

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I just wanted to add another word for Pastor Bernard before he leaves.

He is such an extraordinary leader to so many, not just the thousands who are—tens of thousands who are members of his church, Christian Cultural Center, but for the Nation.

And he has been a great spiritual guidance for me during times of difficulty. We have shared our joys and our sorrows together—but for the whole country.

He has done an amazing thing, as CCC, Christian Cultural Center, has been a beacon for so many different congregations throughout the country, as a way to lead, as a way to combine the temporal and the secular.

He has done an amazing, amazing job. So I just wanted to, again, thank him for being here but, more importantly, thank him for all he is doing.

Pastor Bernard is a blessing—a blessing to CCC, a blessing to our borough of Brooklyn, to our city, our State, our Nation, and our world.

May God give him strength to continue in his ministry.

I yield the floor.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CAL- ENDAR EN BLOC—S. 81, S. 82, H.R. 300

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, before I get to my remarks and house-keeping, I understand there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading, en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 81) to provide a moratorium on all Federal research grants provided to any institution of higher education or other research institute that is conducting gain-of-function research.

A bill (S. 82) to protect social security benefits and military pay and require that the United States Government to prioritize all obligations on the debt held by the public in the event that the debt limit is reached.

A bill (H.R. 300) to amend chapter 3 of title 5, United States Code, to require the publication of settlement agreements, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in order to place the bills on the calendar

under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings, en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, if the 118th Congress is going to do its job and raise the debt ceiling later this year, there is one very big, very important question that all of us need to answer: Republicans, where is your plan? It is the first question that must be asked, so let me ask it again. Republicans, where is your plan?

For weeks, we have heard lots of howling at the Moon from House Republicans on the MAGA fringe about sabotaging the credit of the United States but little in the way of actual solutions. Republicans in the House, especially the MAGA ones, seem disturbingly at ease with taking our economy hostage in exchange for gutting vital programs, but when asked to explain to the American people what kind of cuts they want, suddenly these Republicans seem stumped.

This is reckless. Few issues require more bipartisanship, more cooperation, and more serious-mindedness than protecting the full faith and credit of the United States. We have never failed to pay our debts on time, and the debt ceiling has consistently been a bipartisan endeavor. The radical MAGA crowd running the show in the House seems unable to grasp this truth.

So let me try it again. House Republicans, where is your plan? You want to gut Federal spending, so show us what that means. Show us what it means to the average American family in specific detail. It is your responsibility on such a weighty issue to do just that.

Speaker MCCARTHY. Speaker MCCARTHY has an obligation—an obligation—to explain to the American people what Republicans actually plan to do about raising the debt ceiling. Until we get a clear answer from House Republicans about what their plan is, there is no point in speculating about anything else, because if Republicans really want to starve the American people of vital services, the American people have a right to know what that will mean for their daily lives. Otherwise, the American people will be left with only questions and no answers.

Republicans say they want cuts. Do Republicans want to cut Social Security and Medicare? Do Republicans want to cut military funding? Do they want to cut aid to veterans? Do they want to cut funding to police and firefighters and first responders? Do they want to cut education, public health, science and research?

Saber-rattling about the debt and grandiose statements without any specifics are not going to cut it. They have been doing that for a while. It doesn't work. Lay out the plan. Show us your plan. Republicans need to show

us the math. They need to level with the American people. They need to show us their plan.

Now, here in the Senate, some Members from the MAGA faction—particularly Senator RICK SCOTT—have taken it upon themselves to fill the void that House Republicans have created. The bad news is, the plan they came up with is about as unhinged as they come.

Yesterday, the junior Senator from Florida—the very same Senator who thought that tax hikes on middle-class families was a winning formula for Republicans last November—released a proposal that would put the interests of the Chinese Communist Party before the needs of American families. Senator SCOTT calls it the Full Faith and Credit Act, but it is legislation that does not even deserve partial credit.

Bondholders in Beijing would get their money, while Floridians, Alabamians, Wisconsinites, and so many other American citizens would be left out to dry. Does he want to pay China before he pays schoolteachers? Does he want to pay the Chinese Communist Party before he pays our police officers? There is no end to the negative impacts of this piece of legislation, and it is no substitute for real action to avoid default. Worse yet, reports suggest that Speaker MCCARTHY has promised MAGA radicals in the House that he will hold a vote on a similar proposal to this one.

Seriously, Mr. President, just when we thought we had seen the limits of MAGA extremism, Senator SCOTT has swooped in and reminded us that when it comes to MAGA insanity, there is no bottom. And who—who—is going to pay the price? The American people.

Now on the national sales tax—I mean, you can't make this stuff up, but it goes on and on and on, these really ludicrous, way out of line, way over to the extreme Republican plans. They keep coming at us. Another one they put out is a national sales tax.

While Republicans refuse to show what they plan to do about the debt ceiling, they spend a lot of time talking up one of the worst policy proposals in existence—a 30-percent national sales tax on all consumer goods. The House Republicans just can't seem to get out of their own way. House Republicans call it the Fair Tax Act, but let's call it what it really is—a disaster for middle-class families.

There is nothing fair about a tax that punishes average families for buying essential goods while giving the rich another chance to lower their tax burdens. That is what is behind most of these Republican plans—a desire to help the very wealthy. And if it comes out on the middle class and most Americans, they don't give a hoot. They don't give a hoot.

The Fair Tax Act is truly foul stuff. The Republican tax plan would raise the cost of buying a house by \$125,000. It would raise the cost of buying a car by \$10,000. It would raise your average

grocery bill by \$3,500 a year at a time when people are already worried about the high price of groceries. How can they do this? Things like eggs are already too expensive, but Republicans want to slap another \$1.50 on that price. The plan would make a gallon of milk cost another \$1.70 more.

The shock waves go way beyond trips to the grocery store, as painful as those have been. The Republican tax would erode the value of retirement plans, Social Security, pensions and 401(k)s by nearly one-third, an insulting way—insulting—to treat people who have spent their entire lives saving up in order to retire with some degree of dignity.

In all my years in office—in all my years in office—I have rarely seen such an extreme proposal be taken seriously by a governing majority. It is another reminder of how radical, how out of touch, how unserious MAGA Republicans are about governing. All they want to do is help their very ultrarich friends. And the fact that the House leadership is catering to the delusional whims of MAGA extremism should send a shiver down every one of our spines.

GUNS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now finally on guns, it is another tragic week of mass shootings, but gun manufacturers continue to stoop to disgusting and morally bankrupt new lows. I am talking about a weapon currently for sale that is actually being marketed by one gunmaker to children. It has a disgusting, horrifying name: the JR-15. The JR-15. You heard me right. That is what they call it. The JR-15 is a spinoff, a child-sized version of an AR-15, which, according to the company marketing it, “functions like a modern sporting rifle” but is “geared to smaller enthusiasts.” Smaller enthusiasts? That is a code for “young children.”

Look at what just happened a few weeks ago in Virginia, where a 6-year-old student shot his teacher at school. We are talking about a kid in the first grade who looked at his teacher and pulled the trigger. When weapons are marketed to children, it makes horrors like what happened in Virginia more likely. Even if the weapons are marketed to adults to give to their children, it creates these terrible, terrible, terrible situations.

So later today, I and a group of my colleagues will ask the FTC to investigate the company that makes and advertises the JR-15. I want to be clear that this probe is not intended to be a cure-all for gun violence. We have a lot more to do in that regard. But we must shed more light on the prevalence of guns in our society, and regulators must take stronger steps to keep guns out of the hands of children. I hope it will pave the way for future action in Congress.

I can't believe I have to say this: The last thing we need to be doing is reduc-

ing in size deadly weapons of war and marketing them to young children. Every parent in America, every citizen in America should be outraged and demand the FTC to take action.

I yield the floor.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate is witnessing an unusual sight. Our colleague from West Virginia, Senator MANCHIN, is trying to roll back legislation that he himself wrote and passed less than a year ago. Reports say the Senator now wants Congress to delay the new electric vehicle tax credit that he himself hand-designed just last summer until he can resolve a fight with his fellow Democrats and the administration over what their own law actually says or actually does.

It would be comical if this Democrat-on-Democrat chaos weren't impacting our country. Republicans pointed out over and over that Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree was unfair as well as unworkable. We said from the start this is a hugely expensive, hopelessly tangled mess of subsidies, regulations, and redtape. They raised taxes on American jobs, American families, and American energy in order to inefficiently send little chunks of the people's money back to them if they plan their lives according to unclear and changing Big Government standards.

This is the classic tax-and-spend liberal logic: The IRS takes more of your money so bureaucrats can take over more of your life. Well, it is proving just as tangled and messy for the country, as we all predicted last summer.

Our Democratic colleague from West Virginia is locked in some battle with the Democrats' own Treasury Department over the sweeping new regulations that need to be written. He seems to be suggesting that some Americans who have already received the EV tax credit—that he wrote—should have to actually pay it back. In the meantime, while Democrats keep fighting it out, the Senator apparently wants Congress to act again to halt or change the implementation of his own policy.

So good luck to American families trying to understand what on Earth does and does not qualify for the Big Government subsidies. Good luck to American businesses trying to figure

out how to direct their investments. Now, this is what happens when Democrats make it up as they go along and clumsily try to rewire huge parts of our economy on the fly.

Now, remember, the senior Senator from West Virginia has already acknowledged that other Biden policies completely cancel out the supposed deficit savings from the massive climate bill. He has admitted that President Biden's student loan socialism wipes out all of their claimed deficit savings from the Green New Deal, and then some. And now, on top of all that, the redtape and expensive subsidies are so tangled that the very Senator who wrote the law now wants to delay or change it.

This has been a terrible deal for the country right from the beginning. Nonpartisan experts said the Democrats' boondoggle would increase inflation in the short term and do nothing for inflation in the long term. Nonpartisan experts said it would shatter President Biden's promise not to impact middle-class families with tax hikes. Nonpartisan experts said that none of it would have any—any—measurable impact on the global temperature.

And now, apparently, even the author of the bill wants Congress to rescue the country from his own handiwork. This is no way to run a country. People need to plan their lives. Businesses need to plan their futures and their investments. How can American workers and entrepreneurs do what they do best if Washington Democrats are micromanaging the economy and changing their mind every 5 minutes?

So, to summarize, we have a Senator asking Congress to delay and modify the signature bill that he himself wrote less than a year ago. We have American families being treated as pawns in a fight between Democrats and other Democrats. This bill was already an incredibly bad deal for the country, and the giant mess gets worse and worse every day.

GUANTANAMO BAY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, some things in life are just constants: The Sun rises in the east, water is wet, and Democratic administrations look for ways to let terrorists out of Guantanamo Bay.

The Biden administration has already overseen the largest terrorist jailbreak in modern memory when they abandoned the Bagram Air Base prison in Afghanistan. They let the Taliban waltz in and free thousands of terrorists, reportedly including the ISIS-K suicide bomber who killed our 13 American servicemembers in Kabul during the Biden administration's botched withdrawal.

Now, rumor has it they are considering writing a sequel to that jailbreak by continuing the Obama-Biden administration's literal obsession with removing terrorists from our secure and