

along with other incentives to encourage current members to reenlist.

Police departments across the State are also facing recruitment challenges so the Iowa State Patrol is raising salaries and starting outreach efforts with kids as young as the sixth grade to get them to start thinking about careers in law enforcement.

And this need for essential workers, well, it isn't limited to just Iowa. America is facing a shortage of teachers, doctors, nurses, childcare providers, construction workers, truck-drivers, pilots, and even accountants.

And with the Democrats' latest tax-and-spend spree, a shortage of accountants is something taxpayers everywhere now need to be concerned about. The Democrats' response to the nationwide need for essential workers is to hire 87,000 new IRS agents. The reckless tax-and-spend bill passed by DC Democrats last month more than doubles the size of the IRS, which already has nearly 80,000 full-time employees.

So what are the new IRS agents being hired to do? Well, audit America, of course—and very aggressively, if a recent job announcement on the Agency's website is any indication. The IRS says it is seeking armed accountants willing to participate in "life-threatening situations on the job."

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says, with the supersized staff, the IRS audit rate "would rise for all taxpayers," regardless of income. CBO warns it will also result in audits of innocent Americans who have paid all of their taxes and don't owe the IRS a cent. That is right. Even if you have paid your taxes, you still could be subjected to an unfair and costly audit by the Biden administration's army of IRS agents.

Folks, Washington doesn't need any more tax collectors; it needs to simplify the Tax Code. If it wasn't so complicated to calculate your tax bill, it would be a lot easier to complete your return and avoid making mistakes.

Ironically, hundreds of employees at the IRS itself may have willfully failed to pay their own tax bills, including tax collectors and even a criminal investigator. In total, 1,250 IRS employees were identified who had not paid their tax bills in full or on time by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration. More than 300 of these employees were repeat offenders. Yet the tax-collecting Agency did little to discipline the tax evaders on its very own payroll.

The IRS staffers gave a variety of excuses for not paying their taxes, including forgetting to report all of their income or being unable to use TurboTax. Yep, folks, you heard that right. We have a real problem if the IRS staff who enforce the tax law aren't paying their own taxes and can't even understand how to properly fill out their own tax forms.

I have heard enough of the excuses and these Washington double standards. That is why I have asked the in-

spector general to audit the IRS to ensure that the tax collectors themselves are paying the taxes they owe, and, on behalf of taxpayers in Iowa and the rest of the country, I am grateful that the IG has agreed.

Before Biden's army of auditors starts harassing innocent taxpayers, let's first make sure that tax collectors have paid their own taxes.

And if the threat of being audited wasn't bad enough, the reckless tax-and-spend bill also increases taxes, which will further add to the burden of small businesses already struggling with the higher costs resulting from Bidenomics. And that is the real issue. Washington's misplaced priorities are creating problems for the rest of America.

No one in Iowa whom I talk to is begging for more IRS auditors, but I do hear about the urgent need for more teachers and daycare providers because these folks are absolutely essential to communities across Iowa. The childcare staffing crisis has an even bigger ripple effect on families because it can determine where, when, and even if a parent can work. Yet four in five childcare centers across the country are understaffed. This is particularly pressing for my home State because we lead the Nation in the percentage of families where both parents work away from home.

Gov. Kim Reynolds is working hard to increase the availability and affordability of childcare, and part of her plan is to pay recruitment and retention bonuses to childcare providers to recognize them for their hard work.

In addition, most of Iowa's restaurants and bars are also shortstaffed, which is resulting in reduced hours of service for customers and also longer shifts for current employees. To retain and attract employees, restaurants are increasing benefits like free meals, more flexible schedules, paid time off, and retirement contributions. And, folks, that is great news for these hard-working Iowans, but it also increases the cost of doing business.

So instead of increasing taxes on Iowa's small businesses to pay for the IRS's new army of auditors, Washington should allow job creators to keep more of their own earnings which can be put toward hiring more of those essential workers—whether that be childcare providers, construction workers, or food service employees—whom we all rely upon. That is the help that America really wants. And while my Democratic friends are working overtime to audit Americans, you can rest assured that Republicans—we are auditing the IRS.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask to speak as if in morning business.

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

ABORTION

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, yesterday, my Republican colleagues

introduced a national abortion ban and made it clear that they are coming after the rights of my constituents and they are coming after the rights of people across the country.

This atrocious bill threatens the people of Kansas who just voted overwhelmingly to protect abortion rights. It threatens the hundreds of thousands of people in Michigan who just signed a petition for a referendum vote to protect abortion and States like mine which already have strong abortion protections on our books.

Up to now, Republicans have tried to play down their abortion extremism. They have tried to run away from the consequences of their extreme agenda, even as patients have been denied prescriptions that they need, even as doctors have been forced to wait until patients' lives are in danger before they can take action, even as healthcare crises they have caused spill across State lines to disastrous effect.

But despite their empty rhetoric about leaving it to States, the truth has been painfully clear: They think they know better than women when it comes to reproductive healthcare decisions. They have shown, again and again, they do not trust women to have full control over their own bodies, and they are also willing to go after doctors.

They have blocked the most basic bills like Senator CORTEZ MASTO's bill that would have made sure people can still travel to other States for legally available care or my bill making sure that doctors in States where abortion is legal cannot be punished for doing their job.

Over and over, they have stood in the way of Democrats' efforts to protect women's abortion rights, and it is crystal clear why. This bill shows the true Republican position. They want to ban abortion for everyone, in every single State, and they want to punish doctors. They want to put them in prison for doing their jobs.

So, to anyone who lives in a blue State like mine, anyone who thinks they are safe from these attacks, here is the painful reality: Republicans are coming after your rights, and you don't have to take my word for it. The Senator from South Carolina said yesterday:

If we take back the House and the Senate, I can assure you we'll have a vote on our bill.

There it is. It couldn't be clearer. That is the MAGA agenda for all 50 States: rights stripped away and doctors in prison.

Regardless of your circumstances, regardless of what is best for your health, regardless of your family plans—of your hopes or your fears or your dreams for your future—Republicans want to control your personal decisions. They don't trust you to have full control over your own body. This is horrifying.

When he unveiled the bill yesterday, the Senator from South Carolina also said

I'll make a prediction: we stay on this and we keep talking about it, maybe less than a decade from now, this will be law.

"This will be law." This is the future that they want—a national abortion ban.

Well, let me tell you something. The Senator from South Carolina may not have been paying attention, but Democrats are already talking about this issue every week, every day, every opportunity. And women across the country have been with us, fighting for the right to abortion and fighting back against Republicans' harmful attacks. We saw it in Kansas. We are seeing it in Michigan. And I am seeing it everywhere I go in Washington State.

I have been talking to doctors and patients and women and men across our country, and they are outraged—outraged—that Republicans want to take away their rights, that Republicans want to put doctors in prison. And I am too. I have never been madder.

So here is my message to Republicans: If you want to go after my constituents' rights, if you want to go after women's bodies and futures, if you want to pass a national abortion ban like this extreme bill, you are going to have to go through me because Democrats are going to keep standing up for women and men across the country who do not want their rights taken away.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The senior Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, we are here today because Republicans are seeking a national ban on abortion. And if we say it once here, we should say it 10 times, 100 times, because literally months ago it would have been virtually unimaginable—first, that *Roe v. Wade* would be struck down and, second, that Republicans would propose a national ban on abortion.

Women across Connecticut and the country are scared and angry. And to those who say those fears and outrage are illusory or unjustified, all you have to do is read their words. Listen to what they say. They are promising the American people that there will be a national ban on abortion.

And to the people of Connecticut who think we have a safe haven because our legislature and Governor have courageously established protections for *Roe v. Wade* and for women who come to Connecticut seeking abortion services and for doctors who depend on our safeguards, there will be no safe haven in this country—none, nowhere—if Republicans go where they say, explicitly, they are heading.

I trust women with their doctors and their clergy and their family to make decisions about when and whether to become pregnant, whether to have children, and when to terminate a pregnancy short of term. I trust women—not the government, not politicians—

to make these preeminently important decisions.

And I promise the people of Connecticut I will not back down. I will not stand for this kind of national ban on abortion.

Republicans have said, historically: We will let the States decide. It should be a matter of State legislatures making these decisions.

This ban on abortion takes away power from women and from States, contrary to their promises over years and years about States' rights. But more than a theoretical or hypothetical argument about the powers of State legislatures or the allocation of responsibility in our Federal system, this law will have destructive and catastrophic consequences for millions of women. It will impair the everyday lives of women and families across America.

It is not just a woman's issue. It is on all of us to say we will not back down; we will not stand for a national ban on abortion.

It is part of a tireless and seemingly boundless campaign against women's rights, but these attacks on reproductive rights and personal freedom apparently know no limits. Remember, first, Republican-controlled State legislatures moved to outlaw abortion entirely, forcing women suffering from ectopic pregnancies to bleed out in hospitals and refusing to care for child rape victims. But now Republicans are moving forward with plans to ban abortion everywhere, under any circumstances, and they are wresting a woman's right to make her own personal healthcare decision, sometimes a decision made during a devastating medical diagnosis out of her hands, putting those decisions into government's hands.

Make no mistake, the 15 weeks—all of the technical stuff that Republicans invoke, doesn't take away from the fact that it is a national ban that will eviscerate Connecticut's law. Congressional Republicans will decide whether or not women can access this vital help.

Eliminating access to abortion services as a result of the *Dobbs* decision has already caused devastating consequences. The loss of reproductive services in some States has caused a ripple effect for healthcare providers across the United States, which proves, for anyone who doubted, that banning reproductive services doesn't stop women from seeking those services. It just adds additional barriers and danger. In fact, it unnecessarily puts their lives at risk.

This bill would place a ban on abortion across the country, and it would include New York and Massachusetts, not just Connecticut and Delaware. Go across the country and pick those States where these rights have been protected.

When I was in the State legislature, and then as attorney general, I helped write the law that incorporates and

codifies *Roe v. Wade* in Connecticut statute. And now Connecticut has moved beyond that statute to provide a safe haven. But all of it would be gone. All of it would be overwritten by this law.

Americans should have no doubt about where Republicans stand now on this issue. They want to punish women. They want to punish doctors. They will do it at the State level. They will do it at the national level. No State, not even Connecticut, is safe from this threat. They are coming after our laws in Connecticut. They are coming after women in Connecticut and men who believe in the rights of women as a matter of constitutional and personal freedom to make these decisions.

Our laws should protect the rights of women seeking to make their own personal decisions about their reproductive health in consultation with medical providers, and I will fight tooth and nail this effort and any other effort that seeks to control, criminalize, and dehumanize women making this choice and the healthcare providers compassionately giving them care.

The American people are in our corner. American people—whatever they may think about abortion in their own lives, for their own family, for their daughters or wives or others—they support the rights of those women to control their own healthcare decision. It is an intensely personal decision, when it has to be made, and sometimes a threat of life, something going horribly wrong in a pregnancy, is the reason for it.

I will continue to fight for all in Connecticut who believe in this fundamental right. It is a matter of our constitutional DNA in Connecticut, beginning with *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which laid the groundwork for the right of privacy which is the underpinning for that constitutional freedom. And all of us, I hope, will reject this effort to ban abortion in the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, in June, as we are hearing, the Supreme Court struck down *Roe v. Wade*, reversing nearly 50 years of law that recognized a woman's fundamental right to reproductive freedom. We also know that Justice Kavanaugh's concurring opinion repeatedly insisted that the Court's decision would return the issue of abortion to the people's elected representatives in the States. But this was never about States' rights, really, to my rightwing colleagues who want to restrict a woman's fundamental rights, and we know that because now they are pushing for a national abortion ban.

Yesterday, as we have heard, Senator GRAHAM introduced a strict national abortion ban with criminal penalties for doctors who provide critical care. If it passes, this bill will preempt the laws in States across the country

where abortion is still legal, including my own State of Nevada. In Nevada, our voters approved a ballot initiative in 1990 to enshrine a woman's right to choose in our State laws.

So what happened to my colleagues' claims of respecting the rights of States to make that decision? Well, apparently it wasn't enough to pack the Court with Supreme Court Justices who would vote to deprive women of the right that they have held for 50 years, under the guise of States' rights. Now, when far-right Republicans disagree with a State's decision, like mine, they plan to impose their own laws.

The current legislation introduced by Senator GRAHAM stops the people in pro-choice States—like mine, like Nevada—from choosing to protect the rights of women. At the same time, it leaves in place stricter abortion bans in 14 States.

What these far-right Republicans are effectively saying now is this: Anti-choice States, you are free to choose however harsh you want your abortion bans to be. But you pro-choice States, you are out of luck. Whatever the voters want in your States, it really doesn't matter because we are going to impose our own laws.

Look, Nevadans, as I have said, in 1990, we worked to codify *Roe v. Wade* because we know that it is impossible to walk in another woman's shoes. We know that for each woman, this is an important decision for each individual woman to make with her doctor, with her loved ones, about her healthcare, about her family planning.

I do not know what another woman is going to go through, and I do not want to restrict her access to any type of care, nor should any of us be imposing our beliefs, our experiences, our religion on someone else.

That is what this is about, and that is why Nevada voters voted in 1990 to codify *Roe v. Wade* and give women the right to make this decision.

Right now, we are seeing some politicians once again declare that they know what is best for every family in this Nation. They want to force the State of Nevada and other States like Nevada to limit women's freedoms, even though voters in my State voted to legally protect the right to choose that Nevada women have had for 50 years.

I have been saying for months now that some of my colleagues would never be satisfied with just overturning *Roe* and that they wouldn't rest until there was a national abortion ban. This bill shows every American that not only are women's rights under attack, but so is the democratic process in States like Nevada. If we don't have an abortion ban on the books, our State rights don't matter. That is just unacceptable. We can't let our nieces, our daughters, our granddaughters grow up in a world where they have fewer rights than we have had in the past.

So I, for one, will keep fighting back because this is about a fundamental

right for American women and the will of people in States like Nevada to make that decision and help and vote for the right of women to choose.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, when the extreme far-right Supreme Court overturned *Roe*, my Republican colleagues lauded this horrendous decision, claiming that a woman's right to an abortion should be left to the States. But now they are admitting what we knew all along: that this was never about States' rights. This has always been about Republicans using their power to control women and our bodily autonomy.

Despite the fact that the vast majority of the American public supports reproductive freedom and despite the fact that voters across the country are overwhelmingly voting to protect this freedom, Republicans are pandering—I think that is a really good word, apt word—pandering—to the extreme MAGA base and have now introduced a nationwide ban on abortion after 15 weeks.

Why 15 weeks, you ask? Because that is what the senior Senator from South Carolina who introduced this legislation said he would “feel comfortable at.” So we now have a Republican Senator attempting to restrict the bodily autonomy of women across the country because that is what he feels comfortable at. It is not enough that the overturning of *Roe* has created fear and confusion all across the country. We now have the introduction of a nationwide abortion ban further adding to the chaos.

This is not some sort of hypothetical debate or “hysteria,” as some of my Republican colleagues have claimed. If Republicans take control of the Senate, we now know what they will do. They will work to pass a national abortion ban, which would mean even in my home State of Hawaii, which was the first State in the country to decriminalize abortion even before the *Roe* decision—we did this in Hawaii in 1970. And for voters in States who are pushing back against their radical legislators and exercising their right to bring the issue of abortion to the ballot, including States like Kansas and Michigan, this bill would overrule their efforts.

But, of course, to add to their utter hypocrisy, if States like Texas or Mississippi want to be even more restrictive, even more harmful to women than a 15-week ban, that would be A-OK, according to the Senator from South Carolina and his extreme bill.

Allowing Republicans to regain control of Congress would be catastrophic not only for women, but for our entire country because when we women can't control what we do with our bodies, of course this impacts our families, our communities, our economy.

So this November, people are going to have a choice: Do you want to let

extreme MAGA Republicans tell you what you can and can't do with your own body, or do you want to hold these politicians accountable for pushing their far-right extreme agenda and perpetuating the chaos, confusion, and fear of women, families, communities, and our healthcare professionals? Let's not forget all the doctors who are out there wondering how they can provide the kind of care that they are trained to do right now, how they can do that in the face of this kind of ban in so many States across the country, not to mention a nationwide abortion ban. The chaos and confusion being experienced all across the country following the Dobbs' decision has only multiplied by this nationwide abortion ban bill.

Talk about government overreach. I hear my colleagues talking about how it should be States' rights or government should not be telling us what to do. The word “hypocrites” doesn't even go far enough to call them out on what they are doing. This is an outright attack on women in this country. That is how I see it. That is how more and more women and those who support our right to make decisions about our own bodies, that is how we see it. And why? Because that is what is happening. This is literally a call to arms in our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I come to the floor to discuss the new Graham legislation to create a national abortion ban. The centerpiece of the Senator's argument is that Senator GRAHAM wants our country to believe that his national abortion ban is a moderate proposal—his words. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

A moderate bill would not institute criminal penalties for doctors providing lifesaving medical care. That is what this so-called moderate bill does. A moderate bill would not take rights away from American women, no matter where they live. That is what this so-called moderate bill does. A moderate bill would not create a presumption of women's guilt by requiring them to report a rape or seek counseling before they get an abortion. This so-called moderate bill does that, too.

Just think about that last point. If you are trying to assess our colleague from South Carolina's argument that his bill is moderate, under Senator GRAHAM's new restrictions, a 12-year-old rape victim, regardless of the terror she feels or the danger she faces, would have to find a way to report her assault to police before she could get the care she needs. That is a stunning overreach and there is absolutely nothing that is moderate about this proposal. The reality is this is not a moderate proposal. It is an extreme proposal, way out of step with the overwhelming opinion of the American people.

The other important argument I wanted to discuss was this whole matter of how so many of my colleagues on

the other side of the aisle have pledged loyalty—pledged loyalty—to the importance of States' rights that they are going to leave the decision on abortion to the States. But Senator GRAHAM has shown us that all his talk about States' rights means that the States have to agree with Senator GRAHAM. That is what his idea about States' rights is all about.

His bill tramples, for example, on the rights of Oregonians, who sure don't share Senator GRAHAM's view on this, and people in many other States, women and men who voted to protect abortion, women's healthcare, and women's individual freedom.

Senator GRAHAM's bill is about control. It is about government—government—mind these words—government having control over women's bodies rather than women having control over their bodies.

It is also clear that what has always been envisioned is not just a nationwide ban on abortions but criminalizing this with women and doctors at some point, I gather, possibly locked behind bars.

It is election season and Senator MCCONNELL wants everybody to forget the Republicans' top priorities include passing these extreme restrictions through Congress and the courts. I believe that Americans know better. When it comes to this kind of legislation that is so far removed—far removed—from the moderate claim of its sponsor, I think we ought to recognize what we are looking at is a total national abortion ban, criminalization, and the rights of women curtailed and the power of government over them increased.

Senator GRAHAM's bill is the next step in that direction for Republicans. Introducing his proposal, Senator GRAHAM basically confirmed that:

If [we] take back the House and Senate, I can assure you we'll have a vote [on our bill].

Madam President, I think we have a lot of speakers coming, but I think the American people ought to take Senator GRAHAM at his word. This is what his agenda is about. This is what he is going to be championing from sea to shining sea. I just hope we do everything we can here in the Senate—in this country—to make sure that the Graham bill does not see the light of day.

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

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

INFLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday, new data showed what Texans have known and felt for months: that inflation simply is not letting up. Last month, prices were up 8.3 percent from a year ago.

Economist Larry Summers, a well-known former president of Harvard University and member of Presidential Cabinets, said that this CPI report, Consumer Price Index report, confirms that the United States has a serious inflation problem.

Rent is up 6.7 percent. If you go to the grocery store to feed your family, groceries are 13.5 percent over what they were last year. If you are a senior citizen suffering through the hot Texas summer and need your air-conditioner to work overtime, electricity to make that air-conditioner run is up 16 percent. Of course, that is just since last August, just a year ago, when we were already battling runaway inflation.

But here is an even more shocking figure: Since President Biden took office on January 20, 2021, prices have risen 13 percent. So 13 cents out of every dollar that you earn—poof—has gone away. You are that much poorer. Your standard of living has been decreased by 13 percent.

Inflation, of course, far outpaces wage growth, meaning the average American has effectively been handed a pay cut. A single paycheck doesn't go nearly as far today as it did a year ago.

This is exactly what was predicted by leading economists when our Democratic colleagues ran off with the taxpayer credit card at the end of last year. They abused the rules of the Senate to spend an additional \$2 trillion in the name of COVID relief even though less than 10 percent of the money was directly related to the pandemic.

I want to differentiate between what we did together on a bipartisan basis to deal with COVID when we spent nearly \$5 trillion on a bipartisan basis. There is no doubt this was a grave emergency, a public health emergency, economic emergency. We did what we had to do, and we got through it. But even after that, our Democratic colleagues couldn't seem to kick the spending habits and unilaterally spent an extra \$2 trillion. As I said, even though 10 percent of that money was related to the pandemic, 90 percent, then, was unrelated.

Then the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, which the President was celebrating yesterday when the stock market fell 1,200 points—this partisan bill amounts to another \$240 billion in unnecessary spending, while raising taxes at the same time.

As I said, our colleagues ironically call this bill the Inflation Reduction Act, and the White House chose yesterday—the day that the latest disappointing inflation figures were released—to celebrate its passage.

Inflation Reduction Act is false advertising. The Penn Wharton economic review of the Inflation Reduction Act said there is no reduction of inflation for at least 2 full years, and, indeed, it may actually get worse. But we all knew this intuitively, that if you keep spending this much money, you are basically pouring gasoline on the inflation fire. It is going to get worse and

worse and worse, and middle-class working families all across this country have gotten hurt as a result.

Since our Democratic colleagues took control of both Houses of Congress and the White House, Texans' lives have gotten harder, not easier. Inflation I have spoken to has skyrocketed, real wages have fallen, and our economy has fallen into a recession.

Now, this is one of the other curious things about defining terms. Our Democratic colleagues want to argue about whether two consecutive quarters of negative GDP are actually a recession or not. Well, they were when Republicans were in charge, but apparently when Democrats are in charge, that definition doesn't apply.

Much as they tried but failed to convince the American people that the Inflation Reduction Act would actually reduce inflation, it didn't, and it won't anytime soon.

Well, we know that the response to inflation by the Federal Reserve has been to raise interest rates, and they are projected to raise them at least three-quarters of 1 percent or 75 basis points, which will also slow down the economy and hurt job creation. So it looks like even more pain is coming.

RAILWAY LABOR MANAGEMENT DISPUTE

Madam President, well, unfortunately, we are also told that there is a looming rail strike that will have a tremendously negative impact on our economy. Our economy, as we all know, depends on a network of tractor-trailers, planes, trains, and cargo ships to transport products around the United States and beyond. These are the very same transportation modes that make sure that your grocery store is fully stocked, that the manufacturing plants have inventory they need in order to make their products, and that, yes, our packages that we order show up on our front door step on time.

But a massive disruption in rail transportation is likely to occur in less than 2 days' time. The unions that represent more than 115,000 rail workers have not been able to reach a contract agreement with railroad companies. Unless they reach a breakthrough soon, rail workers will go on strike this Friday, causing a national rail shutdown.

If you don't think that will have a negative impact on our economy on top of what we have already mentioned, think again. The rail system carries nearly 30 percent of America's freight, everything from agriculture to retail products, heavy equipment, automobiles, coal, lumber. We are talking about the critical products that impact virtually every sector of the economy.

It is tough to overstate the negative impact this will have. Just look at agriculture. On the front end of production, farmers and ranchers need fertilizer, seed, animal feed, and heavy equipment, all of which are likely to travel by rail at some point. Then, at harvest time, our producers rely on