

the Presidency. He didn't shy away from our challenges but, rather, advanced an optimistic and unifying plan for how to meet the moment.

Senate Democrats will continue working with the President to precisely move our country forward on lowering costs, on addressing COVID, and on defending our democracy in this hour of peril.

I thank the President for his leadership. Let us continue in our work.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT OF 2022

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3076, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3076) to provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Peters) amendment No. 4955, to modify the deadline for the initial report on the operations and financial condition of the United States Postal Service.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, last night, President Biden gave a State of the Union Address that might have worked OK for a popular administration that had been successfully tackling America's problems and naturally earning high marks, but that is not the reality in which we live.

Democrats spent the last 12 months making major and painful policy errors. The public overwhelmingly disapproves. President Biden didn't need to stay the course and rehash a scattered wish list; he needed to make a dramatic pivot. But he chose not to.

The President first discussed Ukraine. Everyone agrees with the sentiments President Biden expressed, but the sentiments are not enough. The President articulated no meaningful new steps, no specific plan. He made no explicit commitment to keep flowing weapons, intelligence, and advanced capabilities into Ukraine as long as the Ukrainians need them, nor did he explain why his administration was slow to provide lethal assistance in the first place. Instead, the President focused on trying to claim credit for the remarkable European and worldwide response that his administration did not foresee, let alone orchestrate.

Apart from Ukraine, the President's other remarks on our dangerous world

were not just insufficient; they were basically nonexistent.

The President spoke for over an hour but only mentioned China twice. Neither time had anything to do with national security or military modernization. The President only mentioned Iran one time, and it was literally by accident. There were zero mentions of North Korea, zero mentions of the botched Afghanistan retreat the administration originally boasted was a "success." Our 13 servicemembers who lost their lives were completely unmentioned until Governor Reynolds took the microphone. And there were zero mentions of rebuilding the defense budget that President Biden actually tried to cut last year.

Meanwhile, the President's speech tried to skate by the serious kitchen-table concerns that are actually keeping families up at night. The President talked about "made in America" but keeps fighting against energy independence. Democrats want us to "Buy American" but not American oil or gas. On President Biden's watch, we have set a new record for importing Russian oil, and we are begging OPEC to produce even more, and his energy vision is to dump huge subsidies into supply chains that are dominated by China—borrowing from our grandkids to build back Beijing.

The President tried yet again to revive the zombie spending plans which a bipartisan majority of Senators have already killed and buried because they would make inflation even worse. He tried to brag about fancy technology on our southern border, as if we hadn't just seen a new record for illegal crossings on his watch.

The President's address was not responsive to the country's concerns. He needed to pivot, but he didn't.

CNN conducted an instant poll. As you might expect, it oversampled Democrats. Even so, the percentage who gave the President's speech high marks was the lowest they have seen in 15 years.

Iowa's hugely successful Governor, Kim Reynolds, offered the clearest possible contrast. She spoke for the working families who are suffering under Democrat policies. She outlined a commonsense Republican vision of stability at home, strength abroad, law and order on our streets, and sanity in our public schools.

November is just months away. If President Biden does not correct course sharply and quickly, the American people may correct course for him.

TRIBUTE TO ANGIE SCHULTE

Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, one of the occupational hazards of Senate service is having to say goodbye to truly remarkable staff professionals.

I have already been through this rodeo with Angie Schulte. All the way back in 1988, this dedicated caseworker left my office for the nonprofit sector, but back in 2010, I leapt at the chance to hire Angie back as my State office

manager, and her second tour of duty has been a huge success.

I have known Angie for 40 years now. I have watched her master a wide variety of roles. She is an integral part of my State office. She keeps all of us on task and on time. But, unfortunately, tomorrow, her second tour of service will end with a second farewell. Angie is retiring after decades of hard work and phenomenal public service.

For 12 years, Angie has been the steady rudder steering my instate team. If there was a complicated problem, she would fix it; a scheduling conflict, she would resolve it; a new staffer needed help growing into her role, she would provide it. Angie combines meticulous efficiency with a totally charming and cheerful demeanor.

My relationship with Angie actually predates my time in the Senate. Her mother Jeannette was my personnel director for my county administration. I was a newly elected Republican in a heavily Democratic county government who needed all the smarts and all the help that I could get. Angie's mother Jeannette proved invaluable.

In 1982, her daughter Angie came on board as office receptionist. I quickly promoted her, not once but twice. She served as office manager in my Neighborhood Response Office. When I won statewide in 1984, Angie was one of my first hires.

With the same vigor that helped Louisville residents settle property disputes and parking tickets, Angie began helping Kentuckians across the State navigate the morass of Federal Government redtape. Expertise, an eye for detail—Angie grew into the consummate public servant. Our whole team was overjoyed to welcome Angie back after her tenure with Metro United Way, one of the Commonwealth's largest nonprofits.

Angie is famous for humming and whistling while she works and for throwing extravagant birthday parties for her colleagues. She is unfailingly upbeat. She has a permanent positive attitude and, boy, does she get results for Kentucky.

As you can see, it has been an honor to have Angie's talents on our team. I am just grateful that when her sterling 40-year career concludes tomorrow, a 40-year friendship will not.

So, Angie, I wish you every happiness as you spend more time with Steve, with Kathleen and Becca, and with those grandkids, Grant, Logan, and Elizabeth.

I am eternally grateful for your outstanding good work.

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

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

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last night, President Biden delivered his

State of the Union Address. While the President tried to put a positive spin on things, the truth of the matter is the United States is not thriving under Democratic control.

On the economic front, of course, Americans are struggling under the burden of the worst inflation in 40 years. There are Americans raising families today who had not yet been born the last time inflation was this bad.

Under Democratic control, Americans have seen their standard of living decline as they face massive increases in the price of basic necessities from groceries to gas. Inflation is so bad that despite wage increases in 2021, Americans saw a de facto pay cut. After months of ignoring soaring inflation numbers, the President and congressional Democrats have at last been forced to start talking about inflation.

Unfortunately, it has become clear they still don't understand why this inflation disaster happened and how their massive government spending spree—the so-called American Rescue Plan Act—helped create this crisis. “The American Rescue Plan helped working people—and left no one behind,” the President said in his speech last night. “It worked.” “It worked,” he said. If President Biden believes that, I have some oceanfront property in South Dakota to sell him.

The truth of the matter is that working Americans are struggling right now in large part due to the American Rescue Plan. The American Rescue Plan Act was not a targeted COVID relief bill. It was a massive, unnecessary spending spree that sent too much government money into the economy, and, predictably, the economy overheated as a result.

I am glad that Democrats are starting to acknowledge our inflation crisis, but it would be nice to see them recognize how it actually came about and commit to not repeating their mistakes in the future.

Inflation is not the only domestic crisis that we have been facing on Democrats' watch. Our Nation is also experiencing a border crisis that has resulted in a security, enforcement, and humanitarian nightmare. Almost from the day the President took office, we have seen a massive surge in attempted illegal immigration across our southern border, and there is no end in sight.

In January, the Border Patrol encountered more than 150,000 individuals illegally trying to cross our southern border, the highest January number in more than 20 years. These numbers, of course, only reflect individuals the Border Patrol has been able to apprehend. A Department of Homeland Security official recently stated that more than 200,000 individuals have successfully evaded apprehension since October and have disappeared—disappeared—into our country, more than 200,000 individuals. It is not surprising. The Border Patrol is stretched thin and

lacks sufficient resources to deal with this never-ending border surge. But it is deeply concerning. There are 200,000 people entering our country without any security check or vetting, raising the risk of drug traffickers, criminals, or even terrorists finding their way into our communities.

But perhaps the most concerning thing is that a full year after this massive surge began, the President generally continues to act as if this border crisis doesn't exist. He is apparently unaware of or can't be bothered to deal with the real security risk that this represents for our country.

The President did allude to securing the border last night—something he does periodically—but given his track record, I am not holding my breath. In fact, he hasn't even visited it nor has the Vice President, for that matter.

When it comes to the world stage, things are a little better. The President's first year in office was distinguished by his disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, which weakened our national security, diminished our standing with our allies, and resulted in our abandoning thousands of Afghans who had worked with us and whom we had promised to protect.

Currently, we are facing another international crisis—Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. While this is a crisis of Vladimir Putin's making, President Biden was slow to move weapons and resisted imposing sanctions before Russia attacked. I hope that in the days to come, the President will stand strong against Russian aggression and not hesitate to impose any additional sanctions that may be necessary to isolate Putin and his cronies and to halt the Russian advance.

As I said, the United States is not thriving under Democratic control. A big reason for that is because the President and congressional Democrats have had one thing on their minds since taking office and that is implementing a wide-ranging, far-left socialist agenda.

Democrats' lack of leadership on the big issues facing our country and our world has been striking. I think the truth is that Democrats have seen those big issues as distractions from their real goal in taking office, and that is implementing that far-left agenda. While inflation spiked and then spiked again, Democrats were AWOL. They were focused on passing a massive tax-and-spending spree that would unquestionably make our inflation problem even worse.

And when that failed, they turned their focus to a Federal takeover of election law that they hoped would give them an advantage in the November elections.

This week, as Vladimir Putin continued to pursue his apparent dream of reconstituting the Soviet Union by pushing further into Ukraine, Democrats took a vote on, of all things, legislation to remove virtually all State-level restrictions on abortion.

Yes, that was the big vote this week—legislation to remove nearly every State-level restriction on abortion, despite the fact, I might add, that the majority of the American people support restrictions on abortion. But that doesn't matter to Democrats. If the Planned Parenthood wing of the party wants a vote on unrestricted abortion on demand, that is what it gets.

In yet another example of just how far the Democratic Party has run to the left and just how disconnected Democrats have become, last week, John Kerry, who serves as President Biden's climate chief, expressed his hope that war with Ukraine would be averted because of the carbon emissions such a war would create and how the war might distract from climate change.

You can't make it up. At the time of his remarks, Russia was on the verge of invading a sovereign nation—and possibly condemning an entire country to Soviet oppression—and a key member of the President's administration was worried about how the war might distract from climate change.

I am a longtime supporter of clean energy, but we have a big problem when members of our country's leadership are looking at the imperialist takeover of a sovereign nation, and their biggest concern is not human life and human freedom but carbon emissions.

But it is another sign of just how ideological the Democratic Party has become. Nothing—nothing—is allowed to come between the Democratic Party and its far-left agenda.

President Biden made some nods toward bipartisanship last night, but it remains to be seen whether Democrats and the President are capable of setting aside their far-left agenda to address the priorities facing this country. And given some of the measures the President proposed last night, I have my doubts.

But I hope—I hope for the sake of our Nation—the Democrats will rethink their evermore rigid allegiance to the far left and instead work with Republicans in a bipartisan fashion.

The American people deserve better than what Democrats have given them over this past year.

I yield the floor.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES RELATING TO “MEDICARE AND MEDICAID PROGRAMS; OMNIBUS COVID-19 HEALTH CARE STAFF VACCINATION”

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to consideration of S.J. Res. 32, which the clerk will report.