

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

NDAAs

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I rise today to highlight some of the major victories that were included in the Senate's version of the NDAA—the military budget—that passed out of the Senate Armed Services Committee almost 6 months ago.

The Senate's version of this year's NDAA includes some excellent provisions, including a 4.5-percent pay raise for America's military servicemembers. This is a pay raise for the boots on the ground, not the top brass at the Pentagon. We secured powerful, new security initiatives in the Indo-Pacific. We secured provisions that advance our counter unmanned aircraft systems technologies.

Among the Senate's NDAA victories, I also count my amendments, which will help focus the Pentagon on its stated mission of deterring war and ensuring our Nation's security. One of these amendments includes slashing all funding for the woke diversity, equity, and inclusion policies at the DOD. Another amendment prohibits the use of taxpayer dollars for any costs associated with funding gender transition surgeries.

We need a military that is 100-percent focused on protecting our country and enhancing our national security, not implementing a woke agenda. Our military is not a social experiment. It should be a lethal fighting force, feared by our enemies and made up of our best and brightest in this country, which is why I applaud the work of the Senate Armed Services Committee and Ranking Member WICKER's leadership for putting together this excellent piece of legislation. The Senate's version of the NDAA received bipartisan support in committee, getting 22 of the 25 votes. You seldom see Republicans and Democrats come together like this.

So I ask: Why has Senator SCHUMER not brought this to the floor for the past 6 months? Why has the Senator from New York put a stop to good-faith efforts on setting our military up for success in the future? If Senator SCHUMER really cared about our military, he would have brought the NDAA up for a vote almost 6 months ago, but instead, we have been prioritizing liberal judges for the final weeks he has left as majority leader. Senate Democrats are more interested in burning taxpayer dollars on an unwinnable war in Ukraine than passing our military's budget.

Sadly, we have seen this time and time again: leadership that would rather cater to the woke administration than ensure our military is a lethal fighting force. But putting a woke agenda over our national security is nothing new to this administration. No institutions, not even our great military, are safe from being taken over by the Biden regime's radical woke policies.

Immediately after taking the White House, President Biden began to weaponize the DOD, using it as another tool in the administration's arsenal to further its progressive agenda. One of the Biden administration's first moves was to mandate the divisive diversity, equity, and inclusion training at the DOD—picking up right where Barack Obama left off 4 years earlier.

On day 1, the Biden administration announced that the military would begin conducting training to “have knowledge of systemic and institutional racism and bias against underserved communities.” This hateful ideology has no place in the United States, let alone the U.S. military.

This is supposed to be the No. 1 fighting force in the world. It is dangerous and insulting to waste our troops' valuable time on political indoctrination such as this. We need a lethal killing machine to deter aggression from our adversaries. I want our military focused on protecting Americans and our national security in an increasingly dangerous world, not on all of these woke DEI initiatives. There is no place for it, and Americans want to fund the military to achieve this objective. That is what our taxpayers pay money for, which is why on November 5, nearly 77 million Americans joined me in taking a stand to say: Enough of this nonsense.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Madam President, the American people gave President Trump a mandate to get Washington working for the people again. We chose President Trump because he isn't interested in the same ol', same ol' in this town—a breath of fresh air, no more business as usual. President Trump is returning to the White House and has nominated Pete Hegseth to serve as Secretary of Defense.

I just met with Pete on Monday. I have known him for a long time. He is the man we need leading our military. Pete is smart. He is battle-tested, and he is prepared to lead. Pete has actually had a real job in the military—on the battlefield—not pushing papers in some stuffy room in the Pentagon.

Just this morning, Pete posted on X that he is in this for the warfighters and not for the warmongers—an excellent quote.

That is exactly why the military-industrial complex is losing its mind. If confirmed, Pete will focus on rebuilding peace through strength, putting America first, and prioritizing America's military readiness. He will focus on lethality and maintaining our competitive edge, not to mention getting our recruitment problems straightened out—and, boy, do we have problems.

With military recruitment tanking, what better way to inspire young men and women to join the most lethal fighting force in the world than by nominating a decorated veteran who served in two wars and is closer to their age. Pete is someone who relates to them and looks like them. Who is

more likely to inspire confidence in 18- to 21-year-olds in the military—old, out-of-touch, and arrogant military higher-ups or a younger guy who has been on the battlefield, shoulder to shoulder in the mud with the infantry? I am willing to bet young people would rather sign up to follow the fellow who is the second man on this list.

We need a drill sergeant, someone who has been in the trenches. That man is Pete Hegseth. This is perfectly in line with President Trump's effort to get the Federal Government's house in order. Pete will prioritize building an effective, streamlined Pentagon that can actually pass an audit, which they haven't done in 7 years. He will target waste, fraud, abuse, and refocus the DOD's workforce on its core mission.

And this can't come soon enough. Under this administration, Russia has invaded Ukraine. Iran-backed Hamas brutally attacked Israel. Syria faces a revolution, and China is threatening to invade Taiwan and spread its influence across Africa and South America.

We live in a dangerous world. America can't afford this outdated type of leadership at the DOD to continue any longer. It could result in even more devastating consequences, especially as the outgoing administration has the United States teetering—teetering—on the brink of World War III.

I look forward to beginning a new chapter in January of next year. We will finally turn the page on one of the most criminally bad administrations in the history of our country. More importantly, we will be entering into a new era, a new golden age of America; but in the meantime, I will continue to demand that Senator SCHUMER prioritize our troops and national security over partisan judges and funding foreign wars.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

REMEMBERING JEANNE LUCKEY

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Madam President, I rise today with a deep sense of respect, admiration, and sadness to honor the remarkable life of Jeanne Luckey. Her legacy of service, strength, and compassion will leave a lasting impact on Mississippi, our Nation, and beyond.

A proud daughter of Biloxi, MS, Jeanne was a woman of extraordinary character—dedicated to her family, her community, and her country. She was a tireless leader and key figure in Mississippi's Republican Party, serving in the roles such as president of the Mississippi Federation of Republican Women, as the cochair of the State Republican Party, and as the Republican National Committeewoman. Her voice and influence over the decades shaped the party at the State and national levels, and her work touched the lives of countless individuals across our State.

She faced extraordinary challenges with unmatched grace. Even after a car

accident left her in a wheelchair just days after Hurricane Katrina reshaped the coast of Mississippi, Jeanne didn't stop. She kept working. She continued her work with an unwavering commitment to the values she held dear, always finding a way to move forward.

Jeanne's influence went far beyond politics. Jeanne cared deeply about education and the people of Mississippi. As a member of the board of trustees for the Institutions of Higher Learning, she worked tirelessly to make Mississippi's universities stronger and more inclusive, especially for those with disabilities. Always focused on serving others, her contributions will be felt for generations.

What truly defined Jeanne was her strength of character. She was a woman who made others better. Her husband always said it best:

She made me a better person than I otherwise would have been.

Those of us who had the privilege of knowing her can attest to that. Her wisdom, her kindness, and her ability to bring people together left a permanent mark on everyone she met.

Jeanne leaves behind a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire those whose lives she has touched. My heart goes out to her husband Alwyn, to their two daughters Laurel and Taylor, and to her grandchildren Cornelius and Toxie Ray.

Mississippi has lost an amazing woman and a true leader, but Jeanne's spirit, her passion for life, and her commitment to making our State and country a better place will endure.

TRIBUTE TO TIM WOLVERTON

Madam President, today, I am pleased to commend and bid farewell to my longtime legislative director, Tim Wolverton, who has loyally served the Senate and the great State of Mississippi for more than 15 years. Tim has not only been a trusted member of my staff but a dear friend.

Born and raised in Starkville, MS, Tim attended Mississippi State University where he began his political career, winning an election to serve as student body president.

Apparently, Tim enjoyed being an elected official so much that he decided to move to the one place in the country where elected officials are everywhere: Washington, DC. It was here that Tim interned for one of his home State Senators, the late, great Senator Thad Cochran. If Tim hadn't caught the bug before that summer, he definitely had it now. A year later, Tim moved to the Nation's Capital to begin his professional career by accepting a job in Senator Cochran's office right after graduating with a degree in communications and a minor in leadership studies.

Tim started his career as many of our aides do—fresh out of college, wide-eyed, and ready to make a difference. Under the leadership of Senator Cochran, Tim quickly rose through the ranks and grew from the eager, young staffer into an effective legislative aide and a valuable member of Senator

Cochran's office. Throughout that time, Tim continued his studies, completing a program from the Air Command and Staff College and earning his master's from the U.S. Naval War College.

When Senator Cochran's career was coming to an end and I was appointed to the difficult task of carrying forward his legacy and representing all the people of Mississippi, I made the smart choice of asking Tim Wolverton to stay on as my legislative director, and I am forever grateful that he said yes. Even now, 7 years later, I couldn't imagine having anyone else guiding the legislative priorities of my office with as much skill, dedication, and integrity as Tim Wolverton. His steady hand and deep understanding of the legislative process have been instrumental in advancing the policies that matter most to Mississippi and to our Nation.

Tim approached every challenge with the same unwavering commitment to help create a better Mississippi, whether it was working to secure disaster recovery funds for storm-ravaged areas of the State, advancing military installations to provide well-paying jobs and security for my constituents, or championing infrastructure projects to expand economic opportunity. His ability to navigate complex issues, deliver meaningful results, and do so with humility and grace speaks volumes about his character.

Beyond Tim's many professional accomplishments, he has been a volunteer in his community and a mentor to younger staff members in the office. Although this is just one of the many examples of Tim's generosity, he coached a boys basketball team from their third grade all the way to their senior year. Tim dedicates his time and energy for the betterment of others.

In the office, Tim is no different. He always keeps his door open to staff, listens, gives good advice, and passes on his many years' worth of knowledge and experience to others. They say a true leader's legacy is not measured by their achievements but by the achievements of those who he prepared to lead after he is gone. By any measure, Tim Wolverton stands out among the best.

While his coworkers and I regret to see Tim move on, we are equally excited about the opportunities that await him. The skills he has honed, the relationships he has built, and the impact he has made will undoubtedly serve him—and whoever is fortunate enough to work with him next—extraordinarily well.

To Tim, thank you for your years of dedicated service. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to Mississippi and to the United States. Most importantly, thank you for your good counsel and your friendship, which have undoubtedly helped me serve Mississippi and our Nation in the best way possible over the past 7 years. Now, I wish you every success in all of your future endeavors.

I yield the floor.

DISASTER RELIEF FUNDING

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, if the 118th Congress were a baseball game, we would be nearing the bottom of the ninth. As every Senator is well aware, our to-do list for the next 2 weeks is long.

There are very important issues we need to resolve before the last vote of the year. We need to keep the government open. We need to extend the farm bill and vote on the NDAA. And critically for Vermont and for so many States around the Nation, we must pass the comprehensive disaster aid package.

Legislating is a team sport. If we work together and find common ground, we can send a bill to the President's desk before the end of Congress and deliver for those communities that desperately, desperately need action from the U.S. Senate.

Despite our differences, whether they are political or geographic, communities from Montpelier, VT, to Mankato, MN; from Houston, TX, to Asheville, NC, to Maui, HI, are all asking for Congress to help with the devastation that has happened in those communities.

For months, bipartisan Members of Congress from States that have been affected by floods, fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes have approached our colleagues in the time of our need. We have asked publicly and privately for the assistance and financial support that our homeowners need, our farmers need, and businesses, towns, and local governments urgently need, because when it comes to these extreme weather events, we all know that if it is not us now, it may be us tomorrow, because there but for the grace of God, go I, when the extreme weather events decide to descend upon any community.

I found in the conversations I have had with my colleagues—Republican and Democrat—about Vermont's recovery needs, there is an unspoken acknowledgement that they are not in the Vermont situation or in the Asheville, NC, situation, but it could change.

The climate change that we are experiencing all around the country requires that, No. 1, we be ready to respond; two, we be more resilient and prepared; and, three, that we have better funded responses to recovery so that it can be faster, locally driven, and more efficient.

In July of 2023, Vermont experienced torrential rains and severe storms. For a week, the rain didn't stop. That rain quickly led to catastrophic flooding and landslides. Many homes, many of our farms and businesses and communities were absolutely destroyed, and the damage to infrastructure was fierce. Roads, rail lines, dams, bridges, wastewater plants, the capital city's post office, which after 14 months finally reopened, those were destroyed.

Nine States around Vermont came to our aid, and we are grateful. They sent