

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3848 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3847

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have an amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3848 to amendment No. 3847.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To change the effective date)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect 2 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

MOTION TO REFER WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3849

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to refer the House message to accompany S. 1301 to the Committee on Finance with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] moves to refer to the Committee on Finance with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 3849.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To change the effective date)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect 3 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3850 TO THE INSTRUCTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have an amendment to the instructions at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3850 to the instructions on the motion to refer S. 1301.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To modify the effective date)

On page 1, line 3, strike "3 days" and insert "4 days".

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3851 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3850

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3851 to amendment No. 3850.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To modify the effective date)

On page 1, lines 1 and 2, strike "4 days" and insert "1 day".

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider calendar No. 259.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Gustavo A. Gelpi, of Puerto Rico, to be United States Circuit Judge for the First Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 259, Gustavo A. Gelpi, of Puerto Rico, to be United States Circuit Judge for the First Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Sheldon Whitehouse, Christopher Murphy, Gary C. Peters, Michael F. Bennet, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Benjamin L. Cardin, Patty Murray, Catherine Cortez Masto, Tammy Duckworth, Patrick J. Leahy, Robert Menendez, Bernard Sanders, Mark R. Warner, Tina Smith, Richard J. Durbin, Ben Ray Lujan.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, October 7, be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MOTION TO DISCHARGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Pursuant to S. Res. 27, the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee being tied on the question of reporting, I move to discharge the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee from further consideration of the nomination of Catherine Elizabeth Lhamon, of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the provisions of S. Res. 27, there will now be up to 4 hours of debate on the

motion equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with no motions, points of order, or amendments in order.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. President.

I ask unanimous consent that the time during the quorum call be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to oppose, of course, the Democrats' reckless tax-and-spending bill. I have been coming to the floor to talk about this—the wasted taxes, the spending, all of the sorts of things the Democrats are trying to do.

You know, right now, the Democrats are pushing a Big Government, socialist agenda. There can be no question about it. They want additional, permanent welfare programs. They want to—to me, this bankrupts current programs, like Medicare. It takes—it is very hard to think about this amount of spending without realizing the risk that it proves for Social Security. And, of course, the Democrats are proposing this big green new disaster.

For all this spending, what do they want to do?

Well, they want to raise taxes by trillions and trillions of dollars. But it is still not enough to pay for all of the spending that they want to do.

That is why Democrats are now working and pushing this backdoor tax increase. Democrats want to supersize the least accountable and most powerful Agency of the Federal Government. And that, of course, is the Internal Revenue Service.

Now, what we know about this Agency, the IRS, is that they have, time and time again, proven they can't be even trusted to properly secure data, when we look at the leaks that come out of the IRS.

But they are looking for more data and more information, private information, private business by American taxpayers.

Democrats are asking, in this \$3.5 trillion bill, \$80 billion of additional funding for the Internal Revenue Service. They want to give the IRS enough money and power to hire a full new army of bureaucrats.

President Biden's Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has been very clear. She knows what she wants to do with some of the money. She wants to force banks to tell the IRS every time anyone writes or deposits a check above a certain amount in their banking account, checking account. And right now, the number that she is talking about is \$600—\$600 for a check written or deposited. So every time someone pays the rent, deposits a paycheck, Democrats want the IRS to know about it.

Not enough to know that government knows how much people make; they want to know how much they spend. It is Big Brother initiative to squeeze every last penny out of working families.

I mean, why else would they want to go after every hard-working man and woman in America to find out this information?

As Americans find out about that, they are furious. They are smart enough to know that when Joe Biden first says we are only going to tax the billionaires—they are only going to tax the billionaires—why are they looking into the banking accounts and the checking accounts and the deposits and the withdrawals of people all across the country?

Because the tax man is coming for them as well when it comes to trying to pay for this massive tax-and-spending blowout.

So as more and more people find out about it, the more furious they become. I got a report again this morning, 488 more emails and letters into Wyoming Senate—Senator from Wyoming about that from my home State. I have received more calls, more emails, more letters from people from Wyoming on this one topic than on any one topic that I can recall in the time that I have been in the U.S. Senate.

And everyone calling and writing about it has the same position. It is not like, well, half of the people are for it and half of the people are against it. Everybody is against this. Everyone we have heard from—the 488 that I heard from within the last 24 hours—everyone is against this proposal. Thousands and thousands of emails.

I talked to Senator LUMMIS, the other Senator from Wyoming. Her inbox is completely full as well, all related to this topic. It is what I heard about in the grocery store this past weekend at home in Wyoming.

This new scheme will be terrible, and not just for the taxpayers. It is going to be a heavy weight around the neck of the community banks and credit unions in Wyoming.

I talked to one of the bankers from Wyoming. She was in the grocery store getting food for the weekend. What did she—it was the only—it was the thing she wanted to talk about, is the fact they would have to hire three new employees to comply with all of the regulations coming out that would relate to trying to get this information from their bank to the IRS.

In addition, this would be quite an attack on our privacy. This Big Brother scheme would make bankers and credit union associates into de facto IRS agents.

And as this bank officer said to me, she said: Look, I don't want—I am not going to be working for the IRS. I work for my customers, my clients, the people of Wyoming. The last thing I want to do is be somebody reporting into the IRS.

This is what I am hearing from bankers all around the State of Wyoming. They don't want to be invading people's privacy. They don't want to become agents of the IRS.

People in Wyoming have a straightforward response to this administration, and it is this: Leave us alone. We don't need you looking over our shoulder, prying into our life and our activities.

If Democrats go forward with this Big Brother plan, the people all across this country will not stand for it. Many people in Wyoming will look for alternatives to traditional banks and credit unions because they don't want the IRS and the government and Big Brother to know their personal activities. They want to protect their privacy. They may find other places to put their money.

Look, that is going to devastate local banks, local credit unions, if people take their money out because they don't want the government boring into their data and their financial transactions.

It is going to happen in every State. Hard to believe the government would want to do that, but yet Secretary Yellen came to Capitol Hill, and that is what she is doing. She is still defending this indefensible idea; and I believe she is doing it because that is what Joe Biden, the President of the United States, is telling her to do as his Treasury Secretary.

So she went on television Tuesday—today is Thursday—2 days ago, essentially said it was no big deal. That is what the Treasury Secretary of the United States believes, that violating the individual privacy of individuals of this country is no big deal.

Last week, Senator LUMMIS from Wyoming questioned Secretary Yellen before the Banking Committee. Secretary Yellen, actually astonishingly, doubled down. She said, "I think you misunderstand the proposal." She said, "The IRS already has a wealth of information about individuals."

Well, Madam Secretary, we understand that really well. We know you have a wealth of information about individual taxpayers. You know how much they make. You know how they make it. That is enough. If you have all this, you don't need more, but yet you are asking for more, and you want \$80 billion for an army of IRS agents to be able to find it out. That is the problem. The IRS has so much information about us already.

Now, Senator LUMMIS did get Secretary Yellen to admit working fami-

lies are not the ones skimping out on their taxes. Why else do we have this army of IRS agents looking into our taxes? Secretary Yellen didn't seem to care. She doubled down, still defending this massive invasion of privacy, and that is what it is. It is a huge invasion of privacy, and I contend that they want all this information so they can try to squeeze more money from people who the Secretary even admits are not trying to cheat on their taxes. They are trying to find ways to take more money out of their pocketbooks, when they are already feeling the big bite of Joe Biden's inflation at the gas pump and at the grocery store.

This Big Brother plan is reckless. It treats the American people like criminals. It turns the IRS into the judge, the jury, and the lord high executioner. This scheme shows how desperate Democrats are to get their hands on taxpayer money. Why? So they can spend more. They are so desperate for more spending that they are willing to spy on the American people to try to get more money to spend.

Watch and listen to the Democrats talk. There is a food fight going on, and the food fight is: How much more can we tax and how much more can we spend? It is a food fight between the really big spenders and the extremely big spenders. Look, Democrats think that Washington knows best. Now, the people of Wyoming know differently. We don't need Washington looking over our shoulders. It is time for Democrats to drop the entire plan, mind their own business, and stop demanding more money to spy on the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, today is Thursday, October 7, 2021, and Risk Rating 2.0 has officially been in effect for 6 full days.

What is Risk Rating 2.0?

It is a new rating system for the National Flood Insurance Program that will increase premiums higher than sustainable for homeowners and, therefore, higher than is sustainable for the program.

In Louisiana, 80 percent of policyholders will see increases in the first year, and at times, for some, premiums will become unaffordable and can collapse the value of their home. The Presiding Officer is also from a coastal State. This will absolutely affect everyone who lives in a coastal State.

Now, particularly, in my State, in light of recent storms, it is important that we understand the sustainability of the National Flood Insurance Program is key.

Congress never passed a bill requiring that FEMA implement Risk Rating 2.0. President Biden can stop it. He has chosen not to. We have asked that FEMA delay implementing this program or reconsider it altogether.

Now, by the way, FEMA has been slow to share information with policyholders and, frankly, misleading Congress by hiding the true consequences of 2.0 and not being up front with the cost in the out-years. They said they would tell policyholders by August 1 of the increase in premiums, but they missed the deadline. It didn't come down to homeowners and insurers until the middle of September. Some are still trying to figure out what this rating system will mean for their life.

In 2019, my office reached out to the administration, and we were able to successfully delay the implementation saying that there needed to be further consideration. This time, however, the Biden administration has chosen not to delay it.

Now, let's just take a quote from a working family in Lake Charles, LA, who does not—I repeat—does not live in a flood zone. They currently pay \$572 for flood insurance on a single-family home that is worth approximately \$250,000. The quote he received—this is real life. This isn't theoretical. The quote that he received under Risk Rating 2.0 raises his premium to over \$5,000—\$572 to \$5,000.

Now, rate increases are capped at 18 percent annually, so it doesn't happen next year. But this is 18 percent compounded. It is kind of like a balloon on one of those little helium things. It starts off and it doesn't seem that it is inflating, and then, all of a sudden, it inflates rapidly, like a balloon note on a mortgage.

So with progressive increases, when it gets to \$5,000—actually, \$5,624—he will have to choose: Do I continue my policy?

Now, he is not in a flood zone. If you think about actuarially, you want people who are not at high risk to spread the cost for everybody else.

Under this, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that 20 percent of policyholders will drop their insurance. That has a risk of putting the National Flood Insurance Program into an actuarial death spiral where those at lower risk drop the insurance, the remaining risk is forced upon a relatively small number of people raising their risk even more, and you gradually have a continual falloff of the number of people in the program.

Now, some policyholders are required to pay for the insurance by law, but this puts them in an even worse situation. They will either have to put thousands of dollars up for their insurance or risk losing their home.

I would ask President Biden, who unquestionably is an empathetic man and empathetic to the working families of our country, to consider delaying Risk Rating 2.0.

Now, there are a couple of criticisms of the flood insurance program, in general, which are unfounded.

First: These are millionaires' vacation homes; why do we even have a program?

This is factually not true. When CBO looked at samples of home values in the program, it ranged from \$220- to \$400,000. And I imagine the President from New Jersey—President of the Senate from New Jersey—can think of a middle-income family, a police officer and a teacher; who now live in a home worth \$400,000. These are not millionaires or billionaires.

In my home State of Louisiana, these are middle-income and working families, folks trying to make ends meet. They are not folks in a vacation home. And here is an example of homes, after recent Hurricane Ida, that would need flood insurance: middle-income homes.

By the way, you can see these homes are built a little bit on a berm. They have actually taken the effort to protect their homes from flooding. So the home itself is not flooded, just everything else around it. On the other hand, I can promise you that there are older neighborhoods in which the water is above the doorstep.

Now, looking specifically at Risk Rating 2.0, data shows who will see the rate hikes. It is bad news for Louisiana, where rates will increase for almost everybody.

The second criticism of the program is that it subsidizes people who suffer repetitive flood damage. Now, this argument is mitigated, if you will, by offering mitigation. Data shows that mitigation is good for the taxpayer. According to the National Institute of Building Sciences, for every \$1 spent in Federal mitigation grants, it saves the program an average of \$6.

In the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, there is \$3.5 billion in flood mitigation assistance grants—grants going towards buying up properties that have experienced repetitive loss. Shoring up the program by removing high-risk properties protects other properties. It is true in your State, and it is true in my State. It is a wise investment to protect the National Flood Insurance Program.

So we can have a conversation, by the way, about a criticism that if mitigation opportunities are offered to homeowners and they decline them, what to do about that. On the other hand, when folks are offered mitigation, they almost always accept the opportunity for that.

Finally, some argue that private insurers will replace the National Flood Insurance Program. But let's be honest, that will not occur. I support the expansion of private insurance covering flood properties. Consumers should have options. If nothing else, this highlights the need for a long-term fix to the program.

In the past, I proposed reforms to ensure that NFIP is affordable and accessible to homeowners, accountable to

taxpayers, and sustainable. I worked on flood insurance programs with Senators MENENDEZ and GILLIBRAND, both of them coming from States affected by flooding, just as mine did as well. This makes it bipartisan, two different regions. It is not only about the Gulf Coast; it is about the Atlantic Coast, the Pacific Coast; and it is about our island properties.

By the way, I have been speaking about Louisiana, but Risk Rating 2.0 applies nationwide. It impacts all those living on our coasts. Once more, we should all—all of us representing States with coastlines—ask the Biden administration to halt Risk Rating 2.0.

This Congress, I will continue to work to reform NFIP. In addition to affordability, accessibility, accountability, and sustainability, there needs to be an emphasis on supporting prevention and mitigation efforts to prevent future floods.

At the end of the day, flood insurance must be affordable for the homeowner, accessible, accountable to the taxpayer, and sustainable for the future.

TRIBUTE TO PASTOR A.R. HARRIS, SR.

Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to honor a man in my State of Louisiana, who has dedicated nearly 80 percent of his life to preaching the gospel and serving others through his faith.

Pastor A.R. Harris, Sr., was born December 16, 1932, in Jonesboro, LA. He has preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ since he was 7 years old and led God's people for over six decades.

Pastor Harris is a veteran who served our country in the United States Army during the Korean war. He and his wife Eva of 63 years have six wonderful children, four of whom followed their father's footsteps to preach the Good Word to spread the Gospel. He and Eva are being honored for their 46 years of service at their church, Zion Hill Missionary Baptist Church #2.

He is a man of God, family, and country; and it is my privilege to stand here on the floor of the U.S. Senate and recognize the faithful service of Pastor A.R. Harris, Sr.

God bless him, his family, and God bless the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2953

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, you know, it is no secret that I oppose President Biden's tax proposal. I think it is bad policy that would undercut growth and derail American prosperity.

But one of the worst parts of the President's plan is the provision requiring financial institutions to report their customer's transactions of \$600 or greater to the IRS.

That means anytime an American pays a bill, makes a deposit, transfers funds, or makes a purchase of \$600 or more, their bank, credit union, or financial institution would be forced to report that data to the IRS.

Opposition to this proposal is deep and bipartisan. I don't care if you are a

Republican, Democrat, or Independent. No one wants the IRS looking over their shoulder every time they make a financial transaction. The IRS doesn't efficiently use the data it collects now.

Why in the world would we give them more information?

If the IRS has reason to believe you are not paying all that you owe in taxes, they have the ability to audit you. They don't need any more private financial data on any of us. The bulk of the data collection they are proposing will do nothing to close the so-called tax gap. All it does is violate the liberty of every freedom-loving American who values their financial property.

The proposal would dramatically increase IRS audits of working Americans. The overwhelming majority of people the IRS would look into as a result of this policy would not have done a single thing wrong, but when the IRS starts snooping, it will cost you big money. That means hiring a high-priced attorney/accountant who will bleed you dry.

President Biden claims his proposal would only impact the rich, but middle-class families are the ones who will ultimately pay the price.

Additionally, the IRS has a history of data security failures. Just earlier this year, the confidential tax information of over a dozen well-known Americans leaked from the Agency and was published in the press. That was unacceptable and unlawful, but nothing was done to hold the IRS accountable.

But this is, unfortunately, nothing new. Under President Biden's watch, when he was Vice President, conservative groups and individuals were targeted for aggressive audits. And as recently as this year, a Texas-based charity was denied tax-exempt status because the IRS considered the charity too close to Republicans and too close to Christianity.

Folks, that is pitiful.

Providing the IRS with massive amounts of financial-transaction data will only make it easier for them to target groups or individuals they disagree with. If anything, we need to be reining in the IRS and holding officials accountable who go after taxpayers for political reasons.

The outcry from voters has been strong and swift. Some of my Democrat colleagues are feeling the heat from their constituents and are starting to walk back the President's proposal. The American people have them on the run.

Democrats in Congress are talking about only requiring transactions of only \$10,000 or more to be reported to the IRS. While fewer Americans would be directly impacted by this threshold, we would still feel the broader, negative effects.

That being said, on Tuesday of this week, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, the President's top economic adviser, defended the Biden plan and doubled down on the \$600 IRS proposal.

Regardless of whether Democrats settle on \$600 or \$10,000 threshold, every

American would suffer. That is because our community banks and credit unions will be overwhelmed—I mean overwhelmed—with a tidal wave of compliance data. Small banks and credit unions won't be able to afford to hire the staff that they are going to need, forcing them to close their doors in a lot of rural and minority areas.

And for Americans, including many minorities, living in rural communities across the country, these small banks and credit unions are a focal point for the community. They provide the money folks need to buy their first home or car; they fuel the economic development, provide good-paying jobs, and pump resources back into these rural communities.

If these community banks and credit unions close, it would cut off access to capital for millions of Americans in communities. They would suffer. Livelihoods would be destroyed.

That is why I, along with my colleague from Florida, Senator RICK SCOTT, have introduced a bill prohibiting the IRS from creating, implementing, or administering a financial reporting regime that would require financial institutions or individuals to report data or financial transactions or account balances to the IRS.

To be clear, my legislation does not touch the Bank Secrecy Act or any of the regulations either implemented or issued under that act.

My bill has been endorsed by the American Bankers Association, the Independent Community Bankers of America, the National Association of Federally-Insured Credit Unions, the Credit Union National Association, the Heritage Action for America, the League of Southeastern Credit Unions, and the Alabama Bankers Association. These organizations and their members know that if President Biden's proposal goes through, banking, as we know it, will end.

At this time, I would like to yield the floor to my distinguished colleague from Florida, Mr. SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I would like to thank Senator TUBERVILLE for leading this very important effort.

I want to be very clear. What President Biden is proposing here is as close to policy from communist China as we have seen in the United States. In oppressive regimes like Cuba and communist China, we have come to expect a surveillance state where the government has access to every part of a person's life. Now Joe Biden wants to bring that here to America.

Let me explain what the Biden administration and Democrats in Washington are proposing. Democrats want to open your bank account to Federal agents. Under Joe Biden's America, the Federal Government's authority would be vastly expanded so the IRS can get a look at any account over \$600. The

madness doesn't stop there. This new rule from Joe Biden would also require banks to report every transaction of \$600 or more. Does anyone honestly think the Federal Government will keep your private information safe?

Want to buy a bed? Here comes the Federal Government. But say you want to buy a new shotgun. Hunting season is coming up. Again, here come the feds. How about giving money to your favorite charities; supporting a cause or a political candidate you care about; for childcare or paying for mental health counseling? Perhaps you are just selling off a little furniture and want to put your profits in a savings account. For every one of these transactions I have just described, the government is going to come take a look.

Every American should be disgusted and furious by this insane overreach of the Federal Government. Think about the private, personal information the government would have access to. It is incredibly intrusive, and Joe Biden wants to make it nearly limitless. Again, does anyone honestly think the Federal Government would keep your private information safe? I understand that families are angry. I have heard from more than 18,000 constituents over just the last 2 weeks about how disgusted they are with this plan.

Biden wants to expand the surveillance state of the Federal Government to target every American family. Ninety-five percent of American households have a bank account, and this policy will have impacts on every single one of those accountholders. But it is not just banks; Joe Biden is expanding the Federal surveillance state to monitor your finances across the board. They will be watching your local credit union and your PayPal and Venmo accounts. They will even be watching to see how you spend and earn cryptocurrency. This is an outrageous violation of Americans' privacy.

I think the Democrats are also hearing from their constituents. Recent reports say the President and Democrats in the House are looking at raising the threshold from \$600 to \$10,000. That would still hit many Americans families.

We are not just talking about checking accounts; this applies to savings, retirement, and investment accounts. You name it, the feds want to take a look.

Again, I am not describing something in Cuba or communist China; I am talking about what Joe Biden and the Democrats want to do right here in the U.S.A. I can't wait for my Democratic colleague to explain why President Biden is even proposing this. How can you possibly justify to the American people that the IRS should be snooping around in their bank, retirement, or investment accounts?

There is only one explanation, and it is simply terrifying. The Democrats want to control how you spend your money. Democrats want to control your expenditures, your charitable and

political giving, and your investments. The more power Democrats can grab from American families, the more control they think they will get over each and every American.

This all boils down to Joe Biden and the radical left bringing the American people under the thumb of his socialist tax-and-spend agenda. After all, how else is he going to be able to squeeze every last penny out of American families' bank accounts to pay for his socialist plans?

Here is how the Democratic Party works: They refuse to audit our Federal Agencies that year after year send billions in improper payments to the wrong people, which they rarely ever recover. They refuse to hold their government accountable for reckless waste and massive debt. But they want to put the magnifying glass on hard-working families who are just trying to live their dreams.

Under Biden's socialist regime, it is rules for thee but not for me. How is that different from communist China, where the government lives in opulence while their citizens live totally dependent on the government in poverty?

I will not stand for this outrageous plan. No American should tolerate this unprecedented overreach. I am proud to support Senator TUBERVILLE's legislation and hope every one of my colleagues looks at this for what it is: communist China-style totalitarian surveillance.

I yield back to Senator TUBERVILLE.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. I would like to yield the floor to my distinguished colleague from Indiana, Senator BRAUN.

Mr. BRAUN. Thank you, Senator TUBERVILLE.

Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Every year, I travel and visit every county in the State of Indiana—92 of them. You know, I can't ever recall anyone saying that they want the IRS to poke into their business more on a day-to-day basis. In fact, they bemoan the fact that many years ago, the IRS was actually sifting through stuff to determine who was conservative or not before they might grant status to your entity.

We have gotten to a point—and I think Senators TUBERVILLE and SCOTT have eloquently laid out the details. I want to take a little different approach.

I have been here a little less than 3 years, and this kind of entrepreneurialism through government, growing the Federal Government, having an Agency like the IRS that can't do its job well with the money that we do give to it, is just another example of trying to pile on one bad thing after another.

It would be different if we weren't doing it borrowing 23 percent of the money we spend every year. Imagine

that in your own household, in a State or local government, a business. You would be laughed out of the banker's office if you did that and then wanted a loan to cover it and then do it the next 10 years. It doesn't work anywhere else.

This is an example that I think, along with maybe the vaccine mandate, where you are now forcing small businesses to do something when they finally got a rhythm—and businesses have protected their employees and their customers as well as anybody out there in that journey. You have got that nonsense that is going to be unfurled here soon. But it is an example of where, at some point, enough needs to be enough.

The IRS has had a poor record of doing things to boot. Earlier, ProPublica released illegally obtained tax records of many Americans. We had the incident of issues with conservative businesses being discriminated against in getting proper status set up. I introduced the Protect Taxpayer Privacy Act in June for that because the IRS is already doing things that they shouldn't be doing. This would be a perfect companion to what Senator TUBERVILLE is putting out here.

To wrap it up, we have to be careful when we send people here. If you were knocking it out of the park, delivering results, not borrowing money to do the things we try to do anyway, and then you tee up something like this—this is going to do nothing more than unleash more of an Agency that doesn't do well in its job anyway, and it is truly an example of government gone wild.

I thank Senator TUBERVILLE for bringing this to a focal point.

I yield back to him.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator BRAUN and Senator SCOTT again for supporting this bill.

I am proud to partner with him in this effort to safeguard the financial privacy of American citizens.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2953, which is at the desk. I further ask 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 an objection?

Mr. WYDEN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President and colleagues, the Senator's proposal in effect would be a game-winning touchdown for wealthy tax cheats.

IRS Commissioner Rettig, a Republican appointee, came before the Finance Committee earlier this year and said the total amount of taxes evaded

each year could be as high as \$1 trillion. Cheating by those at the very top is one of the major causes of that huge tax gap. A big reason why is that the automatic reporting and strict rules that apply to the typical, hard-working taxpayer—nurses and firefighters, for example—they don't always apply to those at the top. That means the tax cheats are able to hide their cheating in the shadows.

The Senator's proposal would help them keep it that way. This proposal would make it extraordinarily difficult to collect the information necessary to crack down on the high-flying tax cheats.

The argument against information reporting is always the same, and it has been consistently wrong. Despite what opponents say, what President Biden and Democrats have proposed is focused on rooting out tax cheating at the top. It wouldn't apply to accounts with deposits and withdrawals under \$10,000. And for most people, that is \$10,000 on top of your paycheck. It is not about anybody's transactions. They wouldn't be reported, colleagues. It wouldn't create any new surveillance of digital currency. This information-reporting proposal is about reporting only two numbers: the total amount going into an account and the total amount going out of it. Social Security income does not count either.

So this idea—and I have listened to my friends—that somehow this is going to end Western civilization just doesn't hold up.

In fact, Commissioner Rettig, a Republican appointee, pointed out recently that this plan could actually reduce the odds of an audit for middle-class taxpayers, those folks that I was talking about, the nurses and the firefighters.

I am going to close with just a couple of other points. Most of my colleagues know that I am about as strong a privacy hawk as there is in the Senate. And I don't take a backseat to anybody when it comes to fighting for Americans' privacy, whether it is taxpayer data, communications, web traffic—you name it. And, colleagues, all of that work, all of that private work, is on the public record. It is a matter of public record. It isn't an atomic secret.

In those debates about privacy, it is also striking that it is most often Members of the other side attempting to stop reforms, for example, to government surveillance of phone records and emails and web browsing—web browsing. But when Democrats are working to crack down on ultrawealthy tax cheats, that is when, suddenly, we have got Republicans saying: Oh, my goodness; who is going to be sensitive to privacy?

I want to repeat, as I have on this floor again and again, I will talk to anybody on either side of the aisle with any philosophy about protecting taxpayer data. As the chairman of the

Senate Finance Committee, which handles privacy policy, I want it understood that our committee—and I, particularly, given my record on privacy issues—we take privacy very seriously.

That is not what is on offer by the other side today. The bottom line is wealthy tax cheats are ripping off the American people to the tune of billions and billions of dollars per year. Tax cheats thrive when the reporting rules that apply to them are loose and murky. Democrats want to fix this broken approach and crack down on cheating at the top. The Senator's proposal would make that impossible, and it would hand—colleagues, it would hand, the Senator's proposal—a big fourth-quarter victory to the tax cheats.

For that reason, I object.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, this is a simple two-page bill that will protect every American from an invasion of privacy by Big Brother Government IRS. I am sorry to see that my Democratic colleagues oppose protecting the financial privacy of American taxpayers. That is a real shame.

I think you would be hard-pressed to find a Member of the U.S. Senate who can honestly say that a majority of their constituents support President Biden's proposal for the IRS to monitor a \$600 or more transaction. I don't think you could find one.

We ought to be able to stand up together, in a bipartisan fashion, to reject this radical proposal. I am confident that the American people will continue to put pressure on their elected representatives to reject this plan. I will work with my colleagues to address legitimate concerns, though I suspect there are none, and any position is going to be purely political.

Americans across the country can count on Senator SCOTT and myself to keep up the fight of this important issue.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 5323

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, we have reached a really important point in our relationship with one of our great allies in the world. The United States has before it the challenge—and this Congress can meet that challenge—for \$1 billion of supplemental security assistance to replenish Israel's Iron Dome system.

That funding is provided in H.R. 5323, the Iron Dome Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2022, passed by the House of Representatives by an overwhelming—and I emphasize “overwhelming”—bipartisan support.

I want to thank my Connecticut colleague ROSA DELAURO of New Haven for her leadership and all of the Members of the House of Representatives for their vision and courage in separating this measure and passing it. And we should do so now, as quickly as possible.

All of us know that the 2016 memorandum of understanding negotiated between Israel and the United States provides \$500 million per year in security assistance for Israel's missile defense. The MOU allows Israel to request additional funds to replenish and restore missile defense capabilities in exceptional circumstances.

We all remember vividly the May 2021 conflict between Israel and Hamas, and in our minds still vividly and graphically are the pictures of that Iron Dome system intercepting missiles aimed at civilians in Israel. The Iron Dome defense system intercepted about 90 percent of those potentially lethal missiles targeting populated areas of Israel.

In total, about 4,400 rockets were launched by Hamas. Should the Iron Dome have failed, countless Israeli civilians would have been killed. This system performed with such extraordinary and exceptional prowess, showing its necessity for both humanitarian and defensive purposes.

I recently returned from a trip to Israel, where I talked to the top leadership of the new government, including Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. I was inspired and excited by the determination of the Israeli leadership and, I believe, the Israeli people to inaugurate a new era where we are even closer to Israel than we have been in the past.

There have been some bumps in the road; there have been some potential disagreements in this body; but we should focus on making sure that Israel's defense is completely bipartisan; that our relationship with Israel crosses party lines. We have that opportunity today to renew the sense of bipartisanship in our unshakeable relationship with Israel.

And that relationship goes beyond just security concerns. We are bound by culture, heritage, faith, and a common commitment to democracy. And Israel has that commitment in perhaps the most constantly dangerous neighborhood in the world.

Iron Dome is a defensive system. It is solely defensive, and it defends against the loss of civilians on both sides, in Gaza as well as Israel, because the loss of life in Israel, if it occurs, if Iron Dome is lacking, will lead to escalating violence that will cost lives in Gaza as well.

The Iron Dome prevents escalating hostilities that will cost lives among both Palestinians and Israelis. So its defensive value is indisputable, and that is why it does have bipartisan support here. It has the President's support. He stated:

We're also going to discuss Israel's unwavering—unwavering commitment that we

have in the United States to Israel's security. And I fully, fully, fully support replenishing Israel's Iron Dome system.

A quote from his meeting prior to meeting with Prime Minister Bennett at the White House.

Just 2 days before he made those remarks, Secretary Austin also expressed his support:

You can also see that commitment as we advocate for the replenishment of the Iron Dome missile defense system. The administration is committed to ensuring that Iron Dome can defend Israeli civilian population centers targeted by terrorist attacks, and we're working closely with Congress to provide all the necessary information to respond positively to your request for the—for \$1 billion in emergency funding, and it's going to save more innocent lives.

I am concerned that Members of the U.S. Senate are blocking passage of this bill. Senator PAUL has demanded that we add unrelated language to rescind funds from the Department of State and the Department of Defense before he will agree to a unanimous consent decree. We should prevent this sacred relationship from becoming a political football. We should make sure that we preserve it as a bipartisan source of consensus.

And that is not to say necessarily that we agree with every single act, every single measure that our Israeli allies take. We can be friends and family and still disagree.

But our aid should not be conditioned on agreeing with every single policy or action taken by our Israeli friends. This measure is a defensive platform that saves lives. It is a humanitarian step that should be regarded for what it is—essential to our alliance, our relationship, and our bond with Israel.

Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that, at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 140, H.R. 5323; that there be up to 2 hours of debate; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the bill be considered read a third time, and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I agree with the Senator from Connecticut that we should pass the proposal. In fact, I have offered a proposal to fund the Iron Dome with \$1 billion that should be paid for, though. We are facing a \$30 trillion debt. We borrow \$2 million a minute. Inflation is rising. They are wanting to pile more debt upon our country. So, if we are going to help our ally Israel, I think we need to be strong to do it, we need to be not piling on debt without consequences, and this should be paid for.

There is a very easy pay-for that I have proposed. There is \$6 billion left in a reconstruction fund for the Afghan national government. Well, the Afghan

national government no longer exists. In the haste to leave, the Biden administration has let the Taliban overrun the country.

So I asked the other day, in committee, of Secretary Blinken: This \$6 billion, are you planning on giving it to the Taliban?

And he said: Well, it depends on whether they fulfill their commitments.

To me, that sounds like a pretty big “if,” but if the Biden administration says that they fulfill their commitment and expectations, the understanding is the Biden administration is going to give \$6 billion to the Taliban.

So, not only do they let them take \$80 billion of equipment, not only did we leave in complete disarray, Democrats now want to say: Oh, we have got to keep this money because we have to give it to the Taliban.

That is obscene.

We should immediately rescind all of that money. If you want to give money to Afghanistan, let's vote on it again. But you gave the money to the previous government, and now you want to give the money to the Taliban, which has overrun the country. It is a disgrace. The Taliban shouldn't get a penny. And we should pay for things, even for things that we are trying to give to allies.

So I have a proposal before the desk. My proposal says to fully fund the \$1 billion for the Iron Dome project. Fully fund it. We have already given billions for it. We are willing to give \$1 billion more, but we are going to pay for it by not giving money to the Taliban. So it is a pretty easy sort of list. We asked every Senator on the Republican side if they objected to this, and not one Republican objected to this. So the reason the Iron Dome is being held up is because the Democrats are objecting to its being paid for.

I am here today to support the Iron Dome. I am giving a proposal that would give them their \$1 billion right now. It could happen today. All I ask is that it be paid for with money that has already been appropriated and that is, in all likelihood, going to be given to the Taliban if we don't take it away now. I think it is a very reasonable proposal.

I am disappointed that the Democrats are objecting to Iron Dome today. It is a disappointment that they are against paying for it with a fund that is already out there, and that they so much love the idea of giving the money to the Taliban that they are going to insist on blocking Iron Dome funding because they are insistent on “No, no, we can't get rid of the \$6 billion because, if the Taliban behaves, we are going to give it to them.”

Look, I don't care if the Taliban behaves. I wouldn't give them a penny. There are other ways of trying to have a diplomatic relationship other than giving money to people. People think that somehow, if the Taliban behaves, we have got to give them money? I think that is a crazy notion.

So, without question, I will object.

I ask the Senator to modify his request so that, instead of his proposal and as in legislative session, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 140, H.R. 5323; further, that the only amendment in order be my substitute amendment, which is at the desk. I further ask that there be 2 hours of debate, equally divided between the two leaders, and that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Paul substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time, and that the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator so modify his request?

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, let's set the record straight.

There is no possibility of this money or any other money going to the Taliban. Section 9021 of the fiscal year 2021 Defense Appropriations Act—we all voted for it—makes funding the Taliban illegal, and if any Pentagon official breaks that law, they could go to jail under the Antideficiency Act.

Whatever the Secretary of State may have answered to Senator PAUL's question at a hearing, we should know and he should know that spending money in any way that enables it to go to the Taliban would be breaking the law, and he would have to come to Congress to use any of that money to aid the Taliban. So this is a false issue.

The funds that the Paul amendment seeks to rescind have actually not yet been appropriated. He targets the \$3.3 billion in the fiscal year 2022 request. You can't rescind funds that haven't yet been appropriated. So the amendment falls of its own weight, but I want to deal with the merits.

No. 1, the Paul amendment seeks to rescind funds from the Department of Defense's Afghan Security Forces Fund. Those funds are still needed to complete the withdrawal. They are in an account that is urgently needed to terminate contracts that are already in place and secure military equipment that has been withdrawn from Afghanistan.

All of the complaints about the withdrawal and all of the complaints about the need to secure that military equipment are met by this funding. Defunding the Pentagon in this way will, in fact, disrupt the shutdown of these activities and open the United States to legal action from contractors. I have been advised, for those reasons, that the Department of Defense strongly opposes the Paul amendment because it makes ending the war in Afghanistan more difficult.

Let me just close by saying that there is a need for humanitarian support in areas where the Palestinians live. There is a need for aid for water treatment and vaccines and health and all of the needs—humanitarian needs—of the Palestinian people.

One of the encouraging parts of my visit with the Israeli leadership was their recognition that Israel has a humanitarian obligation in this area. They recognize, as well, that we may not always agree on every facet of our relationship, but this measure should be unconditional because it is defensive, and it is humanitarian to support the Iron Dome.

I wish my Republican colleagues were here to refute Senator PAUL, because I know many of them support it.

Therefore, I will not modify my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Is there objection to the original request?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, I am disappointed that the Democrats will again today block the Iron Dome funding as paid for. I think it is important that we do support our allies. I am in support of the Iron Dome funding, but I think, at the very least, it should be paid for. We have offered them various permutations of this—either the entire \$6 billion from the Afghan reconstruction fund or \$1 billion. We have offered them other alternatives to look at other funding in government that already exists to see if we could pay for this.

So the real reluctance is on the Democrats' part to pay for aid, and the thing is that we can't just blindly keep giving money away without repercussions. We are \$30 trillion in debt.

So I am disappointed today that the Democrats will block the Iron Dome funding as paid for, and I do object to the underlying proposition.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I would just close, Mr. President, by saying we need to pass this measure. We need to do it now, and there is no need for pay-for. We should move ahead with this unanimous consent. I regret the objection.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 5323

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, when I traveled to Israel in 2019, I saw with my own eyes the Iron Dome system up close and in person. I met with the brave soldiers who operate and protect it—young men and women, in many cases, no older than 18 or 19 years old.

Iron Dome is a missile defense system that has successfully intercepted thousands of missiles fired by terrorist groups, like Hamas, at Israeli population centers. It has protected Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It has protected them all from harm and saved countless lives, Israelis and Palestinians alike.

This incredible feat of defense technology is a shining example of the unbreakable U.S.-Israel security partnership. The U.S. Army is in the process,

as well, of acquiring Iron Dome batteries, and it tested the system as recently as August, meaning this life-saving technology could also protect American men and women in uniform from a variety of missile threats.

Let me be clear. I want to emphasize the word “defense.” Iron Dome is a purely defensive system. It is a shield—a miraculous shield—against death and destruction, one that America should be proud to help support and has supported across both Democratic and Republican administrations and in Democratic and Republican Congresses for over a decade. Iron Dome saves lives; Iron Dome prevents an escalation of violence; and Iron Dome provides a critical window for diplomacy.

This past May, terrorist organizations launched over 4,400 rockets at Israel. That is right—4,400 rockets. Iron Dome was key to preventing 90 percent of these rockets from reaching their targets, saving the lives of innocent Israeli citizens. We should be proud to support this technological feat that has protected countless lives and will continue to do so.

My trip to Israel and my visit to see Iron Dome, well, is on my mind today because Israel needs our help, and they need it now.

This summer, following the barrage of rocket fire—those 4,400 missiles that Israel had to endure and which the Iron Dome protected Israel against—Israel made an emergency request to the United States for security assistance in order to replenish and repair the Iron Dome defense system to defend against future potential conflicts.

To Israel's north, on the border with Lebanon, which I went to see just 2 years ago, Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed terrorist organization, is estimated to possess over 100,000 missiles. Those 100,000 missiles are pointed at Israel, including thousands of precision missiles. If war were ever to break out again between Israel and Lebanon, as it did in 2006, Iron Dome would play a crucial role in protecting civilians—all civilians in Israel.

Just a few months ago, I joined Democratic and Republican colleagues in urging the continued support for Iron Dome. Support for Iron Dome is about the integrity of the U.S.-Israel relationship. There has always been strong bipartisan support for the U.S.-Israel defense partnership. That bipartisan support continues today.

The failure to fund this critical defensive tool would be catastrophic for Israel and would result in lives lost. It would lead to more conflict, and it would weaken the bond between the United States and our greatest ally in the Middle East. We must take action to ensure that this program remains fully operational.

The House of Representatives has already passed legislation on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis to fund Iron Dome. It was a vote of 420 for, and only 9 against. So now it is the Senate's turn to act.

Earlier this week, my colleague Senator MENENDEZ, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said this: “There is no conceivable reason why anyone in this Chamber or on either side of the aisle should stand in the way of U.S. support for this life-saving defense to be fully ready for the next attack.”

He is exactly right. Opposition to Iron Dome is contrary to U.S. national security interests and violates the commitment that the U.S. Government made to Israel.

We have an opportunity to rebuild the Iron Dome shield, to support the security of our most important ally in the Middle East, and to save lives. But we must take action right here and right now.

So as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to consideration of Calendar No. 140, H.R. 5323; that there be up to 2 hours for debate; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the bill be considered read a third time, and that the Senate vote on passage of the bill without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, as we speak, the Taliban is regaining control, has control over most of Afghanistan, is brutalizing women, kicking women out of school. Women will no longer be participating in the government.

It is really just unconscionable that Democrats insist that money be there to give to the Taliban.

Any person who believes and truly believes that the Taliban is a menace to women's rights and to women in a civilized world should join me in saying: We should make sure that no money ever goes to the Taliban.

When Secretary Blinken was asked about this, he said that if there is co-operation and if they meet expectations, the \$6 billion—and some say up to \$10 billion—available for the previous government will be given to the Taliban, who violently overthrew this government.

We are asking something very simple. We could fund Iron Dome today. Make sure that everybody who listens to this understands. This is being blocked by Democrats who don't want to pay for it.

We have a proposal that would have proposed \$1 billion today for Iron Dome, but it would have been paid for by taking money out of an account that has been allocated and that Secretary Blinken has indicated he will give to the Taliban if they behave.

So I think it is a real problem, and it is a problem of this body that the cavalier nature of just letting our country pile on \$30 trillion of debt. You ask how we got here. We got here \$1 billion at a time.

So rarely do we have an episode or a time where we can object. You know, I would object to a trillion if it were on the floor. I would object to \$50 billion on the floor.

But the billion dollars ought to be paid for. And there are so many pay-fors. But this is why government grows by leaps and bounds and becomes more and more wasteful over time.

So I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. PAUL's objection is unacceptable. He knows it is unacceptable. This is no time for political games. It could jeopardize the support for our allies and people in need of life-saving assistance.

I challenge all my Republican colleagues to let us take up the House-passed bill, passed 420 to 9, and fund Iron Dome for our national security—our national security—as well as Israel's.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I want to use the opportunity of the Senate floor today to call to the attention what I think is an alarming proposal that would allow the Internal Revenue Service to track nearly all inflows and outflows of Americans' bank accounts.

I heard this story—I heard this proposal while I was home in Kansas, and my reaction was: I assume this is just something on the internet, something that people are perhaps fabricating. Surely no one seriously is proposing that every transaction of \$600 in one's bank account and \$600 out of one's bank account is something that the Internal Revenue Service should be monitoring and recording, or that records would need to be provided to the IRS with that information.

It is one of those things I thought, well, that is just some crazy something that somebody is talking about. But, lo and behold, unfortunately, I have learned that, over the years—sometimes my constituents have brought me things in the past that tell me the story. It is, like, I can't believe that would be true, but let me check it out; and far too often, it turns out that it really is someone's proposal in the Nation's Capital.

Most Kansans would react to this concept by saying: I can't believe it is true. And then: Make sure you do something to keep it from happening.

In this case, it is apparently true. And not only is it true, it is true because it is supported, it is proposed by the Biden administration.

It is the Secretary of the Treasury, Janet Yellen, who believes and testified that this is a good idea. It is Charles Rettig, the IRS Commissioner, who believes that this is important to accomplish. It is not just somebody's ideas. It is somebody who has something that—because they have something to say that matters that can cause it to happen is for this.

For the IRS knowing how much money a Kansan earns, that just isn't enough. How much an American earns, it isn't enough to know our income. Now the IRS wants to know how you spend that income.

This is an invasion of privacy that focuses on account flows, not just on income, and it intrudes on virtually every American.

The claim that this will help tax wealthy cheats—I am all for taxing wealthy cheats, but instead, this isn't that. It gives the government the unprecedented access to nearly every working American's bank account.

Rather than listening to the enormous pushback from Americans and eliminating from consideration this invasive mandate, Democrats are simply suggesting to tweak the proposal depending on the revenues needed to fund this massive tax-and-spend spree that is around the corner.

In recent weeks, I have heard from more than 1,000 Kansans who are alarmed at this massive expansion of IRS reach and authority, this invasion of privacy. The last thing my Kansas constituents would want when it comes to their own bank account is more bureaucrats watching and dictating how they live their lives. This provision is a threat to their privacy. They see it that way, and it is.

Kansas relies heavily on small-town banks and credit unions to provide rural communities and their citizens with lending services to finance a small business expansion, to allow a family to pay for college, or to buy a home.

The relationship between our bankers, our credit unions, and their customers and clients is a special one. It is personal. That private relationship between a banker and their customer is one that is based upon trust. The banker no more wants to be in the middle of invading their customers' privacy. Mandating that banks report to the government their customers' account activities will significantly breach the trust that a customer, a client has with their banker.

These financial institutions are often run by just a handful of employees, and are often a family operation handed down from one generation to the next. We have lots of small local banks and credit unions already knee-deep—perhaps waist-deep—in red tape; something they have to deal with every day, and something we have tried nearly every day to reduce or eliminate.

Our bankers and credit unions spend millions of dollars to comply with the anti-money laundering policies, and those often yield minimal results.

This proposal would turn our banking system into an extension of the Internal Revenue Service while forcing local banks to shoulder the cost. And these costs, of course, ultimately would be paid for—guess who—the customer, the citizen.

So not only are we—would this proposal allow our privacy to be intruded

upon, but we would be paying as it happens.

Unfortunately, the IRS has increasingly politicized and—has been politicized and has a history of targeting disfavored groups and individuals, and has proven incapable of protecting taxpayers' data from leaks.

Entrusting this bureaucracy, the IRS, or, really, any other bureaucracy in Washington, DC, with the supervision of your personal finances is no way to close a tax gap.

At a time when the American people are more weary than ever of the Federal Government and their Agencies, this proposal will do nothing but further increase that distrust.

Democrats in Congress and particularly in the Biden administration should prioritize strengthening the faith in the financial service, not pursuing these kinds of policies that will push underbanked Americans away.

Ultimately, this plan will not achieve its stated goal of increasing tax revenues. Rather, it will lead to more harassment of average Americans and those who work at their financial institutions.

It is clear to me that there is an attempt here to leave no stone unturned to find every possible way to tax everyday Americans in order to fund a massive spending spree.

So while we hoped that this proposal was just idle talk, something that somebody said over a cup of coffee at the local doughnut shop or the cafe, something that when we went to find out if there was any truth to it we discover: Oh, no, I could tell my constituents this isn't happening, this is just something that somebody is gossiping about.

But no. It is a serious proposal by the Biden administration, and it has serious consequences to the well-being, financial, but perhaps more importantly, the privacy, something that Americans deserve, something that Americans request, and something that is already too often lacking in our lives—privacy—and in this case, privacy from the Federal Government.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from Iowa.

TRUMP INVESTIGATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to address the Senate Judiciary majority's Trump investigation examining the period from December 14, 2020 through January 3, 2021.

The majority released their report this morning; the minority released our report this morning.

This truncated investigation doesn't support the long-running Democratic narrative that Trump used the Justice Department to try to overturn the 2020 election. And it is truncated because we don't have all the records and this committee only interviewed three witnesses.

The available evidence shows that President Trump didn't use the Department of Justice to subvert the 2020

election. For example, one witness testified that President Trump had no impact—I repeat, no impact; and the words “no impact” come from that witness—on what the Department did to investigate election allegations.

In fact, the evidence shows that President Trump listened to his advisers and to their recommendations, and that he followed those recommendations.

The witnesses also testified that President Trump didn't fire anyone at the Justice Department relating to the election.

Records from this investigation indicate that President Trump's focus was on “legitimate complaints and reports of crimes.”

Witnesses testified that President Trump's main focus was on making the Department aware of the potential criminal allegations and to ensure that the Department did its job. It wasn't President Trump directing or ordering specific investigative steps. Witnesses also testified that it wasn't unreasonable for President Trump to ask the Department what it was doing to investigate election fraud and crime allegations.

Now, with respect to the other core issues in the Democratic narrative, the available evidence shows three facts.

Fact No. 1: President Trump rejected sending the letter drafted and advocated by Assistant Attorney General Clark to various States to contest the election.

Fact No. 2: President Trump rejected firing Attorney General Rosen. Indeed, after Bill Barr submitted his resignation as Attorney General, President Trump apparently considered Richard Donoghue as a replacement, showing his displeasure with Rosen.

Third and final fact: President Trump accepted Acting Attorney General Rosen's position that the Department not file a lawsuit against the States with reported voter issues.

The Democrats' report makes much of the efforts by individual lawyers to push the Department to take these steps, but the fact is, none of these steps were taken because President Trump made the ultimate decision not to take those steps. At each of these critical decision points, the President asked his advisers for their candid views and their candid recommendations, and the President followed them.

Now, ask yourself this: Where would we be now if President Biden followed the advice and recommendations of his advisers regarding Afghanistan? And we know what that advice was because we heard it last week before the committees in the House and Senate by the generals who were testifying.

Again, I am not sure why the committee is releasing transcripts and an investigative report when the investigation doesn't seem to be complete yet. I, as chairman of a committee, run investigations differently. I collect records and run all the necessary interviews. I gather the full set of facts.

Then and only then, I release the material publicly.

So far, the narrative the majority has been spinning here just isn't borne out by the facts. So this advice from me: Don't take this Senator's word for it; do as we have done on the Republican side. Read the transcripts. I think you will come to the very same conclusions that I have just stated.

TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR LISA SCHULTE MOORE

Mr. President, on a second point and a much shorter point, I would like to recognize an outstanding professor at Iowa State University. Professor Lisa Schulte Moore of Iowa State University is doing important work on behalf of farmers and rural communities, and eventually it affects all Americans.

Dr. Schulte Moore is a landscape ecologist and professor of natural resource ecology and management. Additionally, she serves as associate director of the Bioeconomy Institute at Iowa State University.

Dr. Schulte Moore was recently recognized as the 2021 MacArthur Foundation Award recipient and the first-ever Iowa State MacArthur Fellow. This award is known as the Genius Grant and is given to individuals who have shown a dedication to their field through creativity and originality.

Dr. Schulte Moore is a founder of the Prairie STRIPS conservation program. Established in 2003 at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City, IA, this program studied the effects of planting prairie strips on farmland.

Before I continue, I just used the name Neal Smith—former Congressman Neal Smith of Iowa, 36 years a Member of the House of Representatives. He has been retired quite a while now. He just celebrated, I think, his 100th birthday and is still active in the Des Moines community.

Participants found that prairie strips can protect the quality of our soil and water by reducing farm field soil loss by 95 percent. They also reduce nitrogen and phosphorus runoff by up to 80 percent. Because of the professor's work, prairie strips are used in 14 States on over 115,000 acres of cropland.

In addition to the \$625,000 received through the MacArthur Foundation, Dr. Schulte Moore was recently awarded a \$10 million Federal grant to turn biomass and manure into fuel. With this research, the professor is looking for additional ways that farm waste can be turned into renewable fuel and consequently not contribute to the degradation of the environment.

Whether it is researching the next generation of biofuels or helping farmers understand what conservation practices work best at their farms, I am grateful that the MacArthur Foundation recognized Dr. Schulte Moore. Her dedication and innovation encourage young people at Iowa State University and beyond to become involved in agriculture.

The fact is, the United States has the safest and most abundant food supply

in the world thanks to the American farmer and through research at institutions like Iowa State University.

Congratulations, Dr. Schulte Moore. Iowa State University and the State of Iowa are lucky to have a professor like you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

VACCINES

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. President Biden ran on a promise to be a unifying moderate. He promised to bring America together. On the campaign trail, he promised to "shut down the virus, not the country." As we have seen with his vaccine management, the opposite has happened.

Joe Biden and Democrats in Washington have adopted an agenda of systemic socialism focused on expanding government and Federal control. In Joe Biden's America, the government knows better than the people, and President Biden has shown that he is eager to use government mandates to keep families in check.

President Biden's latest vaccine mandate for private companies tramples on the personal freedoms of Americans. This unconstitutional order will push more Americans out of the workforce, devastate our economy with product and service shortages that cripple supply chains, and throw America into a stagflation crisis not seen since the 1970s.

By forcing some working Americans to choose between keeping their jobs or doing what they believe is best for their health, Biden's mandate hurts the people he claims to help—workers, low-income Americans, and seniors on a fixed income, who will all be either hit with higher unemployment, higher prices, or a shortage of available goods.

When I think about the impact of burdensome government regulations, I think about my dad. My adopted father was a truckdriver. Anyone who has driven trucks or been close to someone in that line of work knows how demanding that job can be. It is hard work, and it is one of the most critical jobs in our country. Truckdrivers are like the offensive linemen of America's supply chain—often overlooked but absolutely essential to getting things moving. Our country is already experiencing a significant shortage of truckdrivers. We can't afford to lose any more.

Of course, trucking isn't the only industry that will be affected by Biden's unconstitutional mandate; nearly every sector is under the gun. In an economy where simply keeping shelves stocked is an everyday challenge, losing workers in almost any critical industry will have a catastrophic impact across our supply chains and drive prices even higher.

Just this week, a month and a half before Thanksgiving, Amazon began already giving Black Friday discounts on goods because they expect so many delays and shortages on goods. That

means families who have to wait for holiday bonuses before they can go shopping are going to be facing "out of stock" signs online and in stores.

Joe Biden needs to answer this question: How is he going to fix this? How can Joe Biden guarantee that our supply chains won't completely crumble under his failed policies and mandates?

In fact, I urge President Biden to have Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo testify to the Commerce Committee on the shortages we are already seeing and the shortages that we anticipate.

Ensuring the stability of American supply chains requires the urgent attention of the Biden administration. As a member of the Commerce Committee and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, and Export Promotion, I know this testimony from Secretaries Buttigieg and Raimondo would be useful in understanding how this will be addressed.

We are already starting to see major supply issues. Seafood restaurants in Miami are seeing price increases of 50 to 60 percent on fish. Furniture stores in Florida are seeing wait times of 6 to 8 months before they can deliver certain products. Florida grocery stores are warning of product shortages as customers are starting to see empty shelves.

Small business owners and families aren't able to afford those kinds of drastic increases, but if President Biden has his way, those transportation difficulties are going to become even worse and prices will rise even higher. Right now, rising prices on everyday goods are forcing American families to make hard choices.

I have said it on this floor countless times, and I will say it again: Reckless government spending causes inflation. The reckless spending agenda of Joe Biden and Democrats here in Washington is having disastrous effects on families across our country.

We can never forget that, as inflation worsens and prices surge higher, it is the poorest Americans and those on fixed incomes who are hurt the most. There are single moms wondering if they can put an extra few gallons of gas in the car and still afford to put dinner on the table this week or moms like mine who took on odd jobs to make ends meet and watched the smallest price changes at the grocery store to make sure we could still get by.

If President Biden actually spoke with small and midsized employers and hard-working families instead of big banks and CEOs, he would learn that massive Federal mandates won't help us get our economy back on track. His Big Government mandates will only hurt us.

I want to be clear. I got the vaccine. I had COVID. And I encourage every American to talk with their doctor and consider doing the same. But getting the vaccine is a choice every American

gets to make for themselves. We can't give people an ultimatum to comply, quit, or get fired. It is a gross overreach by the Federal Government at a time when we need more jobs, not less; lower prices on everyday goods, not higher.

Unlike Joe Biden and Democrats in Washington, I don't believe that government knows better than the American people. My parents didn't have much of a formal education, but they worked hard and made the choices they felt were right for the health and well-being of our family. They relied on government to keep them informed, and they made their own choices. That is how government should work.

That is what I did when I was Governor of Florida. In 2016, Florida was faced with the Zika virus, which impacted newborns. Rather than placing mandates on pregnant women or restricting their travel to areas with local transmission of Zika, which we knew where they were, we simply informed Floridians. We worked to be as transparent as possible and offered free Zika testing to all pregnant women in Florida. That is how the Federal Government should deal with COVID. The government's role in public health is to inform and support, not mandate.

Our country has seen labor shortages caused by Democrats' failed policies of rewarding unemployment, paying people more to stay at home than to get back to work. Energy prices are surging, and inflation is raging. American families can't afford more of President's Biden's radical policy decisions that are inflicting lasting damage and driving our economy backwards.

Restoring and strengthening our supply chains is a critical step in getting the American economy rolling forward.

It is time for President Biden to acknowledge that massive, unconstitutional mandates on private companies won't do anything but hurt American business and throw gasoline on the already raging inflation crisis he has created.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

TRIBUTE TO WARRANT OFFICER HERSEL
"WOODY" WILLIAMS

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I am here today to honor the lives of our World War II Medal of Honor recipients who bravely served our Nation, including the last surviving recipient who just celebrated his 98th birthday, Hershel "Woody" Williams.

My colleague is here with me. We have known Woody for years and years and years. This is a person who has never quit serving his country from the day he was born to the day he fought and won the Congressional Medal of Honor in Iwo Jima.

If you ever saw any pictures and basically the war videos we see, you see a little guy running around Iwo Jima shooting the flame thrower in the pill boxes. That was Woody. It is just unbelievable.

He is a fellow West Virginian. He was a marine, a Medal of Honor recipient for his heroic efforts at the Battle of Iwo Jima that I have been told involved the flame thrower, which I have seen. And it is not just one. I think he went through five flame throwers because when he ran out, he went and reloaded and went at them again. It is just unbelievable.

Woody has dedicated his life to our great and our beautiful United States through his service in the military and his dedication to supporting veterans and advocating for their needs for decades after.

There is not a time when I know that Senator CAPITO and myself don't hear from Woody and there is something going on, whether it is at the cemetery, or whether we are having a ride for the Gold Star families. We do a motorcycle ride, which I would like to invite the Presiding Officer to.

I say to the Presiding Officer: You would enjoy it. It is wonderful.

Senator CAPITO has been with us before on that. It is just a wonderful thing, and Woody has never failed to be part of it. Now, he rides in a sling shot, but, by golly, he makes the whole route.

He has dedicated his life fully to our veterans and to the Gold Star families.

He is bound and determined to get a committal shelter built at the Donel C. Kinnard Memorial State Veterans Cemetery. Again, Senator CAPITO and I, both serving on the Appropriations Committee, have committed that we are united in getting this done. We will get that done, and it needs to be.

That basically would ensure that the families of our fallen soldiers and veterans, they have a safe place to lay their loved ones to rest, protected from the weather, rain, Sun, and snow throughout the year.

In this year's Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill, we include a language to create a pilot program that allows Federal veterans cemeteries to build shelters for those purposes. But we must ensure the pilot program includes State veterans cemeteries, like the Donel C. Kinnard Memorial State Veterans Cemetery.

The families of our fallen servicemembers deserve to honor their loved ones in peace, and I am proud to help Woody fight for this simple request.

Americans like Woody Williams answered the call to serve our great Nation during World War II, and he fought to ensure democracy prevailed. Their sacrifices allowed the rest of us to enjoy the freedoms we hold sacred and help make the United States the strongest Nation in the world.

I am going to share with you one story that Woody has told all of us back home. He says the thing that he remembers most and the thing that he still grieves the most about, he had two marines that were protecting him with gunfire while he ran around, and their lives were sacrificed for him. I think both got shot and perished. And

he says: They gave their life for me to do my job and protect and save my life.

There is not a day that goes by, he says, he doesn't think about that, how the Good Lord spared him and the sacrifices that were made for him and our country.

So I believe that honoring all of those who served in World War II by allowing the last surviving—and I want to make sure we understand, Woody Williams is the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from World War II.

We are asking that he be allowed to lay in State at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. And what better way to honor this generation, their sacrifices than the President to authorize the State funeral for that brave individual.

And Woody—there is not a better person to represent all of those who sacrificed and given their all, all of those who were basically decorated for their valor, to do this. And bestowing this great honor on the last survivor and the World War II Medal of Honor recipient would be the perfect way to come together as a nation to salute the "greatest generation."

So I am honored to be here with my colleague and my friend Senator CAPITO in a bipartisan—you know, I have always said this: The glue that holds this country together is the people who put themselves in harm's way for all of us.

They didn't say: Well, I will put a uniform on and I will take a bullet for the Republican, but not the Democrat, or I will take a bullet for the Democrat and not the Republican.

Senator CAPITO's father took a bullet for all of us too, and she will speak about that, I am sure, and the bravery that he had. He was my dear friend, and we all miss him. But the sacrifices that my parents and Senator CAPITO's parents and the generation—that was the "greatest generation," I think, that we will ever see because they took responsibility and took responsibility for their action. They held themselves accountable for their actions, and that showed the character that generation has.

And that is what I would hope these young interns and all the young pages that we have here understand, that your character is defined the day that you take responsibility for the actions—good, bad, or indifferent—and be able to look yourself in the mirror and say: I made a mistake. I can do better. That is my fault. I will fix that. That is character.

So I am honored to be here and to honor every World War II veteran, every World War II Medal of Honor recipient.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us in our efforts to honor these brave veterans. And I call on our President, President Biden, to grant our request.

With that, I yield the floor to my colleague.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, it is an honor to talk about a good friend of ours, Woody Williams, here with my fellow Senator from the West Virginia, to talk about our fellow West Virginian, Hershel "Woody" Williams.

He is just an incredible, incredible, individual. He turned 98 just, I think, last week. So he was born in 1923, which was the same year my father was born. Woody and I have talked about this because when I see him, I see my dad and that generation. My dad is no longer with us. You know, they did incredible things at such a young age.

One day, I was honored to sit next to Woody on an airplane flying home. He travels all over. It is amazing where he goes and what he does. He told me his whole story of joining the Marines and signing up for the Marines and why he wanted to do it. He was a country boy, just born—they didn't really actually know when he was born. He didn't have a full birth certificate. And he is a little guy. He wasn't quite big enough to maybe get—be able to join, and he worried about that. He was 17, but nobody really knew how old he was.

I asked him: Well, what was your attraction of being in the Marines?

He said one day he was in town and he saw this guy walk by, and he was fully dressed in a Marine uniform.

And he said: I want to be that guy. I want to wear that uniform.

And he persevered, as he has in every aspect of his life.

There are so many, as Senator MANCHIN said, so many brave from that "greatest generation" that served in World War II. And he is the final World War II veteran Medal of Honor recipient of that award.

We are so proud of him in West Virginia because, you know, it didn't stop there for him. He spent a lifetime advocating for veterans, for veterans' health, for fallen soldiers' families, in a whole variety of roles, and he never stopped.

As Senator MANCHIN said, he fought valiantly in the Battle of Iwo Jima, storming those pill boxes, all four of them, under relentless fire. He survived the entire 5-week campaign in Iwo Jima. As we know, that was one of the most staunchly defended Japanese strong points at that time, and his actions played a critical role in the eventual capture of that island.

He has inspired future generations to want to serve our Nation. He is a hero for what he has done at home. He has committed himself for 75 years to veterans and their families, and he created the Hershel Woody Williams Foundation.

Through his foundation, Woody advocates for and recognizes the sacrifices of our Gold Star families who have lost loved ones in the military.

Because of his tremendous efforts, Woody and his foundation are responsible for 60 Gold Star family memorial monuments. Senator MANCHIN and I have been to the grand opening. They

just had a new one in Charleston, on the grounds of the Charleston capitol. It is beautiful to see, and the other 70 additional monuments that are going to be built in the future.

We need reminders, I think. We need reminders of the sacrifices that people make. And we need reminders of what it takes to defend our liberties, our freedoms, our families. So we are really, really pleased to be here.

The West Virginia Legislature included Woody in the West Virginia Hall of Fame and named him a Distinguished West Virginian in 1980, and again in 2013, and they would probably do it again next year. He is just so exceptional.

His unending energy and passion have also inspired many generations. He has spoken to numerous schools, universities, community events, and veterans' receptions, promoting patriotism and the ideals of service above self.

I have been privileged to attend—and I know Senator MANCHIN has too—several speeches given by Woody Williams, keeping in mind the last one I heard, he was 97 years old. Oh, my gosh, so inspiring. It makes you just want to feel pride for our country but also for our people, that our country boy from West Virginia could keep inspiring the next generations.

He has been here to the Halls of the U.S. Capitol. Or you might have even seen him at the coin flip—how did he get there?—at the Super Bowl in 2018. So he has gone on to really, I think, be a remarkable human being. If you haven't met him or haven't seen him, make sure you get a chance if you hear he is coming your way.

Abraham Lincoln famously said: "Any nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure."

Today, I am proud to honor my friend, with Senator MANCHIN and many other West Virginians and others around the country, and to share his stories of courage, compassion, and the service not only in the past but the service that he has today. I am glad to join a bipartisan group of our colleagues in honoring him and honoring him in the future.

Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. MANCHIN. I say to Senator CAPITO, if you could just wait a minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. I know you remember this very well.

Woody is a person who taught us all how to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Because we think we know how to say it. We all memorized it as a little kid: "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands."

Woody would always say: One Nation under God—do not stop, do not hesitate at "one Nation." It is "one Nation under God." It is not "one Nation." "Under God with liberty and justice for all."

He corrected us, and he never would let us say it without going with no pause because he said we are a nation under God.

And I will never forget. He drove that home so many times to all of us. So the young pages here, I hope you will remember that.

With that, maybe we should do a "happy birthday" together to Woody because he is probably watching. So together, you and I? Happy birthday, Woody.

Ms. CAPITO. Happy birthday, Woody.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I also want to wish Woody a happy birthday as well.

I just join my colleagues today to commemorate and honor some of the Nation's most admirable warfighters in the Second World War, and I so appreciate my colleagues bringing their personal stories to the floor today. This is something that all Americans should cherish—the stories of these heroes. We have very few of these brave heroes still among us today, and it is so important that they receive every ounce of recognition that we can give them for their selflessness and extraordinary heroism.

I am pleased to be a cosponsor of Senator MANCHIN's legislation to provide a merited celebration and commemoration of the last living World War II Medal of Honor recipient, Woody Williams, who recently celebrated his 98th birthday.

Medal of Honor recipients like Mr. Williams demonstrated a courageous and noble commitment to our Nation, and their exemplary actions deserve all the praise that we can give them.

I am proud to represent a State that has several World War II Medal of Honor recipients of its own, in Mississippi: Van Thomas Barfoot of Edinburg, Robert T. Henry of Greenville, James Daniel Slaton of Gulfport, Louis Hugh Wilson of Brandon, and Jack Harold Lucas of Hattiesburg, whom I still remain friends with his family today.

From Germany to Japan, these men served our Nation without hesitation in the height of the Second World War, defending our Nation, our allies, and the very principles of freedom. It fills my heart with great pride to call these late veterans my fellow Mississippians. The tributes we offer today for Mr. Williams in truth stand for our deep appreciation for all of those who fought in World War II.

I thank my colleagues for their great work on this important recognition and the opportunity to be a part of this.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I join my colleagues today in support of our bipartisan resolution to designate a state funeral in honor of the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient for

World War II. Woody Williams is that person, and this would also recognize millions of Americans for their service and sacrifice during the war.

The Medal of Honor represents a small token of our appreciation for the spirit, determination, and gallantry of those who performed far beyond the call of duty, those of our “greatest generation” who gave everything on the battlefield. This includes five brave Medal of Honor recipients from the great State of Montana: William W. Galt, Laverne Parrish, Leo J. Powers, Donald Ruhl, and Henry Schauer. Each of these men pitted bravery and heroism against great odds and showed exemplary devotion to our Nation. Now, they have all passed, but their memories live on in each of us—in our freedoms, in the freedoms of our children, and in those of our children’s children.

Today, we have a special opportunity to honor their service and ensure that their acts of heroism are never forgotten. A state funeral for the last surviving World War II Medal of Honor recipient is a key part of fulfilling this promise. These ceremonies offer our Nation the opportunity to pause and reflect on the service of not only the individual but also those who served alongside them.

It is my hope that President Biden designates this state funeral so that we may honor the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from World War II with this distinction. It is time to pay a final salute to the millions of men and women of our “greatest generation” who served our country with great courage.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, shortly, I will ask for unanimous consent on the nomination of Robert L. Santos to be the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau.

The mission of the Census Bureau is to serve as the leading source of quality data about the Nation’s people and our economy. The census and the Bureau’s surveys are critical for communities, businesses, and people across our Nation to ensure communities have the resources and the information they need to thrive.

The Census Bureau Director must meet the challenge of this mission. They must have experience in the collection, analysis, and use of statistical data and demonstrated management experience at large organizations.

Robert Santos is an eminently qualified nominee for this role. He has over 40 years of experience as a manager and expert in the field of survey design and statistical research, including experience as a manager at the most renowned research centers for statistics, as principal of a market research firm, and currently at the nonprofit Urban Institute.

He has interacted closely with the Census Bureau for decades as a re-

searcher, a stakeholder, and an expert adviser, serving on the Census Advisory Committees and National Academies’ panels on Federal statistics. Mr. Santos has demonstrated a deep knowledge of the Census Bureau, its data, and its stakeholders. He has demonstrated a commitment to upholding the Bureau’s mission of producing essential, high-quality data that our Nation relies on.

It is critical that we confirm Mr. Santos to the Census Bureau so they can continue their important work with a well-qualified leader at the helm.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 311 and 312, Robert Luis Santos, of Texas, to be Director of the Census for the remainder of the term expiring December 31, 2021; and Robert Luis Santos, of Texas, to be Director of the Census for a term expiring December 31, 2026. (Reappointment); that the nominations be confirmed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

First, happy birthday. Is it your birthday?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. No, sir. Don’t rush it.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. As my colleague knows, the Census Bureau performs critically important functions to collect accurate and timely data. Unfortunately, I am concerned that this nominee will politicize the Census Bureau and will not perform his duties in a fair and unbiased fashion, which this position demands.

I cannot and will not consent to allowing this nominee to move forward in an expedited manner. We should take a vote so every Senator can get on the record with their support or opposition to this nominee. Therefore, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Michigan.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, over the last few months, the American people have watched in disbelief and then in

anger as the Biden administration has completely fumbled the response to the border crisis.

In the spring, the biggest concerns were the thousands of children coming across the border. We lacked the facilities, the personnel, and the resources to provide proper care for those children, particularly in those kinds of numbers. At one point, one of the processing centers in Donna, TX, in the Rio Grande Valley was at 1,600 percent of capacity.

Then, in the summer, the scale and scope of the crisis grew. In addition to the thousands of unaccompanied children entering our country each month, the number of family units has skyrocketed.

I should pause to add, Mr. President, that the reason why the smugglers send in unaccompanied children is because they know they will simply be placed with sponsors in the interior of the country and most of them will fail to return to the immigration courts for their asylum hearing. So they will have been successfully placed in the United States, sometimes with relatives, sometimes with noncitizens, sometimes with foster families who don’t know them at all. That is why the smugglers have been smuggling unaccompanied children.

But in August alone, more than 86,000 members of families—typically women with young children—have crossed the border. Now that we have reached the fall, the crisis has shifted once again.

I think what really grabbed people’s attention was when they saw the little town of Del Rio, TX, with 15,000 Haitian migrants under a bridge in Del Rio, TX. First of all, they were shocked. They thought this was a Central American phenomenon or Mexican migrants. But the reality is, as Border Patrol will tell you and has told me, we literally have people coming from around the world across the southern border, including some countries of particular concern.

So the Haitians got people’s attention and completely overwhelmed the border region and our capacity to deal with them. That is why 400 Border Patrol agents had to be shipped in from other parts of the border or from interior checkpoints, which means that those other locations were understaffed or perhaps had no staff at all. That, in turn, is an invitation to the drug smugglers to smuggle more drugs across the border.

I have mentioned time and time again this shocking number: 93,000 Americans died of drug overdoses last year. The vast majority of those drugs come across the southern border. So the cartels—these criminal organizations that smuggle people, drugs, and other contraband—they are pretty smart. They understand where the weaknesses are, where the gaps are both in our policy and in our physical ability to secure the border, and they play us just like a fiddle.

The individuals and families huddled under the Del Rio Bridge—they were

trying to escape triple-digit temperatures.

It is hot in August and September in Texas, and they had little, if any, access to food, clean water, or restrooms. It took a number of days before the Department of Homeland Security was able to remove them from what the New York Times described as squalid conditions—truly, Third World conditions.

Now, President Biden has said to the migrants: Don't come to the United States. But the fact is, what he says with his mouth, with his lips, is contradicted by all of his policies and all of his action and inaction.

Here, let me share a few headlines from the last several months: "Overwhelmed Texas border community begins busing migrants to Austin"; "Migrants freed without court notice—sometimes no paperwork"; "Haitian migrants released in U.S. on 'very, very large scale'."

Folks beyond our borders are reading this. Friends and family in the United States are communicating with potential migrants who have come across. Certainly, the human smugglers—the coyotes—who get rich and are getting richer with every person they smuggle into the United States, are reading these headlines and watching cable TV and talking to people inside the heartland of our country. The message they see with their own eyes or they hear from others contradicts this lip service, really, that President Biden has been paying to border security.

Like I said, this is especially true among the cartels and criminal organizations that charge thousands of dollars a head to bring folks from literally anywhere around the world. It just gets a little more expensive. If you want to come from, let's say, the Middle East or if you want to come from, let's say, Iran or Afghanistan, it is a little more expensive than if you just want to come from Mexico or Central America, but you can do it because the same networks and criminal organizations run those networks in those countries around the world.

Last week, the Biden administration handed the cartels a big recruiting tool.

Let me read you another headline: "U.S. Will No Longer Deport Illegal Immigrants Based on Undocumented Status Alone."

That is what Secretary Mayorkas, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, said: The U.S. Government will not enforce U.S. law.

As if we needed to add any more to the chaos and the crisis on the border, Secretary Mayorkas has provided explicit confirmation that the Department of Homeland Security will not enforce our immigration laws. His directive strongly discourages Immigration and Customs Enforcement from even carrying out their most basic duties.

I know it seems like a long time ago, but it wasn't that long ago when people

said: "Abolish the police." Before that, they said: "Abolish ICE," Immigration and Customs Enforcement. But now they are, maybe, not so much intent on abolishing ICE as just telling them don't do your job. Don't enforce the very laws that we in Congress have made.

Considering the fact that the border czar, Vice President HARRIS, once compared ICE to the Ku Klux Klan, we probably should have seen this coming. Liberal activists can throw out their "Abolish ICE" posters because the administration is, effectively, nullifying the Agency from the inside.

The reality of the situation, however inconvenient it may be, is that, by entering the United States illegally, migrants are breaking U.S. laws. We are fortunate, indeed, and grateful to the hard-working men and women of ICE and Customs and Border Protection, who are committed to enforcing our laws and keeping the American people safe, but they can't do it when they are told don't do your job or if the administration continues to denigrate these officers to try to shame them and to publicly criticize them for doing what we have asked them to do.

Secretary Mayorkas's decision not to enforce our immigration laws isn't an example of prosecutorial discretion, which is the usual excuse; it is a violation of his oath. The Department of Homeland Security is charged with safeguarding the American people, but it can't do it because of the direction of its own leadership—a member of President Biden's Cabinet.

There is nothing wrong with prioritizing the removal of the most dangerous criminals who are here illegally. Previous administrations have prioritized certain categories, like those suspected of terrorism or others who could be a threat to our national security or public safety, but there is a difference between prioritizing and exempting entire categories from enforcement altogether.

Under this new guidance from Secretary Mayorkas, ICE officers are discouraged from arresting or removing illegal immigrants unless they have been convicted of a serious crime. It is unclear, though, whether domestic violence meets this criteria. Certainly, other crimes don't. So it defies all common sense to ask our law enforcement officers—that is what ICE officers are; they are law enforcement officers—to turn a blind eye to illegal conduct and not do what they have sworn to do in a professional oath.

I am reminded of a controversial directive issued by another one of President Biden's nominees to enforce our Nation's laws. Rachael Rollins was nominated to serve as the U.S. attorney for Massachusetts and is currently the district attorney for Suffolk County—home to Boston. She is a current nominee from the Biden administration.

Shortly after taking office as the Suffolk County district attorney for

the State and local office, she released a memo that outlined more than a dozen crimes that should be ignored by law enforcement. This was the district attorney, who was charged with enforcing the laws, saying to law enforcement: Ignore the laws.

According to Ms. Rollins, individuals who committed offenses like trespassing, shoplifting, larceny—that is stealing—wanton or malicious destruction of property or even possession with intent to distribute drugs should not be prosecuted.

Again, I have no issue with law enforcement using limited resources to address the biggest threats and to prioritize their prosecution decisions, but they cannot, I believe, consistent with their oaths, exempt wholesale classes of criminals from enforcement.

Under the Biden administration, we are already seeing a record-low number of deportations for people who violate our immigration laws. Back in April, as border crossings hit their highest level in 20 years, ICE removed the lowest number of illegal immigrants on record. There is no coincidence there. The guidance from Secretary Mayorkas sends an unequivocal message to the entire world that, if you want to come to the United States illegally, you will be able to stay as long as you don't get caught committing a murder or some other crime of a similar nature.

The administration has tried to claim that this will not serve as a pull factor. That is what the Border Patrol talks about with the push factors—poverty, violence, and maybe things like that which are the push factors for immigration—but they also talk about the pull factors, which are things that the migrants see and the smugglers see that will actually attract more illegal immigration to the United States. The administration has tried to claim that this refusal to enforce our immigration laws won't act as an additional pull factor because, they say, the order only applies to immigrants who entered the United States before November 2020.

But let's consider some of the other things that have been said. For example, Vice President HARRIS said migrants should not come to the United States because they will be turned back. That is clearly not happening. That is clearly not the case.

We were told that the Department of Homeland Security would use title 42, a public health law, to return the vast majority of Haitian migrants because, after all, while we are still dealing with the pandemic of COVID-19, these migrants, by and large, aren't vaccinated, and they are not tested for COVID-19 when they are released into the interior of the United States. You would think that would be a problem for the Biden administration, but Secretary Mayorkas just flat lied to the American people when he said what would happen to the migrants from Haiti. Some 13,000 migrants from that group have been released into the interior of the United States before even appearing in front of an immigration judge.

Clearly, that was a lie when he said they would be repatriated to their country of origin. So we have no reason to believe that things will be any different this time.

The President can't have it both ways. He can't say he is taking a tough stance on illegal immigration to appease one wing of the Democratic Party while implementing policies that just encourage more illegal immigration to appease the other wing.

The only way to address this crisis is to enforce our laws, not as the Biden administration wishes they were written. If we are going to have any hope of managing the current crisis and the additional crisis that will necessarily follow, deterrence is a key.

As the Border Patrol told me, there have to be consequences for illegal immigration. If there are no consequences, people are going to continue to come in greater and greater numbers.

Albert Einstein reportedly once said: Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

Unless the administration backs up their "do not come" statements with actions which actually send the same message, we are going to continue down this very dangerous road.

What will need to happen next before the administration takes this crisis seriously? More than 200,000 border crossings during each of the last 2 months didn't get their attention nor did the group of 30,000 migrants in Del Rio, TX, in a matter of days. So you can't help but ask: How many more migrants will have to suffer before President Biden and Vice President HARRIS finally back up their empty statements with action?

We stand ready to help and to work on a bipartisan basis. As a matter of fact, Senator SINEMA and I, along with our colleagues HENRY CUELLAR and TONY GONZALEZ in the House, have a bipartisan-bicameral border solutions bill. It is not perfect, and it doesn't answer all the questions, but it is a good place to start. So far, we have heard nothing but crickets from the administration. Apparently, they don't care about the status quo and, so far, seem unwilling to do anything differently to correct it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to conclude my remarks today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I just listened to my colleague from Texas talk about what is going on at the border. I thought he made a lot of really good points, and I appreciate his willingness not just to talk about this issue and the crisis we have on our southern border but also to talk about solutions.

One of the solutions he talked about and I have heard about a lot recently—

I am the ranking Republican on the Homeland Security Committee. In the last week, I have had the opportunity to speak with both the current Border Patrol Chief and also the recently retired Border Patrol Chief about what is happening on the border and the real-world problems that it is creating.

One thing they tell me is, just let us finish the small parts of the wall that haven't been completed because it is impossible for us to enforce the laws if you have these openings. Secondly, they said: Please let us complete the technology.

On both sides of this aisle, we have agreed, in the past, that, even if we disagree on having a fence along any parts of the border, including the urban areas, we will agree on the technology that ought to go with it.

They told me these stories that I had confirmed when I was down at the border earlier this year in that the technology that goes with it—the remote sensing cameras, the remote sensors in the ground, and so on—were stopped as soon as the Biden administration came in even though they were already paid for. So it wasn't just stopping construction; it was, in effect, in my view, more important that they have actually stopped the technology that is needed to be able to protect the border.

Senator CORNYN talked about how he and Senator SINEMA have worked on legislation to deal with some of these issues. I appreciate that because that is what is needed. We need to make some changes. We can't just continue to do what we are doing because we have over 200,000 people a month now coming over—unprecedented numbers. Usually, in the summer, those numbers go down a lot, but they have actually increased this summer.

We also need to fix a broken asylum system. This should not be a partisan issue.

It is obviously not working. People come to our border. They claim asylum. They are allowed to come into the United States. They are told, you know: Please go to an immigration office and check in, but 4 or 5 years until your immigration case is likely to be heard, sometimes longer.

Meanwhile, these folks are in the United States.

And then at the end of the process, even though those who end up going through the court system are self-selected because they are the folks who more likely—I think are more likely to have an asylum claim that is valid—but even when you go all the way through that process, guess what. Only 15 percent of those from countries like Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador—the so-called Northern Triangle countries—or other countries like Ecuador, only 15 percent are granted asylum by an immigration judge.

But, meanwhile, everybody is in the United States. And as I said earlier, the internal enforcement is not occurring, so people are literally not being told they have got to go back. And

often, obviously, not identified because, after 4 or 5 years, many people are embedded in our community.

So the asylum system has become a pull factor, and we need to realize that.

I was in four countries in Latin America earlier this year—Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador—and I heard from every one of the Presidents in those countries, the same thing in different ways, but the same thing, which is: You guys are pulling our people to your southern border because the traffickers, the smugglers, the coyotes, who are making all this money, are coming to our families and saying: Hey, come to the border. Give me 10,000 bucks. I will take your kids there. I can get them into school in the interior of the United States, and they are right.

Their narrative might not be exactly right. I am sure they exaggerate. But as a whole, what they are saying is correct. In other words, our system is so broken that these people who are exploiting poor people all over Latin America and elsewhere now—all over the world they are starting to come through our border in bigger numbers—are able to say: If you come with me, I will get you in.

That is because the asylum system is broken. So until we fix the asylum system, we can do everything else we are talking about—I don't think this is going to work.

And by the way, when I talk to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle about this, when I talk to Secretary Mayorkas about it, they acknowledge this is broken. I mean, you have to.

The 13,000 Haitians that just came into our country, that walked in, were given a bus ticket or a plane ride and told: Here is an immigration office. Please check in.

My understanding is the vast majority of those people had applied for asylum, and we said: Come on in.

And in 4 or 5 years, their case may be heard. And if they come to that trial, many of them will be deemed, just as the Central Americans are deemed, to be economic refugees.

Look, if you or I were in Central America and knew we could better ourselves and our family and take care of our kids by coming to the United States, wouldn't we make the same decision?

But don't we also in the United States have an obligation to have an orderly, legal way to do that?

And we have one. We are the most generous country in the world in terms of taking in immigrants. And I am a strong supporter of the legal immigration system. But we have got to have a proper way to do it. It has got to be legal. Otherwise, again, people are going to be exploited.

This trip north is not a safe trip. It is a dangerous trip, and people die in the desert. These kids are not treated well. Many are assaulted.

I did a study on this when I was head of the Permanent Subcommittee of Investigations. We did two reports. One

was on kids who were taken into HHS custody at the border, and then when they were sent out to their sponsors—because that is what happens. You go to the Border Patrol, then HHS, then you are sent out to sponsors.

You know who the sponsors were?

The very traffickers who had brought them up—in this case, from Guatemala—who were exploiting them.

And those same traffickers took those kids and took them to an egg farm, where they had to work 11, 12 hours a day, no school, paid little or nothing, living on bare mattresses underneath trailers.

Finally, luckily, a local law enforcement official figured out what was going on and was able to save these kids.

But that is not a system we should want in America. We should want a legal, orderly system that works for everybody. By the way, including the many, many people around the world who are waiting in line patiently to come to the United States through legal means.

So I hadn't meant to talk about this today, but I appreciate the fact that my colleague mentioned it. And I do think it is very important that, on a bipartisan basis, we put aside our political rhetoric on this and talk about solutions.

I think we should go back to a system where we are encouraging people to apply for asylum in their home country, and, second, to do it from third countries. If they are not comfortable doing it in their home country because they really are feeling persecuted for some reason, do it in a third country.

Those agreements were in place during the Trump administration. They were starting to work. They have now been ended. And then if you come to the border, have the adjudication be immediate. Let's spend the money to have the processing centers there at the border so people aren't waiting 4, 5, 6 years to go to their immigration hearing that they may or may not attend, as you can understand.

Instead say: You want to come as an asylee? Here is the system. Your adjudication is going to occur right now.

And for those who apply and are successful—which, again, is about 15 percent of people from the countries that are sending most of these migrants—then you would come in as an asylee and you would have the ability to be resettled legally and you would have the ability to work.

But if you are one of the 85 percent, you would be told: Sorry, you didn't make the standards. You have got to go back home, and you can apply legally, and here is the way you do it.

Wouldn't that make more sense for our country?

By the way, there is now a backlog of 1.3 million people waiting for these asylum hearings—1.3 million people. And it is growing every day.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. President, I had planned today to talk about something else, which is the

tax situation that we are facing with this new proposal from the Democrats.

You probably heard about the Build Back Better legislation, also sometimes called the reconciliation bill. It is in reconciliation because it wouldn't require any Republican votes, and Democrats are proposing to take this through Congress, much as they did in March with the \$1.9 trillion legislation.

This is also called the \$3.5 trillion bill, this Build Back Better. Actually, I would argue it is a lot more than 3.5 trillion when you look at the actual spending in it.

But let's focus on the tax side for a moment because that is how it is intended to be paid for.

The tax hikes, which would be the largest tax increases in America in at least 50 years, systematically dismantle a lot of the pro-growth and pro-job reforms that were put in place in 2017.

Why do I call them pro-growth and pro-jobs?

Because they worked. They helped Americans keep more of their hard-earned earnings. They helped businesses to be more successful, to hire more people and increase wages. And they are a big reason that, as of February of 2020—the month that we went into in this pandemic, as of February 2020—we had 19 straight months in this country of wage growth of over 3 percent per annum—19 straight months.

But what all of us should want—Republican, Democrat, all of us—higher wages. And by the way, most of that wage growth went to lower- and middle-income Americans.

That is what we should want too, right?

That was happening. In fact, as of that point, we had the lowest poverty rate in the history of America. We started keeping track of it back in the fifties. It was the lowest poverty rate ever. This was just a year or so ago. This was before the pandemic hit.

We also had a 50-year low in unemployment—the lowest unemployment ever—for certain groups: Blacks, Hispanics, disabled, others.

So this is something that was an achievement, that met the standards that we talk about on both sides of the aisle—more economic opportunity, closing the wage gap, giving people a chance to come off the sidelines and get a job. Things were happening, and in large measure, because of these 2017 reforms.

And yet, in this proposal that is now being proposed, called the Build Back Better proposal, there are tax increases that dismantle much of the reform in 2017 that caused this economic growth.

U.S.-based corporations are going to have a really hard time competing now in the global economy again because it takes our tax rate back up to being the highest, depending on where they end up in terms of their rate—one of the highest or the highest rate in the entire world.

The average corporate tax rate under the Ways and Means proposal will be 32

percent again—back up into the thirties—instead of an average of 21 percent, plus about 5 points on the State average, which is about 26 percent.

So, again, it puts us in a position where we are not competitive with the rest of the world. That is why we changed it back in 2017. In fact, according to the International Tax Competitiveness Index, the Democrats' plan would cause the United States to drop steeply down the rankings from 21st in the world to 28th in the world among developing countries in terms of competitiveness of our Tax Code.

Once again, as happened too often before the 2017 reforms—and, by the way, has not happened since then—companies will choose to say: OK. I am out of here.

Because of the Tax Code and the tax changes that they want to make, companies will say, as they did before 2017, because of the tax laws: I can't be competitive as an American company. I am going to go be a company of some other country.

It is called inversions. Sounds bad, and it is. Nobody wanted inversions. Democrats, Republicans, we all hated them. Guess what. We stopped them. After the 2017 reforms, they stopped.

Miraculously, we had companies in Ohio that chose to do that. It was terrible. They chose to actually become foreign companies because our Tax Code was so uncompetitive. We can't let that happen again.

Small businesses, which make up about 99 percent of the business in America, and they account for about two-thirds of the jobs in America—and, by the way, most of the job growth is in small businesses—are also hit hard by these tax increases.

The vast majority of small businesses are structured as what you call pass-throughs. In other words, they don't pay taxes at the company level; the individuals who own the company pay the taxes. That is the vast majority of companies in America.

So when you raise individual income taxes, guess what happens. You are socking it to not just the wealthy or whoever you are trying to sock it to; you are socking it to small business because that is, again, the vast majority of businesses in America, most of the employees. And that is how they are taxed, down to the individual level.

To make matters worse, the Biden administration seems intent on ending section 199A, which is a deduction we put in place on purpose to help small businesses kind of level the playing field between big businesses and small businesses. They are actually talking about getting rid of that deduction. So for small businesses listening today, be aware.

In all, the more successful pass-through companies should expect their Federal tax rate to rise from about 29.6 percent today to about 46.4 percent under the Democrats' new plan—46.4 percent taxation on small business.

How does that make sense?

So I think what is going to happen is you will see a lot of small businesses go out of business if this happens and certainly not be able to create new jobs and the opportunity that we saw during the 2018, 2019 time period.

But it is not just larger and small businesses that are going to feel the impact of these tax hikes. American workers and families will find themselves losing more of their hard-earned cash from all sides, thanks to the across-the-board tax increases, whether in estate taxes, capital gains taxes, retirement account taxes, the marriage tax, cigarette excise taxes—the list goes on and on.

It is no surprise, then, that contrary to what President Biden has repeatedly said, according to the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation—they are the people up here on the Hill who tell us what the impact is of tax law changes. The Joint Committee on Taxation, analyzing this tax proposal that is out there already—this is the Democrat tax proposal of the Ways and Means Committee—they say a lot of taxpayers who make less than \$400,000 a year are going to see higher taxes.

Some percentage of taxpayers in every bracket will see tax rates go up, even folks making between 40,000 and 50,000 a year, according to the distribution tables by the Joint Committee on Taxation.

More than one in three taxpayers making between \$100,000 and \$200,000 per year will be paying higher taxes in 2023—more than one in three. By 2031, more than three-quarters of those middle-class taxpayers will be paying higher taxes.

This is according to the Joint Committee. I encourage you to go on their website. Joint Committee on Taxation, JCT.org.

So even working-class families are going to end up paying some of the price of this spending spree in the form of higher taxes. But all of us have to pay an additional price in damage to our economy.

According to the Tax Foundation, the combined long-run effects of the tax hikes include a decline in our long-run gross domestic product of 0.98 percent. So about a 1-percent decline in our GDP—wow—a decline of the wage rate of about 0.68 percent, and a loss of 303,000 full-time jobs.

So this is the Tax Foundation analyzing what the effects of this would be in addition to what I have talked about in terms of the tax hikes.

The Joint Committee on Taxation has looked at this and said: Well, if you raise taxes on corporations, it is going to come primarily out of the pockets of the workers, and that is a lot of these middle-class families. But also it is going to reduce our economy. It is going to decline our wages. And it is going to result in a loss of over 300,000 full-time jobs.

That is the Tax Foundation.

So, to be honest, I am not exactly sure where the President got the no-

tion he has been repeating lately that the price tag on this \$3.5 trillion—maybe \$5 trillion; I don't know; depending on how you look at the spending—is zero dollars. That is what he said. It is zero dollars.

Even by their own admission, the big tax hikes we are talking about here are not going to cover all the spending, No. 1. But more importantly, billions of dollars lost in economic growth, a significant decline in wages, and hundreds of thousands of jobs lost doesn't sound like zero to me; it sounds like a bad deal for the American people.

So, along with my Republican colleagues, we have to keep telling the American people what is in this tax proposal and urging people to learn more about how these new taxes are going to affect them, their businesses, and their communities, and weigh in with their representatives in Congress.

Why would the American people support tax hikes that are going to be bad for workers and bad for our businesses? We have a responsibility to our constituents to ensure that does not happen.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2846

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, President Biden announced his vague, still-unwritten mandate for the vaccine just almost a month ago. He said then, at the time of his announcement, that his “patience was wearing thin.” Those are his words, not mine. Yet, oddly, President Biden’s administration is now in no particular rush to implement the rule. So almost a month has now elapsed, but there is still no rule and therefore no implementation of the rule. Perhaps President Biden and those who work with him are realizing what countless Americans already know: that the mandate was not well thought out.

First, neither the President of the United States specifically nor the Federal Government generally has the authority to issue a sweeping vaccine mandate of this nature. The Constitution doesn’t empower the Federal Government and certainly not the President individually, acting in isolation, with the right, the authority, or the power to broadly dictate personal medical decisions for all Americans with the stroke of the Executive pen.

I spoke earlier this week and I also spoke last week about individuals with religious, moral, and medical reasons to forgo vaccinations. The President’s mandate ignores their concerns and their rights.

Much of corporate America is already starting to fire unvaccinated workers despite the legitimate religious, moral, or health concerns that those workers might have. Some are even being charged fees for being married to an unvaccinated spouse. So it is not just their decisions but that of their spouses that are causing them to confront adverse action from their em-

ployer, all as a result of this mandate—a mandate which doesn’t yet exist. Even though time was of the essence a month ago when it was issued, there is still no rule and still nothing to enforce, but people are starting to enforce what they think will be in the rule if and when it ever does get promulgated.

In recent days, I have heard from over 200 Utahns who are at risk of losing their jobs due to this mandate. They are scared of becoming not just unemployed but unemployable—unemployable, second-class outcasts due to the President’s order.

Have we lost compassion? Have we lost all reason? Troublingly, it seems that these mandates aren’t based in reason. The mandate completely ignores the millions of Americans who have previously contracted and recovered from COVID-19. These people have antibodies against the virus.

In other countries where significant research on natural immunity has been conducted, the results are compelling. A study conducted in Italy shows that natural immunity is more effective than vaccines at reducing risk of future infection. Another study of half a million people in Denmark has shown that natural immunity provides significant, lasting protection against infection. Finally, a study from three separate hospitals in Israel found that natural immunity from a previous COVID infection was “27 times more effective than vaccinated immunity in preventing symptomatic infections.” But the President’s mandate announcement makes no mention of natural immunity—no mention whatsoever. Our entire national health apparatus seems to disregard the significant protection individuals have if they previously had and recovered from COVID.

Now, I believe the vaccines are generally safe and effective. I have been vaccinated. Every member of my family has been vaccinated, with my encouragement. I see these vaccines as a miracle, one that is helping to protect millions and millions of Americans—hundreds of millions of Americans, for that matter. But I also recognize that millions of Americans are already protected by their natural defenses because they contracted COVID, before the vaccines were available in many instances, and they have recovered and therefore have natural immunity. The science shows that this immunity is strong, that it is effective, and that it is widespread in America.

So I, today, am offering a bill that would require Federal Agencies to recognize, accept, truthfully characterize, and include natural immunity in any regulation. This bill does not say that vaccines are bad or unhelpful; it merely asks the Federal Government to respect widely available science.

I am glad to be joined in this effort by Senators BRAUN, TUBERVILLE, and SULLIVAN as cosponsors.

The bill would allow us to keep Americans employed and help us beat

the pandemic in a smart way, in a reasoned, rational way, and in a compassionate way.

Now, I believe—in fact, I am quite confident that the mandate in its entirety will be struck down as unconstitutional, as having been issued outside the authority of the President of the United States. This simple bill wouldn't undo the whole thing, as I believe the courts are certain ultimately to do. This simple bill is narrow, and it would simply give peace of mind to Americans and employers by recognizing and upholding evidence-based realities concerning our natural defense to COVID. It is a commonsense proposal, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

So, Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on HELP be discharged from further consideration of S. 2846 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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?

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, unfortunately, even though the Senate has had multiple exposures now to nonsense ideas like this bill, they keep coming back.

Now, Agencies like the CDC and NIH are already looking closely at data on COVID infection and natural immunity. They have been since the earliest days of this pandemic.

In an August "Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report," CDC assessed data from Kentucky and found that out of a group of people who had been infected with COVID before, those who were unvaccinated were twice as likely to get COVID again than the people who were vaccinated. In other words, being unvaccinated puts you at higher risk of being reinfecting, period.

Getting vaccinated is a necessary step to protect you but also to protect those around you.

We are in the middle of the deadliest pandemic in American history. It has now killed 700,000 people and counting. If we are going to end this thing, if we are going to reopen our economy, if we are going to save lives, we need to get everyone vaccinated when they are eligible.

We don't need politicians suggesting they know more than those experts and ignoring the data. We don't need bills meant to weaken one of our strongest tools to get this thing behind us, like the ones that Republicans have repeatedly been pressing for.

Workplace safety standards are nothing new in this country. Immunization requirements are nothing new in this country. And let's be clear. The vaccine requirements President Biden has enacted so far include tailored exemp-

tions for legitimate religious and medical considerations that have long been standard. The emergency temporary standard he has envisioned would allow testing as an alternative.

People are dying every day. Families are scared, and they are tired, and they are angry that even as they try so hard to do the right thing so we can end this crisis, their hard work is being undermined.

So can the Republicans stop the theatrics and stop wasting our time? Can they stop pretending they know more than the experts about this disease? Is that too much to ask?

It isn't, and I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I appreciate the insight and the thoughtful attention paid to this matter by my friend and distinguished colleague, the Senator from Washington.

I respectfully submit that we are not dealing with theatrics when it comes to hard-working Americans, including the more than 200 Utahns whom I have heard from just in the last 2 weeks, who are losing their jobs or are at immediate risk for doing so based on a decision forced upon them by an action that has been threatened but not taken and in no way legally articulated by the President of the United States.

These are not theatrics for those who are losing their jobs. That is just not an accurate portrayal, and it really is disrespectful to those who are enduring that. To them, these are not theatrics. To them, this is their ability to make a living.

As far as the characterization that these claims of natural immunity are one off, I have yet to see any study that refutes the studies I referenced a moment ago—not the one from Denmark, not the one from Italy, and not the one from Israel that shows the significant immunity benefits conferred by a previous COVID infection, one from which a person has fully recovered. In the case of at least two of those studies—the one from Italy and the one from Israel—the immunity is as strong if not stronger. In fact, the one from Israel concluded that it is 27 times more protective.

Yet we continue to hear efforts like this one today characterized as "theatrics," characterized as "nonsense ideas like this bill"—bills that try, in the case of the bill that we are talking about today, to protect the employment rights and the personal decisions of Americans who have natural immunity or, as in previous bills, those who have a legitimate medical concern, especially where that concern is one that has been taken on the advice of a board-certified physician who has advised them, based on a preexisting medical condition, not to get it.

I also heard that the President has indicated that there would be exceptions. We don't know what those exceptions are. Many of those exceptions are

not being honored by those segments of corporate America already moving to implement and enforce this vaccine mandate.

What is happening is that HR departments and general counsel's offices in large corporations—those with more than 99 employees—are understandably trying to get ahead of this so that they are not behind when the rule actually issues, so they won't run any risk of the aggressive, heavy fines with which they have already been threatened. So for that reason, many of them are trying to get ahead of it, and many of them are now using President Biden's speech about the yet-to-exist rule, and they are either threatening to fire or preparing to fire or in some cases already have fired people regardless of any exceptions that they think they ought to be entitled to. It is easier for the corporation, in some instances, perhaps, or maybe more convenient or maybe more in conformity with the liking of the individuals making the decision to do that, but it is not fair to the workers. It is especially not fair in light of the fact that all of these actions are being undertaken in response to a yet-to-exist rule promulgated by an executive branch Agency that has yet to act at the behest of the President of the United States—one person without statutory authority and without constitutional authority to do this. That is tragic.

Because he doesn't have the authority to do this, it shouldn't happen at all. At a minimum, we, as the law-making body within the Federal Government, have an obligation to take it down. Even if we can't take it all down or to stop it, we at least have an obligation to try to make its effects less draconian, less hurtful, and less harmful to individuals who, by no choice of their own and no fault of their own, aren't in a position to get this, whether because of religious convictions, natural immunity, or a health condition or something else.

It is tragic. We are better than this. We should be acting to protect Americans, not make them more vulnerable.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

BUILD BACK BETTER AGENDA

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I am here to talk about the President's Build Back Better agenda and its importance to our country.

We have heard a lot over the last couple of months about the new jobs that that plan will bring. It is estimated by economists that it will generate 4 million jobs every year for the next 10 years. That is because we are going to be investing in modernizing our infrastructure.

We have already heard about the important work to modernize our roads and our bridges, expand our transit systems, build out the infrastructure of the 21st century, including high-speed internet to every American household and every small business.

We have talked about the importance of deploying a clean energy grid and making sure that we move toward a clean energy economy. That will put millions of Americans to work in good-paying jobs. If you are generating that kind of economic activity, that kind of wage opportunity, obviously, that is good for every American household and brings in more income.

But, today, I am going to gather with some of my colleagues, organized by the Senator from Minnesota, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, who will join us shortly, to talk about how the Build Back Better agenda will not just generate millions of jobs and good-paying jobs, but help the dollars that Americans have in their pockets and bank accounts travel faster, how it is going to save them money.

Now, one way it is going to save money is for families with kids. They are going to get a tax cut. In fact, that tax cut was put in place as part of the American Rescue Plan that we passed earlier this year. As a result of a tax cut for families with kids, families around the country right now are getting up to \$300 per child to help cover the everyday costs of raising kids and addressing the needs of a family.

That will also cut child poverty in half, but only for this year. It is currently scheduled to terminate at the end of this year, that tax cut for American families with kids. So one of the things we do in the Build Back Better agenda is extend that for many years because it doesn't make sense to have that terminate and have those families stuck with all those additional costs.

But there is also another way that the Build Back Better agenda is going to help every dollar that comes into the family bank account go farther, and that is by reducing the costs that they face in so many of their everyday household expenditures.

I want to focus on a couple of areas. One is in the area of childcare, one is in the area of healthcare and prescription drugs, and the other is the energy costs and gas costs that so many families face. The Build Back Better agenda is going to lower the costs for American families in those areas so that the income they have will go much further.

I want to start with childcare because working parents with infant children are scraping by today to pay for childcare, paying, on average, \$1,300 every month to get licensed care.

Under the Build Back Better agenda, if you look at the projections, you will see that Marylanders—families in my State of Maryland—will see their childcare bills cut nearly in half with weekly savings of \$141 every week. That is \$7,322 a year for childcare costs—lowering of childcare costs for those families.

If you think about the need to try to get more people in the workforce, it is understandable that if you are a parent with kids, you want to make sure that when you go into the workforce, your kids have an affordable and secure place during the day. And right now that is not an option for millions of American families. So one of the things this proposal does, the Build Back Better plan, is dramatically reduce those costs for childcare.

The proposal will also cut prescription drug costs for seniors. We have been having a debate for years about the need to allow Medicare to negotiate for lower drug prices on behalf of all of us, on behalf of all the beneficiaries in Medicare.

The Veterans' Administration negotiates drug prices for veterans who are in their care, and yet we don't allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices. This is nuts. And it runs up the costs for Medicare because if you don't get to negotiate price, the pharmaceutical companies get to set the price wherever they want. So this proposal, the Build Back Better plan, will cut those costs and reduce prescription drug costs for Part D premiums by 15 percent.

We are also proposing to expand Medicare to cover vision, dental, and hearing services. This is a big gap in the current Medicare Program. Right now, seniors, on average, each year, are paying \$914 out of pocket for hearing services, \$874 for dental services, and \$230 for vision services. Our proposal would cover that big gap in the Medicare Program.

I am going to talk for one moment about energy prices because we all know we have to move to a clean energy economy. We are going to make it easier to do that as we put more Americans to work in that area.

One of the things that is proposed is a generous electric vehicle tax credit of up to \$12,500. This will make it easier for Americans to afford those cars. It is much easier to run a car on cheaper electricity than on gas.

But it is also going to help folks who continue to drive their gas-powered cars for years to come, because if we get more people into electric cars, that means less demand for gas, and so that means the folks who continue to drive in their gas cars will get lower gas prices. And we all know that gas prices have been on the rise.

Finally, talking about energy savings—you know, the best way to save energy money is to make sure that we don't waste as much energy. All of us know that we have homes, in many cases they are not that well insulated. So part of this plan also includes help to homeowners to more cheaply make their homes energy efficient. That means, with a given amount of power, they will heat their homes at cheaper costs because there will be less wasted energy.

In situation after situation, if you look at this bill, not only will it gen-

erate more jobs at better wages, not only will it provide working families with kids with tax cuts, but it will also help Americans save money on everything from prescription drugs to childcare, to energy prices, and many others.

That is what economists have said, and that is especially true because we are going to pay for this by finally requiring big corporations to pay their fair share and not allow them to hide so many of their profits offshore in places like Bermuda and the Cayman Islands. And we are going to ask the very wealthiest, billionaires, to also pay more for the success of the entire country.

So I just want to emphasize the fact—because we hear so much misinformation in this Chamber about what is in the Build Back Better agenda—that in addition to the jobs and higher wages, it is also going to help save families money on their bills so that their dollars will travel farther.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, let me start by asking unanimous consent that the vote on the motion to discharge the Lhamon nomination occur at 3:30 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BUILD BACK BETTER AGENDA

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the opportunity we have before us to deliver results for the people we work for.

Right now, too many Americans are struggling to make ends meet and get ahead because of the cost and availability of childcare, healthcare, home care, and prescription drugs.

In my home State of Wisconsin, people like Zena, a human resources representative from Twin Lakes, needs us to pass the Build Back Better Budget that invests in working families.

Zena has been battling several severe autoimmune diseases, and she has been battling this for more than 15 years. She fell very ill after contracting norovirus, and she was unable to work and ultimately lost her job, as well as her employer-sponsored healthcare that came with it.

Sick and uninsured, she turned to our State's BadgerCare program for help. But because the Republicans in the Wisconsin State Legislature have refused a Federal investment to fully expand Medicaid coverage, Zena was locked out of the program and unable to access necessary healthcare coverage. Like millions of Americans, Zena found herself in the Medicaid coverage gap and was forced to make choices that no one living in the United States should have to face, choices like paying for life-sustaining medication or paying her mortgage.

Right now, the people we work for are paying two to three times more for their prescription drugs than people in

other wealthy countries. This needs to change, and we have an opportunity to get the job done if we simply make the superwealthy and most profitable corporations, like the big drug companies, pay their fair share of taxes.

For years, Congress has been talking about lowering the cost of prescription drugs, so let's finally do it by giving Medicare the power to negotiate lower prescription drug prices that will save taxpayers money. Let's stand on the side of seniors, who should no longer be at the mercy of Big Pharma.

In addition to lowering the cost of needed medications, our Build Back Better budget provides the opportunity to expand Medicare benefits to include vision, dental, and hearing. The last time I checked, your ears, eyes, and teeth are all a part of your overall health, and there is no good reason not to include them in Medicare coverage.

Right now, the United States is also in the midst of a long-term care and caregiving crisis. Hundreds of thousands of older adults and people with disabilities who need and qualify for home- and community-based care services are unable to access them. I know something about this. I was my grandmother's caregiver, and I know firsthand the challenges that family caregivers face.

But we can do something about this, and we should, with Build Back Better legislation that invests in long-term care; creates new, good-paying home-care jobs; and raises wages for care workers who often work around the clock to care for our loved ones yet live in poverty.

All of this and more is doable if Washington finally says we are not going to continue spending trillions of taxpayer dollars on tax loopholes and tax giveaways for huge, profitable corporations, millionaires, and billionaires.

This is all to say that we face an urgent choice: Do we work for the powerful special interests who have too much influence in Washington, or do we work for people like Zena and others like her who simply look for a little help from us to even the playing field and to get ahead?

This is our moment to prove to the American people—to people like Zena—that their government works for them, not just those at the top. I have faith that we can do this for Zena, for Wisconsin, and for the millions of Americans counting on us to get the job done for them.

I yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, as we go over the wonderful things that Build Back Better offers—including tax benefits for families with children, support for home care and childcare for family members, lower prescription drug costs—I want to focus on a particular area, which is the addiction crisis, which grinds on in Rhode Island. I think every Member of

this body knows a family who has been touched by this crisis.

I remember visiting the small town of Burrillville, RI, a close-knit community. People know one another there. On January 1, 2015, no one would have known that half a dozen people would die in Burrillville of drug overdoses in the next 3 months. That went through that community just in a heart-breaking wave, and it remains burdened by addiction and overdose.

We have made a lot of gains since then. The CARA bill that Senator PORTMAN and I did, CARA 2.0, which was baked into the SUPPORT Act, shifted the way we think about addiction so we don't see it as a moral failing. We recognize its medical nature. We recognize, frankly, the noble nature of the path to recovery that people have to walk. We invested in prevention and education and treatment.

But still there is a massive gap that remains between the needs of families who have a member who is facing addiction and the care and support that we give them, and Build Back Better makes some really important steps for those families—first, for new mothers in recovery.

A new mom has a lot going on: caring for a newborn, coping with a potential substance abuse complication for that newborn, and caring for herself in her often deadly battle with addiction. Build Back Better would grow the workforce specializing in that care for moms.

The Medicaid Reentry Act, which I did with Senator BALDWIN, is also in the mix to provide Medicaid coverage to people as they get out of jail and prison. We showed in Rhode Island that these programs dramatically reduce overdoses and deaths in the weeks following release from incarceration. Steady access to care through Medicaid will save lives.

There is a boost to the Minority Fellowship Program because it is demonstrable that a more diverse workforce produces better outcomes for patients and families.

Finally, the peer recovery coach is a personal favorite of mine. We are pioneering this in Rhode Island. These are people who have walked the path of addiction and recovery, and they can relate to people who are struggling in a way that you and I might not be able to. Their role, after an overdose or in a crisis, to get people onto the path of recovery is wonderfully important.

All of the other things we are doing will actually create more stable lives. When events happen that knock people off of the path of recovery, having a stable life actually allows for a better shot at recovery and work around relapse.

So there is a lot to love in Build Back Better, and I want people to know that we did not forget those folks who are struggling with addiction or walking the noble path of recovery.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators MERKLEY, KAINE, and I be able to complete our remarks prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, we are all gathered here today, the group of us, to make a real case for passing the Build Back Better agenda and what it really means to people back in our home States, as Senator WHITEHOUSE was just explaining about Rhode Island. We get a lot in the minutia here for good reason. We are fighting a lot of forces. But in the end, what I know about this agenda, from the infrastructure in the bipartisan infrastructure bill to the work we are doing as part of this people-first agenda, it is about putting the people of this country first over the pharmaceutical companies, over polluters.

As I see those fires rage in my State, I know we have to do something about it. As I see people coming to me after years and years and years about the costs of common drugs—Lyrica. You see it advertised on TV all the time. What you might not know is that it has gone up 50 percent in just the last 5 years.

What I do know is that the people of this country overwhelmingly—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents—support bringing costs down for families, support a big middle-class tax cut, and support doing something about pharmaceutical prices.

Chief among the reforms in this bill when it comes to healthcare will be allowing Medicare to negotiate directly for less expensive drugs for our seniors. I think 46 million seniors should be able to get a pretty good deal, and I know they could if someone let them do it.

Right now, in law, because the pharmaceutical companies lobbied to get it done, they got a ban—a ban—on Medicare negotiating better prices for our seniors. This doesn't just help our seniors, to lift this ban; it helps everyone in America because this is the single biggest purchaser of drugs, our seniors, because they need help in their later years. They have health issues.

The stories I have heard in my State—people like Claire from St. Paul. When the cost of the prescription drugs she relied on to manage her arthritis jumped from 60 bucks per month to 1,400 bucks per month, she knew she could no longer afford it. She tried over-the-counter options. Her arthritis advanced. She could barely hold a fork and a knife. I met a woman who was literally holding the drops of her insulin from day to day to day so she could save it for the next day. That is how we are treating seniors in our country?

Let's unleash the power of 46 million seniors, get better prices for the drugs, push this Build Back Better agenda, which puts people first, and bring down the cost of prescription drugs.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor to my friend from Oregon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, Build Back Better invests in families, the foundations for our families to thrive—in education, in childcare, in healthcare, and in housing. So much is needed. It makes huge investments critical to taking on the biggest challenge facing mankind: climate chaos.

Earlier this summer, the U.N. climate panel released a report they called “code red for humanity” because the science shows what a dire path we are on right now.

Another report, this one coming from Save the Children and published in the journal *Science*, titled “Born into the Climate Crisis,” shows how much harder life is going to be for our children. Let me say it again: for our children—not our children’s children, not our grandchildren’s grandchildren; our children. On average, they will experience 2½ times more droughts than we did, three times as many floods, three times as many crop failures, twice the number of wildfires, and so forth. This is the dangerous and unforgiving world we are willfully leaving our children if we do not act now to control methane and carbon dioxide that are heating up our planet and causing these catastrophes. This is a collective effort of humankind, but America has to act and help lead the world to action.

Now, some say we simply cannot afford the investments, but the truth is, we can’t not afford to act. Last year alone, America confronted 22 separate billion-dollar disasters. That came with a \$95 billion pricetag to the American people. Winds and flooding and severe storms accounted for \$35 billion. Hurricanes over the last 5 years cost \$400 billion. Those numbers don’t account for the droughts, the wildfires, the impact on sea life, ocean ecosystems, the fishing industry. They don’t account for any of that.

We are facing massive economic disasters if we don’t act on climate, and the way we act: We pass Build Back Better. We set ourselves on that path to net zero in the next 30 years, reducing our emissions over the next decade to half of what they were in 2005, ensuring that 80 percent of our American electricity is carbon-free by 2030, and ensuring that half of America’s auto fleet is electric by the same time. We have the tools. We have to have the political will to act. So we must pass Build Back Better.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, I rise with my colleagues on Build Back Better, and I just want to emphasize two points that really matter to me.

First, Build Back Better is absolutely critical to combine with the infrastructure bill. If we make an infrastructure investment that will be the biggest since the Interstate Highway

System, who is going to build it? Who is going to build it?

Open the paper. You can’t hire schoolbus drivers. You can’t hire truckers. We have a tight labor market right now. What Build Back Better does is massive investments in the American workforce, beginning with the workforce of tomorrow—our children—all the way up through community college, workforce development, and immigration reforms that will expand the Nation’s workforce.

If we invest in infrastructure but don’t think about making sure that we have the workforce to do it, what a missed opportunity. The Build Back Better plan has amazing investments in our workforce—the workforce we need right now and the workforce we will need for decades.

The second thing about Build Back Better that I particularly appreciate is what it does for children.

If we pass Build Back Better, we will have done for American children what Social Security has done for American seniors.

Let me just point something out.

Pre-Social Security, you would work your whole life; you would educate your kids; you would be the PTA president or the Little League coach or the Sunday school teacher. You would retire, and 50 percent of people would retire and then go below the poverty level. That was what being a senior citizen was in the United States before Social Security.

FDR basically said: We want you to have a dignified retirement because you have worked, and you have earned it.

So Social Security, once passed and implemented, dropped the senior poverty rate from 50 percent to 10 percent. There has never been a program that has been as successful in doing exactly what it was designed to do as Social Security.

Build Back Better can do the same thing for kids. We are a nation that has tolerated, for decades, a youth poverty level dramatically higher than the adult poverty level. What does that say about a society? Yet we have sort of acted like: Well, I guess that is the law of nature. I guess we can’t do anything about it. I guess kids are just going to be a lot poorer than adults.

We don’t have to tolerate it. We can do something about it with the combined impact of the child tax credit, the childcare tax credit, the funding for childcare, universal pre-K, paid parent and family leave, and free community college. If you put those things together, we will do for children what Social Security did for adults, and we will no longer be a nation that tolerates an unacceptably high children’s poverty rate and says: Well, there is nothing we can do about it.

We can do something about it, and we will do something about it. That is why I so strongly support, with my colleagues, Build Back Better.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

DEBT CEILING

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, as we await the vote this afternoon, I hope we will resolve a number of things today so that we make sure we stand by the full faith and credit of the United States and not let regular people’s interest rates go up, the economy go to tatters, and our credit rating be downgraded. I hope we can get this done.

At the same time, just as Americans have gone through this pandemic—just as those moms and dads have been at home, with their toddlers on their knees and laptops on their desks; just as they have been teaching their first graders how to use a mute button; and just as so many people have lost their jobs or risked their lives while working on the frontline—they are ready to get through this. They see the light at the end of the tunnel or, as we say in Duluth, MN, the lighthouse on the horizon. They see this just as we continue to work, as best we can, with a number of our colleagues we disagree with because we think we should just simply move through this and make sure we are standing by the full faith and credit of the United States and not let our debt ceiling lapse.

As we do that, we are looking to the future just as America is. Just as we are starting to see those jobs come back, they are going back to work; they are starting to see their families again; they are going to family reunions; they are starting to be able to go to weddings again. As all of this is happening—as we get the vaccine out there and as we bring people back together—we also have to plan for that future just like families do every day.

That is what this is about, the Build Back Better agenda. That is what this is about—putting people in front of so many people who, honestly, have done pretty well during this time. There are a whole bunch of billionaires who didn’t even have to pay taxes while these families have been struggling through the pandemic. There are a whole bunch of people for whom it is easier to go and get prescription drugs or do whatever they want while other people are having to choose between filling their refrigerators with food or filling their prescriptions at the pharmacy.

So you got a tour in the last half hour from Maryland to Wisconsin, the State of my neighboring friend TAMMY BALDWIN; to Rhode Island; to the great State of Oregon on the west coast; to my home State of Minnesota; to close by Senator KAINE’s State of Virginia. What we are seeing, while our States may be very different, and what we are hearing are the same things: Regular people want to bring costs down. That is what this bill is about—bringing costs down for families in America—and there are many ways we are going to do this.

One is with straightforward tax cuts for people. Another is with making it

easier to afford things. It is that simple. That is what I like most about it in my State. They want to make it easier to get childcare. They want to make it easier to get healthcare. They want to make it easier for their parents at the moment when they go to assisted living or they need to get someone in to help them, just like my dad, whom we lost this year. He got that long-term care insurance. I don't know why he did it, but he did. I knew the day that his money ran out, and he was going to go on Medicaid because that was there for his safety net. So many families in America know exactly what I am talking about, and what this bill does is build on the safety net we have in place.

So let's remember that. Putting our kids first, our seniors first, our families first, our healthcare first—that is what this is about.

We look forward, over the next few weeks, to getting this bill done and getting it agreed to. To me, it is not always about what those top numbers are and everything you hear on the news; it is for what it is going to mean to the families in my State.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, following the disposition of the motion to discharge, the Senate resume legislative session; that there be 3 hours for debate under the control of Senator LEE or his designee and 1 hour under the control of the majority; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur with an amendment; that if cloture is invoked, all postcloture time be considered expired, amendment No. 3848 be withdrawn, and the Senate vote on the motion to concur with the amendment; that if the motion to concur with the amendment is agreed to, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table without intervening action or debate; further, that upon disposition of the House message with respect to S. 1301, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 259; that if cloture is invoked on the nomination, all postcloture time be considered expired and the Senate vote on the confirmation of the nomination at 5:30 p.m., Monday, October 18.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON MOTION TO DISCHARGE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The yeas and nays were previously ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 410 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Hassan	Padilla	Wyden
Heinrich	Peters	

NAYS—49

Barrasso	Grassley	Risch
Blackburn	Hagerty	Romney
Blunt	Hawley	Rounds
Boozman	Hoeven	Rubio
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Toomey
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	
Graham	Portman	

NOT VOTING—1

BURR

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). Pursuant to S. Res. 27 and the motion to discharge having been agreed to, the nomination will be placed on the Executive Calendar.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR AMERICANS ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

There will now be up to 3 hours of debate under the control of the Senator from Utah, Mr. LEE, or his designee, and 1 hour under the control of the majority.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, we are rapidly approaching a milestone in our country, and it is not a good one. We are rapidly approaching \$30 trillion in debt. We are accumulating debt like we

never have at any time in our history. We are actually accumulating debt at the rate of over \$2 million per minute.

Now, some say deficits don't matter. Some on the left say they have this new monetary theory: We can just print it all up. You can all have free stuff. There will be manna from Heaven. And nothing could go wrong; we are just going to give you money. If not \$1,400 checks a month or a year, why don't we give you monthly checks?

That is part of the new plans. The new plans of the \$3½ trillion that we are facing down at this point—that will all be borrowed—is to give people free money; to give people free this, free that. But I think people are smarter than that. I think people know that, ultimately, you don't get anything in life without hard work; you don't get anything in life, really, for free.

Isn't there some kind of ramification to so much borrowed money? When someone comes to you and says or they call you on the phone and they say "Here is a thousand dollars; all you have got to do is sign up for this," most people immediately recoil and they say "Well, that might be a scam. Somebody is going to be ripping me off to say that."

Well, that is sort of the bait-and-switch of the politics we face now. People are saying: We are going to give you free college, free cars, free cell phones, free this, free that. Everything in life will be free. You won't have to work anymore.

The problem is, there are ramifications. Money doesn't grow on trees. Money has got to come from somewhere. So either we borrow it and we become more indebted to foreign countries, we tax people for it, or ultimately the way we fix a lot of our deficit problems is we simply print the money.

So when the Federal Reserve prints the money, as we increase the money supply, the money that we have becomes worth less and less; it loses its purchasing power. This is the insidious tax of inflation.

The interesting thing about it is that inflation is a regressive tax. It doesn't affect everyone the same. In fact, the tax of inflation actually affects the working class, the people of lower incomes, and those on fixed incomes and pensions, retirees—it affects them much worse because they don't have the ability for their income to go up.

So, right now, we are facing 5 percent inflation because of the massive borrowing that, really, both parties instituted in the last year. They decided that the result to the pandemic would be to close everything down, destroy the economy, and then give everyone free money. And, to a large extent, both parties actually did this last year.

Now, this year, the decision has been made by Republicans to say: Whoo, this is so much. We have got to stop. We have got to get people back to work and let the economy recover.