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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Mighty God, teach us to trust You more fully, to wait quietly for the unfolding of Your providence, to pray fervently, and to worship more humbly. Reassure us with Your wisdom, power, and love that Your providence will prevail.

Lord, You are our shelter for every storm. Remind our lawmakers to remember how Your purposes have prevailed in our Nation's history so they need not fear for the future.

Lord, provide them with a firm faith that will enable them to meet the daunting challenges of these times. Lengthen their moments of prayer until their lives become a continual aspiration after You.

We pray in Your matchless Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAWLEY). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

RUSSIA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, which happened last month, was a very disgusting thing to

hear about. Such action in Russia or by Russia is not unprecedented. In 2015, the leading democracy advocate in Russia, Boris Nemtsov, was gunned down within the sight of the Kremlin. The square in front of the Russian Embassy in Washington is now named in his honor, echoing the effort that I led to name the street in front of the old Russian Embassy after the dissident Andrei Sakharov.

Nemtsov's protege in the Russian opposition, Vladimir Kara-Murza, was then poisoned—poisoned twice but miraculously survived and continues to work for Russian democracy. The good news is that Mr. Navalny is reportedly conscious.

Now, a silver lining may also be that Putin's latest attempted assassination is bringing our allies toward a consensus to treat Putin as a pariah.

There are reports of senior German politicians reconsidering their support for Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which divides our European allies. This pipeline is opposed by countries like Poland and the Baltics that truly understand that Putin will use it as a strategic influence tool, as well as by the Trump administration and bipartisan majorities in Congress.

I hope all of these happenings are a start of a new era of cooperation with our Russian allies to counter Russian influence.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ISRAEL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, when I address the situation in the Middle East, it is often to discuss instability, terror, or other threats to the United States and its partners, like Israel. Those threats still exist, but I am very glad to be speaking today about peace breaking out, and it is breaking out more quickly than we can even stage the official ceremonies to memorialize the diplomatic achievements.

A few weeks ago, with major help from the United States and the Trump administration, Israel and the United Arab Emirates reached the first Arab-Israeli peace deal in 26 years. The Abraham Accord is named for the shared religious roots that Christians, Jews, and Muslims all hold in common. It will make the UAE just the third Arab nation, and the very first in the gulf, to normalize relations with Israel. In the words of Prime Minister Netanyahu, "full and official peace, full diplomatic agreement, with embassies, investment, commerce, tourism, and direct flights between Tel Aviv and Dubai and Abu Dhabi."

We have come a long way—a long way indeed. What a moment.

Farsighted leaders in both countries made sacrifices to make this deal possible. Prime Minister Netanyahu and Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayid understand that both Arabs and Israelis will benefit from the peace and prosperity that tearing down barriers can bring. America will also benefit from these two regional friends working more closely together and reducing tensions across the challenging region.

Now, to be sure, work is not finished, and no single step like this should be confused for an overnight miracle. In this case, we in Congress have an obligation to review any U.S. arms sales package linked to the deal. As we help our Arab partners defend against growing threats, we must continue ensuring that Israel's qualitative military edge

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



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remains unchallenged. But the winds of change are blowing, and they are bringing good news for peace all across the region.

Of course, a few extreme voices, perhaps correctly sensing that their moment is slipping away, are not at all happy. A predictable cast of characters wasted no time condemning the agreement and branding the UAE as traitors to the Arab or Muslim world.

Unlike Iranian clerics or al-Qaida terrorists, everyone who is actually living in the 21st century is celebrating this major progress. This major step forward is being documented in a signing ceremony at the White House tomorrow. But in just the couple of weeks that have elapsed between the announcement of the Abraham Accord and the official ceremony tomorrow, another Arab state has joined the parade toward peace. On Friday, September 11, Israel and Bahrain announced their agreement to open formal diplomatic relations. After Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE, this makes the fourth historic step toward normalization by Israel's Arab neighbors.

Along with President Trump, Prime Minister Netanyahu and King Hamad of Bahrain called the agreement "a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East." Indeed, reports suggest that still more Arab states may not be far behind. This is a new course with the potential to fundamentally—fundamentally—change the Middle East.

Dennis Ross, former senior diplomatic adviser to President Obama and a longtime practitioner of the peace process, wrote just yesterday that these agreements are bona fide "breakthroughs" that are changing "the political landscape of the Middle East" and the Israel-Palestine stalemate for the better. That is Dennis Ross, from the Obama administration. That is how former Obama administration officials are praising the Trump administration's successes.

I am grateful for this administration's work to encourage peace. I am proud of this historic opportunity that American leadership and diplomacy has made possible.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on a totally different message, I had hoped, Republicans had hoped, and the American people had hoped that the Senate would be spending this week finishing up another bipartisan agreement on coronavirus relief. We want to get hundreds of billions more dollars into the pipeline for kids, for jobs, for healthcare.

Unfortunately, Senate Democrats chose to block it all. Our Democratic colleagues voted against hundreds of billions of dollars to help Americans fight the virus. This wasn't even a vote on final passage, just a procedural vote to break the Democratic leader's filibuster and move forward with some-

thing. Senate Democrats, nevertheless, filibustered the aid.

Then, just a few short days later, they went right back to signaling that a Democratic Senate majority paired with a President Joe Biden would abolish the filibuster and permanently vandalize this institution to more easily force radical change on the country. This threat to permanently disfigure the Senate has been the latest growing drumbeat in the modern Democratic Party's war against our governing institutions.

There was former Senator Reid starting the "nuclear" exchange back in 2013. There have been years of unprecedented tactics to try and deny President Trump the government the people elected. There has been the least fair, least thorough, and most rushed impeachment inquiry in modern history.

Now, the most shameless—the most shameless—hypocrisy: Senate Democrats happily use the filibuster to block coronavirus relief and Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill at the very same time they are conspiring to destroy that very tool so they can ram through their radical agenda if they ever win power. Grade A hypocrisy and nothing more.

We have had former President Obama call for "eliminating the filibuster, another Jim Crow relic," about 1 month after his own party used it to kill Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill. We have some of former Vice President Biden's allies in the Senate daydreaming about ending the filibuster even as they themselves use the filibuster to kill pandemic relief for working families.

Democrats want completely different sets of rules depending on whether they hold power—different sets of rules depending upon whether they hold power. They want to assert minority rights when they have the minority and steamroll them if they get a majority.

Here is NBC News:

Democratic insiders are assembling a coalition behind the scenes to wage an all-out war on the Senate filibuster. . . . Veteran party operatives, activist groups and supportive Senators are coordinating message and strategy.

This takes measuring the drapes to a new level. The Democratic leader and his colleagues aren't just measuring the drapes; they are calculating how much kerosene it would take to burn the drapes down.

They aren't just threatening to pass radical policies like Medicare for none or the Green New Deal—no, no, no. The far left wants to hot-wire democracy itself—things like packing the Supreme Court with new seats or packing the Senate by handing out new statehood to one individual city.

I said it a few months ago. Today's Democrats have lost patience with playing by the rules and want to wage war on the rule book itself. They are saying as much out loud.

Perhaps our colleagues think promising a shameless power grab is the

only way to energize their radical, far-left base, but the real effect—the real effect—is to make the stakes in these issues completely and totally clear to the American people.

The Framers designed the Senate to be the country's firewall against ill-considered and radical change. That is what the Senate was all about in the beginning. If our Democratic friends have concluded their worst ideas could never clear the high bar—if they think their ideas could never clear the high bar, it is their bad ideas that need to be scrapped, not the core checks and balances of our government.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Mark C. Scarsi, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

RACISM

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, the events of the last few months—what we have been seeing in the streets and the protests and all the issues that surround that—I think, have forced the country to grapple with our history on the issue of race and, in particular, what we teach young Americans about what that means and how it fits in the broader story of America.

Is America, in fact, a nation founded on racism, one that makes our very founding and its principles almost irredeemable? It is an important question. You can't ask Americans or any generation to sacrifice or defend a nation they believe is so deeply flawed, so it is one that I think we have to talk about.

This country was founded in the year 1776, and it was founded by this declaration that all men are created equal; that your rights come from God, from your Creator. Now, we take those words for granted today. They were extraordinarily radical ideas 244 years ago. Up until that time, every person on Earth was told that your rights are whatever the sovereign allowed you to have, whatever the King allowed you to have. You didn't have any rights that were natural to you. So the very principle itself was pretty radical.

The problem is that, from the very beginning, many people, including those who put their name on that document, and our laws at the time did not reflect that founding principle, and our story can largely be summarized as the 244-year journey to more fully live up to the promises made at our founding.

For our first 89 years as a nation, human beings were owned as slaves. And beyond just the horrors of slavery, they were the subject of torture, of rape, of seeing their children sold away—away from them—never to see them again.

When that horrible institution finally came to an end, it was followed by another hundred years of separate and unequal, where Black Americans were told where they could live, where they could work, where they could go to school, and more. They were told where they could eat, where they could sit or not, where they were allowed to stay overnight. They were even told what side of the road they would be allowed to walk on in many parts of this country. They were denied the right to vote, either directly or through intimidation and threats.

It was a time when, in many parts of this country, any Black man was one false accusation away from losing his life at the hands of a lynch mob.

This is a shameful truth, an undeniable part of our history, a stain on our legacy as a nation. But it is not the whole story. From the very beginning, it was clear that the promise of our founding and our failure to live up to it—these two things could not ultimately coexist. From the very beginning, within a year and even before the founding of our Nation, there were already Americans working to end slavery. Sometimes they paid for it with their lives.

Ultimately, it became the single most divisive issue in the country, to the point that it was resolved only through a bloody civil war. For the next hundred years, during the era of separate and unequal, it was also Americans who worked to end segregation and Jim Crow laws, Americans of every walk of life: little children who would brave angry mobs to desegregate a school, the protesters and those in the streets who faced down “Bull” Connor’s dogs and beatings, little girls who died when their church was bombed.

Ours is not simply the story of a people who, for 189 years, failed to live up to the promise of America. Ours is also the story of the Americans who ultimately succeeded in making us a nation that was closer to who we were supposed to be.

That is why, at least for me, when they play the “National Anthem” and the flag that I face and put my hand over my heart to honor—that flag—that is not the flag of slave owners; that is the flag of the abolitionists. That is the flag of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, who were American heroes. The flag that I pledge allegiance to is not the flag of a segrega-

tionist. It is the flag of the Freedom Riders, the people who made the march from Selma to Montgomery. That is the flag of Rosa Parks and Dr. King.

Our history does not simply belong to the villains. It belongs, even more so, to the heroes who, frankly, made us more American in each successive generation.

I have heard in some corners people suggest that our founding documents themselves are documents embedded in racism because I imagine many of the people who signed it, indeed, were or did not live up to the words they signed their names on. But that would be forgetting the fundamental fact that every single great movement in American history—every movement for equality in the history of this Nation—has not been a rejection of our founding documents, has not been a rejection of our founding principles, has not been a call to overthrow the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. Every one of these movements—great movements in the history of this country towards equality—has been an appeal to those principles, a demand that we live up to those principles.

Dr. King said the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence—an appeal to our founding documents, which he called a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.

As we talk now about what is taught to our children in our schools and in our lives, I think our children deserve to know the truth about their country—all the truth. We must teach our children about the times in which our Nation fell short. We must teach them about the people responsible for our falling short. We must point to the times even now when we fall short. That is the only way you learn the lessons of history and the only way to avoid repeating them. But we must also teach them that it was Americans who dedicated and even lost their lives to end these evils.

While we are at it, we should teach them, too, about the greatness of our country. Teach them about the young Americans who died far from home for the freedom and the liberty of others, who lost their lives at Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal and Normandy and the Ardennes and Chosin and Fallujah, on San Juan Hill and in Manila Bay. Teach them also about how, when disaster strikes anywhere on this planet, it is their country that responds first and with the most—Fukushima, Japan, and West Berlin; after an earthquake hit Haiti; after floods impacted Pakistan—how it is Americans and their charities and their government that have literally saved the lives of millions of people on the African continent from starvation, from the ravages of HIV-AIDS. Teach them how, on a summer night in 1969, the entire world stopped and watched with amazement as man first stepped foot on the Moon and there planted the flag of their country.

Our children deserve to know the truth about their country, that in the history of mankind, there has never been a great power that has used its means to help more people and more places than anywhere in human history—no other great power in human history has done what the people of this Nation have done, both individually through the monies we give to charities and through their government. This is also true about America.

Our children deserve to know that they are citizens not of a perfect country but of the single greatest Nation in the history of all of mankind. They deserve to know that they are the heirs to a 244-year journey to achieve in one land a nation where all people are viewed as equal under the law, whose rights come from their Creator. They deserve to know that their country is a special one—one worth defending, one worth protecting, and one worth passing on to the generations that will follow them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

WILDFIRES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, because of raging fires in my home State of Oregon, many communities in my home State have been reduced to ashes. A number of others are experiencing what is known as the ice box effect, where, in effect, smoke blocks out the Sun, and it gets quite cool. Virtually all of Oregon is now choking on smoke—that is whether you are inside or outside at this point. Countless thousands of Oregonians are under evacuation orders. Many are quite literally fleeing for their lives and abandoning their homes as the flames approach.

When I was home this weekend, I initially thought that a number of my communities had been hit by a wrecking ball. That really understates the situation because usually when you get hit by a wrecking ball, there is a little bit left that is not just ashes. Now thousands of people in my State have lost their homes. They have lost their businesses. They have lost lifelong memories.

I brought a flag to a family who lost in one of the fires the service flag of a loved one that they had cherished, and it just struck me that it is those kinds of memories, and losing them, that are as painful in many instances as losing houses and businesses.

The death toll has been rising. Others are still missing and unaccounted for.

Amid all the panic and loss, one of the aspects that left me, as I came back to Washington, with a bit of hope is that we lost so much, but we didn’t lose our spirit. We didn’t lose what we call the Oregon Way—neighbor helping neighbor, volunteers helping evacuees get food and water and shelter. Everybody steps up when a crisis arrives; nobody cares a whit about anybody’s politics.

I have come to the floor today with a specific purpose, and that is to ask the

Senate to match the same standard I saw of volunteers, neighbors, and Oregonians helping Oregonians this weekend, to show the same kind of can-do spirit.

The Presiding Officer of the Senate is new to this body. He has a State with a lot of rural terrain. I am going to be asking him and every Member of the Senate, all 100 of us, to say: Let's make today the day when the Senate chose to finally get serious about fire that has harmed so many these last few weeks. Let's make this the day when the Senate chose to take a dilapidated and out-of-date fire policy and replace it with a modern strategy for the real, on-the-ground conditions that have caused fires to magnify the pain that is being felt by millions today.

The reason I am making this request of the Senate—that the Senate replace the way forest policy has been made in the past—is that those past processes—and, as my colleague already knows since he has been here now, the Senate moves often with glacially slow Senate processes, and those processes are now being totally overwhelmed by the massive infernos that are blanketing our communities and blanketing the West with smoke that is literally up to our eyeballs. The Presiding Officer in the Senate is a tall fellow. I am 6 feet 4 inches. That is what I felt this weekend. I and everybody else had smoke up to our eyeballs.

The process the Senate has for dealing with these new kinds of forest calamities—and there is no other way to describe it—those old procedures lack the urgency, lack the speed, lack, frankly, the resolute discipline for the incredibly big job that needs to be done and done quickly.

So today I want to begin by offering three policies that I believe could be supported by every Senator, Democrats and Republicans. The first is that Congress should pass a 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps Act. I have actually seen press in Missouri calling for this kind of approach, where young people are involved, securing jobs where they pay a living wage, and they can go in and shore up these communities threatened by fire.

I want to emphasize that, having served on the Energy Committee now for several years, having authored the two major bills in the forestry area—the bill with Senator CRAPO—so we no longer waste so much money not budgeting for fire, brought about the end of fire borrowing so the big fires get taken care of in the disaster fund—don't shortchange prevention—and then secure rural schools, which I think is also a policy that benefits people all over the country in rural forested areas.

I will just offer the first. All over America, there are millions of acres of overstocked timber stands. They are hazardous fuels. It is urgent that we go in there, and we can use these hard-working young people to clean out those overstocked stands and reduce

the risk of fire. Fire is inevitable. I know of no bill—none—that can abolish fire. The question is, Can we take concrete steps to reduce the suffering and the damage of these big fires?

(Ms. ERNST assumed the Chair.)

I just gave one example of what the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps could do. In my home State, there are more than 2 million acres backlogged in terms of these hazardous fuels that need to be reduced. You could have the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps—thousands of young people—going into every State and taking action to reduce these risks. There are a lot of other things that could be done by the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps.

I learned this weekend that we are going to need to deploy new cell phone connectivity because a lot of people have lost those connections. In fact, one of the challenges in trying to determine how many people we have lost is that we believe when the fires first hit, a lot of people went to a friend's house and then the friend is not able to communicate because they lost cell phone connectivity.

This is about having young people work on communications, having them clean out hazardous fuels, and having them work on stabilizing soils to prevent massive flooding, because, make no mistake about it, all over the West—in Oregon, Washington, and California—we are going to need those soil stabilization projects to prevent massive flooding this spring. As sure as the night follows the day, it will be a problem.

Using the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps, we can deploy folks into the forest and into our wildland-urban areas, where there is a connection—an interface—because we have a lot of fires in those areas, and the Civilian Conservation Corps can reduce hazardous fuels, prevent catastrophic fires, and they can do it on a grand scale.

An ideal part of it and one of the reasons I think this will appeal to Democrats and Republicans is there doesn't have to be a fight over carrying out our nation's environmental laws. As I mentioned, in Oregon alone, there was already a backlog of more than 2 million acres that need to be treated. Without those treatments, a lightning strike or a carelessly dropped match can start yet another inferno. Just picture that. After everything that we had over the last few days, you have all of these hazardous fuels built up and you have a lightning strike or a carelessly dropped match and, all of a sudden, you have ripped through thousands of other acres in the blink of an eye.

Oregon's forests and the forests of the West badly need this care and investment. It would really be an updated version of one of the most popular programs the government has ever pursued, that came out of the New Deal, and it would be a huge economic boost to rural communities—I see the

Presiding Officer from the State of Iowa—rural communities that feel like government has left them behind.

That is my first proposal—the first of three—that I believe can help us come together as a Senate to reduce the devastating toll of these fires that are not your grandfather's fires. They are bigger and they are hotter and they are more powerful. We can do it together.

The second area that I want to see the Senate focus on is addressing that the fires mean a lot more than spending all your money on just putting big fires out. Forest science has shown that wildfires are a part of the natural life cycle of certain parts of the Nation. If all you do is focus on putting out fires all the time, you disrupt the cycle and that can lead to bigger fires down the road.

But America no longer gets just manageable natural fires. Instead, we get these huge infernos like the ones we have in Oregon, fires that are hot enough to melt a car and sterilize the soil. I ask the Presiding Officer to imagine how hot it has to be to melt a car.

There is a need for another tool to help reduce the devastating effect of these great fires. It is supported by scientists who have been looking at the various tools for dealing with these horrors—Democrats, Republicans—and it basically involves a prescribed fire that can be done safely in the off-seasons, say, in the winter months.

During those months, there is less risk of spread. You can limit the smoke. Civilian Conservation Corps workers working with the scientists at the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Oregon Department of Forestry, collaboratives, and our counties can carefully target these prescribed fires during the off-season and help prevent catastrophic fires in the summer and the fall by using the concept to clean out the dead and dying undergrowth.

Here is the essence of my second proposition. If you use prescribed fire to burn a little when it is safe in the off-season, you can save a whole lot later on by preventing catastrophe during those hotter months of summer and fall.

I have a bill that I have been developing with the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I would say to my colleagues that this approach, like the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps, will be ready for cosponsors later this week. I am going to be going to all of my colleagues to ask for support for this second commonsense approach to catastrophe avoidance.

The third proposal brings it all together. Congress must finally kick its aversion to making long-term budget investments in treatment and fire prevention. Managing our forests requires an investment that we essentially look to beyond the next 36 hours. Managing our forests for wildfire resilience needs

to be approached as a longer term proposition, one that can make our communities safer while generating jobs—timber for mills, improving recreation opportunities. And yet this has been an investment the Senate has been unwilling to spend.

Clearly, not enough has been done to deal with fire prevention. The fact that the Congress has constantly been shorting fire prevention is contributing to what is being seen in Oregon and throughout the West right now. Shorting fire prevention is the wrong way to go, and this item, No. 3, is literally a matter of life and death.

Somehow, this Senate can produce hundreds of billions of dollars for tax breaks for special interests. There are outrageous, indefensible subsidies for fossil fuels that compound the climate crisis.

Senator CRAPO and I—my colleague who sits just a few feet away, the Republican of Idaho—worked for years in a bipartisan way to end what is called “fire borrowing.” This is actually the first year when our bill has gone into effect. It got to the point where we needed over 300 citizens’ groups to pass this bill because so often the big fires were fought with prevention money—money borrowed from the prevention accounts, and then the fire just got worst.

Senator CRAPO and I said that is foolish, even by Washington, DC, standards. We were able to get a special fund created where the big fires would be fought from the disaster fund. But still, even with the beginning that Senator CRAPO and I have made on a bipartisan basis, the budget for fire preparedness and prevention is still so woefully short. More has to be done to limit the damage from staggeringly powerful forest fires, and one of the best ways to do it is to start building up that prevention fund that Senator CRAPO and I started here in the U.S. Senate.

We laid the foundation, but it is clearly not enough. I checked, actually, a couple of days ago. There are \$3 billion now in the fund for fire suppression. We are sure going to need that because we have scores of fires still burning in Oregon, but we are going to need to build up preventive funds. And still, prevention as of today, September of 2020, is woefully underfunded.

The Forest Service has the technical tools it needs to improve forest health and to reduce the risk of fire, but, as I mentioned, there is a 2 million-acre backlog just in Oregon. Multiply that all over the West or all over the country where there are forests that are under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government and it is pretty clear that America has to decide it is urgent business to build up the budget for fire prevention.

By allowing the fire prevention backlog I have described to build, Congress is just racking up more debt—dangerous debt—and the devastation and the smoke in Oregon and across the West today is the debt coming due.

For those of us in the West who fear it is going to be impossible to pay the enormous bill that we have been handed through a combination of lousy forestry science and a disinterest in real policies that reduce climate change, we know the job is going to be hard, but we can and must do it by coming together like I saw Oregonians do just this last weekend.

Before I wrap up, I want to mention that there sure have been some misguided priorities on all sides of the political spectrum. On one side, some of the timber industry skipped past active management to pursue the golden calf of eliminating environmental laws. On the other side, misguided nonmanagement priorities beat back every attempt to manage our forests based on science. Now add to that the ridiculous new lies and delusions you are seeing online about the causes of these fires, and you have a recipe for distraction as to how the Senate must move forward.

Just today, while visiting California, the President was asked about climate change and fires. He said: No problem. The President said, “It’ll start getting cooler,” and then he blamed “explosive trees.” Sending that kind of nonsense across the land is cold comfort to the families who are mourning the loved ones they have lost in the fires or the thousands of Oregonians who barely made it out before their homes and businesses went up in flames.

The Senate has an obligation to act because around this country—and it is not just in my State but across the West—big-hearted neighbors, animal lovers, county employees, city administrators, local U-Haul businesses, teachers, nurses, and retirees—all of them—are stepping up and pitching in. They are bringing food and clothes and towels, and they are helping with mental health services.

Before I wrap up, I particularly want to thank the incredible firefighters who are working on hardly any sleep, and I thank the first responders, the police and others who are doing so much. One issue they are helping with is cell phones and service. My staff and others in the delegation have been working with these folks.

I see my friend from Virginia, who knows a lot about what it takes to maintain communications networks, and that is what we are working on this afternoon.

One problem that has come up is networks and equipment burn. There is a major strain on the resources for the people on the frontlines who are fighting the inferno—for example, with the repeaters that can amplify a signal and keep our firefighters connected. I am hearing that this country doesn’t have enough repeaters in stock to begin to address such a crisis that the West is experiencing. It is another example of what happens when, year after year, you ignore the urgent need for serious fire prevention.

Before I left Oregon, I told some friends that I was going to come back

and try to bring the Senate together around fire prevention.

One said: Well, you are going to be Mr. Fire Prevention.

I said: No, that is not how it works. I would like to make this the Senate that is known for fire prevention and the Senate that said, between there and here, there are 100 U.S. Senators, and we have differences of opinion. Lord knows that this is the case. But I offered concrete proposals, 21st Century Conservation Corps-prescribed changes in the budget that Democrats and Republicans can come together on. The reason I say that is that we have already done it. That is how Senator CRAPO and I ended fire borrowing.

I close with this: What I saw this weekend was heartbreaking—thousands of families mourning unthinkable loss, trying to figure out how to move forward when their homes and their possessions had been reduced to ash. Yet, when you talk to them, they will tell you that they also know that the problem is not going to get better all by itself—I know there are Senators who want to debate this—and that is because the climate crisis is here, right now, today.

It is no longer a far-off hypothetical danger for Senators to debate in comfortably air-conditioned buildings. The American West—my State—is on fire. Whole neighborhoods and whole communities are being reduced to ashes. Our air quality has had the dubious recognition over the last couple of days of being some of the worst in the world. The climate crisis is happening now to us and to our kids. America and the Senate ignore it at our peril.

I brought today three concrete proposals that I think make a serious contribution to reducing the pain and suffering that have been seen across Oregon and across the West over the last couple of days. I want this to be the day the Senate gets serious about fire prevention as part of a comprehensive effort to fight the climate crisis.

The ideas I have outlined—the three major proposals—ought to become law soon, and they ought to have bipartisan support. They are policies that will protect our communities and the families who live in them and that will protect jobs, protect homes, and protect businesses. They sure are a lot cheaper because they will prevent fires rather than force a bigger pricetag when we need to rebuild communities out of the ashes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I have come to the floor to talk about a different subject, but I want to commend my good friend, the Senator from Oregon, for his comments. We all watched with horror this weekend the images from his State and from those in Washington and California that were literally like something out of Dante’s “Inferno.”

I have enormous respect for the Senator from Oregon, and he can count on

me to be behind him on these proposals. I know they will be reasonable, and I know they will be straightforward. Boy oh boy. If, when we see those images, we are not able to step up with a commonsense, bipartisan, and quick response, then shame on all of us. I commend the Senator for his leadership, and I look forward to working with him.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Madam President, as if that isn't enough—and with the challenges we face with having close to 200,000 of our fellow citizens dead from coronavirus and there still being no national plan on PPE or testing or, my fear, that we could see a repeat of the mistakes that were made on testing and PPE happen on vaccinations if we are not careful—what I actually came to talk about and to remind my colleagues about is something that the Senator from Oregon will also be very, very involved in. I express my grave concern that we are only 16 days away from a potential lapse in government funding.

It is encouraging that Secretary Mnuchin and Speaker PELOSI seem to have reached at least an agreement in principle on this must-pass stopgap funding, but I have been around here long enough to know that when negotiations between and within two Chambers on supposedly must-pass coronavirus relief legislation breaks down and stalls—and when that breakdown lasts for months—that we cannot let the funding of our government get mired in the same complacency and lack of urgency.

I hope and pray that the devastating impact of the 2018-2019 government shutdown is still in the front minds of all of my colleagues here in the Senate. I acknowledge it has been a long year, so here is a little recap for those who need it.

The government shutdown over the holiday of 2018 and into the beginning of the new year of 2019 was the longest shutdown of the Federal Government in history—not of this Congress's and not under this administration but in our country's history.

For 35 days, the Federal Government did not hold up its end of the bargain with taxpayers or the public servants who have dedicated their lives to delivering services to them. The economic impact and human toll were devastating. More than 380,000 Federal workers were furloughed, and another 450,000 were forced to work without pay. While Federal employees eventually received backpay, furloughed workers who happened to be contractors still have not been made whole. To put that in context, contractors, including those who had served the Federal Government as custodians, cafeteria workers, and security guards, had to figure out how to pay rent and buy medicine and put food on the table after two entire paychecks just evaporated.

The economic effects were not just personal either. The Congressional

Budget Office estimates that the 2018-2019 government shutdown cost taxpayers—cost all of us—about \$3 billion. It actually registered as a decrease in 2019's gross domestic product of about two-tenths of a percent. Those will be losses that we will never recover.

As bad as that all sounds, that was only a partial government shutdown. There were 9 out of 15 Departments and several Agencies that were closed.

What we are facing in a couple of weeks would affect the entire Federal Government. To state the obvious, that was when we were not in a global pandemic and an economic recession. Virginians and people across the country continue relying on services from the Federal Government to help keep their families and businesses afloat.

I am sure the administration will take steps to ensure people continue to receive their most essential things, like SNAP benefits to keep their families fed and PPP loans to keep their businesses afloat. Shutting down the entire Federal Government will inevitably lead to disruptions and bare-bone contingency matters.

The American people need and, frankly, deserve better. With food insecurity, housing instability, and job loss all on the rise, now is the time for the Federal Government to do more to help everyday people—not by turning the lights out. Shutting down the government just as we are expecting a surge in COVID-19 cases post-Labor Day and as the flu season is starting and as we are needing to work double time to secure the November election and as the Postal Service needs relief and, as Senator WYDEN just indicated, as the entire west coast is burning—boy oh boy. Calling it a self-inflicted injury doesn't even cut it. If we were to shut down, it would be more like kicking ourselves. Failing to reach an agreement on funding the government would be absolutely disastrous.

I can only hope that there will be bipartisan agreement on this point and that we will be able to put aside any of the unrelated policy differences to fulfill one of our most basic obligations as lawmakers—that of funding the government and keeping our commitments to both our constituents and the Federal workforce that works so tirelessly to serve them.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BROADBAND

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise to address broadband connectivity and broadband access in rural States like the Presiding Officer's State and my State of West Virginia.

Our Nation has experienced a very tough couple of months because of the

coronavirus pandemic. With the new normal consisting of teleworking, virtual learning, and telehealth appointments, there is no question that this has forced us to recognize and to reckon with the digital divide in this country. The ability to have affordable and reliable service is more valuable than ever.

However, in 2020, my State remains one of the least connected States in the country. Over the last few months, I have heard from many constituents—hundreds of my constituents—who are having difficulties properly and efficiently working from home, helping their kids with their homework because they lack robust internet access.

You know, I think about those children who either don't have connectivity or don't have an adult in the home who can really help them do their digital learning. We have to get our kids back in school, but in the meantime we have to have this connectivity.

Some examples of this are Randy from Parkersburg, whom I spoke to recently during a tele-townhall meeting that I held with constituents. Randy expressed his frustration with not being able to access the internet, making it difficult for his kids to complete their homework. He was driving to a hot spot.

Laura from Wheeling expressed her concern that her children will fall behind in school without access to their homework online.

And Mandy from Elkins, who is a professor, needs internet because of required online learning at Davis & Elkins.

These are just examples of the few of the concerns that I have heard from my constituents, but, unfortunately, there are many, many more just like those. I am sure you are hearing them as well in the great State of Iowa.

The reality is that broadband build-out in rural areas of West Virginia and across our country are extremely expensive and take more time to complete because, in our case, we have those beautiful West Virginia mountains. I have always said that if we can communicate with somebody on the Moon, we can surely find a way to deliver broadband to individuals, families, and businesses all across this Nation.

Fortunately, the FCC Chairman, Ajit Pai, understands this and has been working with the other Commissioners at the FCC to structure the future of rural broadband deployment. The FCC's upcoming Rural Digital Opportunity Fund—which I am going to call it RDOF, which is how we address it—is the largest Federal investment aimed at closing the digital divide.

RDOF will award \$20.4 billion over the next 10 years for broadband service in rural America, with a special emphasis at the beginning on those who are totally unserved and then moving to those who have some service, but it is inadequate.

The first phase of the funding will be up to \$16 billion deployed through a reverse auction, which is slated to begin next month.

On Friday, I talked with Chairman Pai for an update on the RDOF Program and what it will mean to West Virginia.

We also discussed where my State stands in the process. West Virginia is set to receive a significant amount of funding over the next 10 years to connect 121,000 eligible homes—so that is probably over 200,000 individuals—particularly those in the underserved areas, as I mentioned.

During my call with the Chairman, I received assurances that the FCC has been diligently working to get as many providers into the RDOF Program as possible.

The FCC has already provided feedback to providers on their short-form applications so that they may be prepared to bid in the upcoming auction next month.

Another partner in my quest to close this digital divide is West Virginia Governor Jim Justice. Recently, the Governor signed an executive order to help expand broadband capabilities in West Virginia—very innovatively, I might add. His executive order would remove the regulatory cap on the amount of money that West Virginia's EDA can provide as loan insurance for broadband projects. In other words, the State is going to stand behind these providers to make sure we get our share of the RDOF money.

This is an innovative and bipartisan Federal-State partnership that hopefully will allow more local providers to successfully bid on the majority of the RDOF census blocks in our State.

These areas are oftentimes the most challenging to serve, and we need to ensure that our local providers—that are ready and able to connect their communities with high-speed broadband—have the ability to compete in the upcoming auction.

Our Governor's bipartisan effort is supported by leaders in both the majority and minority party of both chambers of the West Virginia Legislature, including the Senate president, Mitch Carmichael; our house speaker, Roger Hanshaw; the Senate minority leader, Roman Prezioso—whom I would like to thank for his service, as he is leaving the senate—and also the house minority leader, Tim Miley, who is also leaving, and I would like to thank him for his service.

So what is next and how do we continue to improve on this progress? One major undertaking is improving the FCC's broadband maps with more granular data. Far too often these maps show rural areas that are covered, but, in reality, if you are living in and around the area, you know they are not covered. There is no service. It is not the case.

This data collection and correction is tedious but critical, as these maps often determine funding levels and what areas are prioritized, naturally.

As cochair of the Senate Broadband Caucus, I cosponsored the Broadband DATA Act, which this body passed last year and President Trump signed into law in March.

This new law will lead to the creation of a singular Federal broadband map, with new more granular data collected by the FCC from State and local governments, consumers, and other third parties, and will be updated biannually.

It would create an online mechanism where individuals can challenge the coverage maps. Let's say you live in an area and you say: Well, they are saying I am covered, and you know darn well you are living in a place that is uncovered. You can submit that data online, and it will be submitted to the providers.

It also requires regular auditing of data submitted by providers, allowing for crowdsourcing verification. This is important, too, because if you are grading yourself, you are going to give yourself a better grade, but if you are grading yourself and then you have a third-party verifier who is actually making sure that the data you are putting forward is correct, you might be just a little more circumspect about how accurate that data is.

Another step forward would be dovetailing road infrastructure with fiber broadband buildout. We all recognize broadband is infrastructure, and a "dig once" approach would sure save time and money. Digging through those mountains is pretty tough so we only want to dig once if we have to.

This is why I am happy to see that the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration in mid-August made an announcement of a new rule to improve coordination in the use of highway rights-of-way to support the installation of broadband technologies.

In other words, they are making it regulatorily easier at the Federal level to move forward.

This proposed rule would help ensure that the digging required to install utilities would also be utilized for broadband infrastructure. That makes sense, doesn't it? This would help cut down on the expense associated with the deployment into rural areas.

The good news is, this issue is one of the few issues that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are eager to work on together. We will continue to have obstacles ahead as we seek to close this digital divide, but I believe it is important to note the progress that we have made up to this point.

Five years ago, I created my Capito Connect Plan, which is a roadmap for bringing affordable, high-speed internet access to homes, businesses, and classrooms in my State of West Virginia.

Each year, we have made significant strides, and I am proud of these accomplishments that have been made. Are we all the way there? No. That is why I am talking about it today—how im-

portant it is, especially in this COVID environment.

So, for example, there is the Facebook Fiber Project. I personally asked founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg, during a Commerce Committee hearing, for his commitment to partner with West Virginia on rural fiber deployment. They announced they are investing 275 miles of long-haul fiber right through the southern portion of the State. I just drove by it on my way here. I can see the big coils, and they are moving forward with that.

Other investments are the State's first fiber infrastructure investment from Zayo. They will be constructing a similar build through the northern part of the State.

I have also worked to leverage Federal agencies like the USDA and their ReConnect Program to invest in West Virginia with Federal grants and loans.

Since the launch of my initiative, I have successfully delivered \$37 million in funding for residential broadband projects through the USDA Programs and will continue in those efforts.

Last month, I was in rural Preston County, where I witnessed firsthand as broadband service was being installed to the home of Beverly and Jeff Stemple. This fiber installation project was funded by the USDA's Community Connect project and made possible by those initiatives.

I also visited Lincoln Primary Care in Hamlin, WV, which received a telemedicine grant from the FCC to help provide better care in Southern West Virginia, and they have a great plan that they are going to put in their community health centers and about 5 or 6 counties in 17 locations.

We have had a great deal of success with also identifying new areas for cell towers—one in Lincoln County. We visited with the providers there.

As you can see, all levels of government, along with the private sector, along with our municipalities and our local leaders, have stepped up to the plate to work toward this common goal.

Capito Connect is making a difference of connecting thousands of West Virginians. I have worked with colleagues on both side of the aisle through my committee work and also worked with the administration, which has truly prioritized this issue.

Perhaps one upside to the pandemic—or I would say better maybe lessons learned—is that it has helped us better appreciate the time that we can physically spend with one another. But lessons learned are we cannot disadvantage certain parts of this country because you don't have what I consider to be one of the essentials in order to do business, to have healthcare, and to learn, and that is the deployment of high-speed broadband.

Getting back to the human connection—wow. It is so important, and I know we miss it. A lot of us miss it. But it makes our work on broadband all that much more important.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Tennessee.

FREE SPEECH

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, it seems like every other week we turn on the TV only to hear a pundit declare that we are living in the most divisive time in the history of our Nation. Now, as I am sure many would point out, especially if we were having this discussion on social media, those who lived through the Civil War and other contentious eras might have something to say about that, but we can all agree it is a contentious time.

What I know for sure is this: Every single day I see the American people losing the hope they once had in the absolute inviolability of our fundamental right to free speech and expression. They may not be too worried about official action changing those rights, but what they do see is a dwindling respect for what those rights mean outside of the context of what lawyers and lawmakers understand as protected speech. They are not thinking about Supreme Court cases. They are wondering what changed in the hearts and minds of their countrymen to turn simple disagreements into all-out war. They long for the days when they would have friendly banter with their neighbors and with their friends and discuss the issues of the day.

Well, over the past few months, I have watched this national discourse spiral to the point where most people I talked to back home believe that civil debate is just about impossible, and it worries them. What happened to mutual respect? What happened to point-counterpoint? What happened to civil discourse in the public square? What happened to sitting around the table after a Sunday School class and talking about how what you have discussed applies to the issues of the day? Have we lost it?

I have witnessed obvious efforts to threaten and intimidate conservative activists. I have watched these go unchecked by powerful legal figureheads who should have known better. And what is worse, these threats and intimidation tactics have spilled over into the online platforms millions of Americans use to check the news, stay connected to friends, and share updates on the lives of their families.

Now, I think we can agree that most of our friends in Silicon Valley who are in charge of those platforms harbor some liberal bias. That being said, I think we can also agree that doesn't mean they can't be objective when it comes to things like content moderation. Of course, that is not how it

works out in real life. The modern era's hostility toward debate provides those platforms with a perverse incentive just to flip the switch, shut down conservative voices, and then suggest that we had it coming all along: You shouldn't have been saying such. Well, we all know that this seems to be a one-sided argument.

Now, those in this Chamber who follow technology policy know that Big Tech uses the liability shield granted under section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to justify this type of censorship. In part, the statute reads:

No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be held liable on account of—any action voluntarily taken in good faith to restrict access to or availability of material that the provider or user considers to be obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected.

Remember that “otherwise objectionable” catchall. That is going to be important. Congress originally constructed those provisions to protect startups and innovators from frivolous content moderation lawsuits that could either bankrupt their firms or severely restrict their access to venture capital. But, in reality, Big Tech has abused this privilege.

Now, listen to this part because this also is as important as that “otherwise objectionable” phrase. Congress originally constructed these provisions of section 230 to protect startups and innovators from frivolous content moderation lawsuits that could either bankrupt their firms or severely restrict their access to venture capital. This was done because the internet was in its infancy, and people wanted to make certain they could get their sea legs underneath them, have a little space, and be able to innovate. If they made mistakes, they would be able to rectify those mistakes and not get sued.

Those days are long gone, and, yes, Big Tech has abused this privilege. They became very comfortable with looking at section 230 and using it as a way to issue take-down notices, as a way to restrict content, and as a way to manipulate prioritization. It came in line with their thought processes and their ideas, but, in reality, we know that this has become an excuse to censor content that they disagree with in principle, and, in doing so, they have damaged—perhaps in some ways irreparably—the integrity of the national discourse.

The problem isn't just that they have unilaterally imposed their own preferred content filter into the browser and news feeds of millions of Americans and manipulated the availability and quality of the information; it is that in the process of doing so, they have trained their customers to expect that filter to cover their real-world interactions with people whose beliefs are much more diverse than those of the Silicon Valley's wealthiest residents.

You know, this is one of those Hollywood versus the heartland sorts of issues. They think they know better than the people across this country, so they feel that they can impose their own filter onto your browser and your news feed and thereby manipulate the availability and the quality of information to which you are going to have access, and they are doing it because they can, they think, because they have been using 230 as their shield.

Last week, I joined my colleagues Senators WICKER and GRAHAM to introduce the Online Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity Act, and I thank them for their willingness to work with me and to move a product to completion and introduction. To introduce this legislation means we are introducing accountability into our dealings with this notoriously opaque and unregulated industry.

To be clear, this piece of legislation isn't meant to construct a new set of guide rails that will let Washington dictate the inner workings of a platform's content moderation strategy. What it does is change the language of the existing statute to clarify some ambiguous terminology. Basically, you are clarifying who can use liability protection, when they can use it, how they can use it, and where it can be applied.

First and foremost, the bill clarifies those scenarios when an online platform's decision to restrict access—restrict it, censoring, diminishing, pushing it back—to certain types of content will result in their losing that section 230 shield. Did they do it because they wanted to or did they do it because it is language that should be shielded and taken down?

This provision will address those famously vague content moderation policies that are almost impossible for users to challenge. How many times have you looked at terms of service and how many times have you looked at community standards and said: I can't figure out what this means. Guess what. Most people cannot. And the online platform—it is fine with them if you can't figure it out. It gives them more latitude.

Next, it conditions the content moderation liability shield on a reasonableness standard. In order to be protected from liability, a tech company may only restrict access to content where it has an “objectively reasonable belief” that the content falls within a certain specified category.

So the purpose of this is to take away the benefit of the doubt. We want them to really think before restricting content. What they have done is just take it down—no fear that their hands would be slapped. And what do we know about Big Tech? They are going to push the envelope until they get their hands slapped.

So, instead of giving them the benefit of the doubt, the next time they decide they are going to go in here and they are going to take something down, we

want to give them pause. They need to think before they do that.

Our update removes the “otherwise objectionable” standard that I mentioned previously, and it replaces it with some specific terms that would protect platforms when they remove content that promotes terrorism, promotes self-harm, or is unlawful.

You know, it is a good thing when Congress can be specific in what they mean and when they can be specific in the intent of the law. Changing this language would provide that specificity that is needed.

Last but not least, the bill clarifies the definition of “information content provider” to include a person or entity that creates, develops, or editorializes information provided through the internet or any other online platform.

Now, this will help online publishers, periodicals, and websites that are news websites. But then you have Big Tech block them because somebody puts up something in the comment section that Big Tech doesn't like. Of course, we all are familiar with Mark Zuckerberg saying that his company, Facebook, works more like a government than a corporation. So, this pulls back on what they have used as their control.

There has been a lot of discussion in this Chamber regarding the best way to handle section 230. Many argue that we would all be better off if Congress wiped the statute off the books and just got rid of it completely. But I will tell you, I fully believe that is a misguided approach. That strategy will not temper the effects of Big Tech's bias because their bias stretches far beyond interactions that raise section 230 concerns.

This isn't a simple issue. Those of us who have been working on section 230 for years are still studying the ripple effects these changes will bring. What we know for sure is that simply closing the book on section 230 via congressional decree would be like casting a protest vote against Big Tech's bad behavior. It would be absolutely pointless.

Until we recognize the importance of clarifying and preserving liability protections for the internet we have now and not—not—the internet we had in 1996, Big Tech will keep pushing the boundaries until private corporations will become judge and jury over not only how Americans discover new information but what information is actually there to discover.

It is time for the U.S. Senate to step up, to do the work, and to write those changes into law.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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 nomination of Mark C. Scarsi, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

Mitch McConnell, Martha McSally, Tom Cotton, Rob Portman, Kevin Cramer, John Barrasso, Roy Blunt, John Boozman, Marco Rubio, Richard Burr, Mike Crapo, Roger F. Wicker, John Cornyn, Lamar Alexander, John Thune, Steve Daines, James Lankford.

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 nomination of Mark C. Scarsi, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California, 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote or change their vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 77, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 169 Ex.]

YEAS—77

Alexander	Ernst	Menendez
Baldwin	Feinstein	Murkowski
Barrasso	Fischer	Murphy
Bennet	Gardner	Paul
Blackburn	Graham	Perdue
Blunt	Grassley	Peters
Boozman	Hassan	Portman
Braun	Hawley	Reed
Brown	Heinrich	Risch
Burr	Hoeven	Roberts
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Cardin	Inhofe	Rosen
Carper	Johnson	Rounds
Casey	Jones	Rubio
Collins	Kaine	Sasse
Cornyn	King	Schatz
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Leahy	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Lee	Shaheen
Cruz	Loeffler	Shelby
Duckworth	Manchin	Sinema
Durbin	McConnell	Smith
Enzi	McSally	Stabenow

Sullivan	Udall	Wicker
Tester	Warner	Young
Thune	Whitehouse	

NAYS—12

Blumenthal	Hirono	Schumer
Booker	Klobuchar	Van Hollen
Cantwell	Markley	Warren
Gillibrand	Merkley	Wyden

NOT VOTING—11

Cassidy	Harris	Sanders
Coons	Kennedy	Tillis
Cramer	Moran	Toomey
Daines	Murray	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 77, the nays are 12.

The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the confirmation vote with respect to the Scarsi nomination occur at 10:30 a.m. tomorrow; further, if cloture is invoked on the Blumenfeld nomination, the postcloture time with respect to the Blumenfeld nomination expire at 2:15 p.m. tomorrow, the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination, and following disposition of the Blumenfeld nomination, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the Holcomb and Robinson nominations in the order listed; further, if cloture is invoked on the Holcomb nomination, the postcloture time with respect to the nomination expire at 5:15 p.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on the confirmation of the nomination. I further ask that if cloture is invoked on the Robinson nomination, the postcloture time expire at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader on Wednesday, September 16; finally, that if any of the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Ms. Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message

from the President of the United States submitting a nomination which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 2103(b), and the order of the House of January 3, 2019, the Speaker appoints the following individual to the Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress on the part of the House of Representatives for a term of 6 years: Ms. Anne Arrington of Lubbock, Texas.

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 Ms. WARREN (for herself, Mr. PORTMAN, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. TESTER, and Mr. REED):

S. 4566. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide clarification of delivery of notice of termination of leases of premises and motor vehicles, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. CRUZ, and Mr. TESTER):

S. 4567. A bill to designate the Rocksprings Station of the U.S. Border Patrol located on West Main Street in Rocksprings, Texas, as the "Donna M. Doss Border Patrol Station"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. WICKER (for himself and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 4568. A bill to facilitate the development and distribution of forensic science standards by establishing in the National Institute of Standards and Technology the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. RISCH (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. ROMNEY, Mr. COONS, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. PORTMAN, and Mr. KAINE):

S. Res. 689. A resolution condemning the crackdown on peaceful protestors in Belarus and calling for the imposition of sanctions on responsible officials; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. ENZI, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. YOUNG, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. CARPER, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HIRONO, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. BARRASSO, Ms.

CANTWELL, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. KAINE, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Ms. SMITH, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PETERS, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. CRAMER, and Mr. DAINES):

S. Res. 690. A resolution designating September 2020 as "National Workforce Development Month"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HASSAN, and Mr. KING):

S. Res. 691. A resolution expressing support for evidence-based programs that facilitate social and emotional learning during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 815

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 815, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a refundable tax credit against income tax for the purchase of qualified access technology for the blind.

S. 892

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) were added as cosponsors of S. 892, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the women in the United States who joined the workforce during World War II, providing the aircraft, vehicles, weaponry, ammunition, and other materials to win the war, that were referred to as "Rosie the Riveter", in recognition of their contributions to the United States and the inspiration they have provided to ensuing generations.

S. 997

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 997, a bill to recognize and honor the service of individuals who served in the United States Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II, and for other purposes.

S. 1083

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1083, a bill to address the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery in the United States and the 13 American colonies between 1619 and 1865 and to establish a commission to study and consider a national apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery, its subsequent de jure and de facto racial and economic discrimination against African-Americans, and the impact of these forces on living African-Americans, to make recommendations to the Congress on appropriate remedies, and for other purposes.

S. 2548

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from New York

(Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2548, a bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to address and take action to prevent bullying and harassment of students.

S. 2886

At the request of Ms. MCSALLY, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2886, a bill to prohibit the use of animal testing for cosmetics and the sale of cosmetics tested on animals.

S. 3176

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3176, a bill to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014 to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriations of funds to Israel, and for other purposes.

S. 3427

At the request of Ms. MCSALLY, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3427, a bill to require the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works to digitize and make publicly available geographic information system mapping data relating to public access to Federal land and waters for outdoor recreation, and for other purposes.

S. 3471

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3471, a bill to ensure that goods made with forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China do not enter the United States market, and for other purposes.

S. 3718

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3718, a bill to expand the waiver of affiliation rules for certain business concerns with more than 1 physical location, and for other purposes.

S. 3722

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3722, a bill to authorize funding for a bilateral cooperative program with Israel for the development of health technologies with a focus on combating COVID-19.

S. 3829

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3829, a bill to advance the global health security and diplomacy objectives of the United States, improve coordination among the relevant Federal departments and agencies implementing

United States foreign assistance for global health security, and more effectively enable partner countries to strengthen and sustain resilient health systems and supply chains with the resources, capacity, and personnel required to prevent, detect, mitigate, and respond to infectious disease threats before they become pandemics, and for other purposes.

S. 4150

At the request of Mr. REED, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) were added as cosponsors of S. 4150, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to provide assistance to certain providers of transportation services affected by the novel coronavirus.

S. 4245

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4245, a bill to develop and deploy firewall circumvention tools for the people of Hong Kong after the People's Republic of China violated its agreement under the Joint Declaration, and for other purposes.

S. 4255

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4255, a bill to amend the CARES Act to establish community investment programs, and for other purposes.

S. 4275

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4275, a bill to require recipients of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance to provide employment documentation, and for other purposes.

S. 4334

At the request of Ms. MCSALLY, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4334, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the process by which a member of the Armed Forces may be referred for a mental health evaluation.

S. 4375

At the request of Mr. ALEXANDER, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 4375, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to make permanent certain telehealth flexibilities under the Medicare program related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

S. 4380

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4380, a bill to provide redress to the employees of Air America.

S. 4402

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from

Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 4402, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to clarify certain activities that would have been authorized under Nationwide Permit 12 and other Nationwide Permits, and for other purposes.

S. 4431

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) were added as cosponsors of S. 4431, a bill to increase wildfire preparedness and response throughout the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 4453

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN), the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) and the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) were added as cosponsors of S. 4453, a bill to protect the continuity of the food supply chain of the United States in response to COVID-19, and for other purposes.

S. 4561

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4561, a bill to clarify and increase the restrictions on political activities that are applicable to the members of the Board of Governors of the United States Postal Service, including the Postmaster General and the Deputy Postmaster General, and for other purposes.

S. 4562

At the request of Ms. SMITH, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4562, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act with respect to the collection and availability of health data with respect to Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 578

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 578, a resolution condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

S. RES. 672

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the names of the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH), the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 672, a resolution designating September 2020 as National Democracy Month as a time to reflect on the contributions of the system of government of the United States to a more free and stable world.

S. RES. 679

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the name of the Senator from Mississippi

(Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 679, a resolution expressing appreciation and support for essential employees with disabilities or who are blind during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 689—CONDEMNING THE CRACKDOWN ON PEACEFUL PROTESTORS IN BELARUS AND CALLING FOR THE IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS ON RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS

Mr. RISCH (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. ROMNEY, Mr. COONS, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. PORTMAN, and Mr. KAINE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 689

Whereas Alyaksandr Lukashenka has ruled Belarus as an undemocratic dictatorship since the first presidential election in Belarus in 1994;

Whereas subsequent presidential elections in Belarus have been neither free nor fair and have been rejected by the international community as not meeting minimal electoral standards, with the jailing of opposition activists frequently used as a tool of government repression before and after the elections;

Whereas, in response to the repression and violence during the 2006 presidential election, Congress passed the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-480);

Whereas, in March 2011, the Senate unanimously passed Senate Resolution 105, which—

(1) condemned the December 2010 election in Belarus as “illegitimate, fraudulent, and not representative of the will or the aspirations of the voters in Belarus”; and

(2) called on the Lukashenka regime “to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners in Belarus who were arrested in association with the December 19, 2010, election”;

Whereas, in advance of the August 2020 presidential elections in Belarus, authorities acting on behalf of President Lukashenka arrested journalists, bloggers, political activists, and opposition leaders, including three leading presidential candidates (Siarhey Tsikhanouski, Mikalay Statkevich, and Viktar Babaryka), who were barred from running in the election by the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus;

Whereas, while the three opposition candidates were imprisoned, two of their wives and one of their campaign managers, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Veranika Tsepkala, and Maria Kalesnikava, joined together and ran in place of the candidates;

Whereas thousands of Belarusian people demonstrated their support for these candidates by attending rallies, including one rally that included an estimated 63,000 participants;

Whereas, on August, 5, 2020, the Senate unanimously passed Senate Resolution 658, which calls for a free, fair, and transparent presidential election in Belarus, including the unimpeded participation of all presidential candidates;

Whereas presidential elections were held in Belarus on August 9, 2020, under undemocratic conditions with reports of malfeasance on the part of Lukashenka's government, including early voting ballot stuffing, ballot burning, pressuring poll workers, and removing bags full of ballots by climbing out of windows;

Whereas incumbent president Alyaksandr Lukashenka declared a landslide victory in the election and claimed to have received more than 80 percent of the votes cast in the election;

Whereas the leading opposition candidate, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya—

(1) formally disputed the government's reported election results;

(2) explained that her staff had examined the election results from more than 50 polling places; and

(3) found that her share of the vote exceeded Lukashenka's share by many times;

Whereas, on August 10, 2020, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was detained while attending a meeting with the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus and forced to flee to Lithuania under pressure from government authorities;

Whereas, on August 11, 2020, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius announced that Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was safe in Lithuania and has continued to be 1 of the strongest voices supporting the pro-democracy movement in Belarus within the European Union and globally;

Whereas, on August 11, 2020, the European Union High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, issued a declaration on the presidential election in Belarus stating that the elections were neither free nor fair;

Whereas, on August 18, 2020, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya announced the formation of a Coordination Council to oversee a resolution to the crisis in Belarus and a peaceful transition of power;

Whereas, on August 19, 2020, European Council President Charles Michel announced that the European Union would impose sanctions on a substantial number of individuals responsible for violence, repression, and election fraud in Belarus;

Whereas, on August 28, 2020, United States Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun declared that the August 9th election in Belarus was fraudulent;

Whereas, since the sham election on August 9, 2020, tens of thousands of Belarusian citizens have participated in daily peaceful protests calling for a new, free, and fair election, and the release of political prisoners;

Whereas according to Amnesty International, on August 30, 2020, Belarusians held one of the largest protest rallies in the country's modern history in Minsk and in other cities, which was attended by at least 100,000 people who demanded the resignation of President Lukashenka and an investigation into the human rights violations in Belarus;

Whereas women have played a leading role in the protests, including by forming peaceful solidarity chains of thousands of Belarusians symbolically dressed in white;

Whereas more than 7,000 Belarusian citizens have been detained by government authorities, mostly for taking part in or observing peaceful protests, with many of these arrests followed by beatings and torture at the hands of Belarusian law enforcement;

Whereas authorities in Belarus have consistently restricted press freedom as part of the crackdown, including—

(1) the arrest of dozens of journalists, six of whom report for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty;

(2) blocking more than 50 news websites that were covering the protests;

(3) halting the publishing of two independent newspapers; and

(4) stripping the accreditation of journalists working for foreign news outlets;

Whereas internet access in Belarus has been repeatedly disrupted and restricted since August 9, 2020, which independent experts and monitoring groups have attributed to government interference;

Whereas after employees of state media outlets walked off the job in protest rather than help report misleading government propaganda, Lukashenka confirmed that he "asked the Russians" to send teams of Russian journalists to replace local employees;

Whereas Lukashenka appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin to provide security assistance to his government, if requested, and Putin confirmed that a reserve police force was ready to be deployed if "the situation gets out of control";

Whereas the Belarus Ministry of Defense threatened to send the army to confront protestors, warning that in case of any violation of peace and order in areas around national monuments, "you will have the army to deal with now, not the police";

Whereas, according to the Viasna Human Rights Centre, at least 450 detainees have reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated while held in incommunicado detention for up to 10 days, including through—

(1) severe beatings;

(2) forced performance of humiliating acts; and

(3) sexual violence and other forms of violence;

Whereas at least four Belarusians have been killed at protests, and dozens of Belarusians who were detained during the protests are still missing;

Whereas, on or around September 6, 2020, the opposition leader, Maria Kalesnikava, and members of the Coordination Council, including Anton Ronenkov, Ivan Kravtsov, and Maxim Bogretsov, were detained by authorities who sought to forcibly expel them to Ukraine;

Whereas opposition leader Maria Kolesnikova tore up her passport at the Ukrainian border in a successful effort to prevent this expulsion, subsequently disappeared, and was discovered in a Minsk prison on September 9, 2020;

Whereas the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, done at New York December 19, 1966, was ratified by Belarus in 1973, guaranteeing Belarusians the freedom of expression and the freedom of association; and

Whereas, in 2006, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13405, titled "Blocking Property of Certain Persons Undermining Democratic Processes or Institutions in Belarus", which authorized the imposition of sanctions against persons responsible for—

(1) undermining democratic processes in Belarus; or

(2) participating in human rights abuses related to political repression in Belarus;

Now, therefore, be it
Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) finds that—

(A) the elections held in Belarus on August 9, 2020, were neither free nor fair; and

(B) the results announced by the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus are invalid;

(2) stands in solidarity with the people of Belarus, including human rights defenders, bloggers, and journalists, who are exercising their right to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and rule of law;

(3) recognizes the leading role of women in the peaceful protests and pro-democracy movement in Belarus;

(4) condemns the unrelenting crackdown on, arbitrary arrests of, and violence against

peaceful protesters, opposition leaders, human rights activists, and independent media by authorities in Belarus;

(5) condemns the unjustified detention and forced or attempted expulsion of members of the Coordination Council in Belarus;

(6) demands the release of all political prisoners and those arrested for peacefully protesting, including those arrested before the August 9, 2020 election;

(7) applauds the commitment by foreign diplomats in Minsk to engage with Coordination Council member and Nobel Laureate, Svetlana Alexievich, and encourages an ongoing dialogue with her and with other leaders of the democratically-oriented political opposition in Belarus;

(8) calls on the Government of Belarus to uphold its human rights obligations, including those enumerated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

(9) calls on the United States Government to impose targeted sanctions, in coordination with the European Union and other international partners, against officials in Belarus who are responsible for—

(A) undermining democratic processes in Belarus; or

(B) participating in human rights abuses related to political repression in Belarus;

(10) encourages the United States Government to continue working with its partners in Europe, particularly the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to support the people of Belarus; and

(11) supports—

(A) the continued territorial integrity of Belarus; and

(B) the right of the Belarusian people to determine their future.

SENATE RESOLUTION 690—DESIGNATING SEPTEMBER 2020 AS "NATIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MONTH"

Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. ENZI, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. YOUNG, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. CARPER, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HIRONO, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. BARRASSO, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. KAINE, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Ms. SMITH, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PETERS, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. CRAMER, and Mr. DAINES) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 690

Whereas investment in the education, training, and career advancement of the workforce in the United States, known as "workforce development", is crucial to the ability of the United States to compete in the global economy;

Whereas collaboration among Governors, local governments, State and local education, workforce, and human services agencies, community colleges, local businesses, employment service providers, community-based organizations, and workforce development boards provides for long-term, sustainable, and successful workforce development across traditional sectors and emerging industries;

Whereas middle-skill jobs, which require more than a high school diploma but not a 4-year degree, comprise 52 percent of the labor market, but only 42 percent of workers in the United States have been able to access

training at that level, creating a discrepancy that may limit growth in changing industries such as health care, manufacturing, and information technology;

Whereas 76 percent of business leaders say greater investment in skills training would help their businesses;

Whereas, during the first 6 months of 2020 in the United States—

(1) tens of millions of individuals filed for unemployment benefits;

(2) more than 50 percent of job losses were concentrated among workers earning less than \$40,000 per year; and

(3) workers with a high school diploma or a lower level of educational attainment were displaced from jobs at nearly 3 times the rate of workers with a bachelor's degree;

Whereas, in 2014, Congress reauthorized the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.) with overwhelming bipartisan support in recognition of the need to strengthen the focus of the United States on the skills necessary to fill jobs in local and regional industries;

Whereas the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.) supports employment, training, and support services for individuals with barriers to employment, including—

(1) individuals who are low-income;

(2) individuals who are out of work, including the long-term unemployed;

(3) individuals displaced by outsourcing;

(4) individuals living in rural areas or areas with persistently high unemployment;

(5) individuals looking to learn new skills; and

(6) individuals with disabilities;

Whereas the more than 550 workforce development boards and 2,500 American Job Centers are a driving force behind growing regional economies by providing training, resources, and assistance to workers who aim to compete in the 21st century economy;

Whereas ongoing State and local implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.) provides unprecedented opportunities to develop the skills of workers in the United States through access to effective workforce education and training, including the development and delivery of proven strategies such as sector partnerships, career pathways, integrated education and training, work-based learning models, and paid internships;

Whereas, in 2018, programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.)—

(1) served nearly 6,000,000 young people and adults;

(2) exceeded employment targets across all programs; and

(3) helped more than 1,500,000 individuals, including English language learners, gain skills and credentials to help the individuals succeed in the labor market;

Whereas State programs established under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.)—

(1) ensured that more than 5,400,000 unemployed workers, including more than 500,000 veterans, had access to career services through American Job Centers in 2018; and

(2) are a foundational part of the workforce development system;

Whereas workforce development programs will play a critical role in addressing the expected 2,400,000 unfilled manufacturing jobs over the next decade;

Whereas community colleges and other workforce development training providers across the United States are well situated—

(1) to train the next generation of workers in the United States; and

(2) to address the educational challenges created by emerging industries and technological advancements;

Whereas participation in a career and technical education (referred to in this preamble as “CTE”) program decreases the risk of students dropping out of high school, and all 50 States and the District of Columbia report higher graduation rates for CTE students, as compared to other students;

Whereas community and technical colleges operate as open access institutions serving millions of students annually at a comparatively low cost;

Whereas the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Public Law 115-224; 132 Stat. 1563) supports the development and implementation of high-quality CTE programs that—

(1) combine rigorous academic content with occupational skills; and

(2) served approximately 12,500,000 high school and college students between 2018 and 2019;

Whereas there are more than 500,000 registered apprentices in the United States, and there is growing and bipartisan support for expanding earn-and-learn strategies to help current and future workers gain skills and work experience;

Whereas the federally supported workforce system and partner programs—

(1) have helped rebuild the economy of the United States and provide increased economic opportunities; and

(2) provide a pathway into 21st century jobs that support families while ensuring that businesses in the United States find the skilled workforce needed to compete in the global economy; and

Whereas workforce development is crucial to sustaining economic security for workers in the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates September 2020 as “National Workforce Development Month”;;

(2) supports Federal initiatives to promote workforce development; and

(3) acknowledges that workforce development plays a crucial role in supporting workers and growing the economy.

SENATE RESOLUTION 691—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS THAT FACILITATE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING DURING AND BEYOND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HASSAN, and Mr. KING) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 691

Whereas a positive school culture is important for students, teachers, and staff to feel safe, valued, engaged, included, and respected;

Whereas students face intense academic and social pressures in school, including stress, bullying, and social isolation;

Whereas students face increasing anxiety as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, as a result of—

(1) social distancing requirements and increasing social isolation;

(2) fear of illness for themselves and peers;

(3) uncertainty of the future for themselves and schooling; and

(4) financial insecurity that results in hunger or stress at home;

Whereas, when these concerns or childhood trauma are not addressed appropriately, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, disruptive behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence can result;

Whereas skills developed through social and emotional learning equip young people to handle the challenges they face and help them succeed not just as students, but as healthy and caring adults, productive workers, and engaged citizens;

Whereas social and emotional learning is defined as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills associated with social and emotional competency, including the ability to—

(1) identify, understand, and manage emotions;

(2) set and achieve positive goals;

(3) feel and show empathy for others;

(4) establish and maintain positive relationships; and

(5) make responsible decisions;

Whereas social and emotional learning programs can be effectively integrated into schools through classroom instruction, both in-person and virtually, and other schoolwide activities that—

(1) provide instruction for school leaders, educators, and staff on social and emotional learning, so they can both model these skills for students and benefit from them personally and professionally;

(2) integrate social and emotional learning through family engagement and in the school curriculum, through instruction and, in some cases, playful learning;

(3) provide systematic instruction in which skills are taught, modeled, practiced, and applied in daily behavior; and

(4) establish safe and caring learning environments that foster student participation, engagement, and connection to their school community;

Whereas social and emotional skills are both teachable and measurable, and evidence-based social and emotional learning programs have already been successfully implemented in schools across the country for students in preschool through high school;

Whereas students exposed to social and emotional learning programs have improved academic outcomes, including greater motivation to learn and commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork and mastery of subject matter, and improved attendance, graduation rates, grades, and test scores;

Whereas these positive outcomes increase in students who are involved in social and emotional learning programs by an average of 11 percentage points over students who are not involved in such programs;

Whereas social and emotional learning programs can mitigate the impact of childhood trauma and also result in reduced problem behavior, improved health outcomes, a lower rate of violent delinquency, and a lower rate of heavy alcohol use;

Whereas programs that increase student connectedness and raise awareness about social isolation have been shown to reduce bullying and improve school climate; and

Whereas social and emotional learning programs help young people appreciate the importance of developing and sustaining positive interpersonal relationships and inclusive communities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals of evidence-based social and emotional learning programs;

(2) encourages schools and communities to implement programs to facilitate social and emotional learning in both in-person curriculum and virtual curriculum; and

(3) encourages schools to conduct regular in-person and virtual training of their staff to ensure social and emotional learning programs can evolve, grow, and build capacity as needed.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have a request for one committee to meet during today's session of the Senate. It has the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Monday, September 14, 2020, at 3:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

NATIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MONTH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 690, submitted earlier today.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 690) designating September 2020 as "National Workforce Development Month".

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on the adoption of the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 690) was agreed to.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the preamble 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 preamble was agreed to.

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

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, September 15; further, 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 busi-

ness be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Scarsi nomination under the previous order; finally, that the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly conference meetings.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:45 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, September 15, 2020, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. SEAN C. BERNABE
BRIG. GEN. PATRICK D. FRANK