

For 4 years, former President Trump turned a blind eye and gave Putin a free pass. In the history of our country, Americans had never seen a President of the United States support an adversary the way Trump supported President Putin on that stage in Helsinki nearly 3 years ago. We all remember President Trump standing next to Vladimir Putin and taking the word of a Russian intelligence officer over America's intelligence agencies.

Trump not only defended Putin repeatedly from accusations of election interference, he actually announced—if you believe this, stranger than fiction—that the United States and Russia would set up a joint cyber security unit. Even Senator GRAHAM said that it wasn't "the dumbest idea [he'd] ever heard, but it [was] . . . close."

Now, President Biden must take the exact opposite approach. The United States must approach Vladimir Putin with a firm hand and demand accountability in a way that President Trump never did. I expect President Biden will do exactly that.

One issue I am particularly concerned about is cyber security and the rise of ransomware attacks on the critical infrastructure of the United States. Many of those cyber criminals, unsurprisingly, may be hiding out in Putin's Russia or potentially connected to Putin's intelligence agencies.

Here at home, I have called on Congress to significantly boost funding for our cyber fighting Agencies and asked our Senate committees to study if we need new legislation to help counter the threat of cyber attacks.

Abroad, President Biden has an opportunity to pressure Putin directly to put an end to Russian-supported cyber crime. I expect he will. The President has smartly made these issues a priority among our NATO allies, announcing a host of joint actions to combat cyber crime, harden our cyber security, and condemn Russian aggression in the cyber space. It is time to take the issue directly to Vladimir Putin himself.

For 4 years, former President Trump berated our allies while emboldening and sometimes embracing the world's dictators and autocrats, Vladimir Putin above all. Already, President Biden's first foreign trip is a welcome turn of the page in America's relationship with the world.

#### DOMESTIC TERRORISM

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, on one final matter, QAnon, last December, I joined with Senator HEINRICH and other Democrats to ask the FBI and DHS to provide a written assessment on the dangers posed by the online conspiracy group QAnon.

They recently responded to our request with a very sobering assessment. The threat of QAnon is likely to persist, and the current environment will likely continue to spur QAnon adherents to see violence as a legitimate course of action. The assessment also

expresses that QAnon adherents and domestic violent extremists will likely shift from acting digitally to engaging in real world violence. That is a shot across our bow. That is a warning signal.

QAnon today is perhaps best known for the role it played in inspiring many of the rioters who assaulted the U.S. Capitol on January 6. According to the FBI's assessment, they arrested 20 self-identified adherents who participated in the insurrection. But even before the horrific events on January 6, QAnon supporters spread disinformation that amplified hatred and violence and threatened our democratic institutions.

The past 4 years have seen a notable increase in violent domestic terrorism, fed by a host of lies and conspiracies that flourished under the Trump era. This assessment by the FBI is a stark reminder that we have a lot of work to do to tamp down conspiracy theories and disinformation as well as monitoring and thwarting violent domestic extremists.

And to my Republican Senate colleagues, I would add that this report further strengthens the argument for an independent January 6 Commission.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 1 week ago today, the personal financial information of several prominent Americans was made public in only the latest leak of sensitive data from the Internal Revenue Service. To put it another way, it appears that an anonymous source committed a felony by releasing the confidential information of American citizens, which a media outlet then published. Now, the way this leak has been covered in the press may not suggest it, but the most alarming part isn't whose information was involved; it is how it was allowed to happen at all—at all.

The American people know that having the personal information they give to the IRS made public isn't just a fear reserved for the highest earners. On multiple occasions in the last decade, individuals and organizations alike have had to watch as their filing details wander far from the IRS's databases. And it goes beyond pay stubs. The IRS holds massive storage of sensitive details, from healthcare expenses, to retirement savings, to charitable contributions. They hold addresses, information about dependents, and associations with organizations that may not be tax-deductible.

Needless to say, there are good arguments for paring back the scope of what information this Agency is al-

lowed to collect in the first place. But here is the bottom line: American taxpayers are required by law to comply with invasive disclosure requirements, and they are doing it with less and less confidence that the Federal Government will honor their trust.

A fundamental piece of our Nation's social contract is fraying, but just how worried you should be about it apparently depends on your personal politics. The precise circumstances of this latest leak have not yet been made clear, but the recent history of IRS negligence and outright political targeting tells conservatives to be especially worried.

As our colleagues remember all too well, years ago, the State of California's database of private donor data for over 1,000 nonprofit organizations was made public illegally. A few years later, confidential IRS donor information from a conservative organization's tax filings was published. To no one's surprise, that information made its way into the hands of liberal groups with opposite views on key issues. Of course, we are talking about the same IRS that made slow-walking requests and filings from conservative organizations a matter of internal policy under the last Democratic administration.

So these situations all have two things in common: first, a blatant political agenda aimed at advancing the cause of the political left, and second, the utter absence of criminal charges against the leakers—no charges against the leakers.

So let's be clear. As soon as sensitive personal information is leaked, the damage is already done. The genie can't be put back in the bottle, and the Federal Government has proven far too often that it is at best, incapable and at worse, unwilling to protect taxpayers' data from misuse by the political left. That is why I have been outspoken in support of efforts to reduce taxpayers' exposure to unnecessary IRS collection in the first place.

But every time a leak goes without serious investigation and criminal prosecution, basic public trust in our tax system suffers, and that fraying trust may eventually be irreparable. That is why I joined Ranking Member GRASSLEY and Ranking Member CRAPO to demand that the Department of Justice and the FBI immediately investigate last week's leak and aggressively pursue criminal charges against those who are responsible—actual consequences as a matter of justice and as a practical deterrent. The Federal Government owes taxpayers nothing less.

Unfortunately, thus far, the Biden administration hasn't just neglected to aggressively prosecute overt discrimination; in some cases, it is actually trying to promote it.

Take the massive spending package Democrats rammed through in the name of COVID relief. The spending bill was billed as urgent, but its authors apparently had time to bake in a provision directing relief funds to restaurants on the basis of race and sex

and another directing funds to farmers on the basis of race. So we are talking about blatantly unconstitutional discrimination.

Fortunately, the independent judiciary has stepped in to stop it. Over the last few weeks, multiple Federal courts have struck down these provisions, including an appeals panel led by Judge Amul Thapar from my home State of Kentucky. But these are hardly the only instances in which Washington Democrats have tried to impose their own radical preferences on ordinary Americans.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later today, the Senate will vote on the nomination of Kiran Ahuja, President Biden's choice to serve as head of the Office of Personnel Management. This is the position responsible for making hiring, payroll, and training decisions that affect literally millions of Federal employees.

The President's nominee has made statements expressing sympathy for the discredited, ahistorical claims about our Nation's origins that form the backbone of so-called critical race theory. One major organization of Federal employees expressed its concern about the nominee's capacity for "neutrality, fairness, and impartiality." I share those concerns, and I will be voting against this nomination.

Still elsewhere in the Biden administration, efforts to subvert the basic understanding of our founding principles are already well underway. The Department of Education's latest "proposed priorities" run roughshod over existing history and civic programs—established with bipartisan support—in order to push critical race theory on public school students and keep pace with "woke" sensibilities.

American students deserve a rock-solid civics education grounded in actual facts, not divisive propaganda that tells them they are little more than a product of their racial background. That is the basis of new legislation I was proud to help introduce this week. Schools that choose to trade in fact-based curricula for activist propaganda like the 1619 Project forfeit their right to receive Federal education grant funding for those teachings.

The current administration came to power on the promise to unify a divided nation. It will be judged closely and carefully on how that power is used.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Lina M. Khan, of New York, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the unexpired term of seven years from September 26, 2017.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, unfortunately, predictions about the negative economic effects of the so-called American Rescue Plan seem to be coming true.

In March, Democrats pushed through this massive partisan spending bill. They claimed it was urgently needed COVID funding. In reality, the bill was filled with unnecessary spending, from a staggering \$350 billion slush fund for States, a majority of which didn't need any more government money to weather the rest of the pandemic, to almost \$129 billion for schools, even though schools had spent just a tiny fraction of the tens of billions of dollars Congress had already given them.

At the time, Republicans warned about the bill's level of spending. More than just one liberal economist warned about the size of Democrats' spending plan, with former Obama adviser Larry Summers noting that the bill could "set off inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation."

Well, it turns out he was right to be worried. Last week, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released its report on May's consumer prices, and the news was not good. Inflation reached its highest level in nearly 13 years, with consumer prices up 5 percent from a year ago. Core inflation, a measure of inflation that excludes food and energy prices, soared to its highest level in nearly three decades.

And what does that mean? Well, higher prices for Americans. The price of everything from bikes to bacon has shot up. Auto insurance costs 17 percent more than it did a year ago. Used cars cost 30 percent more. Shoes and whole milk cost 7 percent more. Inflation is starting to look like it could become nontransitory, or what most Americans call a serious problem.

And Democrats' government spending spree is contributing, but, of course, that is not causing Democrats to hit pause on the economic overstimulation. Democrats are looking at more trillion-plus-dollar spending bills.

The President just released a budget proposing to hike government spending by trillions of dollars over the next 10

years. Under the President's plan, the Federal budget would be \$6 trillion for fiscal year 2022, rising to \$8.2 trillion for fiscal year 2031. Now, to put those numbers in perspective, the entire Federal budget for 2019 came to \$4.4 trillion. The President is proposing to nearly double that by 2031.

It is disturbing that the overspending in the American Rescue Plan hasn't made Democrats think twice about future government sprees, but it is not all that surprising because in the Democratic Party these days, dogma tends to triumph over reality—or practicality. Democrats are ever more fanatically committed to expanding government and taxing Americans, and they are not slowed down by little details like damaging the economy.

Take the increased unemployment benefits situation. Congress provided a Federal increase in unemployment benefits early in the pandemic when businesses were closed and workers had few alternatives to keep their families afloat, but as early as last fall, there were signs that our economy was rebounding. And with the arrival of the COVID vaccines, it became clear that America would be able to get fully back to work sooner rather than later.

But Democrats insisted on continuing the increased unemployment benefits until September of 2021, and the effect has been predictable. Despite record-high job openings, many people are declining to return to work because they can make more money staying home and drawing unemployment benefits.

Businesses hit hard by the pandemic are desperate to return to full operating capacity, but they are being slowed down by the fact that they can't find workers. In response to the worker shortage, a number of Governors around the country decided to stop accepting the Federal increase in unemployment benefits. They wanted to help businesses in their States and get their residents back to work.

And how did Democrats respond to that? Well, more than one Democrat responded by suggesting that the Federal Government step in to make sure these payments continue. That is right. Despite evidence that the increased unemployment benefits were discouraging workers from going back to work, some Democrats wanted to prevent Governors from halting these payments.

Nowhere is Democrats' devotion to dogma over reality more notable than in their proposed capital gains tax hike. Now, I don't need to tell anyone that "tax the rich" has become the rallying cry of the Democratic Party. And one of the ways that the President plans to tax well-off Americans is by doubling the top capital gains rate to almost 40 percent.

The problem is that a 40-percent capital gains rate substantially exceeds the revenue-maximizing rate. In non-accountant speak, what that means is that Democrats could collect more