

American companies—are waiting on congressional action—mostly American companies, not all. But they are waiting on congressional action before they decide where to invest in chip production. From Asia to Europe, other nations have copied the American playbook and have already invested billions of dollars to incentivize chip manufacturers to come to them. If we do not match the efforts of other countries to boost chip manufacturing, the consequences could be dire and long-lasting. Countless good-paying American jobs are on the line. Costs that Americans are now paying—higher costs—getting them lowered is now on the line. Billions of dollars in economic activity is on the line, and our national security is on the line.

As Secretary Austin and Secretary Raimondo told us last week, our economic and national security depends on our ability to invest in the technologies of today and tomorrow.

If we allow other nations to lead the way on chips, the days of America leading the world in scientific innovation, the days of America being the leading economic and military power in the world may actually be over. Nobody wants that. So vote for this bill. This is a future none of us wants to see.

Again, vote for this bill. I urge my colleagues to move forward later today.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, now on judges, as we move forward on legislation to boost chip manufacturing, there is a lot to do on the nominations front too.

Let me start with a very important number: 73. Let me say that again: 73. That is the total number of judges the Senate will, hopefully, have confirmed by the end of today. A year and a half into President Biden's term, that is nothing short of a towering achievement.

Here is how we reach that figure today: Later this morning, the Senate will vote to confirm Nina Nin-Yuen Wang as U.S. district court judge for the District of Colorado. This afternoon, we will hold a confirmation vote on Nancy Maldonado for the Northern District of Illinois. I expect these well-qualified nominees to move through this Chamber with bipartisan support. And as soon as today, the Senate will also vote on the confirmation of Judge Michelle Childs of South Carolina to serve on the DC Circuit.

Judge Childs will be the fourth—only the fourth—Black woman to ever sit on the DC Circuit, founded nearly 130 years ago. Confirming this remarkable jurist is an important step to reversing generations of underrepresentation and making our courts better reflect the Nation.

Let's not forget, after the Supreme Court, the DC Court of Appeals is the most important Federal court in the country, regularly taking up cases that the Supreme Court is unable to consider. Oftentimes, the DC Circuit makes the final decision on some of the

most important cases in the country, particularly those involving Congress and the executive branch. It is a really important court. Remember, the Supreme Court only hears about 75 cases a year. So lots of very vital cases are decided by this circuit court of appeals.

The judges who preside on the DC Circuit must be individuals of high character and unassailable qualification, and that is precisely what we have in Judge Childs. She is a native of Detroit, a graduate of the Universities of South Florida, South Carolina, and Duke. Judge Childs built a reputation as both a trailblazing jurist and a staunch defender of the Constitution. She already commands strong bipartisan support from both sides of the aisle, and I thank my Democratic and Republican colleagues for their support of the judge.

As the Senate continues to fulfill its duty of confirming well-qualified judges, we hope the trailblazers of today can be closer to the norm of tomorrow. We want our courts to include more women, more diverse candidates, both demographically and professionally, and more judges who come from unique backgrounds. Our courts, our democracy, and the American people will be better off through these efforts. There is not a doubt in my mind Judge Childs will help advance this noble goal. I look forward to her final confirmation.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Mr. President, finally, on marriage equality, this week, the House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on two pieces of legislation that will enshrine some of the most fundamental rights that every American should enjoy: the right to marriage equality and the access to contraceptives.

These votes come at a disturbing and dangerous moment for our country. A few weeks ago, the Supreme Court concluded one of its worst and most destructive terms in history.

Casting aside a half century of precedent, a conservative majority on the Court shamefully and disgustingly eliminated the fundamental right of women to make their own decisions regarding their bodies. It is a decision that will live in infamy, an indelible stain on the legacy of the highest Court in the land that will not be erased.

Alarming, the nightmare is very likely far from over. The MAGA Republicans on the Court and the MAGA radicals who are taking over the Republican Party have made it abundantly clear they are not satisfied with repealing Roe. As I said, it is an indelible stain, and the attempts by some to talk it away and erase it will not happen because it is such a bad stain.

Anyway, the MAGA Republicans who are taking over the Republican Party have made it abundantly clear they are not satisfied with repealing Roe. As many have openly said, they have turned their attention now to the Obergefell decision and marriage equality.

A few days ago, the junior Senator from Texas said the Supreme Court's decision protecting marriage equality was "clearly wrong" and argued that partisan State legislatures should determine who can and cannot get married. Other MAGA Republicans have echoed the same thing. We need to think—we need to pause and think about how unhinged—unhinged—this idea is.

Fresh off repealing the rights of every single woman in this country, MAGA Republicans now want to reopen the doors for discrimination and hatred targeted against same-sex couples. Even one of the Justices on the Supreme Court indicated in his opinion that gay marriage should be reconsidered by the courts.

This is the future that MAGA Republicans clamor for: one where women and same-sex couples are branded as second-class citizens. If they succeed, they will take our country down a dark path from which there may be no return, although we will fight it tooth and nail. Every single American should stand in opposition against these MAGA Republican views.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, a year ago today, with prices already rising, President Biden said that high inflation was "expected to be temporary." One year later, after 9 straight months of inflation over 6 percent, the prices are now rising at their fastest rate in over 40 years.

Last week's inflation report confirmed on paper what working families have been feeling for a year: President Biden's prediction was dead wrong. Instead, prices are skyrocketing, and paychecks aren't keeping up. Real hourly wages are declining at breakneck speeds, dropping a full 1 percent last month alone. The average American worker got a full 1-percent pay cut just last month alone due to inflation.

The Biden administration has tried to claim that we are "stronger economically than we have been in history." That is what the White House Press Secretary told reporters earlier this month. Kentuckians know that is utterly absurd. They know the opposite is true. In my home State, the average household now spends over \$600 more—\$600 more—every month compared to the day President Biden took his oath of office. That comes out to more than \$7,300 a year.

Inflation is pushing Kentucky families to the brink. As a result, food bank

demand is rising, and shelves are running low. A soup kitchen in Campbell County put out an urgent call for volunteers as surging visitors threaten to overwhelm its limited staff. As the executive director said in an interview, with “inflation and milk [at] \$4 a gallon,” they see people who have “never needed help before.”

I have received messages from constituents all over the Commonwealth facing the same crisis: Prices are rising while real wages fall.

A 59-year-old from Louisville tells me she has worked two jobs since she graduated from college in 1987 to save for retirement. Now she is afraid she will “lose [her] hard-earned money . . . due to this inflation.”

Another constituent in Hopkins County tells me he worked 60 hours a week for years to afford the home he bought recently. Now, with rising prices, he “can’t even support [his] family anymore” and might lose his new house as well.

A couple in Lexington in their late seventies spends almost all of their fixed income on rent, utilities, and medical bills. They are struggling to find enough left over for food. “What are we suppose[d] to do?” they ask.

Families across Kentucky are asking themselves the same question every day. The answer from Washington Democrats is alarming but not surprising. After spending us into inflation, they now want to tax us into recession. I can’t think of a more reckless response for struggling Kentuckians.

DISCLOSE ACT

Mr. President, now on another matter, unfortunately, inflation and tax hikes don’t exhaust Washington Democrats’ capacity to make trouble for the American people. Today, the Rules Committee will be reviewing the DISCLOSE Act—a seemingly annual liberal attempt to restrict political speech by threatening the privacy of those who see things differently from them.

For decades, Washington Democrats have looked for opportunities to expand the reach of unelected Federal bureaucrats to police the political activities of private citizens. The DISCLOSE Act is just one more example of a troubling tendency on today’s political left: Quit trying to play by the rules and demanding a change in the rules instead.

The DISCLOSE Act was a key pillar of the sweeping election takeover Democrats have been trying to pass since they lost an election in 2016. For years, they have failed to convince majorities in Congress or among the American people that the future of our democracy requires the playing field to be tilted toward their side.

But failing to overhaul the system hasn’t stopped liberals from sabotaging the guardrails that protect political speech from the inside. Remember, the naming and shaming of conservatives for “wrong think” was practically an official policy back in the Obama-

Biden IRS. More recently, leaked confidential taxpayer information from the IRS wound up in the hands of liberal publications just in time for tax debates on the Hill. Now Washington Democrats want to grease the skids for more. Needless to say, whether or not disclosure was legal hasn’t been a primary concern for the liberals behind these leaks in recent years.

But to the extent our Democratic colleagues want to have a conversation about laws on the books, donations to political action committees are already disclosed to the FEC. So are donations to 501(c)(4) organizations aimed at influencing Federal elections. In other words, existing law has already thought of this.

What our colleagues want to do is newly expand the definition of political speech and stretch disclosure requirements. They want Americans who oppose them politically to have to either abandon their privacy or abandon the public square. They want conservatives to choose between their livelihoods or their political beliefs. The chilling effect on Americans’ speech is by design, not by coincidence.

The same liberal groups who urged radical mobs to intimidate the Supreme Court Justices outside their private family homes and the same elected Democratic officials who refuse to condemn that illegal intimidation now want to systematically “out” ordinary private citizens’ private donations and political speech.

The pro-intimidation, anti-privacy modern left wants less privacy surrounding the First Amendment. It doesn’t take much connecting the dots to see why. But even the liberal ACLU warned years ago that what liberals want here “unconstitutionally infringes on freedom of political speech and the right to associational privacy.” That is the ACLU, on the same side as myself.

More recently, the NAACP and the ACLU teamed up in fighting State-level public disclosure laws at the Supreme Court—on the same side, again, as me and several other Republican Senators. They reiterated the landmark ruling in NAACP v. Alabama that “inviolability of privacy in group association may in many circumstances be indispensable to preservation of freedom of association, particularly where a group espouses dissident beliefs.”

Ah, but today’s Democrats disagree. Over the years, Washington Democrats have cycled through a litany of reasons for passing their sweeping takeover of American elections. But while the rationales changed constantly, the goal never changes one inch: more power for elected Democrats to rewrite the rules of their own elections and more power for the political left to harass and intimidate citizens who don’t think like them.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

INFLATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, June inflation numbers came out last Wednesday, and, as is typical for the Biden Presidency, they weren’t good. In fact, they were spectacularly bad. Inflation hit 9.1 percent in June, the worst inflation since November of 1981. The last time inflation was this bad, America was still a year and a half away from finding out whether Han Solo would survive his time in carbonite.

Mr. President, we all know how we got here. In large part, it was via a Democratic spending spree. When Democrats took office in January 2021, Congress had just passed a fifth bipartisan COVID relief bill that met essentially all current pressing COVID needs. But now that they were in charge, Democrats were eager to get spending. So they passed a massive \$1.9 trillion piece of legislation under the guise of COVID relief that flooded the economy with unnecessary government money, and, as expected, the economy overheated as a result.

Even worse, despite steadily climbing inflation in the wake of their bill, Democrats seemed incapable of learning from their mistake. In fact, they spent last fall attempting to double down on the strategy that helped get us into this mess in the first place. Fortunately, their plans for a second spending spree failed last December.

But it has become clear that they are not giving up. In fact, right now, they are trying to pass a new version. In the latest iteration of their tax-and-spending spree, Democrats notably plan to hike taxes on small businesses. Yeah, that is right, on small businesses.

Our country is struggling with soaring inflation, the economy is teetering on the brink of a recession, and the Democrats want to raise taxes on small businesses—and particularly on small, individually, and family-owned businesses or what are often called pass-through businesses, which make up more than 90 percent of the businesses in this country.

Mr. President, I guess it shouldn’t be a surprise. After all, “tax and spend” is the unofficial Democrat motto. The Democrats have made their hostility to tax relief very plain. President Biden ran for President on repealing tax cuts from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the tax relief legislation Republicans passed in 2017 that helped increase wages and incomes, boost economic growth, and drive the poverty rate to a record low.

In addition to the natural economic recovery coming out of the pandemic, much of the residual strength in the economy that President Biden likes to tout is a result of the tax relief passed