

the welfare of the American people for us to step up to the plate and get this done this week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, less than 2 months ago, at his inauguration, President Biden spoke about his deep commitment to bringing Americans together.

Today, the Senate will consider the first major bill of his Presidency, an intensely partisan piece of legislation. Why is the bill before us today so partisan? It is not because Republicans were unwilling to cooperate with Democrats on COVID legislation. In fact—in fact—Republicans made it very clear that we were willing to work with Democrats.

No, the bill before us today is so heavily partisan because Democrats didn't want to work with Republicans. Democrats saw an opportunity to use the COVID crisis to advance a whole host of liberal priorities, and they were afraid that allowing Republicans to participate in the process would mean that some of their pet projects would be excluded or that they would have to pare back some of their more profligate spending.

So Democrats decided to use reconciliation to ensure that Republicans wouldn't be able to interfere with their Democratic legislation. And let's be very clear about the nature of that legislation. Democrats would like to present this as a COVID bill. It is not. Yes, there are a handful of true COVID priorities in this legislation, such as more money for vaccines and coronavirus treatment, something that I think everybody here on both sides of the aisle supports. But the bulk of this bill is either non-COVID-related or ostensibly COVID-related but, actually, either unnecessary or excessive.

On the non-COVID front, there is the \$86 billion bailout for multiemployer pension plans, the billions for climate change and other environmental policy issues, a new taxpayer-funded leave program for government employees with no requirement that it be used for COVID-19, and I could go on.

The version of the bill that came over from the House contained such non-COVID-related measures as \$100 million for an underground rail project in the House Speaker's home State and \$1.5 million for a bridge in the Democratic leader's home State, plus a massive increase in the Federal minimum wage that would cost an estimated 1.4 million jobs, according to the Congressional Budget Office, and potentially—potentially—devastate small businesses already reeling from the effects of the coronavirus.

Then there are the ostensibly COVID-related measures, such as \$350 billion for States. So what is the big problem there? Well, States don't need anywhere near that much money to weather the rest of the pandemic. The vast majority of States are not in crisis,

and rescuing those States that are not in crisis would not take anywhere close to \$350 billion. Democrats are going to spend hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars on an unnecessary giveaway to States, and on top of that, that giveaway is heavily, heavily weighted in favor of blue States. That is right. The distribution formula is designed to heavily favor Democratic States.

Well, then there is the money for schools. Now, Republicans have been very willing to give schools money to help them reopen. In fact, last year, when Republicans were in the majority—which, by the way, during that time we passed five COVID-19 relief bills, all with bipartisan cooperation and support, at the 60-vote level that we use here in the Senate for most legislation that we take up under regular order—but we put a lot of money into giving schools money to help them reopen. In fact, Republicans voted for \$68 billion for K-12 schools.

At this point, that money is sufficient. Schools have spent just \$5 billion of the \$68 billion that we have already provided. Let me repeat that. So far, schools have spent just \$5 billion, or less than 10 percent, of the \$68 billion that has already been given to them.

Yet the Democrats' bill would appropriate an additional \$129 billion for schools, 95 percent of which would be spent after this year—the year of the crisis, the year of the emergency, the year of the pandemic. You would think that, if this was a crisis, the funding would be made available to be used this year, but it is not. It is spent in the years 2022 to 2028.

Do Democrats really expect Americans to believe that school dollars that won't be spent until 2027 or 2028 are urgently needed coronavirus response dollars? This is the pattern with this bill, though.

We just passed a large coronavirus relief bill in December, the fifth coronavirus relief bill that Congress has passed, and a lot of the money from that bill hasn't been spent yet. In fact, a lot of money from earlier coronavirus bills has not been spent. Yet Democrats are throwing massive additional amounts of money at various recipients with no idea—no clear idea—of whether or not that money will be needed or, in some cases, when we know very well that that money isn't needed.

Republicans will be introducing amendments to the Democrats' bill. I am introducing an amendment to undo the Biden administration's freeze on the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, which has provided support for farmers and ranchers who have been hit hard by the pandemic.

I hope some of my less extreme Democratic colleagues will join Republicans to advance some of our amendments, such as Senator GRAHAM's amendment to change the distribution formula for States to the formula used in the bipartisan CARES Act, which passed unanimously here in the Senate,

so that both red and blue States would get a fair shot at funding, or amendments to remove those provisions that are in no way related to COVID relief.

Unfortunately, Democratic leaders have made it very clear that they are not willing to entertain Republican ideas. So I don't have a lot of confidence that Republican amendments, even if adopted, will end up in the final bill.

It is deeply disappointing that pretty much the first thing Democrats did this Congress was to take a bipartisan process—the coronavirus relief—and make it partisan. All five—all five—of the coronavirus bills that Congress has passed to date—last year, when Republicans were in the majority—were bipartisan. This bill could have been bipartisan, too, but Democrats decided that Republicans and the Americans that they represent should not have a voice in this legislation.

Is this what the rest of the Biden Presidency is going to look like? I sure hope not, because it is going to be really hard—really hard—to come up with solutions that are durable and that represent the middle of the country—those people whose voices are not heard in the legislation that we will be taking up today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### CONCERNS OVER NATIONS FUNDING UNIVERSITY CAMPUS INSTITUTES IN THE UNITED STATES ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to talk a few minutes about the good people of China, about Confucius Institutes, and the Chinese Communist Party.

I meant what I said when I referred to “the good people of China.” You visited China, Mr. President. The people of China are wonderful people. They are engaging. They are smart. They have a great sense of humor. They have built an extraordinary economy.

I wish I could say the same about their authoritarian government, but I can't. The Communist Party of China is trying to not only swallow China, it is trying to swallow the world.

We helped the Communist Party of China be admitted into the World Trade Organization. We were told that if we did, they would embrace free enterprise. We were told that the Communist Party of China would be a valuable participant in a stable world order. None of that has come to be the case.

We know what the Communist Party of China has done to Hong Kong. We know what the Communist Party of China has done to the Uighurs. We know what the Communist Party of China has done to the wonderful, wonderful people of Tibet. But I did want to make that distinction between the authoritarian government of the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people.

The Communist Party of China, being as aggressive as it is, has for a number of years reached out to our colleges and universities to establish what the Communist Party of China calls "Confucius Institutes." And this was the pitch made by the government of China to our universities: "We will give you bucket loads of money if you"—our American universities—"will allow us to establish Confucius Institutes where we can explain our culture to the young people of America, where we can have a free exchange of ideas, and where we can help young Americans learn the Chinese language if they would like."

That sounds great. You know, I will take a dozen of those. But the Communist Party of China being the Communist Party of China, that is not how our Confucius Institutes have worked out.

These institutes, run by the authoritarian Government of China, will not allow the free exchange of ideas. They will not allow anyone to talk about the Uighurs or the people of Tibet or Hong Kong or what happened at Tiananmen Square. They basically—"they" meaning the Communist Party of China—have used these Confucius Institutes as propaganda arms of their government.

Many of our universities have done the right thing. They have said: No, we stand for the free exchange of ideas, and if you are going to come on our campus and tell our people that there are things they can't talk about, then, respectfully, you need—you, the Confucius Institutes—to leave our campus.

But some of the universities haven't done the right thing. I am not suggesting that—I am not cynical enough to suggest that it is all about the money, but you can't ignore the fact that I think the Communist Party of China has given our universities, through the years—don't hold me to this figure exactly—but about \$150 million to set up these Confucius Institutes. Universities, you know, they build that money into their budget, so they are reluctant to see the Confucius Institutes leave—not all of our universities but some of them. I recognize the economic reality.

I have a bill that would say to—we wouldn't get rid of Confucius Institutes. It will just tell our universities: You have to properly manage them. You can't allow the Confucius Institutes to stay on your campus if the Confucius Institutes will not allow for the free exchange of ideas.

If kids—I shouldn't call them kids. If young people in our universities want to talk about Tibet, they get to talk about Tibet. And the bill would say that the universities have to take back control of these Confucius Institutes from the Communist Party of China; otherwise, they are not going to be eligible for Federal funds.

My bill, once again, doesn't kick anybody off campus. It just says you have to—you, the Communist Party of China, have to do what you originally told us you were going to do.

My bill has—our bill, because the Senate passed it twice. Twice this bill has passed the U.S. Senate, the last time with bipartisan support. We put the bill on the NDAA, and, Mr. President, you know how conference committees work with the NDAA. Sometimes it is a ferret fire drill, and there is a lot of confusion, and somehow the Confucius Institute bill got watered down to do nothing in the conference negotiations on the NDAA. I am not criticizing anybody, but it happened.

So I am going to ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass the Confucius Institute Act for a third time, and I hope, in our new Congress, we can keep teeth in it in working with our colleagues, not only in the Senate but in the House.

Toward that end, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 590, introduced earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 590) to establish limitations regarding Confucius Institutes, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 590) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 590

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Concerns Over Nations Funding University Campus Institutes in the United States Act" or the "CONFUCIUS Act".

#### SEC. 2. RESTRICTIONS ON CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES.

(a) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term "Confucius Institute" means a cultural institute directly or indirectly funded by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

(b) RESTRICTIONS ON CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES.—An institution of higher education or other postsecondary educational institution (referred to in this section as an "institution") shall not be eligible to receive Federal funds from the Department of Education (except funds under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et seq.) or other Department of Education funds that are provided directly to students) unless the institution ensures that any contract or agreement between the institution and a Confucius Institute includes clear provisions that—

(1) protect academic freedom at the institution;

(2) prohibit the application of any foreign law on any campus of the institution; and

(3) grant full managerial authority of the Confucius Institute to the institution, including full control over what is being

taught, the activities carried out, the research grants that are made, and who is employed at the Confucius Institute.

#### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, since we have a few minutes here—I think Senator SANDERS is supposed to be next—I just thought I would take a few minutes to talk about President Biden's coronavirus bill.

Let me see if I can explain why so many of my Republican colleagues—and I am a part of that—are disappointed in the bill. This bill will be our sixth coronavirus bill. I don't think anybody, any fair-minded person, can accuse the U.S. Senate, both Democrats and Republicans, of not trying to respond to this devastating virus and the economic problems it has created.

I have been very proud, within the first five bills, that we did it on a bipartisan basis. We spent a lot of money, about \$4 trillion. That is 4-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0 taxpayer dollars. And, of course, we don't even have 5 percent of that. We borrowed every bit of it. It is a staggering sum. But we did it because we had a crisis. We had to deal with it. That is what we were sent up here to do. We did it on a bipartisan basis. But this, the last bill, President Biden's most recent bill—we call it the \$1.9 trillion bill—we haven't done it on a bipartisan basis. I am disappointed in that.

I understand politics. The Presiding Officer does too. But I listened very carefully to President Biden throughout the campaign and in his 6 weeks of this administration, and he said very clearly and repeatedly: You know, I want to work with everybody. What I heard him say to the Republicans was: You know, I want to meet you halfway.

I don't mean any disrespect, but if that is the case, either he or the people around him are not very good judges of distance.

It has been made very clear to us that there would be no negotiations on this bill and that President Biden decided to proceed to reconciliation, which only requires a majority. And I think we both expect there to be 50 Democratic votes in favor of this bill and 50 Republican votes against it, and Vice President HARRIS will break the tie. That is not a bipartisan bill, and I regret that, and I think it could have been different.

You know, we can debate about whether we need \$1.9 trillion, and I understand there are good arguments on both sides. I have heard the arguments, and I have listened carefully to my Democratic friends explain why they think we need it. There is another side of the story, and that is that, thank the Lord, we enjoyed 4 percent GDP growth last quarter. Most economists reckon that we will have about 6 percent GDP growth this year. The American people have about \$1.6 trillion in excess savings. We have all this liquidity that, as soon as it is allowed to be