

# Indivisible Meets

## New Mexico's Senator Ben Ray Lujan's Staff

### Thanks and Questions

### MEETING NOTES

April 16, 2026, 1 PM, by zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81617017811?pwd=leDNklAwlL1pfJabjskcG0ampxEs8F.1>

Participants: Nancy Burkey, Mitch Chapman, Judy Johnson, Charlotte Perry, Pam Rogers  
Joellen Schilmoeller, Leeondra Schuler, Oscar Simpson Andrea Slade, Paul Dirdak  
Staff: Graham Mason

#### RETURNING from February Notes:

1. **Any progress on the issue of retiree pay for USPHS officers during a government shutdown?** Mary Murphy provided you with contact information to the Commissioned Officers' Association for your colleagues' use to make headway on the issue.

**Brooke agreed to follow up with Graham to secure the information that Mary sent to him and to speak with Sophia about progress toward resolution of the inequity that Mary and her peers are experiencing. Mary is an able spokesperson for an entire class of federal retirees whose pension payments are not shutdown-protected as are the majority of uniformed service retirees.**

Brook was traveling out of the country at the time of our meeting, but Graham knew that she has been meeting with stakeholders including the Military Officers Association of America to assess support and possible legislation. Seems as though some movement is under way. Graham knows the MOAA from years of cooperation. He believes that someone else is working on a bill in the House. "So, we're kicking the tires and doing the due diligence." We're taking the issue.

#### Gratitude:

- Thanks to the Senator for attending our March meeting. He added his own fervor to our condemnation of all lawless damage he and we experienced over these

months of the Trump administration and the capitulation of his party's total congressional delegation.

- Thank the Senator for joining No Kings 3 in Santa Fe. He was forceful “No Kings! No Bull!” And was very well received. He also was exactly as brief as requested while the rest of the less experienced speakers were decidedly not. So, thanks again.
- We are grateful that Senator Lujan was able to secure \$3M for the new MRI scanner at the UNM Health Sciences Center.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/u-n-m-sen-luj-223517223.html>

- Congratulations to Senator Lujan for being named a James Beard Foundation Impact Award honoree. We very much appreciate his work on the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition, including working to prevent hunger by supporting SNAP benefits and ensuring the efficient functioning of the essential components of our vital food system. Senator Lujan is always thinking about the importance of the people being affected by the actions of our federal government.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/new-mexico-senator-named-as-james-beard-foundation-impact-award-honoree/ar-AA1ZPz9f>

- Thank the Senator for voting against confirmation of Markwayne Mullin. His colleague could stand a dose of Lujan ethics.

## Questions

### 1. Iran War Powers Resolution and the 25th

Once again, the Senate failed to pass a war powers resolution despite the even more despicable threat against a “whole civilization” by an American President. Beyond the pale illegal, immoral, un-American.

**What is your impression of the impact of so many people calling for the 25<sup>th</sup>?**

**We are hearing the Senator's voters. Lately they have been mad –now they are really, really, scared. The naked wizard threatened a “civilization” and with the gall to invoke Alah as though it were a joke. Has he not abdicated?  
BTW: Not one more dime for war.**

“WASHINGTON, April 8 (Reuters) - U.S. lawmakers will try again next week to pass a resolution to halt the Iran war and force President Donald Trump to obtain Congress' approval for any further attacks, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said on Wednesday, “Trump's threat that “a whole civilization will die tonight” prompted global concern and censure from Democrats, dozens of whom called for Trump's removal from office. The 1949 Geneva Conventions on humanitarian conduct in war prohibit attacks on sites considered essential for civilians.”

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2026-04-08/us-senate-to-vote-on-resolution-to-curb-trumps-iran-war-powers>

While the efforts to apply “the 25<sup>th</sup>” are understandable and picking up steam, the greater issue is that “madness and insanity” is contagious across the R party, not just in the White House. And when Rs declare an occasional responsible position, they are the same ones who are predictably inconsistent over time. Graham reminded us that Senator Lujan is one of only two who voted to impeach when he was in the House and then was elected to the Senate just in time to also vote to convict. We had learned of this in past meetings and conclude that the Senator is clear about Trump's violation of his oath in that past and on-going. The night before our meeting, the Senate had another war powers vote and no Rs supported it. Again. In the House, only Massey is consistently with us on this. During the Obama years, his administration wanted a red line on chemical weapons and Syria, but the Rs insisted on his getting congressional authorization, so they sent it to Congress and the Rs all voted it down. Now, the same Republicans won't defend congressional authorization.

“It's a dangerous time, a uniquely dangerous time.”

Graham said that so far, the Dems in the Senate “remain opposed to” the \$200B increase for defense.

Leeondra highlighted the historic role that Dems have played in stopping wars. If that is to happen, it will likely be our side that does it. Funding it would be the opposite of stopping it.

The world is seeing that we are in this war because of Netanyahu and therefore, Schumer's continued support for Israel is really harming our party. All the more reason to be really grateful for Senator Lujan's immediate vote in support of Senator Sanders' bill to deny increased funding for IDF.

Graham reminded that of the 40 Senators to support the Sanders bill, it started out two years ago with only 15 and Senator Lujan was one of the originals.

## 2. The Forest Service

Recent reports indicate that Trump is effectively dismantling the USFS, including closing all regional offices, including Albuquerque. This is presumably a prelude to allowing the plundering of resources or trying to privatize FS lands. This has gotten very little play in the media that I have seen. **Can the Senator use his podium to raise awareness about this so as to get pressure on Rs to stop this? Is there any support among Senate Rs to stop this?**

From Bill McKibben:

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/the-forest-service-a-force-across-rural-america-reorganizes-under-trump>

Graham reported that a letter about the Forest Service was being drafted by Senators Lujan and Klobuchar. We noted that Senator Lee's earlier threats to public lands was met by certain R Senator's objections and asked whether those could possibly become allies on behalf of the Forest Service.

Graham allowed as how he's been disappointed in how little constituent pushback, measured by calls to R Senators, there has been on the Forest Service issue.

We in Indivisible can do something about that.

Enlist Indivisibles in red states.

### 2.5 The Boundary Waters Mining Regulation Overturn in MN

This concern had arisen for us since our pre-meeting a week before this meeting. Graham explained that Congress had voted to proceed with overturning a regulatory protection for mining in the Boundary Waters area of Minnesota using the Congressional Review Act, which he noted was concerning as it could potentially allow undoing 125 different rules, many of which are environmental. Leeandra asked about protecting our state from this action, and Graham indicated that while Democrats have unified support, protecting the rules would likely require a 60-vote threshold in legislation.

This is the first time that a public land, created 3 years ago, has been reversed using a CRA after the fact. The mining company is a multi-billion-dollar Chilean copper mining company.

The group discussed the potential cascade effects of this action. What makes it worse is that the Trump administration declares policies of Departments that they want to abandon to be rules whether they had that status or not. Then, they use the Congressional Review Act to overturn the policy by a party-line vote. The reclassifying move at the outset is new and potentially dangerous. California's vehicle emissions standards are a current example. But what bears more research is how to use the same precedent to our constructive advantage once it has been put in play destructively. It is a new maneuver in the Senate, so some deep thinking is in order.

Graham: "What goes around, comes around. No majority is forever. When you start doing things like this, the archaic rules of the Senate mean that you have opened a door, and you also opened it for the rest of us." (Edited for written logic. PD)

### 3. FISA

The FISA Section 702 is set to expire April 20, 2026.

**Where does this stand with the Senate? Do you anticipate there will be any changes made to FISA to ensure the privacy of American Citizens?**

**Is there any momentum with the bipartisan bill introduced by Senators Durbin and Lee?**

**Is Senator Lujan in support of the SAFE Act or does he have any reservations about it?**

Senate Committee on the Judiciary

"February, Durbin and U.S. Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) reintroduced the [\*Security and Freedom Enhancement \(SAFE\) Act\*](#)—a bipartisan bill that would reauthorize Section 702 with common sense reforms to protect Americans' privacy."

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/3893>

<https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/press/dem/releases/durbin-calls-for-reforms-to-fisa-section-702-ahead-of-its-expiration-next-month>

Brennan Center

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/section-702-foreign-intelligence-surveillance-act-fisa-2026-resource-page>

The administration's desire for a straight extension of FISA is complicated by the same administration's past abuse of surveillance powers. The House has struggled to pass corrective legislation due to a rather complete lack of trust between the chamber and the Trump administration.

We noted the apparent cooperation between Senators Durban and Lee to pass the related SAFE Act.

Joellen added that recent actions by the administration, including gutting the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Committee and shutting down the FBI office that detects surveillance misuse, further highlight the seriousness of the FISA 702 issue.

Graham recalled that Senator Lujan voted with Senator Durban on the latter's bill to strengthen the judicial warrant requirement in the last Congress.

The Rs got a two-year extension in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress in order to have time to negotiate greater civil protections, but now they want no improvements at all. So much for negotiations. They just blow through whatever trust might have been built.

So, the House is still having trouble getting the unamended authorization passed and over to the Senate. Thune may just get the Senate process started on his own, but it would require 60 votes.

#### **4. The Leader and the Brand**

It is troubling and worse that Sen. Schumer continues to support milk-toast Democrats like Angie Craig over a candidate like Peggy Flannigan, who is much stronger on resistance to the Trump regime.

It is an open Senate seat in MN – there is no need at all for Schumer to pick the least spirited option. There is no incumbent to protect. Sen. Schumer should be the leader of the entire Democratic party, but he has historically low approval ratings and widely disliked among the base. **When is Sen. Schumer going to be replaced with a leader of Senate Dems who can be a leader of all Dems and who can begin to rebuild confidence in the Democratic Party and who will not reflexively support establishment candidates?**

The Democratic brand is in the toilet with voters. Voters simply don't believe in Dems. Voters need bold ideas from Dems if are going to change their negative views of the Party such that Democrats can retain power long term.

**What are Senate Dems doing as a caucus to revive the Democratic brand?**

**If Democrats win the White House against a GOP's failed attempt to defend the indefensible, who will lead us to be the party that is not the "sore winner," but lead the American win, the win of constitutionalism?**

**The question of leader and the question of brand are the same question.**

The focus on the MN race allowed this conversation to get more specific than it had been in the past. Staff assured us that our ire about Schumer has consequences for the MN election which will be described to our Senator as we believe that that election will affect Lujan's alliances going forward. There is no reason for Schumer to support one MN candidate over the other and Flanagan does not need such artificial headwinds.

The conversation then shifted to the procedural vote of the previous evening that allowed the rule challenge under "Congressional Review" that is discussed here in item 2.5 above. Leondra raised the matter of the vulnerability of, as she understood it, 125 rules that benefit NM. See above.

## **5. Mifepristone:**

"Sen. [Josh Hawley](#) (R-Mo.) on Wednesday unveiled legislation to remove Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for the use of mifepristone to end pregnancies," <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/5779756-hawley-fda-approval-mifepristone/?tbref=hp>

**How would you assess the reception of this bill within the Senate? Have you heard of any Democratic senators that are considering supporting this bill? Is there any chance that this will get out of committee, get a floor vote, or be included in some other bill (reconciliation)?**

This Act may be cited as the "Safeguarding Women from Chemical Abortion Act". <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/TAM26317.pdf>

Graham explained that Democrats do not support actions such as this and that it would require 60 votes, but that an adjacent concern would be R's continuing efforts to defund Planned Parenthood where a simple majority would apply.

## **6. A final question was asked off of the agenda: Can Pam Bondi be held in contempt?**

A: Sure, if you have control of at least one house. So, win, win, win....

## **For the Record for Democrats.**

**These are pieces that will still be useful examples long after the immediate concern is past. We add them as they occur and as we choose to preserve them here for future provocative encouragement.**

**[Mark Carney on American Hegemony \(at Davos\) “](#)**

**[John Pavlovich: Dear Pam Bondi: A Letter from a Father](#)**

**[Teresa Leger Fernandez Interviewed by Heather Cox Richardson \(October 2025\).](#)**

**[Senator Jon Ossoff connects the dots: “The Epstein Class” \(Feb.7, 2026\)](#)**

**[The Democrats’ Response \(Governor Spanberger\) to Trump’s SOTU](#)**

**[The Santa Fe County Commission’s “Declaration of Independence.”](#)**

**Stewart Stevens, Head of The Lincoln Project and a never-Trump Republican: from Ukraine on Ukraine, [“Russia is a terrorist state...,”](#)**

**[Joyce Vance and Andrew Weissman](#) recall their early careers under the leadership of Robert Mueller days after his death. A moving and insightful tour of our civics within the rule of law.**

**[Norm Eisen’s questions that Markwayne Mullin should answer before any and every House or Senate Committee.](#)**

**[Jon Ossoff’s speech in Atlanta connecting the dots on corruption in American politics \(April 11, 2026\):](#)**