aware of climate change, through the period after the 2010 Citizens United decision when special interests could anonymously pour unlimited money into elections, the fossil fuel industry has blocked every serious climate bill in Congress until the Inflation Reduction Act.

Key to this obstruction was the strategic insight that they only needed to capture one political party to strangle legislative action. So the fossil fuel industry captured the Republican Party and has prevented climate action for over three decades, except when we were able to use the extraordinary process of reconciliation. That was just last year.

Democrats had control of the House and Senate and passed the Inflation Reduction Act via budget reconciliation. Congress finally acted on climate.

There is lots more that Congress still needs to do on climate, but the IRA was a big, meaningful bill that powered up tax incentives for clean energy and put a price on oil and gas methane emissions.

In the 10-plus years I have been documenting the fossil fuel industry's hold over the Republican Party, I have provided lots of concrete examples, from election spending to phony front groups by the flotilla, to polluter lackeys installed at the Trump EPA. But nothing tops the debt limit proposal Speaker MCCARTHY released last week, the ''Default on America Act,'' which the House just passed.

MAGA House Republicans like to claim to care about debt and deficits—except, of course, in 2017, when they passed massive tax cuts for the wealthy and large corporations that added trillions to the debt and except when the debt increased by more than $7 trillion under President Trump.

They are a fountain of fiscal hypocrisy. So no surprise that the MCCARTHY package has little to do with reducing debt and deficits and everything to do with providing goodies to big Republican donors, in particular the fossil fuel industry.

Before I get into all the oily, corrupt deals for big polluters, a few words about the rest of the proposal. MCCARTHY calling this monstrosity the Limit, Save, Grow Act would make George Orwell blush. In reality, MCCARTHY's plan would result in unlimited carbon pollution, massive losses to the Federal Government and American families and businesses, and very likely crashes in whole sectors of the economy—some limit, save, and growth.

First, it would rescind the extra funding we provided to the IRS to go after wealthy tax cheats. This would add $120 billion to the deficit. For them, ''limit, save, and grow'' means limit IRS enforcement, save their big donors money paying their taxes, and grow their own campaign contributions.

Federal programs would face indiscriminate cuts of up to 33 percent across research, science, housing, addiction treatment, national parks, transportation, law enforcement, border security, drug enforcement, and criminal prosecutions. If you want to defund the police, Speaker MCCARTHY is your new poster boy.

The public hates all that stuff, so why pursue stuff that the public hates? Why threaten to set off the U.S. default handgrenade to get this done? Who wins? Creepy billionaires who hate the Federal Government and fund KEVIN MCCARTHY—chief among them, the fossil fuel industry.

For his big fossil fuel industry donors, MCCARTHY delivers four huge giveaways. First, they take away the clean energy tax credits we passed in the IRA. Second, they let fossil fuel interests leak polluting methane emissions with no pollution fee. Third, they prop up dying fossil fuel infrastructure with so-called permitting reform targeted to help only fossil fuel. And fourth, they make it harder to protect against water and air pollution.

This oily wish list is not about debt or deficits, and it is not about growing the economy as it risks serious economic downturns. It is about taking care of the industry whose dark money funds their party.

Look at the clean energy tax credits which MCCARTHY claims are wasteful spending. It now appears that those tax credits will incentivize more investment than expected. So what is MCCARTHY's argument? There will be too much investment? Seriously?

Already, in less than a year, the IRA's clean energy tax credits have encouraged over 100 projects that will create north of 100,000 jobs. With time, the IRA could easily create over a million jobs—high-paying manufacturing jobs, the kind we should want. Many projects are in districts in the South and Midwest represented by Republicans.

Indeed, many House Republicans have cheered the very IRA-catalyzed projects they are now trying to torpedo. Seriously. Back home, they celebrate the jobs for their constituents. Here in DC, they vote to eliminate the very tax credits that created them—all to serve fossil fuel polluters.

Here are some of my favorite House Republican quotes celebrating IRA-catalyzed investments in Republican home districts.

This is the largest investment in the State of Georgia's history—

One said—

one that will diversify and expand our economy while providing strong job opportunities for Georgians today and for generations to come.

And then a ''no'' vote against the IRA.

I'm thrilled that Honda has once again committed to Ohio and our workers with today's announcement of a $3.5 billion investment in EV production and a new battery plant within Ohio's 15th Congressional District. I look forward to working Honda and LG Energy Solution to bring 2,200 new jobs to the Buckeye State.

And then voted to wipe out the program.

I am thrilled to welcome ENTEK to Terre Haute and to the Hoosier state. As the only American company to own and produce ''wet-process'' lithium-ion battery separator materials, ENTEK is going to help to pave the way for electric vehicle production in Indiana and reduce American manufacturers' reliance on imported products. Their operation in Terre Haute will create hundreds of new jobs.

And then voted to strip out the tax credits behind them.

I am honored to stand with other state and federal leaders during this groundbreaking event as the first solar energy microgrid-powered industrial site project was unveiled in Jackson County. I know this important project will . . . stimulate economic growth that will create new jobs in West Virginia.

And then voted against the tax credits.

Where are the common themes here? Well, clean energy investments grow the economy and create jobs. These investments will help America compete against imports from overseas.

Usually, Republicans can't stop talking about how we need to reduce our dependence on Chinese imports and build up our own manufacturing industry—until their fossil fuel overlords tell them otherwise. Then they vote against the credits that encourage domestic manufacturing of the clean energy technologies that will dominate the economy of tomorrow.

What a terrible bet. Republicans can't beat China with the energy and technologies of the last century. No amount of fossil fuel-funded obstruction here at home is going to stop the clean energy revolution happening in the rest of the world.

In Europe last year, more than 12 percent of cars sold were fully electric, up from less than 2 percent just back in 2019. Europe is investing massively in wind and solar and green hydrogen, particularly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine demonstrated just how dangerous dependence on fossil fuels can be.

In China last year, 22 percent of cars sold were fully electric, towards the goal of 40 percent of all cars sold fully electric in 2030. China is, by far, the largest installer of wind and solar power, with ambitions to dominate the clean energy technologies of tomorrow.

In most places, renewable energy is now the cheapest form of energy—far cheaper than fossil fuel. So the rest of the world is going all-in on wind, solar, batteries, green hydrogen, and other clean technologies for their low-cost energy. And that savings doesn't even count the trillions of dollars of value from avoiding the costs and harms of fossil fuel pollution.

The future is clean tech. And there are fortunes to be made. Many of these clean energy technologies were developed right here by our scientists and engineers at our companies and national labs. But the fossil fuel industry wants America to lose our technological leadership and all the business opportunities that flow from it.

Remember limit, save, grow? If you want that for real: limit pollution, save clean energy jobs, and grow the economy. The fossil fuel industry behind this is the most subsidized industry on the planet. It lives off public money and political influence. It gets to pollute for free.

Just today in the Budget Committee, we heard testimony that fossil fuel combustion, by warming the planet and polluting the air, costs America over $800 billion per year in health costs. The International Monetary Fund puts the effective subsidy in the U.S. for fossil fuels at almost $700 billion per year.

If fossil fuel-funded Republicans want to talk about picking winners and losers, bring it on. Their fossil fuel donors enjoy the biggest subsidy in world history.

If fossil-fuel-funded Republicans want to talk about free markets, bring it on. Market economics 101 teaches that the cost of your pollution should be in the price of your product. But fossil-fuel-funded Republicans protect free polluting for fossil fuel.

It is not just costs that fossil fuels impose on the rest of us. It is risks—economic risks associated with climate change. Central bankers, economists, insurance CEOs, financial experts, and other witnesses—serious grownups whose judgments are fiduciary—have come to the Budget Committee to warn of systemic risks to the economy, including a collapse in coastal property values and a carbon bubble resulting from stranded fossil fuel assets.

Now, ''systemic risks'' sounds pretty mild. It is not. It is when catastrophe spreads from one troubled sector across the entire economy, much as the 2008 meltdown in the mortgage market spread across the country to become the financial crisis and Great Recession, which, by the way, resulted in an additional $5 trillion in government debt. Disaster avoidance is debt reduction.

The stakes are huge. The consulting firm Deloitte estimates that the global cost of doing nothing on climate is around $180 trillion in economic damage—$180 trillion. But they go on to say that if we act responsibly and limit warming to 1.7 degrees Celsius, we can save ourselves from that and actually grow the global economy by $40 trillion. So you want limit, save, and grow? In this case, if you do it right by limiting pollution and saving clean energy jobs and growing the economy, the swing is $220 trillion between a bad climate outcome and a responsible climate outcome.

But the corrupt fossil fuel industry says ''jump,'' and KEVIN MCCARTHY and MAGA Republicans say ''how high?''

Here is a ''how high'': They eliminate the fee on wasteful methane emissions that I worked to include in the IRA. The methane pollution fee will raise $6 billion against the deficit and save even more from avoided climate and air pollution damage. But the rotten House plan was never about cutting debt and deficits, always about delivering for the fossil fuel overlords. So out goes the methane program.

Methane traps 80 times as much heat as carbon dioxide, at least in the short run, and it creates air pollution that sickens people across the country. This is a satellite image of a methane plume. You can actually detect methane plumes from space now, which is why charging a fee for polluting makes so much sense, because you can find the polluter quite easily. This one is being released from an oil well. Now, the operator of this oil well could capture this methane and sell it. It is natural gas. But, instead, oil companies like this just release it. Pure waste. Pure pollution.

Putting a price on methane emissions will dramatically reduce this pollution and raise budget balancing revenues. But MCCARTHY doesn't care; the industry funds his caucus. So out goes the budget-balancing, pollution-preventing methane fee.

Next in the fossil fuel-funded parade of horribles is a permitting reform stuffed with giveaways to—you guessed it—the fossil fuel industry. What the hell does permitting reform have to do with the debt limit, you might ask? Well, good question. Does building in more fossil fuel even make sense? The world is moving off fossil fuels. Peak oil will occur, and demand will begin to decline. Once demand begins to decline, the oil cartel will collapse in a rush for the exits, causing serious economic turbulence as fossil fuel assets are stranded, particularly in high production cost countries like the United States of America.

This is the global production cost curve for oil. As you can see, Persian Gulf oil is far cheaper to produce than U.S. oil. Here we are.

So when there is a rush for the exits, and instead of cheating the world with cartel pricing, they go to cost-plus pricing, and we are out of business in the U.S. fossil fuel industry, and American fossil fuel infrastructure becomes hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of useless, stranded assets. But fossil fuel says ''jump,'' and House Republicans say ''how high?''

Last in this fossil fuel wish list is a provision to make it next to impossible for EPA to promulgate regulations limiting air and water pollution. Again, deregulating polluters has nothing to do with the debt limit, but the fossil fuel industry wants it. So it is in.

In just the last few months, we have seen what Republican deregulation means for American families and businesses. We saw it in East Palestine, OH, when a train derailment resulted in a major spill of toxic chemicals. We saw it in Northern California when Silicon Valley Bank went belly-up. Both of these events could have been prevented with better regulations. Both harmed American families and businesses.

Protecting Americans from air and water pollution with good regulations always pays because the costs associated with air and water pollution are enormous. But fossil fuel does a lot of air and water pollution. So here is another fact giveaway to the fossil fuel industry.

If you ever needed proof that the Republican Party is the wholly owned subsidiary of the fossil fuel industry, MCCARTHY's debt limit package is that proof. Amazingly, almost 280 pages out of a 320-page bill are devoted to fossil fuel industry giveaways.

Here are 320 pages; 280 of these pages are blue. The remaining 40 are white. So this is a visual image of how much of the ''Default on America'' bill is devoted to making nice for the fossil fuel industry versus everything else.

It is like a bunch of delivery boys for the fossil fuel industry over there. This bill isn't about debt and deficits. It is not about limiting or saving or growing. It is about serving fossil fuel—the source of the money that keeps them in power. Period.

Oil and gas extraction represents only about 5 percent of our GDP. Farming, manufacturing, food and beverage, insurance, finance, restaurants, retail, housing, healthcare—all representing a larger share of GDP. Clean energy actually now accounts for more employment than the fossil fuel industry. But for subsidies, nothing compares to fossil fuel. So for political influence, to protect those massive subsidies, nothing compares to fossil fuel.

There is actually a bug—an insect—that infiltrates another bug and takes over the other bug's nervous system. And from inside the other bug, it drives

it around. It is kind of a creepy, natural development. It happens in the insect world. And it looks like it happened on the other side of the building, because what the fossil fuel industry has done is to take over the Republican Party and now just drive it around.

So fossil fuel money makes the MCCARTHY package serve its Big Oil master. It is a deeply sad and dangerous state of affairs when one of America's two main political parties abandons all pretense of responsible governance just to service its prime political benefactor. That is what Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans are doing. That is this bill.

They threaten default, propose terrible cuts, deny climate warnings, and are willing to kneecap the American economy, all in service to the fossil fuel industry and its dark money.

It is time to fix our democracy so that it functions honestly and this nonsense stops. It is time to wake up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF ESCORT COMMITTEE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the President of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort His Excellency Yoon Suk Yeol, President of the Republic of Korea, into the House Chamber for the joint meeting on Thursday, April 27, 2023.

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

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following resolutions, introduced earlier today: S. Res. 176, S. Res. 177, and S. Res. 178.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions.

S. RES. 177 AND S. RES. 178

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in two criminal cases pending in Federal district court in the District of Columbia and arising out of the events of January 6, 2021, the prosecution has requested testimony from a Senate witness.

In these cases, brought against Leo Christopher Kelly and Rachel Powell, respectively, trials are expected to commence in early May, and the prosecution has requested testimony from Daniel Schwager, formerly counsel to the Secretary of the Senate, concerning his knowledge and observations of the process and constitutional and legal bases for Congress' counting of the Electoral College votes. The prosecution in the Kelly case has additionally requested Mr. Schwager's testimony regarding certain property destruction that occurred on January 6, 2021. Senate Secretary Berry would like to cooperate with these requests by providing relevant testimony in these trials from Mr. Schwager.

In keeping with the rules and practices of the Senate, these resolutions would authorize the production of relevant testimony from Mr. Schwager, with representation by the Senate legal Counsel.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

MORNING BUSINESS

EARTH DAY 2023

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, on Saturday, Earth Day turned 53. For the past half-plus century, we have paused each spring to celebrate and reflect on our relationship with the natural world and to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

This year's theme, Invest in Our Planet, served as a reminder of our responsibility to deliver Federal resources and spur innovation to ensure peace and prosperity for future generations.

The environmental challenges facing our planet, fueled increasingly by climate change, are urgent and require immediate action. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—EPA—nearly half of our rivers and streams are polluted by excess nutrients. During extreme rain events, river flow increases, pouring more fresh water into estuaries like the Chesapeake Bay.

Stormwater runoff pushes nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants off the land and into rivers and streams. Excess nutrients then lead to the growth of harmful algal blooms that harm plants and animals. Pollution not only affects our aquatic life but can contaminate drinking water sources and impart costly impacts to recreation, tourism, and fisheries.

Low-income and communities of color often face disproportionately high pollutant exposures. The communities who are most affected by nitrates are also less likely to be able to afford the necessary water treatment. That is why I applaud the Biden administration's focused attention on delivering the benefits of historic Federal investments to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. For too long, the Nation has underinvested in water infrastructure. Failing water infrastructure threatens the environment, and it risks people's health, safety, and livelihoods.

Congress responded with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which delivers more than $50 billion to EPA to improve our Nation's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. This is the single largest investment in water that the Federal Government has ever made. EPA recently announced $775 million in funding Congress appropriated for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, CWSRF. This funding, along with the investments from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, is critical for communities across the country to upgrade their wastewater and stormwater systems, protect public health and preserve our precious water bodies. In its allotment, my home State of Maryland received $18.3 million towards improving water quality, toward a total of over $167 million this fiscal year to upgrade drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act also invested in EPA's geographic programs, including the Chesapeake Bay Program. These programs are long-standing, location-specific programs that help protect local ecosystems and communities from climate change, habitat loss, and pollution.

I am also pleased to report that due in part to concerted efforts to control nutrient pollution, the Chesapeake Bay had the tenth smallest area impacted by low-oxygen water this past summer. Long-term trends indicate this ''dead zone'' where fish, crab, and other species cannot live because there is not enough oxygen in the water has been getting smaller. Low-oxygen or hypoxic water is caused by excess nutrients like nitrogen or phosphorus from agricultural runoff and urban and suburban stormwater entering the bay. It is encouraging to see that efforts to reduce nutrient pollution are making a difference. The Chesapeake Bay Program is a model for a regional partnership that unites an array of stakeholders—from producers to nonprofits to local governments—behind a common goal: Restore and protect the Bay.

Globally, cooperation offers similar benefits. The recovery of the Earth's protective ozone layer announced in January is a hopeful example. The ozone layer plays a critical role in shielding us from harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Human activities, such as the use of ozone-depleting substances like chlorofluorocarbons—CFCs—have caused significant damage to the ozone layer. Fortunately, collective action to limit these substances, such as the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, an international agreement to protect the ozone layer, is allowing it to recover. According to the United Nations, if commitments like these stay in place, the ozone layer could fully recover to 1980 levels by 2040. However,

we must ensure solving one environmental challenge does not create another. Hydrofluorocarbons—HFCs—which are often used as substitutes for ozone-depleting substances, are even more potent greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide.

The Kigali amendment addresses this issue by adding HFCs to the list of substances that need to be limited in the Montreal Protocol. For our part, Congress not only passed the American Innovation and Manufacturing Act—AIM Act—to phase down HFCs, but also ratified the amendment. It was America's space Agency that demonstrated the link between hydrofluorocarbons—HFCs—and climate change. In 2015, a NASA study found that HFCs damage the ozone layer and that their impact could cause a 0.035 percent decrease in ozone by 2050. Today, federally supported science is returning the U.S. to the Moon: Artemis II is NASA's first crewed Artemis mission. On this 10-day long mission, four astronauts announced earlier this month will fly around the Moon before returning to Earth and test the Space Launch System and Orion spacecraft capabilities that will help send more people to space in the future.

This kind of exploration enables us to learn more about our planet and gather valuable data on the environment. I am so proud of the Marylanders involved with the mission, including Commander Reid Wiseman, with whom I had the opportunity to speak earlier this month. The flight, set to build upon the successful uncrewed Artemis I mission completed in December, will set the stage for the first woman and first person of color on the Moon through the Artemis Program, paving the way for future for long-term human exploration missions to the Moon and, eventually, Mars. This is the Agency's Moon to Mars exploration approach. Overcoming the challenges of working in space will lead to many more technological and scientific advances here on Earth in areas including healthcare, transportation, public safety, consumer goods, energy, information technology, and industrial productivity.

I am heartened by all the positive changes to improve our environment, but there is still work to be done. The Inflation Reduction Act laid the groundwork to make a just, clean U.S. economy a reality, saving trillions of dollars from avoided illness and death, reduced property damage from climate-related disasters and sea level rise, and reduced costs related to increasing temperatures.

Still, climate change and other environmental issues continue to pose a threat to Earth's health that disproportionally impacts vulnerable communities. Further steps will be needed to fully meet President Biden's pledge to reduce U.S. climate pollution by 50 to 52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. We cannot become complacent; we must remain committed to taking action to protect our environment. I am confident that our Nation can further promote sustainability through thoughtful policies and legislation.

This year, let us celebrate our achievements and not forget our responsibility to invest in our planet.

TRIBUTE TO LYNN MALERBA

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of Chief Mutawi Mutahash (Many Hearts) Marilynn ''Lynn'' Malerba, who was recently named the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut's 2023 Citizen of the Year.

Chief Malerba has an impressive list of accomplishments. In 2010, she became Chief of the Mohegan Tribe in Connecticut, the first female Chief in the Tribe's modern history. Before her current role, Chief Malerba held many leadership positions, including chairwoman of the Tribal council and executive director of health and human services for the Mohegan Tribe. Before her work in Tribal government, Chief Malerba also had a long career as registered nurse, earning a doctor of nursing practice at Yale University and eventually serving as the director of cardiology and pulmonary services at Lawrence and Memorial Hospital in New London, CT.

Currently, Chief Malerba serves as the 45th Treasurer of the United States, the first Native American to hold this office. As Treasurer, Chief Malerba has direct oversight over the U.S. Mint and Fort Knox and is a key liaison with the Federal Reserve. She also oversees the Office of Consumer Policy at the Department of Treasury and serves as a senior adviser to the Secretary of Treasury on community development and engagement.

From her long career as a healthcare professional, to her leadership of the Mohegan Tribe, and now her national role as U.S. Treasurer, Chief Malerba has made Connecticut immensely proud. I applaud her selection as the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut's 2023 Citizen of the Year, and I hope my colleagues will join me in celebrating Chief Malerba's remarkable achievements.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR BRIAN FOCARETO

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, today I honor an exemplary leader, liaison, and soldier. After a year of service in the U.S. Senate, MAJ Brian Focareto will continue his service to the Nation in the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell.

On this occasion, I believe it fitting to recognize Major Focareto's distinguished service, leadership, and dedication to fostering the relationship between the U.S. Army and this Chamber. Over the past year, Major Focareto served in the Army Senate Liaison Division. He was invaluable in educating Senators and staff on Army priorities and policy initiatives. He also supported multiple congressional delegations within the United States and to many countries abroad. He became a trusted adviser and friend to many of us.

Prior to his time on the Hill, Major Focareto served our Army in multiple operational assignments over the last 10 years. He commissioned out of the University of Dayton as an armor officer and began his career as a platoon leader, executive officer, and operations officer in the 101st Airborne Division. He deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Following Maneuver Captains Career Course, Major Focareto served as a staff officer in the 2d Cavalry Regiment in Vilseck, Germany, where he planned and executed numerous multinational training exercises with NATO and partner nations across Europe. Major Focareto then commanded a reconnaissance troop and the regimental weapons troop in 2CR. Following troop command, Major Focareto completed a master of policy management from Georgetown University and served as a deputy legislative assistant for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

On behalf of Congress and the United States of America, we thank Major Brian Focareto, his wife, and their children for their continued commitment, sacrifice, and contributions to this great Nation. We join our colleagues in wishing him future successes as he continues to serve our great Army and Nation.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR SARA MILLER

Ms. HASSAN. Madam President, today it is my esteemed pleasure to honor MAJ Sara Miller for her outstanding military service and her exemplary work in my office for the people of New Hampshire. Sara is truly a servant leader who excelled in her year in my office and then for a year and a half as an Army liaison with the Office of the Chief Legislative Liaison. A dedicated mother, wife, and soldier, Sara is leaving her current assignment and—with her husband Daniel, who is also an Army major—heading to Fort Carson, CO, for their next duty assignment. As a dual military family, the Millers know service and sacrifice better than most.

MAJ Sara Miller was born in Lancaster, PA, and moved to Marietta, GA, in 1997. A natural athlete, Sara was recruited out of high school where she earned a scholarship to play soccer at Newberry College in Newberry, SC. After graduating in 2010, her Army career began when she was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army's Adjutant General's Corps.

Over the past 13 years, Sara's primary responsibilities have been ensuring that units under her purview met all personnel readiness requirements to accomplish a variety of critical missions. Her duty assignments included

Fort Bragg, NC, and Fort Carson, CO, before she began her time here in Congress. Sara has served in a variety of Adjutant General's Corps positions at the battalion, brigade, and division level. She also served as commander for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne), at Fort Bragg.

During her deployments overseas, Sara has consistently shown courage, dedication, and leadership. She served during four deployments to the Middle East, including tours to Qatar in 2012, 2013, and 2015, where she helped support Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Inherent Resolve. Her last deployment was to Afghanistan in 2019 as part of the 4th Infantry Division Headquarters, where she was second in charge of personnel for U.S.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO AARON SETH KESSELHEIM

● Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, the award for excellence in STEM and contributions to the well-being of the U.S. was presented by Senator Joseph I. Lieberman to Aaron Seth Kesselheim, MD, JD, MPH, at a luncheon for guests of the Center for Excellence in Education. The center celebrated its upcoming 40th anniversary of the organization, started by Admiral H.G. Rickover and Joann DiGennaro in 1982. The celebratory event took place in the U.S. Capitol Kennedy Caucus Room on April 25, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Aaron Kesselheim attended CEE's Research Science Institute in 1991. He is professor of medicine, Harvard Medical School, and a faculty member in the division of pharmacoepidemiology and pharmacoeconomics in the department of medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Dr. Kesselheim developed and leads the Program on Regulation, Therapeutics, And Law, one of the largest nonindustry funded academic research centers in the country that focuses on pharmaceutical policy and evidence-based use of medicines. Author of over 600 publications in peer-reviewed medical and health policy literatures, Dr. Kesselheim was recognized as one of the top three most cited health law scholars in the U.S. from 2013–2020 in Web of Science, Westlaw, and Google Scholar. Dr. Kesselheim has testified before Congress on pharmaceutical policy, medical device regulation, generic drugs, and modernizing clinical trials. He is the editor-in-chief of the Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics. In 2020, he was elected to the National Academy of Medicine.

Dr. Kesselheim earned his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, his law degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and his master's degree from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He earned an AB degree from Harvard University.

The Senator Lieberman Award is given every 2 years on behalf of CEE's Board of Trustees. The Senator was an honorary member of the board of trustees of the center for 17 years and continues to champion the organization's programs in science and technology.●

TRIBUTE TO PAUL BIANCHI

● Mr. OSSOFF. Madam President, I rise to commend Paul Bianchi, whose leadership in education has helped thousands of children to flourish, improved our world, and built a Georgia legacy that will endure.

After 52 years as head of school for The Paideia School, Mr. Bianchi will retire on June 30, 2023. At Paideia, Mr. Bianchi has built an institution to nourish the minds and hearts of children in Georgia.

After earning an undergraduate degree and a M.A. in teaching at Harvard University, Mr. Bianchi was offered an opportunity to teach at The Galloway School in Atlanta. After 1 year at Galloway, Mr. Bianchi was approached by a group of Atlanta parents who asked him to establish a new school that would emphasize individualized instruction, academics, and the arts. Mr. Bianchi agreed to lead that effort, and in 1971, helped open The Paideia School. Under Mr. Bianchi's decades of leadership, Paideia has grown to serve a student body of 1,020 students. Mr. Bianchi added a high school in 1973 and has managed the growth of a thriving campus with gyms, theaters, science labs, and maker studios.

Mr. Bianchi's leadership has lifted thousands of young people to understand their world and their potential. His work has instilled in generations of students the knowledge, curiosity, and compassion to pursue their dreams and to make a positive difference for our State, our Nation, and the world.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, like so many whose lives Paul has shaped, I am deeply grateful for his service to education, to Georgia, to the United States, and to the world.●

REMEMBERING SANDY BALDONADO

● Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I rise today to celebrate the life of Sandra Nash Baldonado, the former mayor of Claremont, CA, and a beloved community leader.

During an intrepid lifetime of service and generosity, any number of friends across the country will remember her knocking doors in Southern California with her kids by her side, serving our Nation at the C.I.A. in Washington, organizing Lady Bird Johnson's campaign tour through the South in the 1960s, or forging ahead to find a permanent home for the Claremont Lewis Museum of Art to bring life to the town she loved most.

Born in Shanghai in 1935, Sandy had a very international childhood, with her family living everywhere from Canada and Mexico to New York City. She attended Smith College, where she earned her undergraduate degree in economics, her first stop in a lifelong quest for knowledge that would lead her to earn her master's degree in education from Claremont Graduate School and her law degree from Whittier School of Law.

In 1959, after marrying her first husband Arthur Baldonado, the couple moved to Southern California where they would eventually make their home, raise four children, and start their new lives. As a point of personal privilege, it is not lost on me that only in the time since Sandy followed her then Brooklyn Dodgers out west have the Dodgers become one of the most successful franchises in professional sports, with six of their seven World Series titles coming since 1959.

In 1992, Sandy married her late husband George Hart, with whom she traveled the world.

Across her long and accomplished career, Sandy served as a sixth-grade teacher, president of the League of Women Voters, member of the Three Valley Municipal Water District's Board of Directors, vice chair of the California Democratic Party, family lawyer, city council member and later mayor of the city of Claremont, and president of the Claremont Museum of Art.

In every role she held, whether teaching sixth graders or representing women and children in family law, the people and communities around her were made better because of her boundless capacity to care.

My thoughts are with all those she now leaves behind, including her children and their spouses Charles and Michele Baldonado, James Baldonado, Andrew and Susan Baldonado, and Liana and Ezra Bayles; as well as her grandchildren Caroline, Pauline, Alex, Grace, Charlie, and Selina.●

REMEMBERING RICHARD RIORDAN

● Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I rise today to celebrate the life of Richard Joseph Riordan, a veteran, businessman, father, proud Californian, and the 39th mayor of the city of Los Angeles.

Born in Flushing, Queens, in New York City, and the youngest of eight siblings, Mayor Riordan's intellect and work ethic earned him a degree in philosophy from Princeton University, before he went on to serve our Nation in the U.S. Army during the Korean war. His keen mind for business and legal matters brought him to the University of Michigan Law School and later to a career in legal practice and private equity in Los Angeles, where he made his home. But to many Angelenos, we know him best for his time as mayor of Los Angeles from 1993 to 2001.

I had the privilege of serving alongside Mayor Riordan during my first 2 years on the Los Angeles City Council,

and I am proud of the work we did together on behalf of Los Angeles families. Mayor Riordan cared deeply about the city's children and prioritized the modernization of parks, libraries, and recreational, and cultural opportunities for children. He was instrumental in bringing the Children's Museum of Los Angeles, now known as the Discovery Cube Los Angeles, to the San Fernando Valley.

His response to crisis earned Los Angeles national recognition, both in rebuilding after the devastating Northridge earthquake in 1994 and working with the U.S. Department of Justice to reform the Los Angeles Police Department and advance community-based policing efforts. And he was instrumental in bringing the Democratic Convention to Los Angeles in 2000, showcasing the City of Angels to a national audience.

Angela and I offer our deepest condolences and appreciation to Mayor Riordan's family and loved ones. His legacy has left a lasting mark on our city, and his loss will be deeply felt by all Angelenos.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:31 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1343. An act to codify the Institute for Telecommunication Sciences and to direct the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to establish an initiative to support the development of emergency communication and tracking technologies, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1343. An act to codify the Institute for Telecommunication Sciences and to direct the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to establish an initiative to support the development of emergency communication and tracking technologies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–1086. A communication from the Senior Congressional Liaison, Legislative Affairs, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''FY2022 Office of Minority and Women Inclusion Annual Report (March 2023)''; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1087. A communication from the Senior Congressional Liaison, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Statement of Policy Regarding Prohibition on Abusive Acts or Practices'' (12 CFR Chapter X) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1088. A communication from the Senior Congressional Liaison, Legislative Affairs, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Consumer Response Annual Report''; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1089. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Legislative Affairs), transmitting additional legislative proposals that the Department of Defense requests be enacted during the first session of the 118th Congress; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–1090. A communication from the Executive Director, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Annual Update of Filing Fees'' ((RIN1902–AG09) (Docket No. RM23–2–000)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–1091. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations and Standards Branch, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Oil and Gas and Sulfur Operations on the Outer Continental Shelf - Civil Penalty Inflation Adjustment'' (RIN1014–AA58) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–1092. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Regulatory Guide (RG) 1.129 Rev 4, 'Maintenance, Testing, and Replacement of Vented Lead-Acid Storage Batteries for Production and Utilization Facilities''' received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1093. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Disapproval; Iowa; Electronic Submittal of Air Quality'' (FRL No. 9976–02–R7) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1094. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Determination to Defer Sanctions; California; Mojave Desert Air Quality Management'' (FRL No. 10873–03–R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1095. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; Idaho; Incorporation by Reference Updates'' (FRL No. 10254–02–R10) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1096. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Colorado; Revisions to Code of Colorado Regulations; Regulation Number 3'' (FRL No. 10300–02–R8) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1097. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Determination to Defer Sanctions; California; El Dorado County Air Quality Management District'' (FRL No. 10564–02–R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1098. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; North Carolina; Transportation Conformity'' (FRL No. 10576–02–R4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1099. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''National Priorities List'' (FRL No. 10795–01–OLEM) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1100. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; Mississippi; Update to Materials Incorporated by Reference'' (FRL No. 8841–01–R4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1101. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Significant New Use Rules on Certain Chemical Substances (21–2.F)'' (FRL No. 8985–02–OCSPP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1102. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Approval; Illinois; VOC RACT Requirements for Aerospace Manufacturing and Rework Operations'' (FRL No. 9831–02–R5) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1103. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''West Virginia; Finding of Failure to Submit State Implementation Plan Revision in Response to the 2015 Findings of Substantial Inadequacy and SIP Calls to Amend Provisions Applying to Excess Emissions During Periods of Startup, Shutdown, and Malfunction'' (FRL No. 10883–02–R3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1104. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Plan Disapproval; West Virginia; Revision to the West Virginia State Implementation Plan to Add the Startup, Shutdown, Maintenance

Rule 45CSR1 - Alternative Emission Limitations during Startup, Shutdown, and Maintenance Operations'' (FRL No. 10885–02–R3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. REED for the Committee on Armed Services.

*Army nomination of Maj. Gen. John W. Brennan, Jr., to be Lieutenant General.

*Navy nomination of Vice Adm. Karl O. Thomas, to be Vice Admiral.

*Marine Corps nomination of Lt. Gen. Michael S. Cederholm, to be Lieutenant General.

Air Force nomination of Brig. Gen. Derin S. Durham, to be Major General.

Army nominations beginning with Col. Brandi B. Peasley and ending with Col. Earl C. Sparks IV, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 30, 2023.

Army nomination of Brig. Gen. William Green, Jr., to be Major General.

*Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Mark T. Simerly, to be Lieutenant General.

*Marine Corps nomination of Maj. Gen. Ryan P. Heritage, to be Lieutenant General.

*Navy nomination of Vice Adm. Craig A. Clapperton, to be Vice Admiral.

Air Force nomination of Col. Brian R. Moore, to be Brigadier General.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed Services I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORDS on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

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

Air Force nomination of Brian J. Bohenek, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Jorge M. Arzola, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of James F. Cantorna, to be Major.

Army nominations beginning with Sandeep R. Rahangdale and ending with Christie A. Shen, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 27, 2023.

Army nomination of Song Qu, to be Major.

Army nomination of Timothy S. McKiddy, to be Major.

Army nominations beginning with Kevin J. Huxford and ending with David A. Ridgeway, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 27, 2023.

Army nomination of Jerome C. Ferrin, to be Major.

Army nomination of Chet M. Korensky, to be Major.

Army nomination of Anthony L. Ghezzi, to be Major.

Army nominations beginning with Matthew Acosta and ending with D016876, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on April 17, 2023.

Army nominations beginning with Mark P. Adams and ending with D016116, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on April 17, 2023.

Army nominations beginning with Alexander Acheampong and ending with D015566, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on April 17, 2023.

Army nominations beginning with Emmanuel T. Adeniran and ending with D015933, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on April 17, 2023.

Marine Corps nomination of Nathan D. Morris, to be Major.

Navy nominations beginning with Ryan E. Dinnen and ending with Matthew C. Miller, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 27, 2023.

Navy nomination of Jillian M. Mears, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nomination of Mary J. Hessert, to be Captain.

Navy nomination of Matthew A. Bubnis, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nominations beginning with Andrew R. Flora and ending with Jordan J. Foley, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on April 17, 2023.

Space Force nominations beginning with Micah R. Kelley and ending with Erica M. Mitchell, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on April 17, 2023.

Space Force nominations beginning with Erica J. Balfour and ending with James R. Turner, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on April 17, 2023.

Space Force nomination of Craig E. Frank, to be Colonel.

Space Force nominations beginning with Marouane Balmakhtar and ending with Daniel J. Levinson, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on April 17, 2023.

By Mr. CARPER for the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

*David M. Uhlmann, of Michigan, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

*Joseph Goffman, of Pennsylvania, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

By Mr. SANDERS for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

*Julie A. Su, of California, to be Secretary of Labor.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. CARDIN):

S. 1289. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to strengthen requirements related to nutrient information on food labels, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. KING (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 1290. A bill to require the Supreme Court of the United States to issue a code of conduct for the justices of the Supreme Court, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. COTTON, Mr. MURPHY, and Mrs. BRITT):

S. 1291. A bill to require that social media platforms verify the age of their users, prohibit the use of algorithmic recommendation systems on individuals under age 18, require parental or guardian consent for social media users under age 18, and prohibit users who are under age 13 from accessing social media platforms; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Mr. SULLIVAN):

S. 1292. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to increase the Federal student loan limits for students in flight education and training programs; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN:

S. 1293. A bill to provide protection for survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and sex trafficking under the Fair Housing Act; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself and Ms. STABENOW):

S. 1294. A bill to provide for payment rates for durable medical equipment under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BUDD (for himself, Mr. MARSHALL, and Mr. BRAUN):

S. 1295. A bill to amend chapter 131 of title 5, United States Code, to require Senior Executive Service and schedule C employees to disclose Federal student loan debt, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. PADILLA, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 1296. A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to improve access to care for all Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries through models tested under the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Mr. PADILLA, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. REED, Mr. BENNET, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. SMITH, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. WARREN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. CANTWELL, and Mr. WELCH):

S. 1297. A bill to ensure the right to provide reproductive health care services, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. CASEY, Mr. REED, Ms. SMITH, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 1298. A bill to award grants for the creation, recruitment, training and education, retention, and advancement of the direct care workforce and to award grants to support family caregivers; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. KING, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. KELLY):

S. 1299. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to periodically review the automatic maximum coverage under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program and the Veterans' Group Life Insurance

program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. DAINES, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 1300. A bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in recognition of the late Prime Minister Golda Meir and the 75th anniversary of the United States-Israel relationship; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. MULLIN, and Mr. OSSOFF):

S. 1301. A bill to provide highly-skilled nonimmigrant visas for nationals of the Republic of Korea, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. SCHUMER, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 1302. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the distribution of additional residency positions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 1303. A bill to require sellers of event tickets to disclose comprehensive information to consumers about ticket prices and related fees; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. SCOTT of Florida (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. LEE, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. SULLIVAN, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 1304. A bill to require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on the carbon footprint and environmental impacts of electric vehicles, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. SCOTT of Florida:

S. 1305. A bill to provide block grants to assign armed law enforcement officers to elementary and secondary schools; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. COONS, Mr. TILLIS, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. GRAHAM):

S. 1306. A bill to reauthorize the COPS ON THE BEAT grant program; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. REED:

S. 1307. A bill to ensure that students in schools have a right to read, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor , and Pensions.

By Mr. HOEVEN (for himself and Ms. SMITH):

S. 1308. A bill to amend the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act to extend the deadline for the Secretary of the Interior to promulgate regulations implementing title IV of that Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. 1309. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve how the Department of Veterans Affairs discloses to individuals entitled to educational assistance from the Department risks associated with using such assistance at particular educational institutions and to restore entitlement of students to such assistance who are pursuing programs of education at educational institutions that are subject to Federal or State civil enforcement action, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Ms. SMITH, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. LUJAN, Mr. CASEY, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. MARKEY, and Ms. WARREN):

S. 1310. A bill to designate as wilderness certain Federal portions of the red rock canyons of the Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin Deserts in the State of Utah for the benefit of present and future generations of people in the United States; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. KELLY:

S. 1311. A bill to reauthorize the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Trust Fund, and for other purposes; considered and passed.

By Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina (for himself, Mr. DAINES, Ms. ERNST, Mr. LANKFORD, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. CASSIDY, and Mrs. BLACKBURN):

S. 1312. A bill to reprogram $15,000,000,000 to improve border security and enforcement, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. LUJÁN):

S. 1313. A bill to amend parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act to improve foster and adoptive parent recruitment and retention, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 1314. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the definition of spouse and surviving spouse to include all individuals lawfully married, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself and Ms. SINEMA):

S. 1315. A bill to improve the provision of care and services under the Veterans Community Care Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CARPER, and Mr. DAINES):

S. 1316. A bill 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; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. SMITH, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 1317. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for public health research and investment into understanding and eliminating structural racism and police violence; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. KING, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. REED, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. BENNET, Mr. WELCH, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. WARNER, Mr. PADILLA, Ms. WARREN, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. SMITH, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 1318. A bill to provide enhanced protections for election workers; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. PETERS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. CASEY, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. HEINRICH, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. REED, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. SMITH, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 1319. A bill to address the importation and proliferation of machinegun conversion devices; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. YOUNG (for himself and Ms. ROSEN):

S. 1320. A bill to amend certain authorities relating to human rights violations and abuses in Ukraine, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 1321. A bill to prohibit exclusive venue ticketing contracts with an excessive duration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 1322. A bill to amend the Act of August 9, 1955, to modify the authorized purposes and term period of tribal leases, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. DAINES, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. CASSIDY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. SULLIVAN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. PAUL, Mr. KING, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. WELCH, Mr. KELLY, Mr. BENNET, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. SMITH, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. WARREN, Mr. KAINE, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. COONS, Mr. TESTER, Mr. WARNER, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. PETERS, and Mr. MURPHY):

S. 1323. A bill to create protections for financial institutions that provide financial services to State-sanctioned marijuana businesses and service providers for such businesses, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. MARSHALL):

S. 1324. A bill to establish the Southwestern Power Administration Fund, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. RISCH (for himself and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 1325. A bill to establish a partnership with nations in the Western Hemisphere to promote economic competitiveness, democratic governance, and security, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 1326. A bill to prohibit exclusive venue ticketing contracts with an excessive duration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 1327. A bill to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to require that a consumer authorize the release of certain information; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. BOOKER):

S. Res. 174. A resolution condemning the human rights record of the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini and the brutal killing of Eswatini activist Thulani Maseko on January 21, 2023; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. RISCH, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. ROMNEY, Mr. KAINE, Mr. HAGERTY, Mr. OSSOFF, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. HOEVEN):

S. Res. 175. A resolution recognizing the importance of the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea on October 1, 1953; considered and agreed to.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. Res. 176. A resolution supporting the designation of April 2023 as the ''Month of the Military Child''; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL):

S. Res. 177. A resolution to authorize testimony and representation in United States v. Powell; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL):

S. Res. 178. A resolution to authorize testimony and representation in United States v. Kelly; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 26

At the request of Mr. HAGERTY, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) were added as cosponsors of S. 26, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the amendments made to reporting of third party network transactions by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

S. 120

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. SCHMITT) were added as cosponsors of S. 120, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against tax for charitable donations to nonprofit organizations providing education scholarships to qualified elementary and secondary students.

S. 121

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 121, a bill to amend the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to require the provision of training and information to certain personnel relating to food allergy identification and response, and for other purposes.

S. 133

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 133, a bill to extend the National Alzheimer's Project.

S. 134

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 134, a bill to require an annual budget estimate for the initiatives of the National Institutes of Health pursuant to reports and recommendations made under the National Alzheimer's Project Act.

S. 141

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 141, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve certain programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs for home and community based services for veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 216

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 216, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the family caregiver program of the Department of Veterans Affairs to include services related to mental health and neurological disorders, and for other purposes.

S. 260

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 260, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to permit nurse practitioners and physician assistants to satisfy the documentation requirement under the Medicare program for coverage of certain shoes for individuals with diabetes.

S. 291

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 291, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, and for other purposes.

S. 296

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 296, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide an additional tool to prevent certain frauds against veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 363

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 363, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the individuals and communities who volunteered or donated items to the North Platte Canteen in North Platte, Nebraska, during World War II from December 25, 1941, to April 1, 1946.

S. 388

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 388, a bill to establish universal child care and early learning programs.

S. 456

At the request of Ms. SINEMA, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 456, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to authorize non-medical counseling services, provided by certain mental health professionals, to military families.

S. 502

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 502, a bill to amend the Animal Health Protection Act with respect to the importation of live dogs, and for other purposes.

S. 566

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 566, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify and extend the deduction for charitable contributions for individuals not itemizing deductions.

S. 597

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 597, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions.

S. 639

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the names of the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 639, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to improve the historic rehabilitation tax credit, and for other purposes.

S. 704

At the request of Ms. ROSEN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 704, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for interest-free deferment on student loans for borrowers serving in a medical or dental internship or residency program.

S. 711

At the request of Mr. BUDD, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 711, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the invaluable service that working dogs provide to society.

S. 741

At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) were added as cosponsors of S. 741, a bill to amend chapter 44 of title 18, United States Code, to define ''State of residence'' and ''resident'', and for other purposes.

S. 944

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 944, a bill to promote low-carbon, high-octane fuels, to protect public health, and to improve vehicle efficiency and performance, and for other purposes.

S. 988

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 988, a bill to provide for coordination by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission of the process for reviewing certain natural gas projects under

the jurisdiction of the Commission, and for other purposes.

S. 989

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 989, a bill to establish a more uniform, transparent, and modern process to authorize the construction, connection, operation, and maintenance of international border-crossing facilities for the import and export of oil and natural gas and the transmission of electricity.

S. 1043

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1043, a bill to amend the Energy Policy and Conservation Act to modify standards for water heaters, furnaces, boilers, and kitchen cooktops, ranges, and ovens, and for other purposes.

S. 1064

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. 1064, a bill to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out a national project to prevent and cure Parkinson's, to be known as the National Parkinson's Project, and for other purposes.

S. 1070

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1070, a bill to address the needs of individuals with disabilities within the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act.

S. 1113

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1113, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish direct care registered nurse-to-patient staffing ratio requirements in hospitals, and for other purposes.

S. 1117

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1117, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently allow a tax deduction at the time an investment in qualified property is made.

S. 1139

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1139, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to apply prescription drug inflation rebates to drugs furnished in the commercial market and to change the base year for rebate calculations.

S. 1193

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1193, a bill to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities who need long-term services and supports, and for other purposes.

S. 1194

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1194, a bill to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to carry out certain activities to improve recycling and composting programs in the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 1203

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 1203, a bill to amend the Peace Corps Act by reauthorizing the Peace Corps, providing better support for current, returning, and former volunteers, and for other purposes.

S. 1214

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1214, a bill to set forth limitations on exclusive approval or licensure of drugs designated for rare diseases or conditions.

S. 1230

At the request of Mrs. BLACKBURN, the names of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1230, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Master Sergeant Roderick ''Roddie'' Edmonds in recognition of his heroic actions during World War II.

S. 1237

At the request of Ms. ERNST, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1237, a bill to restore the exemption of family farms and small businesses from the definition of assets under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

S. 1249

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1249, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the procedural rules for penalties.

S. 1252

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1252, a bill to support the human rights of Uyghurs and members of other ethnic groups residing primarily in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and safeguard their distinct civilization and identity, and for other purposes.

S. 1256

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1256, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to require certain air carriers to provide reports with respect to maintenance, preventative maintenance, or alterations, and for other purposes.

S. 1261

At the request of Mr. MARSHALL, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1261, a bill to clarify the treatment of 2 or more employers as joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

S. 1271

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE), the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) and the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) were added as cosponsors of S. 1271, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to trafficking of illicit fentanyl and its precursors by transnational criminal organizations, including cartels, and for other purposes.

S. 1281

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1281, a bill to amend the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 to provide for security of tenure for use of mining claims for ancillary activities, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 11

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 11, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to ''Control of Air Pollution From New Motor Vehicles: Heavy-Duty Engine and Vehicle Standards''.

S.J. RES. 15

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of Florida, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 15, a joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Commerce relating to ''Procedures Covering Suspension of Liquidation, Duties and Estimated Duties in Accord With Presidential Proclamation 10414''.

S.J. RES. 25

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 25, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to ''Adverse Effect Wage Rate Methodology for the Temporary Employment of H–2A Nonimmigrants in Non-Range Occupations in the United States''.

S. RES. 107

At the request of Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 107, a resolution recognizing the expiration of the Equal Rights Amendment proposed by Congress in March 1972, and observing that Congress has no authority to modify a resolution proposing a constitutional amendment after the amendment has been submitted to the States or after the amendment has expired.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. THUNE (for himself and Ms. STABENOW):

S. 1294. A bill to provide for payment rates for durable medical equipment under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 1294

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 ''Competitive Bidding Relief Act of 2023''.

SEC. 2. PAYMENT RATES FOR DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT UNDER THE MEDICARE PROGRAM.

(a) AREAS OTHER THAN RURAL AND NONCONTIGUOUS AREAS.—The Secretary shall implement section 414.210(g)(9)(v) of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulation), to apply the transition rule described in the first sentence of such section to all applicable items and services furnished in areas other than rural or noncontiguous areas (as such terms are defined for purposes of such section) through December 31, 2024.

(b) ALL AREAS.—The Secretary shall not implement section 414.210(g)(9)(vi) of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulation) until January 1, 2025.

(c) IMPLEMENTATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary may implement the provisions of this section by program instruction or otherwise.

By Mr. REED:

S. 1307. A bill to ensure that students in schools have a right to read, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. REED. Madam President, literacy opens the door for lifelong opportunity and economic success. But in the aftermath of the COVID–19 pandemic, we have a lot of work to do to help kids catch up. The National Assessment of Education Progress results show the terrible toll the pandemic has taken on students' literacy skills. Reading scores for 9-year-olds dropped by five points, the steepest decline since 1990. We need urgent action to ensure that all children have the means and the right to read. That is why I am pleased to join Congressman RAÚL GRIJALVA in introducing the Right to Read Act.

The Right to Read Act will require States and school districts to have policies protecting the right to read, which includes access to evidence-based reading instruction, access to effective school libraries, access to developmentally and linguistically appropriate materials, reading materials at home, family literacy support, and the freedom to choose reading materials.

The Right to Read Act will ensure that low-income, minority children, English learners, and students with disabilities are not disproportionately enrolled in schools that lack effective school libraries. This is a matter of equity. Data show that school libraries make a big difference in giving kids the skills and inspiration to become proficient and enthusiastic readers. Students who utilize school libraries have 73 percent higher literacy rates than students who do not, and the positive impact of effective school libraries is highest for marginalized groups, including students experiencing poverty, students of color, and students with disabilities. But not every student has access to library services. The U.S. Department of Education reports that 2.5 million students are enrolled in districts where there are no school libraries. An estimated 1 out of 10 schools in America does not have a school library, and 30 percent higher of U.S. public schools do not have full-time librarians. Students experiencing the highest levels of poverty are 30 percent more likely to attend a school without a school library.

While school libraries are most effective when they offer resources that resonate, engage, and empower students and that align with their First Amendment rights, a recent PEN America report found that 182 school districts across 37 States are facing bans on books that disproportionately limit access to titles with LGBTQ+ characters and characters of color. Last month, the American Library Association reported a record number of attempted book bans in 2022, nearly doubling the 2021 total.

The Right to Read Act will address the disparities in access to school library resources. It supports the development of effective school libraries, including the recruitment, retention, and professional development of State-certified school librarians. It will also increase the Federal investment in literacy by reauthorizing comprehensive literacy State development grants at $500 million and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program at $100 million, targeting critical literacy resources in high-need communities. Importantly, the bill protects access to quality reading materials and provides the resources needed to create a foundation for learning and student success.

In developing this legislation, Congressman GRIJALVA and I worked closely with the library community, including the American Library Association and the American Association of School Librarians. We are also pleased to have the support of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and PEN America. These are the experts in helping kids become lifelong readers and learners. I appreciate their insight and assistance on this bill, and I urge my colleagues to join us in cosponsoring this legislation to ensure that all students have a right to read.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Ms. SMITH, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. CASEY, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. MARKEY, and Ms. WARREN):

S. 1310. A bill to designate as wilderness certain Federal portions of the red rock canyons of the Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin Deserts in the State of Utah for the benefit of present and future generations of people in the United States; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 1310

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''America's Red Rock Wilderness Act''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Bureau of Land Management.

(2) STATE.—The term ''State'' means the State of Utah.

SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the land designated as wilderness by this Act is one of the largest remaining expanses of unprotected, wild public land in the continental United States;

(2) the designation of wilderness by this Act would—

(A) increase landscape connectivity in the Colorado Plateau; and

(B) help to mitigate the impacts of climate change by—

(i) providing critical refugia;

(ii) reducing surface disturbances that exacerbate the impacts of climate change;

(iii) reducing greenhouse gas emissions related to the extraction and use of fossil fuels; and

(iv) contributing to the goal of protecting 30 percent of global land and waters by 2030;

(3) the land designated as wilderness by this Act is—

(A) a living cultural landscape;

(B) a place of refuge for wild nature; and

(C) an important part of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community values;

(4) Indian Tribes have been present on the land designated as wilderness by this Act since time immemorial, using the plant, animal, landform, and spiritual values for sustenance and cultural, medicinal, and ceremonial activities, purposes for which Indigenous people continue to use the land; and

(5) the designation of wilderness by this Act—

(A) is vital to the continuation and revitalization of Indigenous cultures; and

(B) serves to protect places of Indigenous use and sanctuary.

SEC. 4. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to designate as wilderness certain Federal portions of the red rock canyons of the Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin Deserts in the State of Utah for the benefit of present and future generations of people in the United States;

(2) to protect the cultural, ecological, and scenic values of land designated as wilderness by this Act for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of present and future generations of people in the United States; and

(3) to protect the ability of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to use the land designated as wilderness by this Act for traditional activities, including hunting, fishing, hiking, horsepacking, camping, and spirituality as people have used the land for generations.

TITLE I—DESIGNATION OF WILDERNESS AREAS

SEC. 101. GREAT BASIN WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the Great Basin region of western Utah is comprised of starkly beautiful mountain ranges that rise as islands from the desert floor;

(2) the Wah Wah Mountains in the Great Basin region are arid and austere, with massive cliff faces and leathery slopes speckled with piñon and juniper;

(3) the Pilot Range and Stansbury Mountains in the Great Basin region are high enough to draw moisture from passing clouds and support ecosystems found nowhere else on earth;

(4) from bristlecone pine, the world's oldest living organism, to newly flowered mountain meadows, mountains of the Great Basin region are islands of nature that—

(A) support remarkable biological diversity; and

(B) provide opportunities to experience the colossal silence of the Great Basin; and

(5) the Great Basin region of western Utah should be protected and managed to ensure the preservation of the natural conditions of the region.

(b) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) Bald Eagle Mountain (approximately 9,000 acres).

(2) Barn Hills (approximately 21,000 acres).

(3) Big Hollow (approximately 4,100 acres).

(4) Black Hills (approximately 8,750 acres).

(5) Broken Ridge (approximately 9,250 acres).

(6) Bullgrass Knoll (approximately 15,750 acres).

(7) Burbank Hills (approximately 17,000 acres).

(8) Burbank Pass (approximately 30,000 acres).

(9) Chalk Knolls (approximately 16,500 acres).

(10) Cobb Peak (approximately 8,500 acres).

(11) Conger Mountain (approximately 21,750 acres).

(12) Crater Bench (approximately 35,000 acres).

(13) Crater Island East (approximately 53,000 acres).

(14) Crater Island West (approximately 30,000 acres).

(15) Cricket Mountain (approximately 16,500 acres).

(16) Crook Creek (approximately 20,000 acres).

(17) Deep Creek Mountains (approximately 127,000 acres).

(18) Disappointment Hills (approximately 24,000 acres).

(19) Drum Mountains (approximately 14,500 acres).

(20) Dugway Mountains (approximately 24,500 acres).

(21) Fish Springs Range (approximately 65,000 acres).

(22) Granite Mountain (approximately 19,250 acres).

(23) Granite Peak (approximately 19,500 acres).

(24) Grassy Mountains North (approximately 8,500 acres).

(25) Grassy Mountains South (approximately 16,500 acres).

(26) Hamlin (approximately 13,750 acres).

(27) Headlight Mountain (approximately 6,000 acres).

(28) Howell Peak (approximately 28,750 acres).

(29) Indian Peaks (approximately 15,750 acres).

(30) Jackson Wash (approximately 18,500 acres).

(31) Juniper (approximately 17,500 acres).

(32) Keg Mountains East (approximately 19,500 acres).

(33) Keg Mountains West (approximately 19,250 acres).

(34) Kern Mountains (approximately 15,000 acres).

(35) King Top (approximately 111,500 acres).

(36) Ledger Canyon (approximately 8,900 acres).

(37) Lion Peak (approximately 27,500 acres).

(38) Little Drum Mountains North (approximately 14,000 acres).

(39) Little Drum Mountains South (approximately 10,000 acres).

(40) Mahogany Peak (approximately 750 acres).

(41) Middle Burbank Hills (approximately 6,750 acres).

(42) Middle Mountains (approximately 39,750 acres).

(43) Mount Escalante (approximately 17,500 acres).

(44) Mountain Home Range North (approximately 21,500 acres).

(45) Mountain Home Range South (approximately 32,750 acres).

(46) Needle Mountains (approximately 12,000 acres).

(47) Newfoundland Mountains (approximately 24,500 acres).

(48) North Peaks (approximately 9,400 acres).

(49) North Stansbury Mountains (approximately 20,500 acres).

(50) Notch Peak (approximately 72,000 acres).

(51) Notch View (approximately 8,000 acres).

(52) Ochre Mountain (approximately 13,500 acres).

(53) Oquirrh Mountains (approximately 8,900 acres).

(54) Orr Ridge (approximately 11,000 acres).

(55) Painted Rock (approximately 26,500 acres).

(56) Paradise Mountain (approximately 40,000 acres).

(57) Pilot Mountains Central (approximately 8,000 acres).

(58) Pilot Peak (approximately 30,250 acres).

(59) Red Canyon (approximately 15,500 acres).

(60) Red Tops (approximately 28,000 acres).

(61) San Francisco Mountains (approximately 39,750 acres).

(62) Silver Island Mountains (approximately 37,500 acres).

(63) Snake Valley (approximately 66,250 acres).

(64) Spring Creek Canyon (approximately 5,250 acres).

(65) Stansbury Island (approximately 10,000 acres).

(66) Steamboat Mountain (approximately 40,250 acres).

(67) Swasey Peak (approximately 91,000 acres).

(68) The Toad (approximately 11,250 acres).

(69) Thomas Range (approximately 41,000 acres).

(70) Tule Valley (approximately 102,000 acres).

(71) Tule Valley South (approximately 19,000 acres).

(72) Tunnel Springs (approximately 23,000 acres).

(73) Wah Wah Mountains Central (approximately 61,000 acres).

(74) Wah Wah Mountains North (approximately 93,500 acres).

(75) Wah Wah Mountains South (approximately 18,000 acres).

(76) White Rock Range (approximately 5,000 acres).

(77) Wild Horse Pass (approximately 35,750 acres).

SEC. 102. GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) GRAND STAIRCASE AREA.—

(1) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(A) the area known as the Grand Staircase rises more than 6,000 feet in a series of great cliffs and plateaus from the depths of the Grand Canyon to the forested rim of Bryce Canyon;

(B) the Grand Staircase—

(i) spans 6 major life zones, from the lower Sonoran Desert to the alpine forest; and

(ii) encompasses geologic formations that display 3,000,000,000 years of Earth's history;

(C) land managed by the Secretary forms a vital natural corridor connecting the deserts and forests of the surrounding landscape, which includes Grand Canyon National Park and Bryce Canyon National Park;

(D) each of the areas described in paragraph (2) (other than East of Bryce, Moquith Mountain, Bunting Point, Canaan Mountain, Orderville Canyon, Parunuweap Canyon, Vermillion Cliffs, and the majority of Upper Kanab Creek) is located within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, as established in 1996; and

(E) the Grand Staircase in Utah should be protected and managed as a wilderness area.

(2) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(A) Bryce Boot (approximately 2,800 acres).

(B) Bryce View (approximately 4,500 acres).

(C) Bunting Point (approximately 11,500 acres).

(D) Canaan Mountain (approximately 15,250 acres).

(E) East of Bryce (approximately 850 acres).

(F) Glass Eye Canyon (approximately 25,500 acres).

(G) Ladder Canyon (approximately 14,500 acres).

(H) Moquith Mountain (approximately 15,750 acres).

(I) Nephi Point (approximately 14,750 acres).

(J) Orderville Canyon (approximately 8,000 acres).

(K) Paria-Hackberry (approximately 196,000 acres).

(L) Paria Wilderness Expansion (approximately 4,000 acres).

(M) Parunuweap Canyon (approximately 44,500 acres).

(N) Pine Hollow (approximately 11,000 acres).

(O) Timber Mountain (approximately 52,750 acres).

(P) Upper Kanab Creek (approximately 51,000 acres).

(Q) Vermillion Cliffs (approximately 25,000 acres).

(R) Willis Creek (approximately 22,000 acres).

(b) KAIPAROWITS PLATEAU.—

(1) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(A) the Kaiparowits Plateau east of the Paria River is one of the most rugged and isolated wilderness regions in the United States;

(B) the Kaiparowits Plateau, a windswept land of harsh beauty, contains distant vistas and a remarkable variety of plant and animal species;

(C) ancient forests, an abundance of big game animals, and 22 species of raptors thrive undisturbed on the grassland mesa tops of the Kaiparowits Plateau;

(D) each of the areas described in paragraph (2) (other than Heaps Canyon, Little Valley, and Wide Hollow) is located within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, as established in 1996; and

(E) the Kaiparowits Plateau should be protected and managed as a wilderness area.

(2) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(A) Andalex Not (approximately 18,000 acres).

(B) Box Canyon (approximately 3,000 acres).

(C) Burning Hills (approximately 81,500 acres).

(D) Canaan Peak Slopes (approximately 2,500 acres).

(E) Carcass Canyon (approximately 84,750 acres).

(F) Fiftymile Bench (approximately 12,750 acres).

(G) Fiftymile Mountain (approximately 207,000 acres).

(H) Heaps Canyon (approximately 4,000 acres).

(I) Horse Spring Canyon (approximately 32,000 acres).

(J) Kodachrome Headlands (approximately 9,750 acres).

(K) Little Valley Canyon (approximately 4,100 acres).

(L) Mud Spring Canyon (approximately 65,750 acres).

(M) Nipple Bench (approximately 31,750 acres).

(N) Paradise Canyon-Wahweap (approximately 266,500 acres).

(O) Rock Cove (approximately 17,000 acres).

(P) The Blues (approximately 22,000 acres).

(Q) The Cockscomb (approximately 11,750 acres).

(R) Warm Creek (approximately 24,000 acres).

(S) Wide Hollow (approximately 7,700 acres).

(c) ESCALANTE CANYONS.—

(1) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(A) glens and coves carved in massive sandstone cliffs, spring-watered hanging gardens, and the silence of ancient ruins are examples of the unique features that entice hikers, campers, and sightseers from around the world to the Escalante Canyons;

(B) the Escalante Canyons link the spruce fir forests of the 11,000-foot Aquarius Plateau with the winding slickrock canyons that flow into Glen Canyon;

(C) the Escalante Canyons, one of Utah's most popular natural areas, contains critical habitat for deer, elk, and wild bighorn sheep that also enhances the scenic integrity of the area;

(D) each of the areas described in paragraph (2) is located within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, as established in 1996; and

(E) the Escalante Canyons should be protected and managed as a wilderness area.

(2) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(A) Colt Mesa (approximately 28,250 acres).

(B) Death Hollow (approximately 49,750 acres).

(C) Forty Mile Gulch (approximately 7,600 acres).

(D) Lampstand (approximately 11,500 acres).

(E) Muley Twist Flank (approximately 3,750 acres).

(F) North Escalante Canyons (approximately 182,000 acres).

(G) Pioneer Mesa (approximately 11,000 acres).

(H) Scorpion (approximately 61,250 acres).

(I) Sooner Bench (approximately 500 acres).

(J) Steep Creek (approximately 35,750 acres).

(K) Studhorse Peaks (approximately 24,000 acres).

SEC. 103. MOAB-LA SAL CANYONS WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the canyons surrounding the La Sal Mountains and the town of Moab offer a variety of extraordinary landscapes;

(2) outstanding examples of natural formations and landscapes in the Moab-La Sal Canyons area include the huge sandstone fins of Behind the Rocks, the mysterious Fisher Towers, and the whitewater rapids of Westwater Canyon; and

(3) the Moab-La Sal Canyons should be protected and managed as a wilderness area.

(b) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) Arches National Park Adjacents (approximately 8,900 acres).

(2) Beaver Creek (approximately 45,000 acres).

(3) Behind the Rocks (approximately 19,500 acres).

(4) Big Triangle (approximately 21,500 acres).

(5) Coyote Wash (approximately 27,000 acres).

(6) Dome Plateau (approximately 36,750 acres).

(7) Fisher Towers (approximately 19,000 acres).

(8) Goldbar Canyon (approximately 9,500 acres).

(9) Granite Creek (approximately 5,000 acres).

(10) Hunter Canyon (approximately 5,500 acres).

(11) Mary Jane Canyon (approximately 28,500 acres).

(12) Mill Creek (approximately 17,250 acres).

(13) Morning Glory (approximately 11,000 acres).

(14) Porcupine Rim (approximately 10,500 acres).

(15) Renegade Point (approximately 6,250 acres).

(16) Westwater Canyon (approximately 39,000 acres).

(17) Yellow Bird (approximately 4,600 acres).

SEC. 104. HENRY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the Henry Mountain Range, the last mountain range to be discovered and named by early explorers in the contiguous United States, still retains a wild and undiscovered quality;

(2) fluted badlands that surround the flanks of 11,000-foot Mounts Ellen and Pennell contain areas of critical habitat for mule deer and for the largest herd of free-roaming buffalo in the United States;

(3) despite their relative accessibility, the Henry Mountain Range remains one of the wildest, least-known ranges in the United States; and

(4) the Henry Mountain Range should be protected and managed to ensure the preservation of the range as a wilderness area.

(b) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) Bull Mountain (approximately 16,000 acres).

(2) Bullfrog Creek (approximately 42,000 acres).

(3) Dogwater Creek (approximately 4,900 acres).

(4) Fremont Gorge (approximately 22,000 acres).

(5) Long Canyon (approximately 16,500 acres).

(6) Mount Ellen-Blue Hills (approximately 14,750 acres).

(7) Mount Hillers (approximately 20,250 acres).

(8) Mount Pennell (approximately 155,500 acres).

(9) Notom Bench (approximately 6,250 acres).

(10) Ragged Mountain (approximately 29,250 acres).

SEC. 105. GLEN CANYON WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the side canyons of Glen Canyon, including the Dirty Devil River and the Red, White and Blue Canyons, contain some of the most remote and outstanding landscapes in southern Utah;

(2) the Dirty Devil River, once the fortress hideout of outlaw Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch, has sculpted a maze of slickrock canyons through an imposing landscape of monoliths and inaccessible mesas;

(3) the Red and Blue Canyons contain colorful Chinle/Moenkopi badlands found nowhere else in the region;

(4) Dark Canyon, Fort Knocker, Tuwa Canyon, Upper Red Canyon, White Canyon, and a portion of Red Rock Plateau are located within the Bears Ears National Monument, as established in 2016; and

(5) the canyons of Glen Canyon in the State should be protected and managed as wilderness areas.

(b) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) Cane Spring Desert (approximately 18,250 acres).

(2) Copper Point (approximately 4,400 acres).

(3) Dark Canyon (approximately 139,000 acres).

(4) Dirty Devil (approximately 245,000 acres).

(5) Fiddler Butte (approximately 93,000 acres).

(6) Flat Tops (approximately 29,750 acres).

(7) Fort Knocker (approximately 12,500 acres).

(8) Little Rockies (approximately 64,000 acres).

(9) Pleasant Creek Bench (approximately 1,000 acres).

(10) Red Rock Plateau (approximately 185,500 acres).

(11) The Needle (approximately 10,750 acres).

(12) Tuwa Canyon (approximately 9,750 acres).

(13) Upper Red Canyon (approximately 25,000 acres).

(14) White Canyon (approximately 78,000 acres).

SEC. 106. SAN JUAN WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) more than 1,000 years ago, Indigenous culture flourished in the slickrock canyons and on the piñon-covered mesas of southeastern Utah;

(2) evidence of the presence of Indigenous people pervades the Cedar Mesa area of the San Juan area where cliff dwellings, rock art, and ceremonial kivas are found in sandstone overhangs and isolated benchlands;

(3) the Cedar Mesa area is in need of protection from the vandalism and theft of its unique cultural resources;

(4) the Cedar Mesa wilderness areas should be created to protect both the archaeological heritage and the extraordinary wilderness, scenic, and ecological values of the United States;

(5) each of the areas described in subsection (b) (other than Cross Canyon, Monument Canyon, Tin Cup Mesa, and most of Nokai Dome and San Juan River) are located within the Bears Ears National Monument, as established in 2016; and

(6) the San Juan area should be protected and managed as a wilderness area to ensure the preservation of the unique and valuable resources of that area.

(b) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) Allen Canyon (approximately 6,500 acres).

(2) Arch Canyon (approximately 30,500 acres).

(3) Comb Ridge (approximately 16,000 acres).

(4) Cross Canyon (approximately 2,400 acres).

(5) Fish and Owl Creek Canyons (approximately 74,000 acres).

(6) Grand Gulch (approximately 161,250 acres).

(7) Hammond Canyon (approximately 4,700 acres).

(8) Lime Creek (approximately 5,500 acres).

(9) Monument Canyon (approximately 18,000 acres).

(10) Nokai Dome (approximately 94,250 acres).

(11) Road Canyon (approximately 64,000 acres).

(12) San Juan River (approximately 14,750 acres).

(13) The Tabernacle (approximately 7,300 acres).

(14) Tin Cup Mesa (approximately 26,000 acres).

(15) Valley of the Gods (approximately 14,500 acres).

SEC. 107. CANYONLANDS BASIN WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) Canyonlands National Park safeguards only a small portion of the extraordinary red-hued, cliff-walled canyonland region of the Colorado Plateau;

(2) areas near Canyonlands National Park contain canyons with rushing perennial streams, natural arches, bridges, and towers;

(3) the gorges of the Green and Colorado Rivers lie on adjacent land managed by the Secretary;

(4) popular overlooks in Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park have views directly into adjacent areas, including Lockhart Basin and Indian Creek;

(5) each of the areas described in subsection (b) (other than Dead Horse Cliffs, Horsethief Point, Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness Expansion, San Rafael River, Sweetwater Reef, and a portion of Gooseneck) are located within the Bears Ears National Monument, as established in 2016; and

(6) designation of those areas as wilderness would ensure the protection of this erosional masterpiece of nature and of the rich pockets of wildlife found within its expanded boundaries.

(b) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) Bridger Jack Mesa (approximately 33,500 acres).

(2) Butler Wash (approximately 27,000 acres).

(3) Dead Horse Cliffs (approximately 5,300 acres).

(4) Demon's Playground (approximately 3,600 acres).

(5) Gooseneck (approximately 9,400 acres).

(6) Hatch Point/Lockhart Basin/Harts Point (approximately 150,500 acres).

(7) Horsethief Point (approximately 15,500 acres).

(8) Indian Creek (approximately 28,500 acres).

(9) Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness Expansion (approximately157,500 acres).

(10) San Rafael River (approximately 103,000 acres).

(11) Shay Mountain (approximately 15,500 acres).

(12) Sweetwater Reef (approximately 69,250 acres).

SEC. 108. SAN RAFAEL SWELL WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the San Rafael Swell towers above the desert like a castle, ringed by 1,000-foot ramparts of Navajo Sandstone;

(2) the highlands of the San Rafael Swell have been fractured by uplift and rendered hollow by erosion over countless millennia, leaving a tremendous basin punctuated by mesas, buttes, and canyons and traversed by sediment-laden desert streams;

(3) the mountains within these areas are among Utah's most valuable habitat for desert bighorn sheep; and

(4) the San Rafael Swell area should be protected and managed to ensure its preservation as a wilderness area.

(b) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) Capitol Reef National Park Adjacents (approximately 9,000 acres).

(2) Cedar Mountain (approximately 14,750 acres).

(3) Devils Canyon Wilderness Expansion (approximately 14,000 acres).

(4) Eagle Canyon (approximately 38,500 acres).

(5) Factory Butte (approximately 22,250 acres).

(6) Hondu Country Wilderness Expansion (approximately 2,500 acres).

(7) Jones Bench (approximately 3,400 acres).

(8) Limestone Cliffs (approximately 25,500 acres).

(9) Lost Spring Wash (approximately 36,500 acres).

(10) Mexican Mountain Wilderness Expansion (approximately 24,750 acres).

(11) Molen Reef (approximately 32,500 acres).

(12) Muddy Creek Wilderness Expansion (approximately 80,750 acres).

(13) Mussentuchit Badlands (approximately 25,000 acres).

(14) Price River-Humbug (approximately 122,250 acres).

(15) Red Desert (approximately 30,750 acres).

(16) Rock Canyon (approximately 17,750 acres).

(17) San Rafael Knob (approximately 15,000 acres).

(18) San Rafael Reef Wilderness Expansion (approximately 53,500 acres).

(19) Sids Mountain Wilderness Expansion (approximately 36,750 acres).

(20) Upper Muddy Creek (approximately 18,500 acres).

(21) Wild Horse Mesa Wilderness Expansion (approximately 56,000 acres).

SEC. 109. BOOK CLIFFS–GREATER DINOSAUR WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the Book Cliffs–Greater Dinosaur Wilderness Areas offer—

(A) unique big game hunting opportunities in verdant high-plateau forests; and

(B) the opportunity for float trips of several days duration down the Green River in Desolation Canyon;

(2) the long rampart of the Book Cliffs bounds the area on the south, while the uplands, plateaus, rivers, and canyons of the Greater Dinosaur area provide connectivity with Dinosaur National Monument and the northernmost extent of the Colorado Plateau;

(3) bears, bighorn sheep, cougars, elk, and mule deer flourish in the backcountry of the Book Cliffs; and

(4) the Book Cliffs–Greater Dinosaur Wilderness Areas should be protected and managed to ensure the protection of the areas as wilderness.

(b) DESIGNATION.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the State are designated as wilderness areas and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) Bad Land Cliffs (approximately 11,500 acres).

(2) Beach Draw (approximately 900 acres).
(3) Bourdette Draw (approximately 15,750 acres).
(4) Bull Canyon (approximately 3,100 acres).
(5) Dead Horse Pass (approximately 8,400 acres).
(6) Desbrough Canyon (approximately 14,000 acres).
(7) Desolation Canyon Wilderness Expansion (approximately 295,000 acres).
(8) Diamond Breaks (approximately 8,600 acres).
(9) Diamond Canyon (approximately 168,000 acres).
(10) Diamond Mountain (approximately 28,000 acres).
(11) Goslin Mountain (approximately 3,800 acres).
(12) Hideout Canyon (approximately 12,750 acres).
(13) Lower Flaming Gorge (approximately 21,000 acres).
(14) Mexico Point (approximately 14,750 acres).
(15) Moonshine Draw (approximately 10,750 acres).
(16) Mountain Home (approximately 8,000 acres).
(17) O-Wi-Yu-Kuts (approximately 14,500 acres).
(18) Red Creek Badlands (approximately 4,600 acres).
(19) Split Mountain Benches (approximately 2,800 acres).
(20) Stone Bridge Draw (approximately 3,600 acres).
(21) Stuntz Draw (approximately 2,000 acres).
(22) Survey Point (approximately 8,700 acres).
(23) Turtle Canyon Wilderness Expansion (approximately 9,600 acres).
(24) Vivas Cake Hill (approximately 275 acres).
(25) Wild Mountain (approximately 700 acres).

TITLE II—ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

SEC. 201. GENERAL PROVISIONS.

(a) NAMES OF WILDERNESS AREAS.—Each wilderness area named in title I shall—

(1) consist of the quantity of land referenced with respect to that named area, as generally depicted on the map entitled ''America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, 118th Congress''; and

(2) be known by the name given to it in title I.

(b) MAP AND DESCRIPTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall file a map and a legal description of each wilderness area designated by this Act with—

(A) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives; and

(B) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate.

(2) FORCE OF LAW.—A map and legal description filed under paragraph (1) shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act, except that the Secretary may correct clerical and typographical errors in the map and legal description.

(3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—Each map and legal description filed under paragraph (1) shall be filed and made available for public inspection in the Office of the Director of the Bureau of Land Management.

SEC. 202. ADMINISTRATION.

Subject to valid rights in existence on the date of enactment of this Act, each wilderness area designated under this Act shall be administered by the Secretary in accordance with—

(1) the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.); and

(2) the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.).

SEC. 203. STATE SCHOOL TRUST LAND WITHIN WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), if State-owned land is included in an area designated by this Act as a wilderness area, the Secretary shall offer to exchange land owned by the United States in the State of approximately equal value in accordance with section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1782(c)) and section 5(a) of the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1134(a)).

(b) MINERAL INTERESTS.—The Secretary shall not transfer any mineral interests under subsection (a) unless the State transfers to the Secretary any mineral interests in land designated by this Act as a wilderness area.

SEC. 204. WATER.

(a) RESERVATION.—

(1) WATER FOR WILDERNESS AREAS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—With respect to each wilderness area designated by this Act, Congress reserves a quantity of water determined by the Secretary to be sufficient for the wilderness area.

(B) PRIORITY DATE.—The priority date of a right reserved under subparagraph (A) shall be the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) PROTECTION OF RIGHTS.—The Secretary and other officers and employees of the United States shall take any steps necessary to protect the rights reserved by paragraph (1)(A), including the filing of a claim for the quantification of the rights in any present or future appropriate stream adjudication in the courts of the State—

(A) in which the United States is or may be joined; and

(B) that is conducted in accordance with section 208 of the Department of Justice Appropriation Act, 1953 (66 Stat. 560, chapter 651).

(b) PRIOR RIGHTS NOT AFFECTED.—Nothing in this Act relinquishes or reduces any water rights reserved or appropriated by the United States in the State on or before the date of enactment of this Act.

(c) ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) SPECIFICATION OF RIGHTS.—The Federal water rights reserved by this Act are specific to the wilderness areas designated by this Act.

(2) NO PRECEDENT ESTABLISHED.—Nothing in this Act related to reserved Federal water rights—

(A) shall establish a precedent with regard to any future designation of water rights; or

(B) shall affect the interpretation of any other Act or any designation made under any other Act.

SEC. 205. ROADS.

(a) SETBACKS.—

(1) MEASUREMENT IN GENERAL.—A setback under this section shall be measured from the center line of the road.

(2) WILDERNESS ON 1 SIDE OF ROADS.—Except as provided in subsection (b), a setback for a road with wilderness on only 1 side shall be set at—

(A) 300 feet from a paved Federal or State highway;

(B) 100 feet from any other paved road or high standard dirt or gravel road; and

(C) 30 feet from any other road.

(3) WILDERNESS ON BOTH SIDES OF ROADS.—Except as provided in subsection (b), a setback for a road with wilderness on both sides (including cherry-stems or roads separating 2 wilderness units) shall be set at—

(A) 200 feet from a paved Federal or State highway;

(B) 40 feet from any other paved road or high standard dirt or gravel road; and

(C) 10 feet from any other roads.

(b) SETBACK EXCEPTIONS.—

(1) WELL-DEFINED TOPOGRAPHICAL BARRIERS.—If, between the road and the boundary of a setback area described in paragraph (2) or (3) of subsection (a), there is a well-defined cliff edge, stream bank, or other topographical barrier, the Secretary shall use the barrier as the wilderness boundary.

(2) FENCES.—If, between the road and the boundary of a setback area specified in paragraph (2) or (3) of subsection (a), there is a fence running parallel to a road, the Secretary shall use the fence as the wilderness boundary if, in the opinion of the Secretary, doing so would result in a more manageable boundary.

(3) DEVIATIONS FROM SETBACK AREAS.—

(A) EXCLUSION OF DISTURBANCES FROM WILDERNESS BOUNDARIES.—In cases where there is an existing livestock development, dispersed camping area, borrow pit, or similar disturbance within 100 feet of a road that forms part of a wilderness boundary, the Secretary may delineate the boundary so as to exclude the disturbance from the wilderness area.

(B) LIMITATION ON EXCLUSION OF DISTURBANCES.—The Secretary shall make a boundary adjustment under subparagraph (A) only if the Secretary determines that doing so is consistent with wilderness management goals.

(C) DEVIATIONS RESTRICTED TO MINIMUM NECESSARY.—Any deviation under this paragraph from the setbacks required under in paragraph (2) or (3) of subsection (a) shall be the minimum necessary to exclude the disturbance.

(c) DELINEATION WITHIN SETBACK AREA.—The Secretary may delineate a wilderness boundary at a location within a setback under paragraph (2) or (3) of subsection (a) if, as determined by the Secretary, the delineation would enhance wilderness management goals.

SEC. 206. LIVESTOCK.

Within the wilderness areas designated under title I, the grazing of livestock authorized on the date of enactment of this Act shall be permitted to continue subject to such reasonable regulations and procedures as the Secretary considers necessary, as long as the regulations and procedures are consistent with—

(1) the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.); and

(2) section 101(f) of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 (Public Law 101–628; 104 Stat. 4469).

SEC. 207. FISH AND WILDLIFE.

Nothing in this Act affects the jurisdiction of the State with respect to wildlife and fish on the public land located in the State.

SEC. 208. PROTECTION OF TRIBAL RIGHTS.

Nothing in this Act affects or modifies—

(1) any right of any federally recognized Indian Tribe; or

(2) any obligation of the United States to any federally recognized Indian Tribe.

SEC. 209. MANAGEMENT OF NEWLY ACQUIRED LAND.

Any land within the boundaries of a wilderness area designated under this Act that is acquired by the Federal Government shall—

(1) become part of the wilderness area in which the land is located; and

(2) be managed in accordance with this Act and other laws applicable to wilderness areas.

SEC. 210. WITHDRAWAL.

Subject to valid rights existing on the date of enactment of this Act, the Federal land referred to in title I is withdrawn from all forms of—

(1) entry, appropriation, or disposal under public law;

(2) location, entry, and patent under mining law; and

(3) disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing or mineral materials.

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 1327. A bill to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to require that a consumer authorize the release of certain information; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I am joined by Senator VAN HOLLEN in introducing the Consumer Credit Control Act, which gives consumers greater control over when and how their consumer reports are shared by consumer reporting agencies.

Our current consumer reporting system is backwards. Consumer reporting agencies collect massive amounts of personal information on consumers, often without their knowledge, in order to compile consumer reports. These reports are then shared with financial institutions and others, often without consent.

Following Equifax's failure several years ago to secure valuable personally identifiable information it collected on approximately 147 million Americans, it remains clear that this system needs to change. Indeed, the National Consumer Law Center's Chi Chi Wu stated in testimony before the House Financial Services Committee that the Equifax breach ''means half of the US population and nearly three-quarters of the consumers with active credit reports are now at risk of identity theft due to one of the worst—if not the worst—breaches of consumer data in American history. These Americans are at risk of having false new credit accounts, phony tax returns, and even spurious medical bills incurred in their good names.'' To make matters worse, the risks of identity fraud may only increase with time. As Ed Mierzwinski, U.S. PIRG's Federal Consumer Program Director, explains ''unlike credit card numbers, your Social Security Number and Date of Birth don't change and may even grow more valuable over time, like gold in a bank vault. Much worse, they are the keys to 'new account identity theft.' ''

The Consumer Credit Control Act aims to address these concerns and fix the current upside down system. Our legislation, at no cost to the consumer, seeks to give Americans greater control over when and how their consumer reports are released when applying for new credit, a loan, or insurance. It also requires consumer reporting agencies to verify a consumer's identity and secure the consumer's permission before releasing consumer reports in instances that are particularly susceptible to identity theft and fraud. Additionally, our legislation requires every consumer reporting agency to take appropriate steps to prevent unauthorized access to the consumer reports and personal information they maintain.

These changes are intended to make it tougher for criminals to open new fraudulent credit or insurance accounts in other people's names. They will also dramatically cut down on so-called ''trigger leads,'' where the credit reporting bureaus sell the fact that a consumer is shopping for a mortgage to other lenders. That causes prospective homebuyers to get inundated with hundreds of calls offering alternative mortgages. The credit bureaus say that these ''trigger leads'' help consumers by making sure they have access to the most attractive financing, but in reality they are a nuisance and add unnecessary stress to the already stressful process of buying a home.

I urge our colleagues to cosponsor the Consumer Credit Control Act, and I thank Senator VAN HOLLEN, the National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients, U.S. PIRG, the Center for Digital Democracy, Consumer Action, the Consumer Federation of America, Consumer Reports, the National Association of Consumer Advocates, and Public Citizen for their support.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 174—CONDEMNING THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI AND THE BRUTAL KILLING OF ESWATINI ACTIVIST THULANI MASEKO ON JANUARY 21, 2023

Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. BOOKER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 174

Whereas Eswatini, one of the world's last absolute monarchies, is ruled by King Mswati III, who has been in power for more than 36 years, and exercises ultimate authority over all branches of the national government and effectively controls local and national governance through his influence over traditional chiefs and the selection of House of Assembly candidates and control over the national electoral system;

Whereas human rights and democracy advocates in Eswatini have faced repression and persecution, including arbitrary arrests, detention, and torture, and have faced on political gatherings and restrictions on their civil liberties, including with respect to expression, assembly, and freedom of the press;

Whereas the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini has used laws such as the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008, and the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act of 1938, to suppress free speech and stifle criticism of the monarch;

Whereas, from June to October 2021, the country witnessed nationwide demonstrations against security sector abuses, with protests evolving into demands for democratic reforms;

Whereas King Mswati III's government employed excessive force and arbitrary arrests and detention, as well as internet shutdowns, to repress pro-democracy protests and related advocacy activities, restrict the activities of human rights advocates, and impose blanket bans on protests demanding democracy and respect for internationally-recognized human rights;

Whereas official sources note security forces in Eswatini responded with violence against protestors, reportedly killing more than 46 people, injuring more than 245, and detaining or arresting hundreds of others, although the international community suggests the true death toll is higher;

Whereas the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini detained two members of parliament on spurious charges for more than 18 months under the Suppression of Terrorism Act, and charged them with terrorism and murder for allegedly encouraging pro-democracy protests and calling for a democratically elected prime minister and other reforms;

Whereas regional human rights organizations continue to receive reports of lawyers and judges being harassed, threatened, and intimidated for their actual, alleged, or suspected support of the ongoing pro-democracy movement, in contravention of their constitutional rights;

Whereas, following a visit to Eswatini by Southern African Development Community (SADC) delegates in November 2021, King Mswati III agreed to provide for a national dialogue to address the civil unrest structured in the format of a sibaya, a royally-convened and -controlled traditional civic consultative forum, but since then has ignored widespread demands of the pleas of citizens, opposition politicians, civil society, and the regional and international community for a genuine consultative forum inclusive of diverse political views, while continuing the government's crackdown on dissenting voices;

Whereas, in October 2021, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on the Eswatini authorities to ensure that the people of Eswatini are able to exercise their civil and political rights peacefully;

Whereas reports indicate that the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini has contracted with international security companies to train government security forces to respond to violence in the country, resulting in increased intimidation against dissenting voices;

Whereas Thulani Maseko, a prominent human rights lawyer, Chairman of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, an organization comprised of various civil society groups calling for constitutional reforms in Eswatini, and a champion of social justice, routinely criticized King Mswati III for undermining judicial independence and called for a more democratic legal system in Eswatini;

Whereas, in 2014, Thulani Maseko and fellow human rights advocate Bheki Makhubu were charged and sentenced to two years in prison for writing and publishing an article that criticized the country's Chief Justice and drew attention to the lack of independence of Eswatini's judicial system;

Whereas, on June 30, 2015, Thulani Maseko and Bheki Makhubu were acquitted and released after Eswatini's supreme court found that they had been wrongly convicted;

Whereas Thulani Maseko made an immense contribution to the advancement of justice and human rights in Eswatini and, more broadly, throughout southern Africa, including through fact-finding missions, including to Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Malawi, where he reported on the deterioration of civic space;

Whereas, on January 21, 2023, Thulani Maseko was shot and killed by an unknown gunman at his home in Luyengo, Mbabane, in front of his wife and children;

Whereas the assassination of Thulani Maseko occurred amid a rise in Swazi government intimidation of King Mswati III's critics, many of whom have called for political reforms in Eswatini, and an overall escalation of violence in the country, including

the killings of members of the security forces and attacks on traditional leaders, as well as state security force element attacks on and legal harassment of pro-democracy advocates;

Whereas the United States Department of State, mulitlateral organizations such as the SADC, the African Union, and the European Union, as well as the human rights community, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have called for a full and transparent investigation into Mr. Maseko's murder;

Whereas, on January 25, 2023, the Department of State delivered a statement underscoring United States condemnation and broader global condemnation of Mr. Maseko's murder, the need for an impartial and transparent investigation and accountability for those responsible for his killing, nonviolence on all sides, and tangible movement on a credible, inclusive national dialogue;

Whereas the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini has failed to announce progress on an independent investigation to identify and bring to justice those responsible for Thulani Maseko's murder; and

Whereas a failure to investigate the unlawful killing of Thulani Maseko and to bring the perpetrators to justice would be a violation of Eswatini's obligations as a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the brutal murder of Thulani Maseko and the worsening cycle of political violence and instability in Eswatini;

(2) expresses deep concern about reports of continued human rights violations against the people of Eswatini, and the harassment of advocates for human rights and democratic practice and constitutionalism in Eswatini;

(3) calls on the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini to—

(A) undertake a full, transparent, and impartial criminal investigation into the assassination of Thulani Maseko and hold perpetrators accountable;

(B) cease surveilling and intimidating human rights activists fighting to protect fundamental freedoms;

(C) uphold internationally recognized human rights, including the rights of freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, as well as corresponding rights in the Eswatini constitution;

(D) expeditiously initiate pre-dialogue preparations and announce a firm date by which a credible, inclusive dialogue on constitutional and political reform will begin starting prior to scheduled September 2023 elections;

(E) engage in good faith in a credible, inclusive national dialogue to address longstanding demands for democratic reforms; and

(F) fully staff and empower a full complement of Commission of Human Rights and Public Accountability (CHRPA) human rights investigation staff, install an appointed Commissioner, make CHRPA fully independent from the Ministry of Justice and other government interference in line with commitments to treaty conventions and the Paris Principle, and take action to address CHRPA's recommendations;

(4) calls on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct an independent investigation into Mr. Maseko's assassination and human rights violations in Eswatini;

(5) encourages the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to—

(A) maintain and expand support for journalists, human rights advocates, and the rule of law and media freedoms in Eswatini; and

(B) encourage the SADC to take action to address the political and human rights crisis in Eswatini, including by working to convene a credible consultative forum inclusive of diverse political views and civil society to address issues related to political space and democratic reform; and

(6) encourages the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury to consider targeted sanctions against any individuals and entities committing violations of internationally-recognized human rights in Eswatini.

SENATE RESOLUTION 175—RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA ON OCTOBER 1, 1953

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. RISCH, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. ROMNEY, Mr. KAINE, Mr. HAGERTY, Mr. OSSOFF, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. HOEVEN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 175

Whereas, on October 1, 1953, the Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea (5 U.S.T. 2368) was signed in Washington, D.C., to which the Senate provided its advice and consent to ratification on January 26, 1954;

Whereas the shared commitment to recognize an armed attack on either of the Parties as dangerous to the peace and security of the other and to ''act to meet the common danger in accordance with [each party's] constitutional processes'' remains in place today;

Whereas the United States and Korea established diplomatic relations on May 22, 1882, with the signing of the Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation, and the United States reestablished its diplomatic relationship with the ''Republic of Korea'' on March 25, 1949;

Whereas, in 2023, the United States-Republic of Korea alliance marks 70 years since the cessation of hostilities in the Korean War and the signing of the Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953, which remains in place today and neither formally ended the Korean War nor constituted a permanent settlement of peace on the Korean Peninsula;

Whereas the United States-Republic of Korea alliance is the linchpin of peace, security, and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the Indo-Pacific region and is essential to confronting the threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK);

Whereas the United States-Republic of Korea alliance is rooted in mutual trust, shared sacrifice, common values, economic interests, and generations of people-to-people ties that provide a foundation for one of the strongest, most interoperable, and enduring bilateral alliances in the world;

Whereas the United States assures its ironclad security commitment to the Republic of Korea, including the United States extended deterrent underpinned by the full range of United States capabilities, including nuclear capabilities;

Whereas the United States-Republic of Korea alliance was forged in shared sacrifice, with 1,789,000 United States soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines serving during the Korean War, of whom 36,574 paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives in defense of the Republic of Korea, including 7,174 Korean Augmentation to the United States Army (KATUSA) soldiers, and the over 7,500 members of the United States Armed Forces that remain classified by the Department of Defense as missing in action;

Whereas casualties of the Republic of Korea were more than 217,000 soldiers killed, more than 291,000 wounded, and over 1,000,000 civilians killed or missing;

Whereas the Republic of Korea has since its founding become a thriving democracy with a vibrant press and commitment to the rule of law and a free market economy;

Whereas the United States-Republic of Korea Security Consultative Meeting met on November 3, 2022, in Washington, D.C. and ''shared their common understanding that the U.S.-ROK Alliance is based on the same principles and shared values including: mutual trust, freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law'';

Whereas the United States and the Republic of Korea are committed to pursuing closely coordinated diplomatic efforts through a shared strategy to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea and establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula;

Whereas the Republic of Korea's 2022 Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region emphasizes its desire to be a global pivotal state that commits ''to working with other key nations both within and beyond the region to foster a free and peaceful region . . . while strengthening the rules-based international order'';

Whereas President Yoon Suk Yeol took the courageous and bold step of announcing that the Government of the Republic of Korea would compensate Korean victims of Japanese wartime labor in order to facilitate the resolution of an issue that has hampered cooperation with Japan;

Whereas a robust and effective trilateral relationship between and among the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan is critical for joint security and interests in defending freedom and democracy, upholding human rights, promoting peace, security, and the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific and across the globe, championing women's empowerment, and combating and adapting to complex environmental challenges;

Whereas the American and Korean people share deeply rooted values of defending freedom, championing economic development, upholding human rights, and respecting the rule of law;

Whereas the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan have held a series of trilateral meetings, including a trilateral leaders' summit on November 13, 2022, a Foreign Ministers' meeting on September 23, 2022, and a vice ministerial meeting on February 13, 2023, at which the three countries committed to continuing trilateral exercises on ballistic missile defense and anti-submarine warfare, and further determined to explore new areas of security cooperation, including sharing DPRK missile warning data in real time;

Whereas the Republic of Korea is the United States' seventh largest goods trading partner with $162,900,000,000 in total (two-way) goods trade and $31,500,000,000 in total services trade for a combined $194,400,000,000 in 2021, and is one of the United States top sources of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which totaled $110,600,000,000 in 2021 and, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, South Korea multinational enterprises (MNEs) in the United States employed almost 84,000 employees in 2020;

Whereas the strength of the United States-Republic of Korea relationship is due in large part to the approximately 2,500,000 Korean Americans that have made significant contributions to every facet of American society and leadership to now include four members of the House of Representatives: Andy Kim of New Jersey, Young Kim of California, Marilyn Strickland of Washington, and Michelle Steel of California; and

Whereas, in April 2023, President Yoon Suk Yeol will visit the United States at the invitation of President Joseph R. Biden: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) welcomes President Yoon Suk Yeol to the United States and urges both sides to use the occasion of this state visit to further deepen the close security, economic, and people-to-people ties between our nations;

(2) reaffirms the importance of the United States-Republic of Korea alliance as the linchpin to safeguarding peace, security, and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and a critical component of peace in the Indo-Pacific region;

(3) reaffirms the United States' extended deterrence commitments to the Republic of Korea and that the United States will continue to ensure that its policy and posture reflects the requirements of extended deterrence;

(4) supports ongoing efforts to further strengthen, broaden, and deepen the ironclad United States-Republic of Korea alliance, including the United States-Republic of Korea Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting (2+2), the Security Consultative Meeting, and the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group, to confront threats to the peace and safety of both nations, and to stand together for the common values and shared interests that unite us;

(5) calls for continued cooperation between the Governments of the United States and the Republic of Korea in the promotion of human rights;

(6) supports the Republic of Korea's engagement in regional diplomacy, including the launching of the ROK-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative, the Republic of Korea's participation in the Minerals Security Partnership, its joining of the Partners in the Blue Pacific, and its hosting of a summit with Pacific Island nations;

(7) endorses further Republic of Korea engagement with Quad initiatives;

(8) calls for close coordination to achieve the denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the establishment of a permanent and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula;

(9) encourages close cooperation among the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan to address shared challenges; and

(10) recognizes the deep partnership forged over 70 years since the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty that has underpinned security for both countries, established a durable trust, undergirded the free and open order in the Indo-Pacific, and demonstrated the benefits of robust democracies on both sides of the Pacific.

SENATE RESOLUTION 176—SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF APRIL 2023 AS THE ''MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD''

Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Mr. BOOZMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 176

Whereas millions of brave United States servicemembers and veterans have demonstrated their courage and commitment to freedom by serving the Armed Forces of the United States of America in active-duty posts around the world;

Whereas there are more than 1,600,000 children connected to the military across the United States;

Whereas it is only fitting that the people of the United States take time to recognize the contributions of servicemembers and veterans, celebrate their spirit, and let the men and women of the United States in uniform know that while they are taking care of us, the people of the United States are taking care of their children;

Whereas the recognition of a ''Month of the Military Child'' will allow the people of the United States to pay tribute to military children for their commitment, struggles, and unconditional support of United States troops;

Whereas, when a servicemember joins the military, it is a family commitment to the United States, and military children are heroes in their own way; and

Whereas a month-long salute to military children will encourage the United States to provide direct support to military children and families: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the designation of April 2023 as the ''Month of the Military Child''; and

(2) urges the people of the United States to observe the Month of the Military Child with appropriate ceremonies and activities that honor, support, and show appreciation for military children.

SENATE RESOLUTION 177—TO AUTHORIZE TESTIMONY AND REPRESENTATION IN UNITED STATES V. POWELL

Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 177

Whereas, in the case of *United States v. Powell*, Cr. No. 21-179, pending in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, the prosecution has requested the production of testimony from Daniel Schwager, a former employee of the Office of the Secretary of the Senate;

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(a) and 704(a)(2) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. §§ 288b(a) and 288c(a)(2), the Senate may direct its counsel to represent current and former officers and employees of the Senate with respect to any subpoena, order, or request for evidence relating to their official responsibilities;

Whereas, by the privileges of the Senate of the United States and Rule XI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, no evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may, by the judicial or administrative process, be taken from such control or possession but by permission of the Senate; and

Whereas, when it appears that evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may promote the administration of justice, the Senate will take such action as will promote the ends of justice consistent with the privileges of the Senate: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Daniel Schwager, a former employee of the Office of the Secretary of the Senate, is authorized to provide relevant testimony in the case of *United States v. Powell*, except concerning matters for which a privilege should be asserted.

SEC. 2. The Senate Legal Counsel is authorized to represent Mr. Schwager, and any current or former officer or employee of the Secretary's office, in connection with the production of evidence authorized in section one of this resolution.

SENATE RESOLUTION 178—TO AUTHORIZE TESTIMONY AND REPRESENTATION IN UNITED STATES V. KELLY

Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 178

Whereas, in the case of *United States v. Kelly*, Cr. No. 21-708, pending in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, the prosecution has requested the production of testimony from Daniel Schwager, a former employee of the Office of the Secretary of the Senate;

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(a) and 704(a)(2) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. §§ 288b(a) and 288c(a)(2), the Senate may direct its counsel to represent current and former officers and employees of the Senate with respect to any subpoena, order, or request for evidence relating to their official responsibilities;

Whereas, by the privileges of the Senate of the United States and Rule XI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, no evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may, by the judicial or administrative process, be taken from such control or possession but by permission of the Senate; and

Whereas, when it appears that evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may promote the administration of justice, the Senate will take such action as will promote the ends of justice consistent with the privileges of the Senate: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Daniel Schwager, a former employee of the Office of the Secretary of the Senate, is authorized to provide relevant testimony in the case of *United States v. Kelly*, except concerning matters for which a privilege should be asserted.

SEC. 2. The Senate Legal Counsel is authorized to represent Mr. Schwager, and any current or former officer or employee of the Secretary's office, in connection with the production of evidence authorized in section one of this resolution.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 88. Mr. TESTER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 326, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a study and clinical trials on the effects of cannabis on certain health outcomes of veterans with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 88. Mr. TESTER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 326, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a study and clinical trials on the effects of cannabis on certain health outcomes of veterans with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Elizabeth Dole Veterans Programs Improvement Act of 2023''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

TITLE I—IMPROVEMENTS TO HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

SEC. 101. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the ''Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act''.

SEC. 102. DEFINITIONS.

In this title:

(1) CAREGIVER; FAMILY CAREGIVER.—The terms ''caregiver'' and ''family caregiver'' have the meanings given those terms under section 1720K(g) of title 38, United States Code (as added by section 104(a)(1)).

(2) COVERED PROGRAM.—The term ''covered program''—

(A) means any program of the Department for home and community based services; and

(B) includes the programs specified in section 1720K of title 38, United States Code (as added by section 104(a)(1)).

(3) DEPARTMENT.—The term ''Department'' means the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(4) HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES.—The term ''home and community based services''—

(A) means the services referred to in section 1701(6)(E) of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) includes services furnished under a program specified in section 1720K of such title (as added by section 104(a)(1)).

(5) HOME BASED PRIMARY CARE PROGRAM; HOME MAKER AND HOME HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM; VETERAN DIRECTED CARE PROGRAM.—The terms ''Home Based Primary Care program'', ''Home Maker and Home Health Aide program'', and ''Veteran Directed Care program'' mean the programs of the Department specified in subsections (d), (c), and (b) of such section 1720K, respectively.

(6) HOME HEALTH AIDE; NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN, TRIBAL HEALTH PROGRAM; URBAN INDIAN ORGANIZATION.—The terms ''home health aide'', ''Native American veteran'', ''tribal health program'', and ''Urban Indian organization'' have the meanings given those terms in subsection (g) of such section 1720K.

(7) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(8) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—The term ''veterans service organization'' means any organization recognized by the Secretary under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 103. COORDINATION WITH PROGRAM OF ALL-INCLUSIVE CARE FOR THE ELDERLY.

Section 1720C of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(f) In furnishing services to a veteran under the program conducted pursuant to subsection (a), if a medical center of the Department through which such program is administered is located in a geographic area in which services are available to the veteran under a PACE program (as such term is defined in sections 1894(a)(2) and 1934(a)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395eee(a)(2); 1396u–4(a)(2))), the Secretary shall establish a partnership with the PACE program operating in that area for the furnishing of such services.''.

SEC. 104. HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES: PROGRAMS.

(a) PROGRAMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1720J the following new section:

''§ 1720K. Home and community based services: programs

''(a) IN GENERAL.—In furnishing non-institutional alternatives to nursing home care under the authority of section 1720C of this title (or any other authority under this chapter or other provision of law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs), the Secretary shall carry out each of the programs specified in this section in accordance with such relevant authorities except as otherwise provided in this section.

''(b) VETERAN DIRECTED CARE PROGRAM.—(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall carry out a program to be known as the 'Veteran Directed Care program' under which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may enter into agreements with the providers described in paragraph (2) to provide to eligible veterans funds to obtain such in-home care services and related items that support clinical need and improve quality of life as determined appropriate by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and selected by the veteran, including through the veteran hiring individuals to provide such services and items or directly purchasing such services and items.

''(2) The providers described in this paragraph are the following:

''(A) An Aging and Disability Resource Center, an area agency on aging, or a State agency.

''(B) A center for independent living.

''(C) Any other entity as determined appropriate by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

''(3) In carrying out the Veteran Directed Care program, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

''(A) administer such program through each medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

''(B) ensure the availability of such program in American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and any other territory or possession of the United States; and

''(C) ensure the availability of such program for eligible veterans who are Native American veterans receiving care and services furnished by the Indian Health Service, a tribal health program, an Urban Indian organization, or (in the case of a Native Hawaiian veteran) a Native Hawaiian health care system.

''(4) If a veteran participating in the Veteran Directed Care program is hospitalized, the veteran may continue to use funds under the program during a period of hospitalization in the same manner that the veteran would be authorized to use such funds under the program if the veteran were not hospitalized, as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

''(c) HOME MAKER AND HOME HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM.—(1) The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as the 'Home Maker and Home Health Aide program' under which the Secretary may enter into agreements with home health agencies to provide to eligible veterans such home health aide services as may be determined appropriate by the Secretary.

''(2) In carrying out the Home Maker and Home Health Aide program, the Secretary shall ensure the availability of such program—

''(A) in the locations specified in subparagraph (B) of subsection (b)(3); and

''(B) for the veteran populations specified in subparagraph (C) of such subsection.

''(d) HOME BASED PRIMARY CARE PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as the 'Home Based Primary Care program' under which the Secretary may furnish to eligible veterans in-home health care, the provision of which is overseen by a health care provider of the Department.

''(e) PURCHASED SKILLED HOME CARE PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as the 'Purchased Skilled Home Care program' under which the Secretary may furnish to eligible veterans such in-home care services as may be determined appropriate and selected by the Secretary for the veteran.

''(f) CAREGIVER SUPPORT.—(1) With respect to a caregiver of a veteran participating in a program under this section who is a family caregiver, the Secretary shall—

''(A) if the veteran meets the requirements of a covered veteran under section 1720G(b) of this title, provide to such caregiver the option of enrolling in the program of general caregiver support services under such section;

''(B) subject to paragraph (2), provide to such caregiver not fewer than 14 days of covered respite care each year; and

''(C) conduct on an annual basis (and, to the extent practicable, in connection with in-person services provided under the program in which the veteran is participating), a wellness check of such caregiver.

''(2) The Secretary shall provide not fewer than 30 days of covered respite care each year to any caregiver who provides services funded under the Veteran Directed Care program under subsection (b).

''(3) Covered respite care provided to a caregiver of a veteran under paragraph (1) or (2), as the case may be, may exceed 14 days annually or 30 days annually, respectively, if an extension is requested by the caregiver or veteran and determined medically appropriate by the Secretary.

''(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The terms 'Aging and Disability Resource Center', 'area agency on aging', and 'State agency' have the meanings given those terms in section 102 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3002).

''(2) The terms 'caregiver' and 'family caregiver', with respect to a veteran, have the meanings given those terms, respectively, under subsection (d) of section 1720G of this title with respect to an eligible veteran under subsection (a) of such section or a covered veteran under subsection (b) of such section, as the case may be.

''(3) The term 'center for independent living' has the meaning given that term in section 702 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 796a).

''(4) The term 'covered respite care' means, with respect to a caregiver of a veteran, respite care that—

''(A) includes 24-hour per day care of the veteran commensurate with the care provided by the caregiver;

''(B) is medically and age-appropriate; and

''(C) includes in-home care services.

''(5) The term 'eligible veteran' means any veteran—

''(A) for whom the Secretary determines participation in a specific program under this section is medically necessary to promote, preserve, or restore the health of the veteran; and

''(B) who absent such participation would be at increased risk for hospitalization, placement in a nursing home, or emergency room care.

''(6) The term 'home health aide' means an individual employed by a home health agency to provide in-home care services.

''(7) The term 'in-home care service' means any service, including a personal care service, provided to enable the recipient of such service to live at home.

''(8) The term 'Native American veteran' has the meaning given that term in section 3765 of this title.

''(9) The terms 'Native Hawaiian' and 'Native Hawaiian health care system' have the meanings given those terms in section 12 of the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act (42 U.S.C. 11711).

''(10) The terms 'tribal health program' and 'Urban Indian organization' have the meanings given those terms in section 4 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (25 U.S.C. 1603).''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such subchapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1720J the following new item:

''1720K. Home and community based services: programs.''.

(b) DEADLINE FOR IMPROVED ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Veteran Directed Care program and the Home Maker and Home Health Aide program are administered through each medical center of the Department in accordance with section 1720K of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)(1)), by not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) ADMINISTRATION OF VETERAN DIRECTED CARE PROGRAM.—

(1) PROCEDURES.—The Secretary shall establish procedures to identify staffing needs for the Program and define the roles and responsibilities of personnel of the Program at the national, Veterans Integrated Service Network, and facility levels, including responsibilities for engagement with veterans participating in the Program, veterans interested in the Program, and providers described in section 1720K(b)(2), as added by subsection (a)(1).

(2) STAFFING MODEL.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a staffing model for the administration of the Program at each medical center of the Department.

(B) STAFFING RATIO.—The Secretary shall establish a staffing ratio for administration of the Program at each facility of the Department at which the Program is carried out, which shall include a specified number of full-time equivalent employees, with no collateral duties, per number of veterans served by the Program.

(3) FUNDING FOR PROGRAM.—

(A) COST ESTIMATES.—The Secretary shall develop methods for tracking and reporting demand by veterans for and use by veterans of services under the Program to inform yearly cost estimates for the Program.

(B) SPECIFIC REQUEST.—In the budget justification materials submitted to Congress in support of the budget of the Department for any fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code), the Secretary shall include a separate statement of the amount requested for the Program.

(4) PROGRAM DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''Program'' means the Veteran Directed Care program.

SEC. 105. COORDINATION WITH ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CAREGIVERS.

(a) COORDINATION WITH PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS.—

(1) COORDINATION.—Section 1720G(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(14)(A) In the case of a veteran or caregiver who seeks services under this subsection and is denied such services, or a veteran or the family caregiver of a veteran who is discharged from the program under this subsection, the Secretary shall—

''(i) if the veteran meets the requirements of a covered veteran under subsection (b), provide to such caregiver the option of enrolling in the program of general caregiver support services under such subsection;

''(ii) assess the veteran or caregiver for participation in any other available program of the Department for home and community based services (including the programs specified in section 1720K of this title) for which the veteran or caregiver may be eligible and, with respect to the veteran, store (and make accessible to the veteran) the results of such assessment in the electronic medical record of the veteran; and

''(iii) provide to the veteran or caregiver written information on any such program identified pursuant to the assessment under clause (ii), including information about facilities, eligibility requirements, and relevant contact information for each such program.

''(B)(i) Subject to clause (ii), for each veteran or family caregiver who is discharged from the program under this subsection, a caregiver support coordinator shall provide for a smooth and personalized transition from such program to an appropriate program of the Department for home and community based services (including the programs specified in section 1720K of this title), including by integrating caregiver support across programs.

''(ii) To the extent practicable, the Secretary shall not discharge a veteran or family caregiver from the program under this subsection until appropriate home and community based services are selected by the veteran or caregiver and are being provided to the veteran and caregiver pursuant to clause (i).''.

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to denials and discharges described in paragraph (14) of such section, as added by paragraph (1), occurring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 1720G(d) of such title is amended—

(1) by striking ''or a covered veteran'' each place it appears and inserting '', a veteran denied or discharged as specified in paragraph (14) of such subsection, or a covered veteran''; and

(2) by striking ''under subsection (a), means'' each place it appears and inserting ''under subsection (a) or a veteran denied or discharged as specified in paragraph (14) of such subsection, means''.

(c) REVIEW RELATING TO CAREGIVER CONTACT.—The Secretary shall conduct a review of the capacity of the Department to establish a streamlined system for contacting all caregivers enrolled in the program of general caregiver support services under section 1720G(b) of title 38, United States Code, to provide to such caregivers program updates and alerts relating to emerging services for which such caregivers or the veterans for which they provide care may be eligible.

SEC. 106. DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRALIZED WEBSITE FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION.

(a) CENTRALIZED WEBSITE.—The Secretary shall develop and maintain a centralized and publicly accessible internet website of the Department as a clearinghouse for information and resources relating to covered programs.

(b) CONTENTS.—The website under subsection (a) shall contain the following:

(1) A description of each covered program.

(2) An informational assessment tool that enables users to—

(A) assess the eligibility of a veteran, or a caregiver of a veteran, for any covered program; and

(B) receive information, as a result of such assessment, on any covered program for which the veteran or caregiver (as the case may be) may be eligible.

(3) A list of required procedures for the directors of medical facilities of the Department to follow in determining the eligibility and suitability of veterans for participation in a covered program, including procedures applicable to instances in which the resource constraints of a facility (or of a community in which a facility is located) may result in the inability to address the health needs of a

veteran under a covered program in a timely manner.

(c) UPDATES.—The Secretary shall ensure the website under subsection (a) is updated on a periodic basis.

SEC. 107. IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO HOME MAKER AND HOME HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITIES WITH SHORTAGE OF HOME HEALTH AIDES.—

(1) PROGRAM.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary shall provide home maker and home health aide services to veterans who reside in communities with a shortage of home health aides.

(2) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall select 10 geographic locations in which the Secretary determines there is a shortage of home health aides at which to carry out the pilot program under paragraph (1).

(3) NURSING ASSISTANTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the pilot program under paragraph (1), the Secretary may hire nursing assistants as new employees of the Department, or reassign nursing assistants who are existing employees of the Department, to provide to veterans in-home care services (including basic tasks authorized by the State certification of the nursing assistant) under the pilot program, in lieu of or in addition to the provision of such services through non-Department home health aides.

(B) RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PROGRAMS.—Nursing assistants hired or reassigned under subparagraph (A) may provide services to a veteran under the pilot program under paragraph (1) while serving as part of a health care team for the veteran under the Home Based Primary Care program or any other program as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(4) DURATION.—The pilot program under paragraph (1) shall be for a duration of three years.

(5) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year prior to the termination of the pilot program under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the results of the pilot program as of the date of the report and the feasibility and advisability of extending the pilot program or making the pilot program permanent.

(b) REPORT ON USE OF FUNDS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report containing, with respect to the period beginning in fiscal year 2011 and ending in fiscal year 2022, the following:

(1) An identification of the amount of funds that were included in a budget of the Department during such period for the provision of in-home care to veterans under the Home Maker and Home Health Aide program in effect during such period but were not expended for the provision of such care, disaggregated by medical center of the Department for which such unexpended funds were budgeted.

(2) An identification of the number of veterans for whom, during such period, the hours during which a home health aide was authorized to provide services to the veteran under such program were reduced, including a detailed description of why such reduction occurred, such as clinical need or provider availability.

(c) UPDATED GUIDANCE ON PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue updated guidance for the Home Maker and Home Health Aide program.

(2) MATTERS TO INCLUDE.—Guidance updated under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A process for the transition of veterans from the Home Maker and Home Health Aide program to other covered programs.

(B) A requirement for the directors of the medical facilities of the Department to complete such process whenever a veteran with care needs has been denied services from home health agencies under the Home Maker and Home Health Aide program as a result of the clinical needs or behavioral issues of the veteran.

SEC. 108. REVIEWS AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES.

(a) OFFICE OF GERIATRIC AND EXTENDED CARE.—

(1) REVIEW OF PROGRAMS.—The Under Secretary for Health of the Department shall conduct a review of each program administered through the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care of the Department or the Caregiver Support Program Office of the Department, or any successor office, to—

(A) ensure consistency in program management;

(B) eliminate service gaps at the medical center level;

(C) ensure the clinical needs of veterans are being met;

(D) ensure the availability of, and the access by veterans to, home and community based services, including for veterans living in rural areas; and

(E) ensure proper coordination between covered programs.

(2) ASSESSMENT OF STAFFING NEEDS.—The Secretary shall conduct an assessment of the staffing needs of the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care of the Department and the Caregiver Support Program Office of the Department, or any successor office.

(3) GOALS FOR GEOGRAPHIC ALIGNMENT OF CARE.—

(A) ESTABLISHMENT OF GOALS.—The Director of the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care and the head of the Caregiver Support Program Office, or the head of any successor office, shall establish quantitative goals to enable aging or disabled veterans who are not located near medical centers of the Department to access extended care services (including by improving access to home and community based services for such veterans).

(B) IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE.—Each goal established under subparagraph (A) shall include a timeline for the implementation of the goal at each medical center of the Department.

(4) GOALS FOR IN-HOME SPECIALTY CARE.—The Director of the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care and the head of the Caregiver Support Program Office, or the head of any successor office, shall establish quantitative goals to address the specialty care needs of veterans through in-home care, including by ensuring the education of home health aides and caregivers of veterans in the following areas:

(A) Dementia care.

(B) Care for spinal cord injuries and diseases.

(C) Ventilator care.

(D) Other specialty care areas as determined by the Secretary.

(5) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report containing the findings of the review under paragraph (1), the results of the assessment under paragraph (2), and the goals established under paragraphs (3) and (4).

(b) REVIEW OF INCENTIVES AND EFFORTS RELATING TO HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES.—

(1) REVIEW.—The Secretary shall conduct a review of the following:

(A) The financial and organizational incentives and disincentives for the directors of medical centers of the Department to establish or expand covered programs at such medical centers.

(B) Any incentives or disincentives for such directors to provide to veterans home and community based services in lieu of institutional care.

(C) The efforts taken by the Secretary to enhance spending of the Department for extended care by balancing spending between institutional care and home and community based services.

(D) The plan of the Under Secretary for Health of the Department to accelerate efforts to enhance spending as specified in subparagraph (C), to match the progress of similar efforts taken by the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services with respect to spending of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for extended care.

(2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the findings of the review under paragraph (1).

(c) REVIEW OF RESPITE CARE SERVICES.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall conduct a review of the use, availability, cost, and effectiveness of the respite care services furnished by the Secretary under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, to include—

(1) the frequency in which Department is unable to meet the need for such services;

(2) a detailed description of why the Department is unable to meet the need for such services; and

(3) a detailed description of the actions the Department has taken or plans to take to ensure that the need for such services is met.

(d) COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES.—

(1) FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON CAREGIVER SUPPORT.—

(A) FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Secretary shall solicit from the entities described in subparagraph (B) feedback and recommendations regarding opportunities for the Secretary to enhance home and community based services for veterans and caregivers of veterans, including through the potential provision by the entity of care and respite services to veterans and caregivers who may not be eligible for any program under section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, or section 1720K of such title (as added by section 104(a)(1)), but have a need for assistance.

(B) COVERED ENTITIES.—The entities described in this subparagraph are veterans service organizations and nonprofit organizations with a focus on caregiver support or long-term care (as determined by the Secretary).

(2) COLLABORATION FOR NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS.—The Secretary shall collaborate with the Director of the Indian Health Service and representatives from tribal health programs and Urban Indian organizations to ensure the availability of home and community based services for Native American veterans, including Native American veterans receiving health care and medical services under multiple health care systems.

TITLE II—IMPROVEMENTS TO FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM

SEC. 201. MODIFICATION OF FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO INCLUDE SERVICES RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 105, is further amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)(C)(ii), by striking ''neurological'' and inserting ''a neurological disorder'';

(B) in paragraph (3)—

(i) in subparagraph (A)(ii)(II), by inserting '', including through public or private entities'' before the semicolon; and

(ii) in subparagraph (C), by adding at the end the following new clause:

''(v)(I) For purposes of determining the amount and degree of personal care services provided under clause (i) with respect to a veteran described in subclause (II), the Secretary shall take into account relevant documentation evidencing the provision of personal care services with respect to the veteran during the preceding three-year period.

''(II) A veteran described in this subclause is a veteran whose need for personal care services as described in paragraph (2)(C) is based in whole or in part on—

''(aa) a diagnosis of mental illness or history of suicidal ideation that puts the veteran at risk of self-harm; or

''(bb) a neurological disorder.''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(15) The Secretary shall establish a process and requirements for clinicians of facilities of the Department—

''(A) to document incidents in which an eligible veteran participating in the program established under paragraph (1)—

''(i) presents at such a facility for treatment for an emergent or urgent mental health crisis; or

''(ii) is assessed by such a clinician to be at risk for suicide; and

''(B) to provide such documentation, including any safety plans developed and referrals made to a suicide prevention coordinator of the Department, to such program.'';

(2) in subsection (b)(2)(B), by striking ''neurological'' and inserting ''a neurological disorder''; and

(3) in subsection (d)—

(A) by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (5);

(B) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following new paragraph (4):

''(4) the term 'neurological disorder' means a disease of the brain, spinal cord, nerves, or neuromuscular system.''; and

(C) in paragraph (5)(B), as redesignated by subparagraph (A), by striking ''neurological'' and inserting ''a neurological disorder''.

(b) TIMING FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESSES.—

(1) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(A) establish the process and requirements required under paragraph (15) of section 1720G(a) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1)(B); and

(B) submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a description of such process and requirements.

(2) CERTIFICATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall require all clinicians of facilities of the Department to certify to the Secretary that the clinician understands the process and requirements established under paragraph (1)(A).

(B) FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT DEFINED.—In this paragraph, the term ''facilities of the Department'' has the meaning given that term in section 1701 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 202. REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO EVALUATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, AND REASSESSMENTS RELATING TO ELIGIBILITY OF VETERANS AND CAREGIVERS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 201(a)(1), is further amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(16)(A) For purposes of conducting evaluations and assessments to determine eligibility of a veteran and caregiver for the program established under paragraph (1) or conducting reassessments to determine continued eligibility for such program, the Secretary shall—

''(i) take into account relevant documentation and medical records generated by Department and non-Department health care providers, including qualified mental health professionals and neurological specialists;

''(ii) if the caregiver of the veteran claims that the serious injury or need for personal care services of the veteran as described in paragraph (2) is based in whole or in part on psychological trauma or another mental disorder, ensure—

''(I) a qualified mental health professional that treats the veteran participates in the evaluation process; and

''(II) a qualified mental health professional participates in the assessment or reassessment process; and

''(iii) if the caregiver of the veteran claims that the serious injury or need for personal care services of the veteran as described in paragraph (2) is based in whole or in part on a neurological disorder, ensure—

''(I) a neurological specialist that treats the veteran participates in the evaluation process; and

''(II) a neurological specialist participates in the assessment or reassessment process.

''(B)(i) The Secretary shall establish an appropriate time limit during a 24-hour period for the active participation of a veteran in an evaluation, assessment, or reassessment to determine eligibility of the veteran for the program established under paragraph (1).

''(ii) In determining an appropriate time limit for a veteran under clause (i), the Secretary shall—

''(I) take into consideration necessary accommodations for the veteran stemming from the disability or medical condition of the veteran; and

''(II) consult with the primary care provider, neurological specialist, or qualified mental health professional that is treating the veteran.

''(C) The Secretary shall not require the presence of a veteran during portions of an evaluation, assessment, or reassessment to determine eligibility of the veteran for the program established under paragraph (1) that only require the active participation of the caregiver.

''(D)(i) The Secretary shall make reasonable efforts to assist a caregiver and veteran in obtaining evidence necessary to substantiate the claims of the caregiver and veteran in the application process for evaluation, assessment, or reassessment for the program established under paragraph (1).

''(ii)(I) As part of the assistance provided to a caregiver or veteran under clause (i), the Secretary shall make reasonable efforts to obtain relevant private records that the caregiver or veteran adequately identifies to the Secretary.

''(II) Whenever the Secretary, after making reasonable efforts under subclause (I), is unable to obtain all of the relevant records sought, the Secretary shall notify the caregiver and veteran that the Secretary is unable to obtain records with respect to the claim, which shall include—

''(aa) an identification of the records the Secretary is unable to obtain;

''(bb) a brief explanation of the efforts that the Secretary made to obtain such records; and

''(cc) an explanation that the Secretary will make a determination based on the evidence of record and that this clause does not prohibit the submission of records at a later date if such submission is otherwise allowed.

''(III) The Secretary shall make not fewer than two requests to a custodian of a private record in order for an effort to obtain such record to be treated as reasonable under subclause (I), unless it is made evident by the first request that a second request would be futile in obtaining such record.

''(iii) Under regulations prescribed by the Secretary, the Secretary—

''(I) shall encourage a caregiver and veteran to submit relevant private medical records of the veteran to the Secretary to substantiate the claims of the caregiver and veteran in the application process for evaluation, assessment, or reassessment for the program established under paragraph (1) if such submission does not burden the caregiver or veteran; and

''(II) may require the caregiver or veteran to authorize the Secretary to obtain such relevant private medical records if such authorization is required to comply with Federal, State, or local law.

''(17)(A) The Secretary, in consultation with a health care provider, neurological specialist, or qualified mental health professional that is treating a veteran, shall waive the reassessment requirement for the veteran for participation in the program established under paragraph (1) if—

''(i) the serious injury of the veteran under paragraph (2) is significantly caused by a degenerative or chronic condition; and

''(ii) such condition is unlikely to improve the dependency of the veteran for personal care services.

''(B) The Secretary shall require a health care provider, neurological specialist, or qualified mental health professional that is treating a veteran to certify at appropriate intervals determined by the Secretary the clinical decision of the provider, specialist, or professional under subparagraph (A).

''(C) The Secretary may rescind a waiver under subparagraph (A) with respect to a veteran and require a reassessment of the veteran if a health care provider, neurological specialist, or qualified mental health professional that is treating the veteran makes a clinical determination that the level of dependency of the veteran for personal care services has diminished since the last certification of the clinical decision of the provider, specialist, or professional under subparagraph (B).''.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—Subsection (d) of such section, as amended by section 201(a)(3), is further amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (5) as paragraph (6);

(2) by inserting after paragraph (4) the following new paragraph (5):

''(5) The term 'neurological specialist' means a neurologist, neuropsychiatrist, physiatrist, geriatrician, certified brain injury specialist, neurology nurse, neurology

nurse practitioner, neurology physician assistant, or such other licensed medical professional as the Secretary considers appropriate.''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(7) The term 'qualified mental health professional' means a psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed clinical social worker, psychiatric nurse, licensed professional mental health counselor, or other licensed mental health professional as the Secretary considers appropriate.''.

SEC. 203. AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO AWARD GRANTS TO ENTITIES TO IMPROVE PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 104(a)(1), is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1720L. Grants to provide mental health support to family caregivers of veterans

''(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to provide for assistance by the Secretary to entities to carry out programs that improve the provision of mental health support to the family caregivers of veterans participating in the family caregiver program.

''(b) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may award grants to carry out, coordinate, improve, or otherwise enhance mental health counseling, treatment, or support to the family caregivers of veterans participating in the family caregiver program.

''(c) APPLICATION.—(1) To be eligible for a grant under this section, an entity shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

''(2) Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

''(A) A detailed plan for the use of the grant.

''(B) A description of the programs or efforts through which the entity will meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary under subsection (g).

''(C) A description of how the entity will distribute grant amounts equitably among areas with varying levels of urbanization.

''(d) DISTRIBUTION.—The Secretary shall seek to ensure that grants awarded under this section are equitably distributed among entities located in States with varying levels of urbanization.

''(e) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall prioritize awarding grants under this section that will serve the following areas:

''(1) Areas with high rates of veterans enrolled in the family caregiver program.

''(2) Areas with high rates of—

''(A) suicide among veterans; or

''(B) referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.

''(f) REQUIRED ACTIVITIES.—Any grant awarded under this section shall be used—

''(1) to expand existing programs, activities, and services;

''(2) to establish new or additional programs, activities, and services; or

''(3) for travel and transportation to facilitate carrying out paragraph (1) or (2).

''(g) OUTCOME MEASURES.—(1) The Secretary shall develop and provide to each entity that receives a grant under this section written guidance on the following:

''(A) Outcome measures.

''(B) Policies of the Department.

''(2) In developing outcome measures under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider the following goals:

''(A) Increasing the utilization of mental health services among family caregivers of veterans participating in the family caregiver program.

''(B) Reducing barriers to mental health services among family caregivers of veterans participating in such program.

''(h) TRACKING REQUIREMENTS.—(1) The Secretary shall establish appropriate tracking requirements with respect to the entities receiving a grant under this section.

''(2) Not less frequently than annually, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on such tracking requirements.

''(i) PERFORMANCE REVIEW.—The Secretary shall—

''(1) review the performance of each entity that receives a grant under this section; and

''(2) make information regarding such performance publicly available.

''(j) REMEDIATION PLAN.—(1) In the case of an entity that receives a grant under this section and does not meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary under subsection (g), the Secretary shall require the entity to submit to the Secretary a remediation plan under which the entity shall describe how and when it plans to meet such outcome measures.

''(2) The Secretary may not award a subsequent grant under this section to an entity described in paragraph (1) unless the Secretary approves the remediation plan submitted by the entity under such paragraph.

''(k) FUNDING REQUEST.—In the budget justification materials submitted to Congress in support of the budget of the Department for any fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary shall include a separate statement of the amount requested to be appropriated for that fiscal year to carry out this section.

''(l) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2025 $50,000,000 to carry out this section.

''(m) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The terms 'caregiver' and 'family caregiver' have the meanings given those terms in section 1720G(d) of this title.

''(2) The term 'family caregiver program' means the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under section 1720G(a) of this title.

''(3) The term 'Veterans Crisis Line' means the toll-free hotline for veterans established under section 1720F(h) of this title.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such subchapter, as amended by section 104(a)(2), is further amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''1720L. Grants to provide mental health support to family caregivers of veterans.''.

SEC. 204. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS.

(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the provision of mental health support to caregivers of veterans.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An assessment of the need for mental health support among caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(2) An assessment of options for mental health support in facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs and in the community for caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(3) An assessment of the availability and accessibility of mental health support in facilities of the Department and in the community for caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(4) An assessment of the awareness among caregivers of the availability of mental health support in facilities of the Department and in the community for caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(5) An assessment of barriers to mental health support in facilities of the Department and in the community for caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) CAREGIVER.—The term ''caregiver'' has the meaning given that term in section 1720G(d) of title 38, United States Code.

(2) CAREGIVER PROGRAMS.—The term ''caregiver programs'' means—

(A) the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under subsection (a) of section 1720G of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) the program of support services for caregivers under subsection (b) of such section.

TITLE III—MEDICINAL CANNABIS RESEARCH

SEC. 301. DEFINITIONS.

In this title:

(1) COVERED VETERAN.—The term ''covered veteran'' means a veteran who is enrolled in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs established and operated under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code.

(2) SECRETARY.— The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 302. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS LARGE-SCALE, MIXED METHODS, RETROSPECTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF CANNABIS ON CERTAIN HEALTH OUTCOMES OF VETERANS WITH CHRONIC PAIN AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, through the Office of Research and Development of the Department of Veterans Affairs, shall carry out a large-scale, mixed methods, retrospective, and qualitative study on the effects of cannabis on the health outcomes of covered veterans diagnosed with chronic pain and covered veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

(2) OBSERVATIONAL STUDY.—The study required by paragraph (1) shall be conducted as an observational study on the effects of cannabis use on the health of covered veterans.

(3) ELEMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The study required by paragraph (1) shall—

(i) triangulate a range of data sources;

(ii) compare the positive and negative health outcomes of covered veterans who use cannabis, utilizing outcomes that can be measured in an electronic health record of the Department and through data sets of the Department relating to claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary;

(iii) elicit the positive and negative outcomes of cannabis use for covered veterans through semi-structured interviews;

(iv) estimate current and future health system needs to address positive and negative outcomes of cannabis use for covered veterans;

(v) include a qualitative, open-ended survey provided to covered veterans who have sought care from the Department for chronic pain or post-traumatic stress disorder during the five-year period preceding the survey; and

(vi) include an assessment of—

(I) all records within the Veterans Health Administration for covered veterans participating in the study; and

(II) all records within the Veterans Benefits Administration for covered veterans participating in the study.

(B) HEALTH OUTCOMES.—A comparison of health outcomes under subparagraph (A)(ii) shall include an assessment of the following:

(i) The reduction or increase in opiate use or dosage.

(ii) The reduction or increase in benzodiazepine use or dosage.

(iii) The reduction or change in use of other types of medication.

(iv) The reduction or increase in alcohol use.

(v) The reduction or increase in the prevalence of substance abuse disorders.

(vi) Sleep quality.

(vii) Osteopathic pain (including pain intensity and pain-related outcomes).

(viii) Agitation.

(ix) Quality of life.

(x) Mortality and morbidity.

(xi) Hospital readmissions.

(xii) Any newly developed or exacerbated health conditions, including mental health conditions.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall commence the implementation of the study required by subsection (a)(1).

(c) DURATION OF STUDY.—The study required by subsection (a)(1) shall be carried out for an 18-month period.

(d) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the completion of the study required by subsection (a)(1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the study.

(2) ABILITY TO CONDUCT CLINICAL TRIALS.—The Secretary shall include in the report required by paragraph (1) an assessment of whether the Secretary is able to meet the criteria necessary to conduct the clinical trials required under section 303, including consideration of subsection (e)(1) of such section.

SEC. 303. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLINICAL TRIALS ON THE EFFECTS OF CANNABIS ON CERTAIN HEALTH OUTCOMES OF VETERANS WITH CHRONIC PAIN AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

(a) CLINICAL TRIALS REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary indicates in the report required by section 302(d) that the Secretary is able to meet the criteria necessary to proceed to clinical trials, commencing not later than 180 days after the submittal of that report, the Secretary shall carry out a series of clinical trials on the effects of cannabis appropriate for investigational use, as determined by the Food and Drug Administration under section 505(i) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355(i)), on the health outcomes of covered veterans diagnosed with chronic pain and covered veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—The clinical trials required by paragraph (1) shall include, as appropriate, an evaluation of key symptoms, clinical outcomes, and conditions associated with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder, which may include—

(A) with respect to covered veterans diagnosed with chronic pain, an evaluation of the effects of the use of cannabis on—

(i) osteopathic pain (including pain intensity and pain-related outcomes);

(ii) the reduction or increase in opioid use or dosage;

(iii) the reduction or increase in benzodiazepine use or dosage;

(iv) the reduction or increase in alcohol use;

(v) the reduction or increase in the prevalence of substance use disorders;

(vi) inflammation;

(vii) sleep quality;

(viii) agitation;

(ix) quality of life;

(x) exacerbated or new mental health conditions; and

(xi) suicidal ideation.

(B) with respect to covered veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, an evaluation of the effects of the use of cannabis on—

(i) the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as established by or derived from the clinician administered PTSD scale, the PTSD checklist, the PTSD symptom scale, the post-traumatic diagnostic scale, and other applicable methods of evaluating symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder;

(ii) the reduction or increase in benzodiazepine use or dosage;

(iii) the reduction or increase in alcohol use;

(iv) the reduction or increase in the prevalence of substance use disorders;

(v) mood;

(vi) anxiety;

(vii) social functioning;

(viii) agitation;

(ix) suicidal ideation; and

(x) sleep quality, including frequency of nightmares and night terrors.

(3) OPTIONAL ELEMENTS.—The clinical trials required by paragraph (1) may include, as appropriate, an evaluation of the effects of the use of cannabis to treat chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder on other symptoms, clinical outcomes, and conditions not covered by paragraph (2), which may include—

(A) pulmonary function;

(B) cardiovascular events;

(C) head, neck, and oral cancer;

(D) testicular cancer;

(E) ovarian cancer;

(F) transitional cell cancer;

(G) intestinal inflammation;

(H) motor vehicle accidents; or

(I) spasticity.

(b) LONG-TERM OBSERVATIONAL STUDY.—The Secretary may carry out a long-term observational study of the participants in the clinical trials required by subsection (a).

(c) TYPE OF CANNABIS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the clinical trials required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall study varying forms of cannabis, including whole plant raw material and extracts, and may study varying routes of administration.

(2) PLANT CULTIVARS.—Of the varying forms of cannabis required under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall study plant cultivars with varying ratios of tetrahydrocannabinol to cannabidiol.

(d) IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall—

(1) develop a plan to implement this section and submit such plan to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(2) issue any requests for proposals the Secretary determines appropriate for such implementation.

(e) TERMINATION OF CLINICAL TRIALS.—

(1) CLINICAL GUIDELINE REQUIREMENTS OR EXCESSIVE RISK.—The Secretary may terminate the clinical trials required by subsection (a) if the Secretary determines that the Department of Veterans Affairs is unable to meet clinical guideline requirements necessary to conduct such trials or the clinical trials would create excessive risk to participants.

(2) COMPLETION UPON SUBMITTAL OF FINAL REPORT.—The Secretary may terminate the clinical trials required by subsection (a) upon submittal of the final report required under subsection (f)(2).

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) PERIODIC REPORTS.—During the five-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of clinical trials required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit periodically, but not less frequently than annually, to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives reports on the implementation of this section.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the completion of the five-year period specified in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a final report on the implementation of this section.

SEC. 304. ADMINISTRATION OF STUDY AND CLINICAL TRIALS.

(a) DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION.—In carrying out the study required by section 302 and the clinical trials required by section 303, the Secretary shall ensure representation in such study and trials of demographics that represent the population of veterans in the United States, as determined by the most recently available data from the American Community Survey of the Bureau of the Census.

(b) DATA PRESERVATION.—The Secretary shall ensure that the study required by section 302 and the clinical trials required by section 303 include a mechanism to ensure—

(1) the preservation of all data, including all data sets and survey results, collected or used for purposes of such study and trials in a manner that will facilitate further research; and

(2) registration of such data in the database of privately and publicly funded clinical studies maintained by the National Library of Medicine (or successor database).

(c) ANONYMOUS DATA.—The Secretary shall ensure that data relating to any study or clinical trial conducted under this Act is anonymized and cannot be traced back to an individual patient.

(d) EFFECT ON OTHER BENEFITS.—The eligibility or entitlement of a covered veteran to any other benefit under the laws administered by the Secretary or any other provision of law shall not be affected by the participation of the covered veteran in the study under section 302, a clinical trial under section 303(a), or a study under section 303(b).

(e) EFFECT ON OTHER LAWS.—Nothing in this Act shall affect or modify—

(1) the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 301 et seq.);

(2) section 351 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 262); or

(3) the authority of the Commissioner of Food and Drugs and the Secretary of Health and Human Services—

(A) under—

(i) the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 301 et seq.); or

(ii) section 351 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 262); or

(B) to promulgate Federal regulations and guidelines pertaining to cannabidiol, marijuana, or other subject matter addressed in this title.

TITLE IV—HOUSING MATTERS

SEC. 401. IMPROVEMENTS TO PROGRAM FOR DIRECT HOUSING LOANS MADE TO NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) GENERAL AUTHORITIES AND REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) DIRECT HOUSING LOANS TO NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS.—Section 3762(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(a) The Secretary may make a direct housing loan to a Native American veteran under this subchapter if the Secretary ensures the following:

''(1) That each Native American veteran to whom the Secretary makes a direct housing loan under this subchapter—

''(A) holds, possesses, or purchases using the proceeds of the loan a meaningful interest in a lot or dwelling (or both) that is located on trust land; and

''(B) will purchase, construct, or improve (as the case may be) a dwelling on the lot using the proceeds of the loan.

''(2) That each such Native American veteran will convey to the Secretary by an appropriate instrument the interest referred to in paragraph (1)(A) as security for a direct housing loan under this subchapter.

''(3) That the Secretary, including the Secretary's employees or agents, may enter upon the trust land for the purposes of carrying out such actions as the Secretary determines are necessary, including—

''(A) to evaluate the advisability of the loan;

''(B) to monitor any purchase, construction, or improvements carried out using the proceeds of the loan; and

''(C) to manage any servicing or post-foreclosure activities, including acquisition, property inspections, and property management.

''(4) That there are established standards and procedures that apply to the foreclosure of the interest conveyed by a Native American veteran pursuant to paragraph (2), including—

''(A) procedures for foreclosing the interest; and

''(B) procedures for the resale of the lot or dwelling (or both) purchased, constructed, or improved using the proceeds of the loan.

''(5) That the loan is made in a responsible and prudent manner, subject to standards and procedures as are necessary for the reasonable protection of the financial interests of the United States.''.

(2) MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING, AGREEMENTS, AND DETERMINATIONS.—Section 3762(b) of such title is amended to read as follows:

''(b)(1) To carry out the purpose of subsection (a), the Secretary may—

''(A) enter into a memorandum of understanding with a tribal organization, other entity, or individual;

''(B) rely on agreements or determinations of other Federal agencies to guarantee, insure, or make loans on trust land; and

''(C) enter into other agreements or take such other actions as the Secretary determines necessary.

''(2) If the Secretary determines that the requirements under subsection (a) are not being enforced by a tribal organization, other entity, or individual that is a party to any memorandum of understanding, agreement, or determination described in paragraph (1), the Secretary may cease making new direct housing loans to Native Americans veterans under this subchapter within the area of the authority of the tribal organization, other entity, or individual (as the case may be).''.

(b) DIRECT LOANS TO NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS TO REFINANCE EXISTING MORTGAGE LOANS.—Section 3762(h) of such title is amended to read as follows:

''(h) The Secretary may make direct loans to Native American veterans in order to enable such veterans to refinance existing mortgage loans for any of the following purposes:

''(1) To refinance an existing loan made under this section, if the loan—

''(A) meets the requirements set forth in subparagraphs (B), (C), and (E) of paragraph (1) of section 3710(e) of this title;

''(B) will bear an interest rate at least one percentage point less than the interest rate borne by the loan being refinanced; and

''(C) complies with paragraphs (2) and (3) of section 3710(e) of this title, except that for the purposes of this subsection the reference to subsection (a)(8) of section 3710 of this title in such paragraphs (2) and (3) shall be deemed to be a reference to this subsection.

''(2) To refinance an existing mortgage loan not made under this section on a dwelling owned and occupied by the veteran as the veteran's home, if all of the following requirements are met:

''(A) The loan will be secured by the same dwelling as was the loan being refinanced.

''(B) The loan will provide the veteran with a net tangible benefit.

''(C) The nature and condition of the property is such as to be suitable for dwelling purposes.

''(D) The amount of the loan does not exceed either of the following:

''(i) 100 percent of the reasonable value of the dwelling, with such reasonable value determined under the procedures established by the Secretary under subsection (d)(2).

''(ii) An amount equal to the sum of the balance of the loan being refinanced and such closing costs (including any discount points) as may be authorized by the Secretary to be included in the loan.

''(E) Notwithstanding subparagraph (D), if a loan is made for both the purpose of this paragraph and to make energy efficiency improvements, the loan must not exceed either of the following:

''(i) 100 percent of the reasonable value of the dwelling as improved for energy efficiency, with such reasonable value determined under the procedures established by the Secretary under subsection (d)(2).

''(ii) The amount referred to under subparagraph (D)(ii), plus the applicable amount specified under section 3710(d)(2) of this title.

''(F) The loan meets all other requirements the Secretary may establish under this subchapter.

''(G) The existing mortgage being refinanced is a first lien on the property and secured of record.

''(3) To refinance an existing mortgage loan to repair, alter, or improve a dwelling owned by the veteran and occupied by the veteran as the veteran's home, if all of the following requirements are met:

''(A) The loan will be secured by the same dwelling as was the loan being refinanced.

''(B) The nature and condition of the property is such as to be suitable for dwelling purposes, and the repair, alteration, or improvement substantially protects or improves the basic livability or utility of such property.

''(C) The amount of the loan, including the costs of repairs, alterations, and improvements, does not exceed either of the following:

''(i) 100 percent of the reasonable value of the dwelling as repaired, altered, or improved, with such reasonable value determined under the procedures established by the Secretary under subsection (d)(2).

''(ii) An amount equal to the sum of—

''(I) the balance of the loan being refinanced;

''(II) the actual cost of repairs, alterations, or improvements; and

''(III) such closing costs (including any discount points) as may be authorized by the Secretary to be included in the loan.

''(D) The loan meets all other requirements the Secretary may establish under this subchapter.

''(E) The existing mortgage loan being refinanced is a first lien on the property and secured of record.''.

(c) EXPANSION OF OUTREACH PROGRAM ON AVAILABILITY OF DIRECT HOUSING LOANS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS.—Section 3762(i)(2) of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(G) Pursuant to subsection (g)(4), assisting Native American veterans in qualifying for mortgage financing by—

''(i) partnering with local service providers, such as tribal organizations, tribally designated housing entities, Native community development financial institutions, and nonprofit organizations, for conducting outreach, homebuyer education, housing counseling, and post-purchase education; and

''(ii) providing other technical assistance as needed.

''(H) Attending conferences and conventions conducted by the network of Native community development financial institutions and other Native American homeownership organizations to provide information and training to Native community development financial institutions about the availability of the relending program under section 3762A of this title.''.

(d) ADEQUATE PERSONNEL.—Section 3762 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(k) The Secretary shall assign a sufficient number of personnel of the Department dedicated to carrying out the authority of the Secretary under this subchapter, including construction and valuation specialists to assist with issues unique to new construction and renovations on trust land.''.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—Section 3765 of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by amending subparagraph (C) to read as follows:

''(C) is located in the State of Alaska within a region established under section 7(a) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1606(a));'';

(B) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

''(E) is defined by the Secretary of the Interior and recognized by the United States as land over which an Indian Tribe has governmental dominion; or

''(F) is on any land that the Secretary determines is provided to Native American veterans because of their status as Native Americans.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(6) The term 'community development financial institution' has the meaning given that term in section 103 of the Community Development Banking and Financial Institutions Act of 1994 (12 U.S.C. 4702).

''(7) The term 'Indian Tribe' means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

''(8) The term 'Native community development financial institution' means any entity—

''(A) that has been certified as a community development financial institution by the Secretary of the Treasury;

''(B) that is not less than 51 percent owned or controlled by Native Americans; and

''(C) for which not less than 51 percent of the activities of the entity serve Native Americans.

''(9) The term 'net tangible benefit' shall have such meaning as the Secretary determines appropriate, but shall include the refinance of an interim construction loan.

''(10) The term 'other technical assistance' means services to assist a Native American veteran to navigate the steps necessary for securing a mortgage loan on trust land, including pre-development activities related to utilities, identifying appropriate residential construction services, and obtaining lease clearances and title status reports from the applicable tribal organization or the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

''(11) The term 'tribally designated housing entity' has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4103).''.

(f) INTEREST RATE REDUCTION FINANCING LOAN.—Section 3729(b)(4)(F) of such title is amended by striking ''3762(h)'' and inserting ''3762(h)(1)''.

(g) REGULATIONS.—Section 3761 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) The Secretary shall prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to carry out this subchapter.''.

SEC. 402. NATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION RELENDING PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter V of chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 3762 the following new section:

''§ 3762A. Native community development financial institution relending program

''(a) PURPOSE.—The Secretary may make a loan to a Native community development financial institution for the purpose of allowing the institution to relend loan amounts to qualified Native American veterans, subject to the requirements of this section.

''(b) STANDARDS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish standards to be used in evaluating whether to make a loan to a Native community development financial institution under this section.

''(2) REQUIREMENTS.—In establishing standards under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall ensure that a Native community development financial institution—

''(A) is able to originate and service loans for single-family homes;

''(B) is able to operate the relending program in a manner consistent with the mission of the Department to serve veterans; and

''(C) uses loan amounts received under this section only for the purpose of relending, as described in subsection (c), to Native American veterans.

''(c) RELENDING REQUIREMENTS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—A Native community development financial institution that receives a loan under this section shall use the loan amounts to make loans to Native American veterans residing on trust land.

''(2) REQUIREMENTS.—A loan to a Native American veteran made by a Native community development financial institution under paragraph (1) shall—

''(A) be limited either to the purpose of purchase, construction, or improvement of a dwelling located on trust land or to the refinance of an existing mortgage loan for a dwelling on trust land, consistent with the requirements of section 3762(h) of this title; and

''(B) comply with such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines are necessary to protect against predatory lending, including the interest rate charged on a loan to a Native American veteran.

''(d) REPAYMENT.—A loan made to a Native community development financial institution under this section shall—

''(1) be payable to the Secretary upon such terms and conditions as are prescribed in regulations pursuant to this subchapter; and

''(2) bear interest at a rate of one percent.

''(e) OVERSIGHT.—Subject to notice and opportunity for a hearing, whenever the Secretary finds with respect to loans made under subsections (a) or (c) that any Native community development financial institution has failed to maintain adequate loan accounting records, to demonstrate proper ability to service loans adequately, or to exercise proper credit judgment, or that such Native community development financial institution has willfully or negligently engaged in practices otherwise detrimental to the interest of veterans or of the Government, the Secretary may take such actions as the Secretary determines necessary to protect veterans or the Government, such as requiring immediate repayment of any loans made under subsection (a) and the assignment to the Secretary of loans made under subsection (c).''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 37 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3762 the following new item:

''3762A. Native community development financial institution relending program.''.

(c) NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN HOUSING LOAN PROGRAM ACCOUNT.—Section 3763 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) Of amounts available in the Account, the Secretary may use for loans made under section 3762A of this title—

''(1) in fiscal year 2024, not more than $5,000,000; and

''(2) in any fiscal year after fiscal year 2024, an amount as determined necessary by the Secretary to meet the demand for such loans.''.

SEC. 403. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HOUSING LOAN FEES.

The loan fee table in section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, as most recently amended by section 204 of the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and Robert Joseph Dole Memorial Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2022 (division U of Public Law 117–328), is further amended by striking ''November 14, 2031'' each place it appears and inserting ''March 14, 2032''.

TITLE V—OTHER MATTERS

SEC. 501. AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO AWARD GRANTS TO STATES TO IMPROVE OUTREACH TO VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 63 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating sections 6307 and 6308 and sections 6308 and 6309, respectively; and

(2) by inserting after section 6306 the following new section 6307:

''§ 6307. Grants to States to improve outreach to veterans

''(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to provide for assistance by the Secretary to States to carry out programs that improve outreach and assistance to veterans and the spouses, children, and parents of veterans, to ensure that such individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans and veterans-related benefits and programs (including State veterans programs) for which they may be eligible.

''(b) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may award grants to States—

''(1) to carry out, coordinate, improve, or otherwise enhance—

''(A) outreach activities; or

''(B) activities to assist in the development and submittal of claims for veterans and veterans-related benefits; or

''(2) to increase the number of county or tribal veterans service officers serving in the State by hiring new, additional such officers.

''(c) APPLICATION.—(1) To be eligible for a grant under this section, a State shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

''(2) Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

''(A) A detailed plan for the use of the grant.

''(B) A description of the programs through which the State will meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary under subsection (i).

''(C) A description of how the State will distribute grant amounts equitably among counties with varying levels of urbanization.

''(D) A plan for how the grant will be used to meet the unique needs of American Indian veterans, Alaska Native veterans, or Native Hawaiian veterans, elderly veterans, and veterans from other underserved communities.

''(d) DISTRIBUTION.—The Secretary shall seek to ensure that grants awarded under this section are equitably distributed among States with varying levels of urbanization.

''(e) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall prioritize awarding grants under this section that will serve the following areas:

''(1) Areas with a critical shortage of county or tribal veterans service officers.

''(2) Areas with high rates of—

''(A) suicide among veterans; or

''(B) referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.

''(f) USE OF COUNTY OR TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS.—A State that receives a grant under this section to carry out an activity described in subsection (b)(1) shall carry out the activity through—

''(1) a county or tribal veterans service officer of the State; or

''(2) if the State does not have a county or tribal veterans service officer, or if the county or tribal veterans service officers of the State cover only a portion of that State, an appropriate entity of a State, local, or tribal government, or another publicly funded entity, as determined by the Secretary.

''(g) REQUIRED ACTIVITIES.—Any grant awarded under this section shall be used—

''(1) to expand existing programs, activities, and services;

''(2) to hire new, additional county or tribal veterans service officers; or

''(3) for travel and transportation to facilitate carrying out paragraph (1) or (2).

''(h) AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.—A grant under this section may be used to provide education and training, including on-the-job training, for State, county, local, and tribal government employees who provide (or when trained will provide) veterans outreach services in order for those employees to obtain accreditation in accordance with procedures approved by the Secretary.

''(i) OUTCOME MEASURES.—(1) The Secretary shall develop and provide to each State that receives a grant under this section written guidance on the following:

''(A) Outcome measures.

''(B) Policies of the Department.

''(2) In developing outcome measures under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider the following goals:

''(A) Increasing the use of veterans and veterans-related benefits, particularly among vulnerable populations.

''(B) Increasing the number of county and tribal veterans service officers recognized by

the Secretary for the representation of veterans under chapter 59 of this title.

''(j) TRACKING REQUIREMENTS.—(1) With respect to each grant awarded under this section, the Secretary shall track the use of veterans and veterans-related benefits among the population served by the grant, including the average period of time between the date on which a veteran applies for such a benefit and the date on which the veteran receives the benefit, disaggregated by type of benefit.

''(2) Not less frequently than annually, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the information tracked under paragraph (1).

''(k) PERFORMANCE REVIEW.—(1) The Secretary shall—

''(A) review the performance of each State that receives a grant under this section; and

''(B) make information regarding such performance publicly available.

''(l) REMEDIATION PLAN.—(1) In the case of a State that receives a grant under this section and does not meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary under subsection (i), the Secretary shall require the State to submit a remediation plan under which the State shall describe how and when it plans to meet such outcome measures.

''(2) The Secretary may not award a subsequent grant under this section to a State described in paragraph (1) unless the Secretary approves the remediation plan submitted by the State.

''(m) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term 'county or tribal veterans service officer' includes a local equivalent veterans service officer.

''(2) The term 'Veterans Crisis Line' means the toll-free hotline for veterans established under section 1720F(h) of this title.

''(n) FUNDING REQUEST.—In the budget justification materials submitted to Congress in support of the Department budget for any fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary shall include a separate statement of the amount requested to be appropriated for that fiscal year to carry out this section.

''(o) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary for each of fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025, $50,000,000 to carry out this section.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 of such title is amended by striking the items relating to sections 6307 and 6308 and inserting the following new items:

''6307. Grants to States to improve outreach to veterans.
''6308. Outreach for eligible dependents.
''6309. Biennial report to Congress.''.

SEC. 502. OVERSIGHT OF COST OF WAR TOXIC EXPOSURES FUND.

(a) PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later July 1, 2023, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a plan for obligating and expending amounts in the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund established by section 324(a) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) CONTENTS.—The plan submitted pursuant to subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A detailed explanation for how the Secretary interprets ''the delivery of veterans' health care associated with exposure to environmental hazards'' for purposes of section 324(c)(1) of title 38, United States Code.

(2) A list of the medical services most commonly sought from the Department in connection with exposure to environmental hazards in the active military, naval, air, or space service.

(3) A list of the medical conditions for which services described in paragraph (2) of this subsection are most commonly sought from the Department.

(4) A detailed explanation of how the Secretary interprets ''expenses incident to the delivery of veterans' health care and benefits associated with exposure to environmental hazards'' for purposes of paragraph (2) of such section.

(5) A list of the expenses described in paragraph (4) of this subsection.

(6) A detailed description of how the Secretary interprets ''medical and other research relating to exposure to environmental hazards'' for purposes of paragraph (3) of such section.

(7) A list of the research described by such paragraph.

(8) A detailed plan for tracking the following:

(A) The health care furnished to individuals who became eligible for or entitled to such heath care because of a provision of or amendment made by the Honoring our PACT Act of 2022 (Public Law 117–168; 136 Stat. 1759).

(B) Reliance by toxic-exposed veterans on health care provided to such veterans pursuant to the Honoring our PACT Act of 2022 (Public Law 117–168; 136 Stat. 1759).

(C) The costs incurred by the Department for the furnishing of health care to toxic exposed veterans for conditions that can be reasonably attributed to toxic exposure.

(c) MONTHLY REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two weeks after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not less frequently than once every month thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report detailing the obligations and expenditures by the Secretary with respect to the amounts in the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund, disaggregated by obligations and expenditures of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration, including with respect to information technology, general administration, operating expenses, and research.

(2) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the Committee on the Budget, and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the Committee on the Budget, and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(d) ANNUAL AUDITS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and not less frequently than once each year thereafter, the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall conduct an audit of the obligation and expenditure of amounts in the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund.

(e) COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives an interim report and a final report on the degree to which the Secretary follows and executes the plan submitted pursuant to subsection (a).

(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) An assessment of the methodology the Secretary uses to create an annual budget for the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund for inclusion in each budget of the President submitted to Congress for a fiscal year pursuant to section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code.

(B) Identification of such adverse consequences to programs of the Department as the Comptroller General may find is created by the implementation of such Fund.

(C) An assessment of the long-term viability of the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund, including budgetary implications on future authorizing and appropriations legislation.

(D) Recommendations for such legislative or administrative action as may resolve or mitigate the adverse consequences identified pursuant to subparagraph (B) or any long-term viability issues that may be identified pursuant to the assessment required by subparagraph (C).

(f) DEFINITIONS OF TOXIC EXPOSURE AND TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERAN.—In this section, the terms ''toxic exposure'' and ''toxic-exposed veteran'' have the meanings given such terms in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I have 13 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 9:45 a.m., to conduct a business meeting.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet in executive session during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 10 a.m.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 3:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 3 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AIRLAND

The Subcommittee on Airland of the Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND SPENDING OVERSIGHT

The Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 10:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

The Subcommittee on Government Operations and Border Management of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 2:30. p.m., to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EAST, SOUTH ASIA, CENTRAL ASIA, AND COUNTERTERRORISM

The Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Counterterrorism of the Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 2 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL

The Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 3 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2023

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 12 noon on Thursday, April 27; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 3, S.J. Res. 4; that the cloture motions filed during yesterday's session ripen at 12:30 p.m.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. For the information of the Senate, there will be two rollcall votes starting at approximately 12:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL TOMORROW

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:31 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, April 27, 2023, at 12 noon.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate April 26, 2023:

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

JOSHUA DAVID JACOBS, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.