

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
**Business Meeting**  
*Thursday, January 29, 2026*

## **BUSINESS MEETING**

*Thursday, January 29, 2026*

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:41 a.m., in S-116, The Capitol, Hon. James E. Risch, Chairman-of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Ricketts, McCormick, Daines, Hagerty, Barrasso, Lee, Paul, Scott, Curtis, Cornyn, Shaheen, Coons, Kaine, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, Duckworth, and Rosen.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

**The Chairman:** The Committee will come to order.

Welcome back, everyone. Great to be back in our first business meeting of the year. Today we're going to start off strong, considering four of President Trump's nominees for key national security positions, and several pieces of legislation brought forward by many of us around the table. I will highlight just a few of those, and we'll work through them as best we can.

First, the most common-sense bill we have before us today is the No Tax Dollars for Terrorists Act. This bill would help to prevent even one American dollar from going to terrorist organizations, like the Taliban. Thank you to Senator Sheehy for his work on this important piece of legislation. American

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military personnel spent years fighting the Taliban. Over 2,000 Americans were killed in Afghanistan, and more than 20,000 were wounded. It is a slap in the face to veterans and their families that any taxpayer dollars would go to that organization. We need to know that the NGOs and foreign nations that receive aid do not pass those dollars to the very organizations that look to harm us. I hope we can all come together on this and fix an obvious loophole.

We are going to consider the SHADOW Fleet Act. This legislation will vastly expand U.S. sanctions authorities to target the collection of ordered, reflagged oil tankers that Russia, Iran, and Venezuela use to circumvent existing U.S. sanctions on oil and energy revenues. They have been in the news somewhat lately.

As you all know, Putin will use every trick in the book to evade U.S. sanctions, and it is high time that he was cracked down on this illicit shadow fleet of ships that he uses to fund this war. These ships and the oil sales they facilitate directly threaten American and European security.

The SHADOW Fleet Act also builds on the incredible work that the Administration has done in the [unclear] countries that are purchasing Russian oil.

Thank you to my colleagues and staff. We will work through these. There are a few hiccups in here, but we'll take it a step at a time.

Senator Shaheen, have you some thoughts?

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**STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**Senator Shaheen:** I do. I also am pleased that we have such a good number of bipartisan bills that are on the agenda today. It is a good way to start the new year.

I do want to point out, however, that we only have four career nominees for ambassadors, and for those of us who attended the hearing yesterday and saw the map that showed where China has its diplomats, in virtually every country in the world, and the United States is woefully behind, we have a lot of work to do. And so I have raised this on multiple occasions with Secretary Rubio. I hope that all of you on the other side of the aisle will do the same, because it is in our interest to get our ambassadors on the ground around the world. We should not be recalling career chargés and ambassadors before a replacement can be nominated and confirming. That is not in our interests.

I also support the bills that Senator Risch talked about. The SHADOW Fleet bill, I think that is a really good one. I also would like to point out, and we will get to it, I think, as part of a bloc vote, to thank Senator Barrasso for the work that we have done on the Subsea Cables bill. I think that is really important. And I was interested, when we were in Copenhagen about 10 days ago, we met with the Danish officials who were responsible, and they were very interested in this legislation. This is a real challenge in the Baltic Sea. So I

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think, again, it is important for our national security.

I also would just like to ask, Mr. Chairman, as we discussed, Senate Bill 2252, Saving Lives and Taxpayer Dollars Act. You and I made a lot of progress in negotiation agreement on this. We are not there yet, so if we cannot vote on it today and hold it over for the next business meeting I think we can get an agreement to get that done together.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Shaheen. I agree with that. I think this is an important piece of legislation. Unfortunately, when you deal with some of these, the devil is in the details, in the language, in some of the portions of it. I think on balance you and I have agreement as to what this should do. It is just in the language to get there. So I will hold 2252 right now, so we can work on that.

**Senator Shaheen:** Thank you.

**The Chairman:** So let's start off and move the noms as we can. I am going to break them into two. One will be Frank Weiland by himself, and then we will do the other three, because I think those are, yeah, generally agreed to.

So let's start with Mr. Frank Weiland to be Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** Is there a second?

**Senator Ricketts:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved and seconded. Is there a debate?

**Senator Curtis:** Mr. Chairman.

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Go ahead.

**The Chairman:** Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Well, I think the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement is a really important agency within our bureau, within the Department of State. It is responsible for everything from countering fentanyl trafficking to addressing corruption and ruleless law.

And sadly, after hearing from Mr. Weiland, he did not give very responsive answers to indicate that he understood how critical this bureau is. During his tenure as the Senior Bureau Official last year, numerous programs to counter crime and stop drug trafficking were cut. He also approved the decision to provide INL funds to El Salvador in exchange for detention of deportees at a prison center notorious for human rights abuses. I am sure we have all heard about that.

So I have real concerns about his ability to be a good steward there, and I intend to vote no.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Curtis.

**Senator Curtis:** Yes. I do not want to bring up an issue that is not an issue, but I think behind the scenes some have concerns about when he was a staff member on the Foreign Affairs Committee. And I have a little institutional knowledge that I would love to share with anybody.

We actually had a whistleblower complaint come to my office. He was assigned by the Chairman to investigate that and was acting under the responsibilities that he was given as a staff member to investigate that. And I

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know there are some other issues, but if that is the issue, I would just simply say we want to be really careful not to chill a staff member who has been asked to file a whistleblower complaint. And I just wanted to share that background because that constituent is actually from my office, that he investigated, the complaint.

**The Chairman:** I intend to vote for Mr. Weiland's nomination. The President has chosen him. I appreciate Senator Shaheen's concerns, but I am going to vote aye.

Is there further debate on this?

**Senator Ricketts:** John, was your point -- I can't quite tell what you mean by that. Is that a defending --

**Senator Curtis:** It was not brought up, but there are some people that are concerned that his investigation was, whether it was a witch hunt or anything like that. And I just wanted to point out that he was following his responsibilities as a staff member to look into a complaint.

**Senator Cruz:** So that is defending him.

**Senator Ricketts:** Yes, Ok.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate?

If there is none, the clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**Senator Lee:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Coons:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

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**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Van Hollen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

The clerk will report.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 12, the noes are 10.

**The Chairman:** The motion is passed.

We have got three in front of us now that are career people. I am going to do these in an en bloc vote, unless there is an objection to that.

Is there a motion to adopt the three --

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**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved. Seconded?

**Senator Ricketts:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved and seconded.

Is there debate?

There being no debate, the clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**Senator Lee:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

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**Senator Scott of Florida:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Coons:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Van Hollen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** Aye.

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**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

The clerk will report.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 22, the noes are 0.

**The Chairman:** The motion is passed.

Now, we are going to move to some legislation, and we are going to start with House Resolution 260. This is the No Tax Dollars for Terrorists Act, Senator Sheehy's bill. I guess it is a House bill but needs to be adopted here.

In any event, there has been a lot of back-and-forth on this, a lot of work on it. So with that, open it for debate.

Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Mr. Chairman, I think everybody here opposes the Taliban. We all oppose giving any kind of assistance to them. But I am concerned that what this bill will do is harm Afghan people, particularly women and girls, because it is going to prevent humanitarian organizations from delivering assistance to those who really need it.

And it is particularly disappointing to me because I think we could have gotten an agreement on this bill. I am going to offer some amendments that I think will address the concerns that I and others have. But there was just no interest on the part of the sponsors in addressing the very legitimate concerns that we are raising. I mean, again, I don't think anybody on this committee

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wants to see more women and girls harmed in Afghanistan. There has been enough of that already. And what this bill will do is inflict real serious harm on a lot of innocent people in Afghanistan who are affected by the Taliban.

So I would hope that we can make some changes in the bill to address the concerns in a way that allows us to say we oppose the Taliban and we do not want to see any help go to them, but recognizes there are people who need help, and we should not deny the ability for independent humanitarian organizations to provide that help.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Shaheen. The bill is before us for possible amendment.

Senator Paul.

**Senator Paul:** I have three different amendments. The first amendment is Paul 1, Degree 1, and this amendment would rescind what remains of the Afghan Reconstruction Fund. This fund, you know, was begun many years ago, in buildings in Afghanistan. There really is no Afghan reconstruction going on. There is no reason to leave this funding standing, without, particularly that some of these funds may go to NGOs to the Taliban.

So this amendment would rescind the remaining \$631 million in appropriated funds. I think this puts some teeth in this bill and actually shows that we are serious, you know, about not letting any of this money get through the NGOs. And I would ask for a recorded vote.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

Is there further debate?

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**Senator Shaheen:** Well again, Mr. Chairman, the places that -- we continue limited support for the American University of Afghanistan, which supports women and girls' education, both in exile and through online courses in Afghanistan. I think we would all agree that it is important to allow women and girls in Afghanistan, by whatever way, means, to be able to have access to education. That is one of the things that we did when we went into Afghanistan, and for us now to say we are not going to allow that to continue, again, breaks promises that we have made to the Afghan people. So I intend to vote no.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

The Chairman is going to vote yes on this and the other two Paul amendments. I am reluctant to do amendments because the bill did pass the House as well as it did. But having said that, I think Senator Paul's amendments are well taken, so I intend to vote yes on Paul 1.

Are you offering Paul 1?

**Senator Paul:** Right now, yes. Paul 1, Degree 1. I am not sure what that means.

**The Chairman:** Make a motion and we will find out what it means.

**Senator Paul:** I make the motion to vote on the amendment.

**The Chairman:** Is there a second?

**Senator Lee:** Second.

**The Chairman:** So there has been a motion made and a second.

Is there further debate on Paul 1?

There being none, the clerk will call the roll.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**Senator Lee:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

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**Senator Shaheen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Coons:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Van Hollen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

The clerk will report.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 12, the noes are 10.

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**The Chairman:** We will take up Paul 2.

**Senator Paul:** This amendment would strike a directive in the bill that requires a strategy for the Secretary of State to look at efforts to relocate eligible, fully vetted, at-risk Afghans and Afghan allies located outside of the U.S.

We have already admitted 180,000. There are 265,000 more that want to come. I think we have done more than enough, and we have some problems. I mean, we fully vetted the National Guard -- the one that did the terrible killing of the National Guard in D.C. recently. I think it is very hard to vet. But we have admitted 180,000 people, you know. I just think enough is enough.

So this would get rid of the directive to try to look for more to bring in.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate?

Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Again, I intend to vote no on this. I think a number of people on this committee have worked over the years to try and ensure that those people who helped our servicemembers in Afghanistan during the war, for all those years, we promised them if they would help us that we would try and help them get to the United States, assuming they passed the vetting, so that they are not killed by the Taliban.

We have people in New Hampshire who have relatives who have been killed by the Taliban because they put their lives at risk to help our soldiers, and now we are saying to all of them, we don't care if they have made that sacrifice, we don't care that your families are being killed. We are not going to let you in no matter what we promised. That is not in our interest with respect

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to Afghanistan, and it is not in our interest with respect to any future conflicts that we might have, if we want people to help us in those conflicts.

So I understand Senator Paul, the argument he is making, but I just think it is the wrong response to the challenge.

**Senator Coons:** Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Yes, Senator Coons.

**Senator Coons:** I strongly agree with the comments by my colleague, Senator Shaheen. I recently visited with an Afghan I have now known for several years. He spent 7 years serving alongside our Special Forces in Afghanistan. He lost his left leg and is permanently disfigured, and was awarded several decorations by the American unit he was supporting because he risked his life repeatedly to drag wounded Americans out of fire.

He lives in terror that he is going to be forcibly returned to Afghanistan every day. His brother has been murdered by the Taliban, and they are actively hunting him in his neighborhood. I just think that we have left thousands of Afghans stranded, without a clear path, and that we are beginning to forcibly return to Afghanistan Afghans who were admitted here and passed vetting I think is shameful.

So I both oppose this amendment and the underlying sentiment that enough is enough. I don't think we could do enough for those who genuinely served alongside and supported our troops.

**Senator Cornyn:** Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Senator Cornyn.

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**Senator Cornyn:** Mr. Chairman, I voted for the Special Immigrant Visa Program because I shared a lot of the sentiments of our Democratic colleagues. The problem is there was a reciprocal obligation on the part of the Biden administration to do proper vetting, which did not happen. And we saw this massive use or abuse of parole authority under Operation Allies Welcome, including the individual who killed a young National Guardswoman here in Washington, DC.

And, you know, it is one thing to show some sympathy for, and again, I agree with the sentiments with regard to those folks who served alongside of us. But I think the Biden administration simply dropped the ball and did not vet individuals coming into the country, did not follow up on them once they were here, and unfortunately it has proved to be deadly. So I support Senator Paul's amendment.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator.

The Chairman is going to vote for this. I was a strong, strong advocate for helping people who helped us, and I share the sentiments of both Senator Shaheen and Senator Coons about that. We really went out of our way to help those people as best we could.

I think that the difficulty now is this has been a long time in going. We have had some incidents that have been referred to here. Secretary Rubio has made the decision to draw down the programs to relocate the at-risk Afghans. I think it is time to ratchet this back some. But I couldn't agree more that the people who helped us, we have done a lot for and will continue in the future.

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So with that, Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I just want to correct the record, because it is my understanding that the Afghan who shot the two National Guard members was vetted by the Trump administration.

**Senator Cornyn:** We had hearings in the Judiciary Committee, and it is impossible to be able to figure out because of the interagency hide the ball between the CIA, between the Department of Defense and the Department of State. But there was, to my earlier point, simply no follow up of this individual who apparently became more and more radicalized the longer he was in the country. So this is a problem not only of vetting but also follow up, as well.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate?

There being no further debate, the clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

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**Senator Lee:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Coons:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Van Hollen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye. The clerk will report.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 12, the noes are 10.

**The Chairman:** The motion is passed.

Paul 3, Senator Paul.

**Senator Paul:** This amendment would require the immediate suspension of all foreign assistance to any country or NGO, non-governmental organization, that the Secretary of State determines has provided assistance to the Taliban.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate?

Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Well, again, I intend to oppose this amendment. I think it is over-broad. It is vague. There are NGOs that make incidental payments to support women and girls and to respond to emergencies, not to support the Taliban. So if they have an office in Afghanistan, when they pay an electric bill they would be prevented from providing any assistance. So I just

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think it doesn't make sense. And frankly, Secretary Rubio has acknowledged that there aren't any U.S. tax dollars that are going to the Taliban. So this is a bill in search of a problem.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate?

I am going to vote in favor of this. I agree there shouldn't be any going -- I am glad to hear Secretary Rubio say that. We need to make sure that that happens. So I am going to vote in favor of this.

Is there further debate?

There being none, the clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**Senator Lee:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**The Chairman:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Coons:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

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**Senator Van Hollen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 12, the noes are 10.

**The Chairman:** The motion is passed.

We now have a list of some other amendments. Senator Rosen has filed some. Senator Shaheen has filed some.

Senator Rosen, did you wish to call some up?

**Senator Rosen:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to call up my amendment, Rosen 1st Degree 2.

So after decades of providing humanitarian support for the most vulnerable in Afghanistan, including women and girls, we need to ensure that we don't unintentionally make it easier for the Taliban to target those individuals.

My amendment would just merely ensure that the legislation report on U.S. funded direct cash payments to Afghans would protect personally identifiable information of those recipients, so they won't be targets. These recipients often include Afghan mothers, their children, local farmers who are growing alternatives to opium, law enforcement, critical to our efforts against

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the Taliban. So failing to protect their identities just put them at risk, makes them easy targets for Taliban retaliation. So this amendment, I believe, is essential to safeguarding those who worked closely with our servicemembers, diplomats, development professionals. I encourage all of my colleagues to vote for this.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate?

The Chairman is going to vote no on these, and with all due respect I am going to oppose the rest of the amendments that have been put in. And I hesitate to do that, but the sponsors of the bill feel very strongly about further degrading the bill. So I am going to vote no. But I understand the situation.

**Senator Ricketts:** This is from the House, you are saying?

**The Chairman:** From both our side and from the other side. The sponsors of the bill are opposed to these. And I am doing that for them as much as anything else.

**Senator Kaine:** Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Senator Kaine.

**Senator Kaine:** Could I just ask a question? I get it that the House guys would rather the bill not be amended, but it has already been amended.

**The Chairman:** Yes.

**Senator Kaine:** And it looks like the purpose of this is to protect people. So the bill, which seems likely to pass, would dramatically restrict funding going to purposes the Democrats wish funding might go to. Ok. We are going to restrict that. But if any funds go, despite the restriction, I think we all would

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agree, personally, identifiable information about people who could be threatened with violence should be removed. So the fact that the House would rather the bill not be amended, it has been amended. And this would seem to provide just some basic protection for folks. I really can't see why there would be a problem with it.

**Senator Paul:** Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Senator Paul.

**Senator Paul:** You know, we all remember the images of the pallets of cash going in, both to Iraq and to Afghanistan. I think if you are going to give people cash you have to have some oversight. I mean, we have seen it happen in our country. The PPP program, we have got the fraud problem in Minnesota now.

**Senator Shaheen:** You don't have to give people cash.

**Senator Paul:** If you are not going to list who is getting the cash, I think that is a real problem if you don't identify who you are actually giving cash to.

**The Chairman:** Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Well, I would just point out, you are suggesting that what this would do is prevent pallets of cash going to the Taliban. I can't imagine anybody --

**Senator Paul:** It says direct cash assistance. I understand the purpose of direct cash assistance.

**Senator Rosen:** This is just a report. We don't want the report out there with personally identifiable information. We do this all the time, aggregate data,

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so we don't put out people, whether it is in reports for disease prevention, all kinds of things. We make sure that it is put there in such a way that those folks aren't personally identified within their communities. And so this is just for the report, to be sure that the legislation's report doesn't have identifiable information that could be publicly found. And these folks, who did so much for people on this committee, and certainly in our body, who have been deployed, who understand how these folks on the ground do help you, and the risks that they take. We are just asking that their names are not in the report.

**The Chairman:** Further debate?

**Senator Duckworth:** Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Senator Duckworth.

**Senator Duckworth:** I just wanted to ask Senator Rosen for clarification. So you are not saying don't collect the data. Just don't put the names in the report. The data is still being collected.

**Senator Rosen:** That is correct.

**Senator Duckworth:** So we are still keeping track of who the money goes to.

**Senator Rosen:** That is correct.

**Senator Duckworth:** We are just not putting the names of individuals in a report.

**Senator Rosen:** Yes.

**Senator Duckworth:** Ok. Thank you.

**Senator Merkley:** Mr. Chairman.

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**The Chairman:** Senator Merkley.

**Senator Merkley:** This is so simple and straightforward. [Unclear]. I don't think so. [Unclear.]

**The Chairman:** Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Well, I would just point out that if we list the beneficiaries, we give the Taliban the list of people to go after. I mean, how is that helpful? And if the positions in bill make sure that we continue do the auditing and all of those safeguards are there, just ensuring that we don't identify the women who are being affected, seems to me like something that we ought to all support.

**Senator Paul:** Oversight is not just us looking at the money.

**Senator Shaheen:** I am not talking about oversight. Oversight is not affected by this at all, Rand.

**Senator Paul:** That is my point, is that it is not only us doing oversight. The public does oversight.

**Senator Rosen:** The public --

**Senator Paul:** Let me finish my point.

**The Chairman:** Let him speak, and we will get back to you, Senator Rosen.

**Senator Paul:** Recently, we did not do a very good job with overseeing the money in Minnesota. That came to light because of, you know, somebody with a video camera, going and videotaping. So that's the public knowing it. So there is an oversight function that the public maintains. So if we give to a group, and we

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are so busy that we do not see that the group is the communist front for communism for Afghanistan or for whatever, we do not know that because we didn't have time to look at all the money, because there is so much money and so many people. But if somebody is really interested in this from the public they would look at all the names and they would research to find out where the money is going to. So the public does provide oversight.

**The Chairman:** Senator Rosen.

**Senator Rosen:** This is putting women and children and farmers who have been helpful to our safety and security in Afghanistan, it is putting them at grave risk. And so there is a way to do oversight. We can talk about the report, making the report better, without listing the exact name of the individual. I just believe so strongly that you are just, why not just hand the Taliban -- why not just open up the intelligence community and just give them the files of everyone that we work with all around the world.

**The Chairman:** Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Well, I just wanted to point out, as the staff just told me, this report only comes to the committee. It is not going to the public. So it seems like it would help us with our oversight.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate?

[No response.]

**The Chairman:** The clerk will call the roll.

**Senator Ricketts:** Mr. Chairman --

**The Chairman:** Sorry.

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**Senator Ricketts:** I'm not, I mean, I don't understand -- it seems like it makes sense to me too. So unless, I just want you to know before you call the roll, I'm going to vote for this. And the idea that the reason we are not going to do it is the House, I understand to make it as clean as possible. But no one has convinced me. So before you make that call --

**The Chairman:** Not a problem.

**Senator Ricketts:** -- I just want you to know where I am going to vote.

**Senator Hagerty:** Mr. Chairman, I want to join Senator Ricketts and McCormick in this concern too. Unless there is a way to modify it, I am very sensitive to the concerns raised by Senator Paul and others that we need greater accountability, and at some sort of organizational level I am certainly fine with that being the report. But the concerns Senator Rosen raised is about specific individuals being named. It raises a concern in my mind, too. And despite my staff recommendation, I will change my vote if it is called right now.

**The Chairman:** Fair points, and that is why we debate.

**Senator Ricketts:** Could I ask a quick question?

**The Chairman:** Sure.

**Senator Ricketts:** Did she say, though, that this report only comes to the committee? So what's the benefit of concealing the names if it is only coming to the committee? The Taliban is not going to get it if it just comes to our committee.

**The Chairman:** We hope not.

**Senator Ricketts:** Right?

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**Senator Shaheen:** Because as Senator Paul will point out that a report comes to Congress, somebody can request it, and it can become public.

**Senator Rosen:** It is not classified, so it could be requested, and then those names would be out, and it puts people at grave risk. And I think that future missions are put at risk if people realize that we are not trustworthy partners. And I am concerned about our service men and women.

**Senator Daines:** Mr. Chairman, so would it be FOIA-able, then? FOIA could get the information they wanted?

**Senator Rosen:** I defer to the committee staff. I believe it would be FOIA-able.

**Senator Shaheen:** Staff has just pointed out to me, too, that we know that the Taliban intelligence organization goes through our reports that reference Afghanistan, that are public.

**The Chairman:** That is good to know.

[Laughter.]

**Senator Shaheen:** Don't you know that? You are on Intel.

**The Chairman:** I do know that. It is a lot worse than what you just said, but yes, I know that. It is pretty obvious that the amendment certainly is not going to corrupt the bill to the point where it is unenforceable or anything else. So why don't we take a vote on this and get to it.

Any further debate?

There being none, the clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

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**Senator Ricketts:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Give me a minute, please.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**Senator Lee:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**The Chairman:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Coons:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Van Hollen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** No. The clerk will report.

Excuse me. Senator Hagerty, what is your vote?

**Senator Hagerty:** So I have got several conflicting pieces of information now. I am going to vote no for now. And I'm going to -- I am sorry. No.

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**The Chairman:** The clerk will report.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 13, the noes are 9.

**The Chairman:** The amendment has passed. It is certainly not going to corrupt the bill, I don't think, in any way, shape or form.

Senator Rosen, did you have --

**Senator Rosen:** I just want to thank everyone. I think of the lives we have saved and the future lives we will save, people wanting to cooperate with us, it sends the right message, I think. So thank you.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. You had another one?

**Senator Rosen:** No.

**The Chairman:** Ok, no. Are there any further amendments to the bill?

Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** This is a 1st Degree Amendment. And what it would do is amend the report that is required in the legislation on the implementation to discourage foreign assistance to the Taliban to include the impact on the lifesaving needs of Afghan civilians and support for Afghan women and girls. So it changes the way the reporting would be required. And it does that, as I said, to try and address some of the concerns about what the impact of this is going to be. The Administration's decision to terminate all humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan has had a real impact on the Afghan population. Over 3 million Afghans have lost access to health services. Over a million women and girls have lost support, women and girls who have survived acts of violence. Nutrition programs have ended for over 80,000 malnourished children,

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pregnant women, and new mothers.

I think monitoring the impact of what we are doing and having real information will be helpful to us as we are doing our oversight. The United Kingdom, Japan, and the EU are three partners that have continued to deliver assistance during this period, and I hope that, again, this is another effort to address the impact on Afghan women and girls.

**The Chairman:** Is this Shaheen 1?

**Senator Shaheen:** This is Shaheen 1.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate on Shaheen 1?

There being none, the clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**Senator Lee:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

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**Senator Paul:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**The Chairman:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Coons:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** Aye.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Van Hollen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 10, the noes are 12.

**The Chairman:** The proposed amendment has failed.

Are there further amendments for this bill?

**Senator Shaheen:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, I would like to offer the 2nd Degree 1 for Shaheen 1st Degree 3. So what this is, is a Sense of Congress that the U.S. should not normalize relations with the Taliban. Again, I would think that all of us ought to agree that normalizing relations with the Taliban is not something that we want to see the United States do. And it is just a simple Sense of Congress that we should not normalize those relations. It will not have any impact on how this bill moves forward, and it is a statement that I would hope, given the intent of this legislation, that we could all support.

**The Chairman:** Senator Shaheen, this is a 2nd Degree Amendment to Shaheen 3.

**Senator Shaheen:** Oh, I'm sorry. So I need to offer 3 first? Yes, no, I can -- they are telling me I can just offer this one.

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**The Chairman:** Yes, you can. And frankly, this one does make sense, and it does very little to it.

Any further debate on this?

**Senator Ricketts:** I like what she is saying.

**The Chairman:** Let's not go overboard.

[Laughter.]

**The Chairman:** We can do a voice vote on this?

**Senator Shaheen:** Yes. I am happy to do a voice vote.

**The Chairman:** All those in favor of the Shaheen 2nd Degree Amendment to Shaheen --

**Senator Cruz:** You lost Schatz's vote when you called him short.

[Laughter.]

**The Chairman:** We'll call a vote. All in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed, nay.

The ayes have it, and that amendment is passed.

Are we good? All right.

Senator Hagerty.

**Senator Hagerty:** I apologize for this lack of preparation, but back to Senator Rosen's amendment, I have been getting information really [unclear] here. I would like to change my vote to yes.

**The Chairman:** Does that change the outcome?

**Senator Shaheen:** No.

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**The Chairman:** It does not? Ok. I will permit the change.

Are we done with amendments?

**Senator Shaheen:** Yes.

**The Chairman:** We can go to the bill. Is there a debate?

There being no debate, the clerk will call the roll.

**Senator Ricketts:** Do you need a motion?

**The Chairman:** A motion.

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** Moved.

And seconded?

**Senator Cruz:** Second.

**The Chairman:** Moved and seconded that we send the bill to the floor, as amended, with recommendation to pass.

The clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

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**Senator Barrasso:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**Senator Lee:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**The Chairman:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Coons:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** No.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Van Hollen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** No.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye. The clerk will report.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 12, the noes are 10.

**The Chairman:** The motion is passed. The bill will be sent to the floor.

We are going to hold 2252, as Senator Shaheen and I have agreed.

And now I would like to move to the SHADOW Fleet Act, Ms. Shaheen, S. 2904. Is there discussion?

**Senator Shaheen:** Well, again I would just like to acknowledge the excellent staff work on this, the work that you and I have done on this, Mr. Chairman. I think it is a really important bill, and will help us as we are looking at so many issues that we are facing from our adversaries. If we can shut down the shadow fleet that is providing oil to China and Russia then it is a benefit to the United States.

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**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Is there further debate? There being none, the clerk -- is there a motion to send 2904? Wait a minute. First we have got to do a Manager's Amendment. There is a Manager's Amendment before the Committee, which we can do in a voice vote.

Senator Shaheen, did you want to make a motion to adopt the Manager's Amendment?

**Senator Shaheen:** I move we adopt the Manager's Amendment.

**The Chairman:** Is there a second?

**Senator Ricketts:** Second.

**The Chairman:** And it is moved we adopt the Manager's Amendment. All in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** All opposed, nay.

The ayes have it. Now a motion to send the bill to the floor, as amended with the Manager's Amendment.

Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved.

**Voice:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It has been seconded. This we'll do a roll call vote on. The clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**Senator Lee:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**Senator Cruz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**The Chairman:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**Senator Cornyn:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

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**Senator Coons:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Schatz:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Van Hollen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Duckworth:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

The clerk will report.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 20, the noes are 2.

**The Chairman:** The motion is passed and it will be sent to the floor with a recommendation to pass.

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We now have before us the Taiwan Energy Security and Anti-Embargo Act.

Excuse me. I am sorry. Senator Cruz's Taiwan Symbols of Sovereignty Act, S. 3018.

Senator Cruz, you have the floor.

**Senator Cruz:** So to recount a little bit of history on this, most of the members of the Committee will remember this for a long time, our policy with Taiwan, we allowed representatives from the Taiwanese government to display their symbols of sovereignty including the Taiwan flag, including the insignia on their uniforms. During the Obama administration, at the request of the Chinese government, the State Department changed that policy and prohibited Taiwanese officials from displaying their flag or having their insignia on uniforms.

During the Trump administration, they maintained that policy for the first 3 years, and the final year, after this committee had repeatedly pressed them to reverse that policy, they reversed it in the last year of the first Trump term. And then, unfortunately, the Biden State Department re-reversed it.

And so the current policy is when we meet with Taiwanese officials they are not allowed to display their symbols of sovereignty, and that is done because the Chinese government does not like to acknowledge that Taiwan has flags or insignia.

I will point out this very same bill this Committee has voted on twice. We have passed it with big bipartisan votes both times. In 2021, 2022, previous

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votes on the Democrat side of the aisle, Senators who voted for this already include Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Booker, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen - I think that is the list. So most of this Committee has voted for it. I think it is a common-sense decision. I think there is a reasonable chance the Trump State Department will do this at some point. But I think this committee speaking will accelerate that process. And I think symbolic gestures of standing with Taiwan are significant and worthwhile. So I would encourage a yes vote.

I would point out also that Senator Curtis in the House introduced this same bill in the House, as well. So excellent leadership on the other side.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Cruz.

**Senator Duckworth:** I have a note here --

**The Chairman:** I have a -- yes.

**Senator Duckworth:** I have a note here that the State Department currently has noted their opposition to this. Is that correct?

**The Chairman:** I am not aware of it.

**Senator Shaheen:** That is my understanding, as well. We have heard from the Administration, on a bipartisan basis, and in writing, that it could undermine our coordination with partners in support of Taiwan.

**Senator Cruz:** They have not conveyed that to us. We had a meeting with State for technical assistance, and apparently they cancelled the meeting so we did not have that meeting. As I said, twice this committee has passed this in the past.

**Senator Shaheen:** But I would just point out that it was part of a larger

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bill, so we never have voted on this provision alone.

**Senator Cruz:** Yes. It was included in the manager's package, so I mean, that was --

**Senator Duckworth:** But as I said, we do have a message from the current State Department that they are opposed to this.

**Senator Shaheen:** That is my understanding.

**Senator Duckworth:** Thank you.

**Voice:** This could be interesting.

**Senator Duckworth:** I am just trying to figure it out.

**The Chairman:** Senator Cruz, it is up to you. I will call the vote, the roll, if you want. It is up to you.

**Senator Cruz:** Look, it would not surprise me that there are people in the bowels who changed the policy the first time and still don't want to see this. I think this committee does not work for Foggy Bottom, and we have an important and independent voice.

**The Chairman:** Yes, Senator Merkley.

**Senator Merkley:** I really wrestle with this particular act. I have done a lot of legislation before with Senator Curtis on Taiwan. And one of the questions I asked my team was is any other developed nation going in this direction, where Taiwan insignia is displayed on Taiwanese uniforms and flags, and the answer is no. That doesn't mean we shouldn't be the first. But the question I've wrestled with is, does this really help Taiwan operating as a republic independent of China, or is this the kind of salt in the wound, or makes it feel

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pretty good but it actually more complicates the relationship between China and Taiwan because it aggravates China?

I don't know that deliberately aggravating China is helpful. I think we would be putting a hell of a lot of effort into Taiwan. I was the first Member of Congress to go after last November's election, had extended conversations, enormous sensitivity about this dynamic to its overwhelmingly powerful next-door neighbor that wants to exercise military force and take control of them.

And it is not as if Taiwan is coming to us asking for this legislation. They have said they are kind of [unclear], but the whole tone of their reaction was kind of like, you really have put us in this awkward position.

**Voice:** This was from State?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, Taiwan.

**Voice:** Ok.

**Senator Merkley:** So I'm just hesitating on this. I think Taiwan should be its own country. I don't think it should be part of China. I also think that if we end up in a military conflict with China or Taiwan, that is a terrible thing all the way around. And I hope we incredibly reinforce the [unclear] strategy so that China doesn't use military force. But I guess in the end I am coming down to the side of this is an unnecessary provocation, it kind of makes you feel good, and so forth, but I think actually it is not wise.

**Senator Cruz:** So let me respond to that, if I could.

**The Chairman:** Senator Cruz.

**Senator Cruz:** I actually agree with several things Senator Merkley said

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there, including I agree Taiwan should be its own country. I don't agree with the One China policy, but that is not the policy of the Administration, either administration, and either party.

I think symbolic matters really make a difference with China, and if the committee will indulge me for a minute I want to tell a story about the impact of that. Some of you all will remember years ago I had legislation to rename the street in front of the Chinese Embassy Liu Xiaobo Street, in honor of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and democracy dissident. And initially we had disagreements. Senator Feinstein disagreed, and in fact, made the same argument you did, Jeff. We had an argument on the floor of the Senate where she said, "This is going to irritate the Chinese government. You don't understand how they'll react." And my response was, "Well, yes, I do understand, and I view that as a feature, not a bug. I'm quite happy irritating the Chinese government."

At the end of the day, after extensive negotiations, Senator Feinstein withdrew her objection, and my legislation passed unanimously in the Senate. The House did not take it up.

But the reason I tell this story is spring of 2017, with the new Trump administration, I went and had breakfast with Rex Tillerson. This is like March or April.

**Senator Shaheen:** The first Administration.

**Senator Cruz:** The first Administration, Trump 1. And he said he had just met with is counterpart in China, the Chinese foreign minister, and he

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said, "China said they had three foreign policy objectives." And he shook his head and he said, "It's the damndest thing." He said, "One of their three objectives is to stop you from passing this legislation to rename the street in front of their embassy." And he said, "I can't explain it, but that's what they listed right at the top of their priorities."

And I told Rex at the time -- at the time Liu Xiaobo had passed away, but his widow, Liu Xia, was still there. And they had never been allowed to leave and get the \$1.4 million he would get for winning the Nobel Peace Prize. And I told Rex, "All right, tell China the following, which is if they allow Liu Xia to leave, I'll stop pushing this. But if they don't, I'll keep pushing this. We'll get it passed. We had already passed it through the Senate. This time we'll get it through the house and the President will sign it." Two weeks later, they let Liu Xia go.

So the Chinese government, these symbolic measures I think make a real difference, and I think there's no other country on Earth where we meet with them that we force them, you must take your flag down, you can't wear your insignia. Can you imagine meeting with the French and saying, "You can't have the French flag"? Like it's an absurd statement. And the fact that we do this only to Taiwan I think is an indignity that doesn't make any sense.

**Senator Merkley:** I agree with my colleague from Texas that symbols matter, and there are a number of areas where Marco Rubio and I passed legislation that would involve these symbols. That is why we passed them. There are some other things that we should be exploring, like getting rid of the

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special status from the Hong Kong [unclear] sectors, the Chinese Cultural Centers around the United States that are in our universities or in Chinese propaganda.

**Senator Cruz:** By the way, that is two things I happily support you on.

**Senator Merkley:** This is a closer call for me, but I wanted to say that this one, I think, [unclear].

**The Chairman:** Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Yes, I have to agree with Jeff. I think it is a really close call, too, because I agree. I think symbols are important. The reason I come down on the no side is because what I understand from the Taipei administration is that they don't think it is helpful. And if our goal is to be supportive of what is happening with Taiwan -- and I agree with you both. It is an independent country, and it should be an independent country, and we should recognize it that way at some point.

But I do feel like they have a better sense of what is in their interest than we do on this. And so that is how I arrived at the no. I mean, if we heard from Taipei that they thought this would be really helpful to them, and they would really support this effort, then I would feel very differently about it.

**Senator Cruz:** They have certainly not conveyed that to me, so we may be having different conversations with them.

**Senator Hagerty:** Excuse me, Mr. Chair. Reflecting on what Senator Shaheen just said, I look at the other side of this, as well. If it is offered, I intend to support what Senator Cruz has put forward. but I also don't like the optics of

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putting this forward and having it fail. And I think the Chinese would make some hay out of that too. So I am not sure where we are on this, but I would hate to find ourselves in that situation. Even though I intend to support it, I don't want to give them the fodder.

**Senator Cruz:** I agree with that. I am hopeful that will not be the outcome. I don't think it will be.

**Senator Hagerty:** Ok.

**Senator Schatz:** I have a question for Senator Cruz. If we have [unclear] members who are close, but then we vote no, as it is do we want to buy ourselves time to see if we can get closer to unanimity?

**Senator Cruz:** Close to what?

**Senator Schatz:** Unanimity.

[Laughter.]

**Senator Cruz:** You have to explain the big words.

**Senator Schatz:** By my count, right now we've got [unclear] question unclear. Fair enough. I don't know how Rand is going to vote, but just the counting and the plus, if Democrats are not supportive it probably doesn't pass the floor in any case. I just think if we want to enact this, we are not that far from being able to do so if you are willing to buy some time to negotiate.

**Senator Cruz:** I would be open to that if there is something that is going to change. But I am not sure I have heard anything in a month that would change anyone. But I would love to get to a unanimous yes. That would be a very good outcome.

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**Senator Schatz:** I defer to the Ranking Member about whether there is actual deal space or whether we are just not going to get there.

**Senator Shaheen:** Yeah, I mean, Rand may have a different perspective, but I haven't personally talked to folks in the State Department. I haven't personally talked to people representing Taipei here. And I guess that would be helpful to me in making a decision, because I feel like if what I hear is that, yeah, this is helpful, that we should go ahead.

**Senator Coons:** I agree that consulting with the Taipei representatives matters. I'm close to ayes, particularly on the U.S. social media posts is the one I was --

**The Chairman:** Ted, do you want to move this to the next business meeting? I will put it right at the top of the next business meeting. It is up to you.

**Senator Cruz:** If our colleagues on the Democratic side think that waiting a few weeks would be helpful and maybe get you to yes, I would love to get to yes. So I am willing to defer it if we think there is a chance of getting to yes.

**Senator Daines:** Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Senator Paul was next.

**Senator Paul:** I just want to say I was listed as a yes, and persuaded, though, by Senator Shaheen that Taipei doesn't want this. Do we really think we know better for them than they know for themselves? So I would say that now I would be a no, and I would like to wait to hear what Taipei says.

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**Senator Daines:** Mr. Chairman, just a thought. There is likely going to be a summit meeting between Xi Jinping and President Trump in the next couple of months. And I think it might be helpful if we at least did get the State Department's view on it, because they are teeing up the dynamics, and they are trying to de-escalate the situation at the moment. And I think it would be better if we had a real strong voice in this Committee if we are going to take this vote.

So it might be worth just getting some more space for further discussion, especially with Ranking Member Shaheen's comment on what the Taiwanese are saying. I would like to hear that, if that is the case.

**The Chairman:** Senator Cruz, did you want to defer?

**Senator Cruz:** Yeah, I am willing to defer.

**The Chairman:** We will hold this until --

**Senator Shaheen:** Can I just say, maybe we can have a joint meeting with them --

**Senator Cruz:** I would be happy to.

**Senator Shaheen:** -- and whoever else might be interested from the committee. That would be helpful.

**The Chairman:** Stick with me for just a minute here. We are going to move to an en bloc package, a voice vote on eight bills. You all have that in your book and have it in front of you. These are ones that we have hammered out, and I believe we have got unanimity on.

And so with that, is there a motion to send these eight bills out with a do pass recommendation?

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**Senator Kaine:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** And second?

**Senator Merkley:** Mr. Chairman, I have a comment before we vote.

**The Chairman:** I will get to that. Is there a second.

**Senator Shaheen:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved and seconded that we send the eight bills out.

Senator Merkley.

**Senator Merkley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So on the timeline of the Security Act, I have a lot of reservations about the advocacy of [unclear] Taiwan. The first thing we need to recognize is when we expand LNG exports, the greater the cost of gas here in the United States. And our families are feeling pressed to the wall. The short commentary on this is, "continued growth in exports of LNG facilities will place additional pressure on natural gas prices in the United States." Energy Information Administration says, "Higher LNG exports create a tighter domestic natural gas market increasing natural gas prices." It is basic economics.

And we are sitting here right now, at the moment, our country is freezing. A whole lot of gas is being burned. A whole lot of families are worried about paying the bill. And it is the short-term impact that raises the cost in America.

The second is increasing LNG exports to Taiwan increases the vulnerability of Taiwan's energy infrastructure. Why is that? Because it is delivered in tankers, and tankers create great vulnerability to a potential

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blockade under Chinese pressure.

What I have suggested, and I do appreciate the cooperation to put the language into this bill, is that what we should really be looking at is diverting the LNG that we export to China to Taiwan. Why are we helping China's economy when they are already thriving, and they are our major competitors? We have the stats on that in 2024, we sent 213 billion cubic feet of natural gas to China, 118 to Taiwan. Instead of increasing LNG exports and increasing prices here at home, how about we work to convert what goes to China to go to Taiwan? It creates, by the way, the issues were raised, well, what about the storage? Well, that's the same question, whether we are delivering LNG directly to Taiwan or whether we are diverting natural gas from China to Taiwan.

And so I have asked for others in here to provide a study, and that study, the National Academy of Sciences, we are going to hear [unclear]. We look at the feasibility of that. You know, it is a compromise. I would prefer that this bill not be passed. But then I also want to note that as we advocate for more fossil fuels driving the entire global economy, what we are advocating for is climate change that is having tremendous impact across the United States.

It certainly has a huge impact in my home state. Over the last 90 years we have got almost a 50 percent reduction in the average snowpack in the Cascades. What does that do? That means less water for our farmers, less water for our streams. We have got a changing ecosystem off the coast affecting some of the most productive fisheries in the entire world with the [unclear] nutrients and the California Current.

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There is a lot at risk there with what we are undertaking, and for all of these reasons I would prefer that we simply be sending less to China, more to Taiwan. Let's use that strategy. Let's not raise the energy prices here at home. Let's not make the climate problem worse.

**Senator Ricketts:** May I address that?

**The Chairman:** Before you do that, I am going to ask that we do all of these on a voice vote. Anyone who wants to be recorded as voting no on any of these, we will do that, Senator Merkley, if that is Ok with you.

**Senator Merkley:** I will be recorded as a no vote.

**The Chairman:** Senator Ricketts was next.

**Senator Ricketts:** Ok. I was just going to say, I certainly appreciate where Senator Merkley is coming from on this. There is a lot more in this bill, including China's support of nuclear energy. So it is not just about fossil fuels in this. And while this bill directs the U.S. Government to work with Taiwan, there is nothing that would prevent them from doing what you are talking about, diverting things from China. And I think that as far as trying to assure Taiwan -- the purpose of this bill is to make sure that China cannot do an energy embargo. I think to do that we need to make sure that we have given whichever administration might face that potential, a really terrible scenario, the most flexibility that that would do it, which is why I would be hesitant to try and restrict specifically to moving LNG from China to Taiwan, because that might be provocative, too.

So I think we want to give the government flexibility to figure out how to

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do this, and certainly your comment about prices at home I would think would be the way into whatever administration is working on this, as well. So that is why I would think that -- I think we should pass this as is, and let the government have the flexibility to address the issues you talked about.

**The Chairman:** Senator Coons.

**Senator Coons:** I appreciate the sense of a compromise offered by Senator Merkley. I have enjoyed working with Senator Ricketts on this bill. Our most recent visit together with Taiwan made it more sharply clear to me than ever that they are genuinely vulnerable to an energy embargo, and we should do everything we can to encourage them to restart their nuclear power plant and to provide reliable alternative sources of energy, whether natural gas or otherwise. Because I think this is the most likely point of pressure for the PRC to try and take them over or reduce their sovereignty.

So thank you, Senator Ricketts.

**Senator Kaine:** Mr. Chair.

**The Chairman:** Yes.

**Senator Kaine:** I just want to offer thanks. Two of the bills in this package are those I have worked on, and I want to thank Senator Cornyn for working together on U.S. Legal Gold and Mining Partnership Act, and then Senator Cassidy on the Protecting Global Fisheries Act. Thank you for including these in the mark-up.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

Ok. So now I intend --

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**Senator Van Hollen:** Mr. Chairman, very quickly --

**The Chairman:** Yes.

**Senator Van Hollen:** Very quickly, if I could just thank Senator Curtis for working together on the Taiwan Allies Fund Act and with Senator Rounds on the [inaudible].

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

**Senator Van Hollen:** Thank you.

**The Chairman:** I have the eight items on the agenda. I entertain a motion that we take a voice vote en bloc, as amended by the noticed amendments, and that anyone who wishes to be recorded as no will be recorded as no.

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**Senator Shaheen:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved and seconded. Senate Bill 2722, Senate Bill 2222, Senate Bills 3496, 3249, 3360, 1216, 1369, and 2236, for anyone who can't read.

The motion has been made and duly seconded. All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed, nay.

The ayes have it. Anyone who wishes to be recorded as no will be done so.

**Senator Merkley:** I wish to be recorded as a no on the Taiwan Energy

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Security and Anti-Embargo Act.

**The Chairman:** You will be so recorded, Senator.

I ask unanimous consent staff be authorized to make technical and conforming changes, and members of the Committee be permitted to submit requests to the clerk in writing to be recorded on any of the items. Without objection, so ordered.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

**[Whereupon, at 10:45 a.m., the business meeting was adjourned.]**

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