

NOT VOTING—2

Bennet

Warner

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 45) was passed.

(Mr. PETERS assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The majority leader.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT OF 2023—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 84, H.R. 3746.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 84, H.R. 3746, a bill to provide for a responsible increase to the debt ceiling.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as we all know by now, yesterday evening, the House passed a bipartisan bill to lift the debt limit and begin the process of reining in our Nation's unchecked spending habit.

From the time the United States reached the debt ceiling in January, it was clear that a compromise bill would be the only way to avoid a full-blown economic crisis, which is what would happen if we were not to raise the debt ceiling. With a Democrat-led Senate and a Republican-led House and a Democrat in the White House, bipartisanship was and is a necessity.

Now, Republicans, for our part, were clear that any increase in the debt ceiling must come with spending reforms. Otherwise, it would be like your maxing out your credit card and then asking to raise the credit limit so you could borrow more money without having an adult conversation about how you were going to pay the money back. In the real world, that is what would happen. You would have to have that conversation or there would be no increase in your credit card limit. But only in Washington, only in the Nation's Capital would it be even argued that you could raise the debt limit without talking about spending reform.

What has happened is, our Nation's national debt has ballooned now to more than \$31.4 trillion. That is a number—I doubt that anybody here in the Chamber could tell us how many zeros follow that 31.4.

The American people are clearly unhappy with what they see is happening here when it comes to out-of-control spending. A recent poll found that 60 percent of adults think the government spends too much, and they are right. They are frustrated by the unnecessary

and wasteful spending, and they are eager for Congress to do the reasonable, rational thing, which is to begin to get our financial house in order.

That is precisely what Republicans demanded throughout this process—necessary fiscal reforms as part of the debt ceiling negotiation. But instead of stepping up, doing his job, acting responsibly, President Biden took a very different approach. He said: I refuse to negotiate. This is a President of the United States with \$31.4 trillion in debt. He said: I refuse to negotiate. He went on to say that only a clean debt ceiling increase was an option, and he refused to engage in negotiations altogether.

It is helpful to remember that it was in January when we actually hit the debt ceiling. What has happened since then is the Treasury Secretary has engaged in what is euphemistically called extraordinary measures in order to pay the bills as the money comes in through tax revenue. But now she has told us that the X date—which presumably is the default date after extraordinary measures are exhausted—would be June 5. That is Monday. That is Monday.

The President has known since January that this day would come. He has refused to negotiate, and he has led us into this scenario where, unless Congress acts by June 5, we will breach the debt limit and begin to default on paying our bills as a nation.

I don't have to remind anybody that inflation as a result of some of the profligate spending habits of the previous Congress, particularly on our Democratic friends' side—they were happy to spend roughly \$2.3 trillion last year on strictly party-line spending votes. But you put enough gasoline on the fire, and inflation is going to spiral out of control. That is exactly what has happened.

As a consequence, two things have happened. One is that hard-working American families have found their standard of living reduced because they simply can't afford to keep up with the increase in costs as a result of inflation. The second thing that happened is that in order to try to deal with this hidden tax, the Federal Reserve has had to raise interest rates, which has slowed down the economy even more.

Why in the world would President Biden, as a responsible public official, refuse to negotiate when he knows that the anxiety associated with hitting this X date on Monday is causing even more uncertainty, even more trepidation, and even more anxiety over exactly what the future is going to look like? Why would he risk that? President Biden stuck to his "no negotiations, no reforms" position for literally months even though it was painfully obvious that a bipartisan deal was the only way to avoid a further economic crisis.

I want to pause for a moment to commend the Speaker of the House, Speaker MCCARTHY, for his leadership

throughout this process. Without a negotiating partner, he did everything in his power and within the power of the House of Representatives to move this process forward. He stood strong behind the need for fiscal reforms and led the House in passing the Limit, Save, Grow Act. He lured President Biden to the negotiating table, and he successfully moved a compromise bill through the House. But I think the backstory about Speaker MCCARTHY's leadership is that President Biden didn't dream that in a million years, after the difficult race for Speaker that we saw in January, Speaker MCCARTHY would be able to unify Republicans in the House of Representatives and actually pass a bill that raised the debt ceiling. That is what the Limit, Save, Grow Act was. I think President Biden was shocked that he was able to get that done. And I congratulate him for it. It changed the whole dynamics of this negotiation.

But now that the House has acted, the ball is in our court. This Chamber will soon vote on the McCarthy-Biden agreement, and now is the time for the Senate to do its job. Our job is not simply to accept or to rubberstamp what the House passed. That has never been the case. We weren't a party to the agreement; why should we be bound by the strict terms of that agreement?

The Senate has not had a say in the process so far, and it has led to serious frustration on both sides of the aisle. This bill didn't go through regular order; in other words, it didn't go through a committee. Members didn't have the opportunity to weigh in or shape the legislation at that level or even the final text.

Given the time constraints wholly created by President Biden's delay and refusal to negotiate, this rushed process was completely unavoidable. We didn't have to get on the precipice of a default in order to act if President Biden had done his job and responsibly engaged in the negotiations that he finally did engage in at an earlier point, months earlier. So the President dragged his feet for several months, leaving the narrowest possible window to reach a deal and avoid a further crisis.

This is not how this should have played out, but that doesn't mean our hands are tied behind our backs here in the Senate. The Senate is not required, as I said, to rubberstamp the House bill. We have the opportunity to amend this legislation and make it better.

I share the concerns expressed by the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, the Senator from Maine; the Senator from South Carolina, Senator GRAHAM; Senator SULIVAN, the Senator from Alaska; and Senator COTTON, I believe, has spoken on that publicly, that the defense number in this agreement is simply inadequate.

It is simply unacceptable to leave it in the hands of Senator SCHUMER, the majority leader, whether or not we actually pass appropriations bills this

year because if we don't, under the terms of the McCarthy-Biden agreement, then we go back into a sequestration, with a 1-percent cut across the board.

That may not sound like a lot, but our country is facing more national security threats than we ever have before. Whether it is the challenge in Europe with Russia's unjustified invasion of Ukraine; whether it is the aspirations of the Ayatollah in Iran to build nuclear weapons; whether it is Kim Jong Un in North Korea or Vladimir Putin or President Xi, it is easy to see that the threats are not diminishing. They are getting more and more serious, which means that a sequestration of the Defense Department's spending by automatic operation of law is unacceptable.

Senators on both sides want amendments. Members want to make changes to try to improve the bill. As I said, the Senate should not be cut out of the process due to President Biden's foot-dragging. We still have time before the June 5 deadline. The Senate could move through the amendment process fairly quickly. We could do it today. We have ample time to vote on amendments and send an amended version back to the House for final passage.

I might add, there is no reason for the majority leader to block amendment votes. Senators deserve an opportunity to vote on amendments, and I hope the majority leader will not stand in the way of those Senators on both sides of the aisle who want to offer amendments and then receive-up-or-down votes.

This bill does include some very positive developments—beginning to rein in our Nation's spending habits—but it is not a magic pill to cure the Federal Government's chronic financial troubles. America's \$31.4 trillion debt developed over the course of decades, so it is unreasonable to expect we are going to turn that around with the passage of one bill. But we can start, and we should start.

We know the pandemic accelerated these problems. We spent a lot of money necessarily on a bipartisan basis to try to deal with the public health crisis and the economic consequences of the pandemic, but then, as I said, at President Biden's request, our Democratic colleagues abused the rules of the Senate to go on two partisan spending sprees.

First came the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, followed by the \$700 billion so-called Inflation Reduction Act. That is \$2.6 trillion more, which gets us up to the \$31.4 trillion today. But then they used that money to do everything from funding a supersized IRS to taxpayer-provided subsidies for rich people to buy electric vehicles.

So I am glad the Speaker was successful. In addition to beginning the long process of beginning to bend the curve when it comes to reckless spending, I am glad the Speaker was able to agree with the White House to claw

back some of that money, including \$27 billion in unspent COVID funds, and to redirect a reported \$20 billion in IRS funding to other priorities.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates this bill will reduce Federal spending by \$1.5 trillion over the next decade, which is a strong start in the fight to right America's financial ship.

As I said, this bill is the beginning of that fight; it is not the end. And I know many of us, including this Senator, would like for us to be able to do more. But the fact is, one bill cannot erase decades of financial troubles. We need to build on the progress made in this legislation in the months and years to come. Of course, the best way to do that is at election time because it matters who wins elections. It matters who is in the majority. It matters who controls a body of Congress and the White House.

But the next big battle will be in the Senate and House Appropriations Committees. As we know, every year, the committees are charged with writing 12 separate bills to fund the various components of the Federal Government.

The process of drafting those bills is designed to involve public hearings, committee votes, and rigorous debate. It gives every member of the Appropriations Committee opportunities to shape the individual spending bills and address America's spending habits. And once it gets voted out of committee, then all 100 Senators should have that opportunity to shape and improve the legislation.

Once these bills are completed, they are supposed to pass both Chambers and be signed into law by September 30 every year. But that didn't happen in 2021 or 2022. The Democratic Senator majority leader refused to allow us to pass a single appropriation bill last year, forcing us into the ugly process of considering and passing an omnibus appropriation bill. That is not the way that is supposed to be done.

Congress cannot continue to operate like this—with bloated budgets, last-minute spending bills, backroom negotiations. That is no way to gain the public's trust or to run the Federal Government. We need to return to a transparent and regular process where every elected Member of Congress has the opportunity to participate in budgeting and deciding what the appropriate expenditure of taxpayer dollars should be.

So we have known this date was coming since January. President Biden put us in this difficult situation by wasting valuable time, and he has pushed us to the brink of default. Now, thanks to his delay tactics, the Senate is preparing to vote on a bill that no Member of this body had a hand in writing. Given the time crunch, this truncated process was a necessary evil, but it cannot be the norm.

We need to return to the processes that were designed to promote smart and responsible spending. Hearings, committee votes, and public debate are

absolutely critical. For today, Senators deserve the opportunity to amend this bill and, as I said, to make it better if they can; but all of our colleagues have the right to have a say in this process, and I urge the majority leader to allow that process to go forward with up-or-down amendment votes.

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

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I want to spend a few minutes here on the Senate floor discussing the debt ceiling agreement reached between the Republican majority in the House and the Biden White House, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the bill that, presumably, we will be further debating, perhaps amending, and voting on yet today or tomorrow.

I fully recognize that governing in a divided government is a challenging amount of work. The American people have given us that circumstance. This circumstance requires negotiation and finding common ground; otherwise, we can do nothing.

Unfortunately, President Biden, for way too long, refused to negotiate with House Republicans. He refused for months to negotiate with House Republicans—I suppose in an effort to intimidate Republicans and pass an unaltered debt ceiling increase. This would have opened the door for more Democratic majority spending—in fact, spending even more money with perhaps no, but certainly fewer, strings attached. Fortunately, that tactic did not work, and the House Republicans acted to pass their own debt limit legislation. Without a realistic plan, a plan that could pass Congress, the Biden administration finally conceded and negotiated with House Republicans to create a deal, the deal that is before us now.

My view: Defaulting on the national debt would send a message that we are a nation that cannot be trusted to pay our bills. Default would be highly dangerous to our national security and to our currency and to our economy. China and other countries, those countries that are on the fence in today's world, are watching. They are watching how the American government operates. They want to diminish our role in the world. China would love for our standing in the world to be damaged due to default, for the United States and its economy to be in chaos.

It is vital to our economy and to our national security that we do not default and that we preserve the U.S. dollar as the primary currency, the "reserve currency"—not the yen or any

other country's currency. The implications of what happens here today in regard to a default has a consequence upon our national well-being vis-a-vis the rest of the world and, most importantly, determines the relationship we have with other countries and the role that China is able to further play in the world order.

China and these countries that are on the fence are watching. It is time—it is vital to our economy and national security that we do not default and that we preserve that dollar.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act isn't the legislation that I personally would introduce. It does not sufficiently cap long-term discretionary spending; it continues to tie our defense budget to spending less than the rate of inflation; and it fails to address reforms needed to mandatory programs. But it does accomplish key conservative priorities that will benefit America and help put our Nation on a better path toward fiscal responsibility.

In addition to the debt ceiling issue, reckless spending can also be the demise of our country's well-being, and endless deficit spending will eliminate the American dream for many Americans and the American dream as seen by the rest of the world.

As a fiscal conservative, the Federal Government must spend less, must grow its spending less rapidly, must set limits on our appetite, and must stop wasteful spending. Our Nation has had a spending problem for the last several decades—probably even longer than that. It used to be that everyone understood that deficit spending was a damaging thing to the economy. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, perhaps the first progressive President, understood that World War II had to be paid for. It was a given that we paid our bills with nearly current revenue.

It seems, over time, that many—particularly, in my view, in the Democratic Party—decided that deficit spending was not that much of a problem. And I worry that, too often, Republicans want to look the other way as well. We accelerated that spending during COVID. Perhaps with the uncertainty of what COVID meant to us, government spending rose rapidly, and we spent too much money. But Congress was slow—even as COVID began returning to the rearview mirror, we were too slow to turn off that COVID spending spigot.

Coupled with reckless tax-and-spending sprees driven by the Biden administration, out-of-control spending has led to record-high inflation. Inflation is like a tax on every American and is damaging to the poorest among us.

Here in Congress, we talk about spending in terms of millions and billions—sometimes even trillions. But folks back home in Kansas talk about spending in dollars and cents. And for everyday Americans, those dollars add up, make it harder to buy the groceries, to pay the rent, or to put gas in their vehicles. We see it every day in

our family, and I hear about it from everyday Kansans all the time.

Reducing inflation requires reductions to spending. The cause of inflation is when we spend more than we have to spend and we borrow money, pumping more Federal spending, government spending, into the economy.

However, we need to fulfill the most important responsibility to the Federal Government, and that is to protect and defend our Nation and to keep our promises to those who served in the military that defends us. My colleagues and I on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs have consistently said we would provide the VA with the funding it needs to provide care and services to the men and women who have served our Nation. I have heard it said many times here in the Senate and elsewhere that it is too easy for us to go to war and never easy enough for us to pay for the bills for those who sacrificed so much during war.

The debt ceiling deal delivers on our commitment to support veterans. The deal also secures the full funding of the toxic-exposed veterans that was authorized by the just recently passed PACT Act.

In regard to government waste, this legislation will slow the rate of spending and recoup unspent funding, starting with COVID funds, to the tune of billions of dollars. The pandemic is basically behind us, and there is no reason for us to keep spending under the rubric—under the title—of COVID relief funding.

Additionally, this legislation will cut significant funding to the Biden administration's plan to hire thousands of additional IRS agents. I am an appropriator, and I have long been an advocate for what we around here call regular order, what folks back home would just call doing your job.

The way this process is supposed to work is we have a budget that outlines how much money we can spend, what the revenues are to pay for it; and then we divide up that money that we are going to spend in discretionary spending among 12 bills that the Appropriations Committee and, ultimately, the Senate and the House and the President then have something to say about.

I have been an advocate for passing those separate 12 bills. We haven't done that very well many times. For far too long, we have relied on continuing resolutions and massive omnibus packages to fund our government. Those omnibus packages allow for a small group of Members of Congress to make major decisions for the rest of us. It adds to the uncertainty of what is in a bill when it is such a massive piece of legislation, and it creates—rightfully so—cynicism among my constituents about “What is in there?” and “Did you read the bill?”

These measures, the way we do it—the way we have done it in the past—are not good government, and they lead to the ease of additional spending. It becomes too easy to add something to such a massive bill.

This legislation would encourage Congress to do its job by passing 12 separate appropriation bills or face automatic caps on spending. Whatever happens on this piece of legislation, I hope the outcome, with the leadership of the Appropriations Committee that we have today, means that we are going to do 12 separate bills, each with the scrutiny of an appropriations subcommittee and the opportunity for amendments by all Senators on the Senate floor.

Working to spend less will help stop this runaway inflation. But this legislation goes a step further by stimulating the economy and protecting Americans from new taxes.

Unleashing American energy is a key to reducing energy prices, stimulating our economy, and strengthening our national security. The permitting reforms included in this bill will help get energy projects approved more quickly rather than being bogged down in a set of bureaucratic regulations. Things that should take months or a few years—hopefully, it will be the case and not take years or decades.

Raising the debt limit is not something I or any of my colleagues should take lightly. Why have a debt ceiling if it is just automatically increased every time it is met? Don't we wish that would work in our credit card bills that we receive? We have a limit on what we can spend because sometimes people, and always government, need to be told no.

We are seeing firsthand the consequence for spending outside our means. And there will continue to be more consequences. But no deal is not a solution either. This is really the clash of a bad outcome of a default and the bad outcome of more spending, more inflation, and a greater challenge to our country and its economy.

No deal is not a solution. And defaulting—I can't see any way that is helpful to Kansans or Americans. The American people elected a divided government. That is what we work in every day here. Democrats hold the White House and the Senate. The House Republicans deserve credit for negotiating a deal with a reluctant President and passing an agreement with reasonable caps on Federal spending.

This bill represents progress and is that proverbial step in the right direction. We cannot continue to borrow money we don't have and saddle future generations with the consequences.

The debate cannot end here, however, with this vote. However the outcome of this legislation in Congress, we should never have to wait for a crisis—an economic crisis, the debt ceiling—to take fiscally responsible measures. It should be part of a way of life here. Those responsible measures need to become the norm for every Member of Congress and for this and every other President.

Without a serious long-term plan and subsequent action to reduce spending, we will be back in this position way

too soon, and we will jeopardize the American dream. It threatens our children and our grandchildren's futures as well as our Nation's ability to defend itself against global threats.

I always tell myself that my responsibility as a citizen of this country—not as a Senator necessarily but just as a citizen—is to do what we can do to make sure that the American dream is alive and well and liberties and freedoms that we enjoy as Americans through the sacrifice and service of many and the wisdom of the Founding Fathers in the Constitution of the United States—our job is to make certain those liberties and freedoms are protected for people we will never meet and that the American dream is alive and well for people today and their children and grandchildren.

America still stands as a beacon for others around the world, and there are others in other countries who are trying to live the American dream. They are envious of what we have. But it is fragile, and it can go away.

It is our responsibility to make sure that is not the case. We can't let this happen. We have to confront our threats head-on.

And, yes, it is easy to take a side and defend that side and advocate for that side. It is what we do here. There are times in which it is necessary for us, for the well-being not of us as individuals or us as elected officials but for the well-being of the country, to find a path forward. And in today's environment, in today's world, it requires bipartisan cooperation. And bipartisan agreement is a blueprint to develop more fiscally responsible legislative agenda.

We will debate this bill. We will, potentially and perhaps hopefully, amend this bill, but our work is cut out for us. The American people deserve for us to make the decisions that protect us from our adversaries, keep the American dream alive, and make certain that our children and grandchildren and those we have never met have a brighter future. The issue before us is one of those that has a consequence in all those arenas.

I will work with my colleagues today as we move forward on this legislation to make sure that the outcome is something that advances a cause that is important to me and to the people I represent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, years ago—talking like 15, maybe 18 years ago—I was speaking in a town in Oklahoma, and my daughter wanted to go with me, which was great. So we took off. I had reserved a hotel. And so we get there. We were going to stay overnight. And I was speaking somewhere the next morning.

We arrive at the hotel late that evening. When I got there and checked in, I knew initially we were in trouble. You have that feeling when you pull up

to the hotel and you think this may not work. Pull up, check in, but there is no one at the desk. And then it just gets harder as we get to our room. It is dark. Lots of light bulbs are out in the pathway to get to our room to check in. And, actually, when I shut the door and the two of us came in, I shut the door behind us, and the crack underneath the door was so large I could physically see the patio and the balcony and everything outside. And it was so loud because it was right next to the highway. I thought, We are in trouble. This is just not going work. So we ended up packing everything up and just going to search and find another place and thinking there is no way we will both be able to sleep.

Why do I tell you this silly story? Well, when we were traveling and heading there, we anticipated one thing, and then when we got there and got to the hotel, it ended up being different.

I have to tell you, this past weekend, when I read through the 99 pages of the debt ceiling bill, I would read through a section of it, and I would get to the end of that section and be surprised at the “except for” at the tail end of each section. It is not what I expected when I read through the document, page after page.

I have to tell you, we are a nation that leads the world. We have the world's largest economy. We are to be responsible in how we handle our budget in the process. We are to get it right because we are the United States of America.

And I have been concerned for quite a while with the trajectory of our spending. And it challenges us as a nation to be able to change the trajectory of our spending because we have to start working back to balance. We can't get to balance in a year. It is going to take a long time to get there, but we have to get started in this process.

And my frustration has been that sometimes we seem to start and then we stop again and then we start and then we stop again.

In the several years that I have been here in the U.S. Congress, I voted for some debt ceiling increases because they changed the trajectory, and I voted against some because they were status quo or they didn't. I had higher expectations for this one.

Now, initially, when it came out, it was, this is going to save \$2 trillion. And then it slowly got downgraded to it is going to save \$1.5 trillion. Then, when we read the fine print and everybody was talking about how much it was going to save, I got to the fine print and found out, actually, it increases spending 3.3 percent next year, and the year after that it increases spending 1 percent again.

It actually doesn't decrease spending at all. It increases spending, both this year and next year. But then it has the promise of the next 8 years after that—it will only grow 1 percent a year after that every single year, except that is not an agreement this Congress can

make. This Congress can only vote on things for this particular session of Congress. We can't commit the next Congress to actions of this Congress. Each Congress stands on its own. And everyone knows that.

It sounds good to say it is going to save these trillions of dollars in the next 8 years, except each Congress will actually vote on a budget for the next 8 years, and there is no commitment from future Congresses by this one to do that.

In fact, I have been here long enough to be able to see agreements being made for what a future Congress will do that didn't actually happen.

And so the \$1.5 trillion in savings is only a decrease of the increase of how much we were “planning to spend but actually hadn't budgeted” because as many people may know, there is not a budget set for the next year of what we were going to spend. So CBO just assumed we were going to increase at least by inflation and any amount less than inflation is suddenly savings when there was no budget that was actually set.

So my first big surprise was, it actually doesn't reduce spending; it actually increases spending.

The next big surprise came when I started looking at how even some of the “savings” are actually managed. There is a supplemental piece that is in this or a piece that is set aside where it takes what they call rescissions—I am not going to get into budget gobbledygook that is tough for us all to be able to process. But there is about \$22 billion that is taken out of items that were COVID spending that are not going to be spent and pulls it over into the Department of Commerce and leaves it there in the Department of Commerce amount and says we will decide later how to spend it.

Now, I ask the obvious question: Isn't this supposed to go to deficit reduction?

And the answer came back: Well, a few billion went to deficit reduction, but \$22 billion actually went over into the Department of Commerce's budget and is being parked there, and they will have other opportunities to be able to spend those dollars in the future.

That is not really a savings on the rescission. There is permitting reform in this, which I am grateful for. Quite frankly, there is bipartisan support for permitting reform in many areas because we can't get lithium and cobalt. We can't move solar and wind power because of permitting, just like we can't move natural gas and hydrogen and CO₂ because of permitting issues. We have to do major reforms in those areas to be able to make sure we can actually produce more energy for the future of our country.

So when I saw the permitting issues, then I thought, good, we need to get started on some of these permitting issues—except when I read through it, there seems to be a lot of exceptions to it.

For instance, there is a 2-year commitment to say, if you are doing the more strict environmental impact statement, you have to get it done in 2 years—well, unless the administration declares it complex, and then they have a lot more time; in fact, an infinite amount of time.

It limits you to 150 pages for an environmental impact statement, which is good; that actually brings the paper down—unless the administration declares it complex, and then it is a whole lot more. It limits the number of pages even, unless it is the appendix. If the administration declares actually these can go in the appendix, then there is actually no cap, no limit for that.

It also says that, in this time period piece, that if you get to 2 years from the environmental impact statement and if they don't achieve that—I asked a logical question: If an administration and an Agency doesn't get it done in 2 years, what happens?

The answer is: Well, you have to sue the Federal Government and that Agency to make them do it. And then it has to go through the court system, which, as this body knows, will take 2 or 3 years. If the court finds in favor, then the court can then declare the Agency has another 90 days to be able to get it resolved—unless it is considered complex, and then they have unlimited time.

So the permitting piece, as I read through it, I thought, why are there all these exceptions that are out there that give it an out for every single portion of it?

There is a section of the bill that talks about what is called administrative pay-go. That is a rule that has existed in some administrations before where they will say that if you are going to add a cost to America through an administrative action, you have to look somewhere else to decrease the cost, because by the Constitution, only this Congress can actually increase spending; that is not something the administration has the constitutional authority to do. That is a reasonable rule.

It puts in this administrative pay-go to say, if spending is going to increase based on a regulation, it has to decrease somewhere else. That sounds great—until I get to the very end of it, and it literally says: unless the Director of the Office of Management and Budget considers the additional spending necessary. No restrictions.

If it is considered necessary, then they have an unlimited amount that they can do. Even that restriction actually goes away on January 1, 20 days before President Biden's term ends, so it is not even all the way through the last 3 weeks. Even that restriction goes away. And I can't figure out why, suddenly, it gives 3 weeks of home base without a restriction like that. And why, if we are going to put a restriction in there, why end it in 2 years anyway? If it is a good idea, it should be a

good idea for every President, not just for this one. Why would there be, suddenly, an out clause in it?

There is a 1-percent sequester that is across the board if appropriations are not done.

Now, I have to tell you, I worked with Senator MAGGIE HASSAN on the other side of the aisle to resolve a way to end government shutdowns and actually do appropriations. We should do all 12 appropriation bills. The Senator who is chairwoman of Appropriations is on the floor right now. She and I have had these conversations. She has committed to doing all 12 appropriations bills. So am I. We can bring back regular order and actually go through the process.

We don't all agree on everything here in the body. Welcome to America, where 320 million Americans don't agree on everything. OK, well, let's talk it all out. Let's have the debate. Let's have the vote and go from there. We haven't had that ability in years.

Senator MAGGIE HASSAN and I have a bill dealing with ending government shutdowns and pushing us towards doing the 12 appropriations bills. That is not a bipartisan bill. Frankly, it is a nonpartisan bill. I don't find anyone here who doesn't actually want to get us back to regular order. So we are trying to find a logical way to be able to do it.

But the way this bill sets up the sequestration to put this towards those 12 appropriation bills, it says that if appropriation bills are not done by April 1 next year, there is a 1-percent, across-the-board cut that will happen in the current year spending in the last 5 months of the year.

That is a pretty big spending. Except it really only hits defense because the way it is set up is nondefense will actually go up and defense will actually be cut by 1 percent from last year's amount.

What in the world? Why would it be structured that way?

No. 1, why would we set up a sequestration piece at all as an incentive? No. 2, why would it be designed in a shape where it hits defense and not non-defense in the way it is actually set up? And, No. 3, when there were other options, like Senator HASSAN and I, through our proposal to deal with ending government shutdowns and to get to actual appropriations, why wouldn't we do something like that that is non-partisan, that is simple and straightforward to be able to do?

The student loan suspension. There has been much publicity on the right about, well, this ends the student loan suspensions, except it ends it on July 30, when President Biden already says he is ending it on August 30. In fact, CBO looked at it and said this doesn't save any money at all because it was already going away. It doesn't really change anything. It literally moves it forward a month but doesn't change a thing.

Then there is a work requirement process. I have to tell you: I am a big

believer in work requirements. Not everybody here in this body is on that. I think work is dignity. I think work encourages families and brings dignity to a family and an individual unlike anything else that a family can bring. I think it is great for kids to grow up in a community where the adults around them work and set that example, and they build on that. There is just a unique dignity in work.

Quite frankly, some of that just comes from what I have seen, and some of that comes from my faith, because when I look at even scripture, there was work in the Garden before the fall. Work is not a consequence of the fall. Work is a gift from God that gives us purpose and meaning and helps us set the next example. Anything we can do as a culture to encourage a culture of work, I think, is beneficial to people in families.

I understand full well there are those who are disabled, those that have kids. There are situations where it can't be done. I completely respect that. But in this particular bill, the incentives for work requirements has a little caveat stuck in the back of it that says all of this applies to these States and they can't take all these waivers where they pull away work requirements—they can't do those things unless Secretary Becerra—the Secretary of HHS—declares that that State is doing good work to try anyway. There are no restrictions on it. It just says solely that if Secretary Becerra decides that, it gets waived.

So as I look at the bill, I see a lot of good intentions in the bill, but I see a whole lot of exceptions. And I see a whole lot of ability for the administration to waive that, waive that, waive that, waive that. That undercuts the purpose of the bill.

Quite frankly, as a Congress, I wish that we could sit down across the aisle and we could have dialogue to say: What is Congress's responsibility? What are the policies that are wise policies? And not hand authority to the White House—Republican or Democratic—and say: Which is good policy that we need to put in place and do those things? One day, we will get back to that, but that day wasn't today. And that is frustrating for me.

I am going to oppose this bill today, but I want us to be able to keep working because we still have work to do, as one side knows as well. I know Congress is focused on this today, rightfully so. The American people expect us to get this resolved.

TULSA RACE MASSACRE

Mr. President, can I just tell you a little heartbeat issue for me? It is June 1. That may not mean a lot of things to a lot of people, but for those of us from Oklahoma, today is the 102nd anniversary of the worst race massacre in American history.

It happened in Tulsa, OK, May 31, overnight, to June 1. And 102 years ago today, Greenwood was a smoking heap of rubble after an all-night violence

and massacre on hundreds of Black Americans in North Tulsa.

It is a stain on our Nation. It is a stain on our State.

And 102 years later, I hope we still pause and remember as a State and we continue to learn the lessons and continue to be able to work towards being a more perfect union.

Today, the Greenwood Rising museum is open. Folks are coming in and out, talking about what happened 102 years ago. Folks at the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation are engaging in conversation. There are community groups all over North Tulsa, meeting with people just to be able to talk and to say: What have we learned 102 years later? How can we still be better as a Nation still?

We learned a lot. We have grown a lot. But it is unfinished business for us.

So on June 1, I remind us as a body, there was a massacre 102 years ago today. We shouldn't ignore this moment to remember how we take tragedy to triumph.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The senior Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, first of all, let me acknowledge the final comments from the Senator from Oklahoma.

Thank you for making us all pause and remember that important time and important lessons that we all need to have learned from here. Thank you very much.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. President, like so many of my colleagues, I spent last week back home hearing from folks in my State. Everywhere I went, I heard from people about how the investments that we make here in Congress actually matter in their daily lives; how the funding that we provide from here helps students at Lake Washington Institute of Technology in Kirkland pursue their dreams and get a higher education and find a good-paying job. It helps entrepreneurs in Tacoma start a business and grow it from the ground up. It helps pregnant moms who rely on the Rainier Valley Midwives Center to get the care they need to have a healthy pregnancy.

I saw how our Federal investments make cutting-edge biomedical research possible at the Allen Institute in Seattle, leading to breakthroughs that save lives and give people more time with their loved ones.

Again and again, I heard about the resources that we send back home pay off in a truly meaningful way. And it is true: The investments we make in our country are critical. They are critical in helping our families succeed; keeping our communities safe; and keeping our Nation strong, secure, and competitive.

We aren't simply spending; we are investing. We are investing in fighting deadly fentanyl and upgrading our crumbling infrastructure. We are in-

vesting in keeping America on the cutting edge of clean energy and scientific innovation. We are investing in rebuilding American manufacturing and bringing industries of the future back home here to our shores.

I could go on and on.

But the point is, the funding decisions we make right here in this Chamber are not just numbers on a page. They are investments in people, in families, in our communities, and, ultimately, in our country's future. And they are also crucial to keeping our country secure and on the cutting edge as competitors like the Chinese Government work hard to outpace us.

As we all know, our adversaries are not restricting their investments in their futures. They are not. And they are not teetering on the verge of calamitous default for the sake of partisan politics. And, yet, instead of listening to the flashing red warning signs from our competitors, House Republicans have been insisting on draconian cuts and harmful changes to the programs that are a lifeline for struggling families and the lifeblood of our global leadership.

House Republicans' push to slash this funding for key Federal programs is alarming, and the way they have tried to make their cuts is downright reckless. We have to be clear about what they have done here. Instead of working through the budget and appropriations process—as we do every year to craft our Nation's budget and determine how we spend money—House Republicans just decided they would threaten to tank our economy and force the United States into default to extract partisan concessions. They have absolutely not been shy about it.

We heard from House Republican leaders and even the leader of the Republican Party talk openly about taking our economy and the American people "hostage." That is damning—House Republicans admitting to using the full faith and credit of the United States of America as a political weapon.

Needless to say, that is not how this should work. Negotiating is not one side saying: Give me everything I want or else. Negotiating is coming to the table saying: Here are my concerns; here are my principles; here is what I am hearing from families in my State; where can we find common ground? That is what people elected us to do. That is what they sent us here to do.

Frankly, that is what I think many of us here want to do. I have heard from so many of my colleagues about their desire to return to regular order, and I have been working with Senator COLLINS to do that on the Appropriations Committee. But let's get one thing straight—hostage-taking is not regular order. It is just not. That is not the way we should arrive at the top lines for our spending bills. And it is time we put an end to this dangerous brinksmanship at the next possible op-

portunity by scrapping this debt ceiling and taking the threat of default off the table once and for all. No other country handles its credit like this.

Hostage-taking is no way to have a conversation about our Nation's fiscal future.

And let's be clear. For House Republicans, this never was truly about the debt anyway. Republicans added trillions to the debt under President Trump through tax giveaways for billionaires and giant corporations, but they refuse to even talk about asking billionaires to pay at least as much in taxes as a firefighter or a nurse. They won't talk about closing giant loopholes for Big Oil or Big Pharma. They definitely won't talk about capping tax giveaways to the wealthy. Instead, House Republicans want to give handouts to the rich and massive corporations. They want to make life harder for struggling families by cutting the programs they rely on and make competing globally harder for our Nation by capping our ability to invest in our future. They agreed to raise the debt ceiling three times under President Trump without batting an eye, but their tune changes when a Democrat is in the White House.

President Biden and congressional Democrats have been clear from the outset that default is not an option and should never have been a threat because it would be catastrophic to our Nation's economy, to the financial security of our families, and to the stability of the global economy. So I applaud President Biden for his laser focus on taking default off the table.

While I know the President has pushed hard to hold the line on recent progress and protect vulnerable people who need support and reject the House Republicans' most extreme demands, we have to be clear-eyed and honest about how this bill fails to meet our current moment—especially how it will limit our ability now to make the investments we need to strengthen our economy and invest in America's future.

I will vote for this legislation because default is not an option, but I do so with deep concern and with a determination to prevent us from ever being in this situation again and lessen the damage of these cuts at every possible opportunity. That can include working with the administration and my colleagues to consider a supplemental, but that conversation has to consider more than just defense and Ukraine because there are other really important priorities, like border security, disaster relief, and other nondefense items, that we should not let be shortchanged.

This is absolutely not a bill I would have written, and the fact that the choice here is between a bill that cuts resources for American families or trashing the Nation's credit and causing a global economic meltdown is an indictment of House Republicans, who decided taking our Nation's credit hostage was an acceptable thing to do.

Understand that the programs being cut make a real difference in people's lives. I know that firsthand. I am someone who grew up knowing what it meant to get by on a tight, tight budget. I had a big family—six brothers and sisters. My dad was a World War II veteran. He ran a mom-and-pop store on Main Street, selling everyday goods in Bothell, WA. We never had a lot, but we always got by, and a lot of times, that was because our government had our backs.

When my dad got sick and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, my mom had to figure out how to support seven kids and find a job that would make that possible. A Federal workforce training program helped her get a job as a bookkeeper to keep my family afloat. Me and my siblings—all seven of us—got through college thanks to Federal assistance because our government invested in Pell grants and other programs. My family and I had to rely on food stamps for a brief time. We didn't go hungry because of Federal investments in nutrition.

So I will say it again. The funding decisions we make right here in this Chamber are not just numbers on a page; the policy we write and sign into law has a direct consequence on people's lives, and every Member of Congress needs to recognize that.

So rest assured I remain very focused on keeping our appropriations process moving forward here in the Senate, marking up our spending bills in a timely, bipartisan way. I want to make it clear right here on the Senate floor that I will be doing absolutely everything I can to protect the investments that help those families get by and ensure that this great country lives up to its promise, from childcare, to housing, to lifesaving research, and more. As chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will be a voice for working families in my home State and all across the country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I have been here about 4½ years and come from that world where you could never do what we do here. When you run a business, you are competing. You are earning your revenues. They are not given to you like in government. Here, we just have to be smart enough not to spend more than we take in.

Sadly, when you look—all the data is there historically—we haven't balanced the budget since the late 1990s. Over 50 years, there are some things that are just criteria you need to take into consideration and maybe view as a given.

Our system is built on enterprise, sound regulation, not overbearing, taxes that you can pay without being a wet blanket on the economy. Over 50 years, other than 2 or 3 years that happened to coincide in the Clinton years when we balanced the budget, we have never generated more than 18 percent of our GDP in revenue through the Federal Government.

It is this simple: When you have high rates, you flush more into the Treasury the first couple years. You go from whatever the economic growth rate was to something a half to a percent and a half lower. When you cut taxes—and it was getting close; it wasn't quite there pre-COVID, the Trump tax cuts—you are going to deplete revenues the first couple years, but then you benefit from an economy that is growing more robustly.

We know all of that. The missing link here is that anywhere else, you have the rigor of the marketplace. When you are running something, it is not merciful. If you behave there like we do here, you are on the ash heap of enterprises that just don't survive in the long run. Nowhere else can you borrow up to 30 cents on every dollar you spend and expect that to be a good long-term business plan.

I am one—in the time I have been here, I have gotten along with a lot of Democrats on passing legislation that is practical. We can still do it. But when it comes to the big agenda items in terms of how much you spend, are you going to have the fortitude to do a real budget, we haven't done that. Whenever we have had moments of discipline with budget caps, sequestrations, they seem to unravel soon after we put them in place.

Again, look at the numbers. We, from the time we were founded until the year 2000, had very little debt. Most of that came after World War II. The "greatest generation" was the deepest in debt we had ever been historically as a country. They were savers. They were investors. They were hard workers. They paid it off and built the Interstate Highway System, the most capital-intensive thing we have ever done as a country.

When you morph into being consumers and spenders—that is what Greece did. That is what Italy did. That is what Spain did. That is what Portugal was doing until they had to get back on the wagon. Otherwise, the second largest economy in the world was going to be in trouble. They put basic discipline into their system. They spend more through the federal government there than we do, but they pay for it generally. They are not borrowing it from future generations.

We have to find a way as Democrats and Republicans to take the priorities that are important to this country. And I haven't mentioned so far the real drivers of our structural deficits. That is Social Security; that is Medicare; that is Medicaid—all programs we want to be there, but we want them to be solid.

Until we get the backbone, the political discipline, we are going to keep skirting the rigor that it takes to make this thing work long term, and you can expect more of the same. What you are seeing here today is no different; it is just punctuated with a little more drama than normal.

We know we have debt ceilings. If we didn't have those, we would probably

even plow further into debt. But the numbers always win in the long run. We are running trillion-dollar deficits—both sides of the aisle generating them—from the Bush years. We had COVID come along. We politically enterprised, I think, through 2 years, not recognizing what the real capability of our economy would be, and we are in a pickle.

I am going to do a little math quiz here. I did it with a bunch of reporters 3 months ago. I said: What is 1 percent of 30 trillion?

Would the Presiding Officer venture to make a guess on that?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. I would, but I am not allowed to.

Mr. BRAUN. So 1 percent of 30 trillion is 300 billion.

After 30 seconds of silence, one reporter offered 300 million. I said: You are off by a power of a thousand.

That is how abstract these numbers become, but they become real over time when you take interest rates that have gone up 4 to 5 percent. Now that you know what 1 percent of 30 trillion is, try 5 percent. That is 1.5 trillion. That is what we are going to be pricing into our debt that we are incurring.

The only blueprint out there has been from the Biden administration—puts us \$20 trillion further in debt in just 10 years. And all this is going to do is knock it back to just \$18 trillion more. That is shameful for future generations.

This institution needs to be healthy, and it needs to live within its means like households do, like local and State governments do, like all businesses do. Try talking to your banker, running a 30-percent loss, wanting them to lend you the money. They would laugh you out of the office before you got into the details of really what you need. It is a bad business plan.

I could go on about that, but it has been happening for now over two decades, both sides of the aisle. The deal is generally made by some on our side of the aisle who hold defense sacrosanct, don't want to budge at all. The other side views domestic spending as more important. But we generally work out this same deal. But do you know what the net result is? We are deeper in debt.

I did take finance 101. I spent 37 years running a business with full competition, the rigor of it, was on a school board, and was on ways and means in our State government. It can be done.

We have the printing press in the basement; that is the Fed. When they take all this fiscal stimulus that we did and put it on their balance sheet, that is how you print money. That is a bad business plan for future generations.

I am going to introduce an amendment called the no-default amendment. We should not be flirting with this year after year when we know it is going to happen anyway, and until we put real reforms into the system, expect the same.

The next time we hit the debt ceiling, when the Treasury says you are

entering into extraordinary measures, that is when the clock starts. My amendment—if you can't get a real deal done with reforms addressing the things I have talked about, we are going to start paring back this place, and it is going to be across the board, defense and domestic spending—every 30 days, a 1-percent cut. If you are so thickheaded that you can't get it done then, in another 30 days, you do it again. That would put some rigor into the process.

But if we are not honest with the public and really address the programs that are dearest to most Americans—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid—and quit doing mandatory spending on things that aren't important, we are going to run this place into the ditch.

I fear for what my kids and grandkids are going to have to deal with, and I think all Americans should be worried about that. This would be at least a start of putting a little bit of discipline into an undisciplined system.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, our national debt now stands at about \$32 trillion.

How did we get here? Whose fault is it? Republicans? Democrats?

Well, the answer is, yes, both parties are at fault for different reasons. Republicans come to this floor and will come to this floor today saying: We need unlimited military spending.

And Democrats will come to this floor and say: We need unlimited welfare spending.

And guess what happens. They compromise. People say Washington doesn't compromise. They compromise all the time. That is what this debt deal that is before us is, a compromise. But the compromise is always to spend more money.

How do we know that? The debt deal that has been crafted by Biden and McCARTHY is an unlimited increase in the debt ceiling. Historically, when we raise the debt ceiling, it would be \$100 billion or \$200 billion or—God forbid—\$1 trillion. It was a dollar amount.

This debt ceiling will go up until January 2025. How many dollars will be borrowed? As many as they can possibly shovel out the door. It will be how much money can you shovel out the door until January 2025. That is how much we will spend. Is there a dollar amount? No. How much can you shovel it out and how fast can you shovel it out? There will be no restraint from this debt deal.

There is a pretense. There is a playing around the edges as if, oh, there might be a cut here or there might be a cut there.

There are no cuts. Why? Two-thirds of your spending is entitlement spending. The on-budget entitlement spending is Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, and other programs. They are called

mandatory, and no one ever looks at them. They go on in perpetuity. This is what drives the deficit.

Who took them off the table? How come there is no discussion of this? Actually, Republicans took them off the table because they feared being criticized by the Democrats.

It is being used in the Presidential campaign: Let's not talk about the entitlements. But that is two-thirds of what gets spent every year. If you don't talk about the entitlements, if you don't talk about mandatory spending, you, frankly, are not a serious person, and you will not make a serious dent in this problem.

So we have taken off the table all mandatory spending—no discussion of it. Does this mean they are in good shape? Is Medicare and Social Security and all these programs in good shape? Heck no, they are not in good shape. They are all running out of money. They are headed toward bankruptcy.

Is anybody brave enough to reform them? No, not a damn thing is going to be done for any of them. But when you take them off the table—take all the entitlement spending off the table and do nothing about it, now we are down to one-third of the budget. So now you are going to try to do budgetary reform, while excluding two-thirds of the spending, on one-third.

But it is worse than that. The one-third they call discretionary spending. It is about \$1.6 trillion. Half of that is military. So they took that off the table.

So mandatory spending—entitlements—is going up 5 percent under this deal because that is what it has been doing for years and years. It is going up 5 percent. The military is going up 3 percent.

So what is left? What are we left looking at? We are looking at one-sixth of the budget, somewhere between 15 and 20 percent—a small sliver of the budget. It is called nonmilitary discretionary, and they think we are going to do some type of fiscal reform on that small sliver of government.

Well, guess what. You can't do it. You can eliminate all of the nonmilitary discretionary money. Leave the mandatory in place. Leave the military in place. Increase them. Eliminate all this other chunk of money, and you still never balance the budget.

There was a time when there was a conservative movement, and the conservative movement had a voice in Washington. There is still some voice but not much. But there was a time when people on the conservative side of this said: Well, in order to be a thoughtful, rational, realistic, strong response to the budget deficit, you would have to balance your budget in 5 years. In fact, we voted on a constitutional amendment in this body, and every Republican voted for it. But it said you had to balance in 5 years.

Why 5 years? Well, because most of the plans that lasted longer than that,

most of the plans that balanced in years 9 and 10 were basically somebody fudging the numbers and hoping something good would happen in year 9 or 10, but the only years they actually had any power over were the first year or two, and there weren't very many cuts. And they always had unrealistic expectations in year 10.

So what I have done? I said: Let's look at 5 years. What would it take?

So about 5 or 6 years ago, I began introducing something called the penny plan. And what would it do? It would cut one penny out of every dollar. It actually would balance. Actually, the first year I did it, I didn't even cut 1 percent. I froze spending for 5 years, and the budget would have balanced. But the trick is—or not the trick but the truth is that you have to cut all spending or freeze all spending. You can't just freeze a sliver of spending.

So people talked about: Oh, there is a 1-percent trigger on the discretionary spending. That is \$16 billion.

They are going to add \$4 trillion in debt over the next 2 years, and they say: "But by golly, we might save \$16 billion," which even that is not going to happen because the trigger isn't real, doesn't have muscle, and will be evaded.

But the thing is that if we were to balance the budget over 5 years, what would happen is there now needs to be about a 5-percent cut of all the spending each year for 5 years and then the budget would balance.

You say: Well, isn't that just a number? What would that mean to real people? Why do I care whether the budget is balanced?

Well, go to the grocery store, go to buy gas, go to buy anything, go to pay your rent, look at your cost of living and look at what inflation is doing to you.

Who does inflation hurt the worst? Those on fixed incomes and those of the working class because they don't have extra expendable income. Most of their income goes to things that they have to purchase each month.

But where does inflation come from?

The Senator from Indiana described it accurately. We run a debt. This place spends money we don't have, and where is the deficit made up for? We sell that debt to the Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve buys it. And it is like: Wow, this is a great system. We spend money we don't have. We print up these things called Treasury bills. The Federal Reserve comes over and buys them. Wow. We can just do anything we want. We have the printing press. But when they create new money and that new money enters into circulation, that is inflation.

Inflation is an increase in the money supply, and when you increase the money supply and you chase the same amount of goods, you are going to chase the prices right up. That is where inflation comes from.

So the debt is not just a number. The debt is about the value of your paycheck. It is about how far your paycheck goes.

So right now we are in a bit of a spiral. We have had 9 percent inflation. It is a little lower now, but we have had as high as 9 percent, and I think the cost of living increase for Social Security went up 9 to match that. But you will actually find people who say: You know, even with the 9-percent increase, I still can't buy everything I need. I am actually still being squeezed.

But it is a bait and switch. It is because your government isn't honest with you. If your government wanted to be honest with you, and they say: We are going to be everything to everyone, and we are going to give you stuff—it is funny because we have this comparison sometimes with Sweden. People say and many Democrats will say: We want to be Sweden. We want to be Sweden, and we are going to give you everything. And we are going to have a big government that coddles you from cradle to grave.

But do you know how they do it in Sweden? With a balanced budget. I am not advocating we become Sweden, but they balance their annual budget every year.

Do you know how they got to have all that free stuff to give everybody, how they have a safety net that includes everything including college, free healthcare, everything? They tax everybody an enormous amount of tax.

Over here the bait and switch is they will say: We are just going to tax the rich people. It is easy. Just tax the rich people.

They don't do that in Sweden, though. In Sweden, they tax everybody. It is a 60-percent income tax beginning at \$60,000 a year. Everybody pays. The middle class pays.

So if we wanted to be to honest and we were to say, "We are going to give you this massive safety net. You don't have to work. Everybody can have a basic income, and do all this," we would be honest or we should be honest and say it would take massive taxes.

Instead, there is a dishonesty, but the dishonesty is on both sides of the aisle. The Democrats say that welfare is free and the safety net is free and Social Security is free and all these things are free.

What do the Republicans say? The military industrial complex is free. You can have all the weapons you want. You can give hundreds of billions of dollars of weapons to Ukraine, and it won't cost anything because we will just print it up.

See, there were times in our history when you went through a war or with the devastation of war in World War II, the people actually suffered, and you could see the suffering and people felt like they had to pay something. But now we just put it on the tab.

But there is a point at which the tab gets so large that there can be something precipitous happening. The question has always been, Is this a gradual problem where we will just have to deal with a little inflation, 5 or 10 percent here, or is there a point at which there is a calamity?

If you look at the stock market for the last 100 years, some people will point to 7 different days in which like 80 or 90 percent of the downturn occurred in 7 days in the last century.

Is there a possibility of calamity when we are so destructive to our dollar, when we are so destructive to good sense?

I think the American people want more from us. Recent polls have said 60 percent of Americans say don't raise the debt ceiling without significant reform. Forty-three Republicans—forty-four of us, actually, said: We want significant reforms before we raise the debt ceiling.

But then the devil is in the details. The devil is in concluding what is significant and what is not significant. So what will end up happening—my prediction here—is almost every Democrat will vote to raise the debt ceiling and about half the Republicans will vote. It will be a 75-25 vote, and in the end, the debt ceiling will go up.

The people will say: It is good. We didn't have a calamity. The stock market didn't crash because we didn't pay our debt.

But you might want to ask yourself: Is this really a contrived controversy? Is there really a reason in which we would ever default? Is there a reason why we wouldn't make our interest payment? We bring in \$5 trillion, and our interest payment is \$500 billion.

So that would be like you make \$100,000, and your mortgage payment is \$10,000. If you made \$100,000 and your mortgage payment is \$10,000, is there any chance you would ever default? Is there any reason you wouldn't cut your other expenditures to prioritize your interest so you don't get kicked out of your house? That is what every American family would do, but we don't do it up here.

So we threaten default. We scare the markets and say: Oh, no, we will default if the debt ceiling doesn't come up.

No, we would default only if we refused to cut spending. So we spend a trillion dollars more than comes in every year. That is the problem.

If we simply said: We are going to pay the \$500 billion, 10 percent of our revenue for next year. We are going to pay the interest no matter what. And guess what. We will tell the marketplace we are never going to default. We are never going to default. We will always do that. That would be great. The market would go gangbusters and say: We no longer have to worry about those knuckleheads. They finally decided they would pay their interest, and they always will.

Then what would happen?

Well, we wouldn't have enough money for everything. So then we should look at where we can save money.

The problem has always been this. Republicans point at Democrats and say: We don't like your programs. Let's cut your programs.

Democrats look at Republicans and say: No, no, no. Don't cut our programs. Cut yours.

Everybody is "Don't cut mine, cut yours."

That is why I have taken the approach and continue to take the approach that we cut everything across the board. In the past, there were always conservatives who said: Let's get rid of Public Television. Let's get rid of "Sesame Street" and Big Bird, and they would get so much grief over that. It is like, why do that? You are not balancing the budget over Big Bird. Take 1 percent of Big Bird's budget. Take 1 percent of everybody's budget.

What would that bring about? It would bring about more conservation of the dollar. It would bring about more restraint and more reform.

I will end with this. People ask: Where would you cut? I would say everywhere. But I can give you on the tip of my hand, ridiculous stuff that should have a 100 percent cut, but it is never cut, and it goes on and on. In the early 1970s, William Proxmire, a conservative Democrat, pointed out that the National Science Foundation was spending \$50,000 to study what makes people fall in love. Now that is a better, I think, topic for Cosmopolitan magazine than it is for a government study.

Nowadays, it has gone up. We spent a million dollars having young people take selfies of themselves while smiling and then looking at it later in the day to see if looking at pictures of yourself smiling makes you a happier person. That cost you a million bucks.

We spent \$1½ million studying the mating call of the Panamanian frog to see if the mating call of the country frogs is different from the city frogs.

We spent nearly a million dollars studying the Japanese quail to see if they are more sexually promiscuous when they are on cocaine. I think we could have just polled the audience on that one.

This is the kind of ridiculous stuff—but does it get better? I complain about this every year and all the time and everybody shakes their head and says: No way. Why are we doing that? For the National Science Foundation, we increased their budget 50 percent last year. People said: Oh, we have to compete with China. So let's give the National Science Foundation more money.

We almost increased their budget by 50 percent—the people who are studying why you go on dates, why you are happy, what the male frog's mating call is. This is the craziness, but it never gets better because we always spend more money.

So my amendment would do this: My amendment would reduce the spending in real terms. We would actually spend less money next year than last year. It would be a 5-percent reduction in money. You would spend less each year, and, over 5 years, you would balance your budget. Then it would be on course to balance.

People ask: Who can do this?

Half of Europe does it. Sweden balances their budget. Germany balances their budget. Over half of the countries in Europe run on an annual balanced budget.

Our profligacy and our spending are catching up to us. I say we act now. I recommend a “yes” vote on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the importance of both the permitting sections and the provision to expedite the completion of the Mountain Valley Pipeline that are included in the Fiscal Responsibility Act.

I want to commend Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans for negotiating legislation that makes responsible reductions in government spending while avoiding a government default.

Included in this legislation are key elements of the BUILDER Act permitting reform proposal, which was championed by Congressman GARRET GRAVES and by House Natural Resources Chairman BRUCE WESTERMAN. The bill represents a positive first step in improving the permitting projects for all kinds of projects.

By amending the National Environmental Policy Act for the first time since 1982, we will help projects of all types whether we are talking about a road, a bridge, a transmission line, a renewable energy project, a pipeline, or a port. Simply put, a project shouldn't take longer to permit than it takes to build, and that should be true regardless of what type of project is under consideration.

This legislation will impose statutory deadlines on the completion of environmental impact statements and environmental assessments.

It will streamline the review process with threshold language that tells Agencies when various levels of review are necessary.

It allows Agencies to share categorical exclusions for similar projects, because multiple Agencies should not have to do the same work twice. It makes sense.

By placing the One Federal Decision policy into the NEPA statute, this legislation will allow project sponsors to work with a single lead Federal Agency.

Most of those listening probably thought that that was what was happening anyway. But, no, all of these different Agencies were giving all individual opinions.

If we want to build things in this country, we should not force project sponsors to bounce back and forth from one Agency to the next, often facing litigation at every step. It is just simply common sense to allow project sponsors to work with one lead Agency.

More work is needed beyond this bill to fix our broken process for permitting projects. Reforms to the judicial

review process, timelier Fish and Wildlife Service reviews, and improvements to the Clean Water Act are all very important.

I introduced the RESTART Act last month with a number of my EPW Republican colleagues to address those issues, and I will continue to work in a bipartisan way to see additional reforms enacted into law.

Today's legislation is a positive step on permitting reform. Again, I want to thank Congressman GRAVES and Chairman WESTERMAN for their efforts to get us to this point.

Mr. President, the Mountain Valley Pipeline is a prime example of an important project that has faced senseless delays, mostly as a result of litigation filed by anti-natural gas activists at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

This project has undergone numerous—numerous—environmental reviews and has received approvals from multiple Federal Agencies both under the Trump and the Biden administrations. These include actions from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, better known as FERC; the U.S. Forest Service; the Bureau of Land Management; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection; and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. These are Agencies that have already approved the construction of this pipeline.

Given the multiple actions by Federal and State environmental agencies' approving this project, assertions that this project has not gone through adequate environmental review are just plain wrong. Both the Trump and Biden administrations have expressed support for this project. Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm recently sent a letter to FERC endorsing the project.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline is 95 percent complete and would be finished today if it weren't for the rulings by the Fourth Circuit that have stayed or vacated multiple approvals granted by Federal and State environmental regulators. The Fourth Circuit has acted nine times with respect to the Mountain Valley Pipeline. On eight of those nine occasions, the court has either stayed or vacated an approval from a Federal or a State agency.

Only once did the court uphold an approval for this project, and that was when the court upheld water quality certifications from the State of Virginia, under section 401 of the Clean Water Act. But, within days of that opinion, the same Fourth Circuit panel vacated similar 401 water quality certifications from the State of West Virginia.

Because certification from both States is necessary to allow the Army Corps of Engineers to issue a required 404 permit for the Mountain Valley Pipeline, vacating certification from one State has had the effect of con-

tinuing to prevent the project from moving forward.

We have become all too familiar with the Fourth Circuit's blocking of key projects. The same panel that has rejected nearly all of the State and Federal approvals for the Mountain Valley Pipeline brought before it took similar actions to vacate State and Federal approvals for the now canceled Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Project sponsors for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline appealed one of the Fourth Circuit's four adverse rulings against that project all the way to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court reversed the Fourth Circuit in a 7-to-2 opinion that was written by Justice Thomas and joined not only by Republican-appointed Justices but also by Justices Ginsburg and Breyer. Despite winning at the Supreme Court, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline was canceled amid the threat of continuing litigation and permitting challenges.

Activists are using the same playbook at the Fourth Circuit to try to stop the Mountain Valley Pipeline. This is a pipeline that will result in \$40 million in tax revenue and \$150 million in royalty payments in West Virginia annually once it is completed. The project will open markets to West Virginia's natural gas, providing good-paying jobs not just in my State, and enhancing our Nation's energy security and our own national security.

Given the project's benefits and given approvals from State and Federal regulators across multiple administrations from both parties, I do not believe that a handful of judges should have the final say.

This legislation will ratify approvals issued under the Biden administration from the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, along with approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. These documents will be insulated from judicial review to prevent further delays.

Additionally, this bill requires the Army Corps of Engineers to issue necessary project permits, including that 404 permit I talked about earlier, within 21 days. Both Virginia and West Virginia environmental regulators have issued necessary certifications for this permit, but the Fourth Circuit has delayed further permitting action by vacating West Virginia's certification.

This legislation makes it crystal clear that Congress expects the Mountain Valley Pipeline to be completed, consistent with the previously approved environmental documents.

I have consistently fought for commonsense reforms so that we can actually ensure that we can build here in America, including key projects such as the Mountain Valley Pipeline. It is my hope that permitting reforms—both the provisions that are in this bill and those that we should consider in the future—will allow projects to be approved and constructed in an efficient manner that does not require congressional intervention.

It also should be pointed out and emphasized that this does not mean that any environmental regulation that is put forward is ever shortchanged or overlooked. That is not the point here.

On occasions when the process fails projects of significant regional and national interest, we have the authority and the responsibility as elected Representatives to step in and ensure a project is allowed to proceed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FETTERMAN). The Senator from Maryland.

CLEAN WATER ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to express my disappointment in the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision to curtail the Clean Water Act, the principal law governing pollution control and water qualities of our Nation's waterways.

The narrow interpretation now supported by the highest Court will remove Clean Water Act protection for the majority of wetlands in the United States.

Let me just repeat that. Wetlands—we all know how important that is to water quality in America. We know that wetlands act as a sponge for runoff. It traps pollution that otherwise would end up in our waterways. And it is critically important to our habitat. This narrow interpretation will remove protection from a majority of wetlands in the United States.

At a time of rightly intense attention to avoiding a default crisis, this attack on clean water protection must not escape notice.

This past weekend, we honored the sacrifices of our military servicemembers. Often, these celebrations of the lives and legacies of our fallen soldiers and their loved ones take place outside in community green spaces. Our parks need clean water.

The Sackett v. EPA decision is detrimental to national parks, where two-thirds of park waters are already impaired with much of this pollution linked to out-of-park upstream activities.

Under the Sackett decision issued on May 25 of this year, a slim majority of the Court, led by Justice Alito, incorrectly concluded that the Clean Water Act extends only to wetlands that have a continuous surface connection with waters of the United States.

This result does not mean the Court unanimously endorsed this new test. In fact, this decision was, to put it mildly, complicated. Justice Thomas filed a concurring opinion, in which Justice Gorsuch joined. Justice Kagan filed an opinion concurring in the judgment, in which Justices Sotomayor and Jackson joined. Justice Kavanaugh filed an opinion concurring in the judgment, in which Justices Sotomayor, Kagan, and Jackson joined.

Put another way, four members of the Supreme Court—Justices Sotomayor, Kagan, Kavanaugh, and Brown Jackson—agreed that the Clean

Water Act does not apply to the wetlands of the Sacketts' property, but they disagreed with the majority's reasoning.

In an opinion joined by the three liberal Justices, Justice Kavanaugh contended that "[b]y narrowing the Act's coverage of wetlands to only adjoining wetlands, the Court's new test will leave some long-regulated adjacent wetlands no longer covered by the Clean Water Act, with significant repercussions for water quality and flood control throughout the United States."

Justice Kavanaugh specifically noted that the health of the Chesapeake Bay would be at risk under the Court's new test. Our national treasure—the largest estuary in the country—was one of two examples given, along with efforts to control flooding along the Mississippi River.

In its opinion, the majority claims that the Clean Water Act repeatedly uses "waters" in contexts that confirm the term refers to bodies of open water. Despite this convenient fallacy, the waters of the Bay are by no means limited to open water. In fact, the Chesapeake Bay receives half of its water from a network of 110,000 streams and 1.7 million acres of wetlands, most of which are non-navigable tributaries and nontidal wetlands that drain to those tributaries.

The watershed's roughly 1.5 million acres of wetlands are critical to restoring the Chesapeake Bay in its tributaries across six States and the District of Columbia.

Wetlands are essential to water quality. They trap pollutants that are running off farmland, suburban parking lots, and city streets before they can reach the 111,000 miles of local streams, creeks, and rivers that empty into the Bay.

Entering the Atlantic hurricane season, it is worth noting that wetlands also protect flood-prone communities by absorbing storm surges and flood waters like sponges. Wetlands also mitigate slow onset climate change effects like sea level rise and "sunny day" flooding that threatens lives, businesses, and properties in waterfront cities like Annapolis.

Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia have State regulations that could offer backstop coverage for wetlands that are adjacent to, but not adjoining, the Bay and its covered tributaries. EPA can no longer protect. But we should not be abdicating this shared responsibility just to our States. Nationwide, more than 111 million acres of wetlands and the ecosystem services they provide are estimated to face the essential threat from the loss of Federal protections.

Justice Kagan also wrote a brief opinion of her own, joined by Justices Sotomayor and Jackson, in which she criticized what she characterized as "the Court's appointment of itself as the national decision-maker on environmental policy."

In her view, which I share, Congress deliberately drafted the Clean Water

Act with a broad reach to "address a problem of 'crisis proportion.'" Although the majority disagrees with that decision, she wrote, it cannot "rewrite Congress's plain instructions because they go further than" the Court would like. But that is precisely what the majority did here, she concluded, just as it did last year when it curtailed the EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants.

Sackett is the latest in an alarming series of rulings to undercut the Agency's mission to protect human health and the environment. This one happens to hit especially close to the statutory home of the Chesapeake Bay program partnership.

For now, to assert jurisdiction over an adjacent wetland under the Clean Water Act, a party must establish "first, that the adjacent [body of water constitutes] . . . 'water[s]' of the United States' [i.e., a relatively permanent body of water connected to traditional interstate navigable waters]; and second, that the wetland has a continuous surface connection with that water, making it difficult to determine whether the 'water' ends and the 'wetland' begins."

This arbitrary new definition strikes at the heart of the Chesapeake Bay Program—science-based decision making.

Moreover, as Justice Kavanaugh notes, the Court's new test "is sufficiently novel and vague" that it will create precisely the type of regulatory uncertainty that the majority roundly criticized.

The decision muddies the waters for a clear, workable waters of the United States definition. After years of uncertainty, the rule of the final "Revised Definition of 'Waters of the United States'" rule the EPA and U.S. Army Corps announced in December established a clear and reasonable definition.

The commonsense approach the EPA must now defend recognizes that pollution upstream can have downstream impacts, so we must protect the system to safeguard downstream communities in our environment.

The rule this opinion invites opponents to challenge also maintained longstanding Clean Water Act permitting exceptions for routine farming and ranching activities. Basically, complied to what we thought the rule was before the Supreme Court decisions almost a decade ago.

In addition to the indirect costs of regulatory uncertainty, the loss of clean water protections will have significant economic consequences for outdoor recreation, which supports \$788 billion in consumer spending and more than 5 million jobs in the United States annually. Wetlands do not just provide habitat for wildlife and trail and fisheries that enhance outdoor recreational opportunities; they also clean water for farmers that drive our economy through production of food.

In order to protect our resources in our new reality, we must enforce the Federal authorities left that protect clean water, support States strengthening their own laws and regulations, and take action to restore protections. In addition, clean water infrastructure grant programs such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and non-regulatory coastal habitat restoration programs like the Coastal Program offer resources to support States, Tribes, and NGOs, restoring wetlands in their own best interests.

Water pollution has never respected political boundaries. Our constituents all rely on clean water for drinking, swimming, fishing, irrigation, and more. I urge my colleagues to consider the seriousness of this setback and let us work together to mitigate the damage of this decision.

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

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a provision of the debt ceiling deal that I will later today offer an amendment so that we can remove it. It is the provision dealing with the Mountain Valley Pipeline.

I appreciate the hard bipartisan work that has been done to put together a deal. And the deal has things I like and things that I don't like. That is the nature of any deal that is struck between Houses of Congress controlled by different parties.

It would have been my intention to be a supporter of the deal despite its imperfections. However, a provision was added to the deal to green-light a pipeline project that goes through two States: West Virginia and my Commonwealth of Virginia.

It was struck without any consultation with either of the Virginia Senators. It is a highly controversial project in Virginia that directly impacts families whose land will be taken for the pipeline project.

I stand to speak on their behalf about the reasons that I will seek to remove the Mountain Valley Pipeline provision from the bill when we vote on it later tonight.

It would be one thing if you could build pipelines in midair, but you can't. To build a pipeline, you have to take people's land. Sometimes the land you take might be public land, a national park or a national forest, but in any pipeline project of size—and the Mountain Valley Pipeline is about 330 miles long—you have to take a lot of land from private landowners, most of whom don't want to give up their land. That means that when you do a pipeline project and you approve it and you give a private company the right to

take people's land, you ought to do it carefully after significant deliberation.

So since the 1930s, there has been a pipeline permitting process that has required for an interstate pipeline—first a determination by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that there is a need for the pipeline, the gas pipeline, and then once that determination is made, a separate determination has to be made about what is the best route for the pipeline.

Once those determinations are made, you are able to take private land to build a pipeline even though those landowners will never benefit at all from having a pipeline cross their property.

Then, additionally, the permitting process isn't just about building, but it is about holding the developer to strict standards so that when they build the pipeline, they minimally disturb the land, they minimally affect species, and they minimally affect creeks and streams and river crossings.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline is proposed to go about 110 miles through the poorest part of my State—Appalachia. In the Appalachian region of Virginia, a lot of people don't have very much. For many of them, their land is what they have, and for many of them, that land has been in their family for generations. They are entitled to a fair process that would look at the need for the pipeline and what is the best route and then would insist that the pipeline be built to a high standard to maximally protect their property.

Congress has made a decision that this is not to be decided by Congress. Pipeline routing, pipeline need is not to be determined by Congress. Instead, you put it in administrative agencies. Why do you do that? It is because, A, they have expertise, and B, it is less likely to be abused.

If you were to let Congress do pipeline deals, it would be pretty easy for somebody to look at a map and say: Well, this county never voted for me. Why don't we run it through that county and take their land?

Instead, we remove it from Congress so that professionals can undertake the right analysis and review.

In this bipartisan debt ceiling deal, there is a provision to green-light one project in the United States, the Mountain Valley Pipeline—to green-light it—and to say that there will be no more administrative processes to determine whether it had been fully permitted and no more ability for the courts to review the administrative Agency's decisions.

I strongly object to that. I don't have an objection to the pipeline itself. I have been asked again and again and again, and I said: This is not for Congress to decide. In fact, it would be wrong for Congress to do this. You should have an administrative process. You should go through it. A pipeline proponent should have to meet the standard, get over the hurdles, and when they do, then, OK, they should be

enabled to take land and build a pipeline but only then. We shouldn't shorten it and give one project a green light.

This is ultimately about Virginians who care about their land. They don't want to give up their land for this pipeline because they don't think they will benefit from it.

Sometimes a county will take someone's land to build a road, and even if you are not happy about that, at least there is a road. You can have an ambulance get to your house or your kid can go out and catch a schoolbus on it. But a pipeline of this kind that is transmitting gas from one part of the country to the other—people can't hook into it to get low-cost natural gas. Many of the communities in Virginia that this pipeline will run across don't even have natural gas distribution to their communities. It might have some effect upon global gas prices, but that won't affect somebody who doesn't have gas service to their home.

So my Virginians just want to be sure that if this pipeline is built, it has met the requisite standards of the review agencies, both State and Federal, and it has withstood any court challenges.

This is a pipeline project that has been underway for a while. I know the proponents of this provision will say it has just been going on too long. But one of the reasons it has been going on for a while is because the company was slipshod in a lot of its operations and construction, particularly early in the life of this project. I do believe the company has better management now, but the project has been cited for dozens and dozens of Clean Water Act violations and other construction problems that have led to mudslides on people's property. That is why my Virginia constituents are so desiring that, let's do this the right way or let's not do it at all.

The provision in this bill not only frustrates these Virginia landowners who want to make sure that if their land is going to be taken, it is done in a fair way after deliberate consideration, but it also does something that I believe is unwarranted and really historical in the wrong way. It is a rebuke of the Fourth Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals, which is headquartered in Richmond, my hometown, which has been the court that has heard cases about the Mountain Valley Pipeline, challenges to agency decisions in the previous administration where the court said: Hey, look, the agency didn't do what they were supposed to do. Go back and do it right this time.

When landowners feel like they are being abused, they have a right to go to court and present their case, and the Fourth Circuit and the district courts within it have said: You have shown your case. The company didn't do it right. The agency didn't do it right. Go back and do it right.

That has made the company upset.

For 18 years, I tried cases in the Fourth Circuit, and I won some, and I

lost some. When I lost, I wasn't happy, but if I lost, I would tell my client: We can appeal.

We would appeal to the Fourth Circuit. Sometimes I would win my appeal, and sometimes I would lose my appeal. When we lost, I wasn't happy, but we would try to get the U.S. Supreme Court to take up the case. Never once did I tell a client after a loss: What we need to do is go to Congress and take this case away from the Fourth Circuit and put it in a court that is more likely to be favorable.

I would never have thought to do that. No one gets that deal. No individual gets that deal. No civil rights plaintiff gets that deal. No criminal defendant gets that deal. No small business gets that deal. Most people would be embarrassed to ask for that.

I lost. I am unhappy. Why don't I get Congress to rewrite the rules of Federal jurisdiction and take this case away from the court that has made me unhappy and put it in another court? Yet that is what this bill will do. It will end further administrative review. It will end judicial review of any permit. And it will say only this: If someone wants to challenge what Congress is doing here, saying it is unlawful or unconstitutional or an overreach, they have to file that challenge in the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. They cannot file it in the Fourth Circuit where this project is being considered.

Both to protect these landowners, who have a right to a full and deliberate consideration if they are going to have to give up their land, and to protect the integrity of both our court system and this body, I strongly oppose this provision.

I will move later in the day to bring up my amendment, and I would encourage my colleagues to support me in it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in favor of the MVP. They call it the Mountain Valley Pipeline; I call it the most valuable pipeline we have to offer energy to the people of America.

It has been under tow for a long time. I brought some illustrations of what we are going through because my good friend from Virginia, the Senator from Virginia who just spoke—and we respectfully disagree on this—this is something we have worked on for an awful long time.

First, I want to make sure everybody understands that you cannot get permission to move forward on a pipeline, transmission line, anything you want in this country, unless there is a market for it. You have to show that there is a person or a group or a market that this product—whether it is electricity on transmission lines or gas in the pipelines or oil or whatever, there has to be a market. You can't go from here to there and try to build a market. So there has to be a need. There has to be a need. If there is going to be a need in

the market, then it starts proceeding, and then it goes through the process.

This was started over 8 years ago, going through that process. I don't think there is another permit that has ever been more scrutinized—or a request for a permit—than this Mountain Valley Pipeline.

It is the Mountain Valley Pipeline. We will call it the MVP. FERC has approved the MVP three times—not one time, three times—basically, over 8 years of review. It started with the Obama administration, went through the Trump administration, and now into the Biden administration. And we are as desperate for the fuel today as we are.

Let's look at the people and basically where the need is. This pipeline is 42 inches. It takes the most oil shale. First of all, it goes into an area that basically is deprived of natural resources themselves. Let me tell you some of the areas we are going to be able to serve in a direct and indirect way. Our military bases in North Carolina and South Carolina are in desperate need.

There was another pipeline coming out of the same shale of gas called the Atlantic Coast Pipeline that went on for years. It went on for years and was finally scrubbed because the price got so exorbitant that there was no way to continue, and they could not get through the litigation that went on for years. After about \$6 or \$7 billion, Dominion Energy basically pulled the plug on it. They couldn't do it.

So when they tell you that everything is fine and they did all this, wherever there were problems, they are sent back. If someone doesn't like this or that, they send it back. They went through it three times. Now, when FERC goes through it, it is a pretty arduous process. They look into everything. And if the courts basically say look at this, then they do that, and they correct that and send it back, and they find something else.

Wouldn't you think that they would see it all the first time if they saw any problems whatsoever that needed corrected?

So, as I said, it has been thoroughly vetted for 8 years by the Obama and Trump and Biden administrations, and eight NEPA reviews. Anyone who has gone through any NEPA review knows how difficult that can be. Eight times NEPA has reviewed this. There are six environmental impact studies. The environmental impact studies can go from 1 to 3 years. Six times, it went back to them.

So when anyone thinks this has not been scrutinized and has not basically gone through every Agency that it was required to go through and had every review done that possibly could be done, they would be mistaken, if you see just the outline of things.

Three rounds of permitting were approved by FERC. They approved all of them. It still wasn't good enough. It still wasn't good enough. It went

through the courts and back it came. It went through the courts and back it came. The Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and Fish and Wildlife, they all went through it. Everybody had a good look at this thing.

Now we have a situation where if you looked at Winter Storm Elliott in December of 2022, the Carolinas have the highest natural gas prices in the country—\$50 to \$60 per million Btu—\$50 to \$60 dollars. Normally, in the Appalachian Basin, that is anywhere from \$2.50 to \$6 dollars to where it stays. But because they did not have the product and the demand was so high, the people are getting gouged.

You tell me of an average family or a hard-working family who can afford \$50 or \$60 per million Btu. It is 10 times the normal rate.

So is there a need? Absolutely, there is a need. Is there basically a need for pricing that is stabilized and helps people get through tough times and helps them take care of their family and home and also the job they work in? Absolutely. So you have that.

Duke Energy says the MVP will save 4.5 million customers \$3 billion over 25 years. Duke Energy is a very large power company within North Carolina, and they are saying that we don't have that product. We need this product. They were counting on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to get that product. That didn't happen. Now we are counting on MVP.

But guess who gets gouged? Everybody talks about big business and companies and this and that. But 4.5 million customers—that is who is going to pay the price.

When you talk about price, let's talk about this. This line, when they started on this pipeline, there was an approximate cost of \$3.5 billion to build it. We are over \$6.6 billion now. Who do you think is going to pay that price? It is going to be paid by the customers who need the product. They are paying \$50 to \$60 per million Btu, and they should be paying \$4 to \$6, in that range there, and I guarantee you the savings would be tremendously supportive to their families.

So as we have talked, we had a lot going on here, a lot of different conversations. There is a new Summit View Business Park in Franklin County in southwest Virginia. It is struggling to attract businesses to that park that would create opportunities and jobs for the hard-working people in southwest Virginia, just like all of West Virginia. They cannot attract or furnish the energy at the plant that the park needs to attract the different industries that would like to come. So for economic development, just having a job, taking care of your family, and living in beautiful southwest Virginia, they don't have that opportunity now.

In North Carolina, Cumberland County and Fayette have lost out on \$1 billion of investment because the businesses cannot afford the high price of gas. And we have an abundance of it in

West Virginia and Pennsylvania and coming out of the eastern part of Ohio. We are willing to share it and put it in the market and keep the prices where they should be—affordable.

So the review process which has been incredibly thorough and rigorous with eight NEPA reviews, six environmental impact statements, two environmental assessments, three rounds of review by the same Federal Agencies—FERC, Fish and Wildlife, Forest Service, and BLM—and that is a mighty lift in itself. It has been before the court numerous times—nine times, to be exact—nine times before the courts. When does it stop? When does it stop? The cost has ballooned, as I said, and doubled in price, and here we are.

Now, you would think that we are just trying to get this line started. It is going to be 303 miles. But guess what: 283 miles are already built. It is already laid in the ground.

Now, they said there have been violations because there is sedimentation going on, and they didn't go back and reseed. They weren't allowed to because of the court actions that prohibited them from getting back on the property. It is a catch-22. They could not reclaim what they wanted to reclaim because they were taken to court and stopped, and then they were brought to task again for not reclaiming it.

If we pass this piece of legislation, within 6 months this line will be in production. We only have 20 miles to go. That would put 2,500 people to work—2,500 people to work.

About \$40 to \$50 million annually will be coming to the States of West Virginia and some to Virginia, as it passes through. There is about \$200 to \$250 million that will go to individuals who own their gas rights that are being sold and put into the line. That is every year. That is tremendous support for the poorest parts of our country. In the poorest parts of our country, the people are finally able to sell what they own, their resources, and to help stabilize the prices or help all people in the States that are affected.

There is \$1.2 billion in additional investment to complete the project. We have tried everything humanly possible. We really have. I just couldn't believe that we couldn't get this to work after what happened to the previous lines they were trying to build to bring product to the marketplace.

So there is all different people who are upset. I understand that. My good friend from Virginia, my Senate friend—we were co-Governors together and our families are very close. This doesn't affect our relationship, our friendship, and it doesn't affect, basically, us fighting for many of the same causes. But it brings a healthy discussion: Are we going to move forward in this country? Are we going to have permit reform? Are we going to be able to build the necessary transmission that it takes?

I am talking about powerlines. They are the same. If anything, it takes

longer for a powerline, for pipelines. Everything is being stopped now. It is not that they are protesting the pipe itself. They are protesting basically the product in the pipe, the gas.

Now, there is a transition going on in energy throughout the country—a transition throughout the world, to a certain extent—but we still cannot run our country without the gas, without the oil, without the coal that we need for dispatch. That means 24/7. Just gas and coal itself is over 60 percent of the energy we use.

In this system here, right where we are in this beautiful Capitol, this is a PJM system, which they call it, and it is basically what this is all about. It is basically “all of the above.” It is wind, solar. It is coal. It is gas. It is everything that gives the reliability that, when you turn that switch on, you are going to have lights. When you turn the heat on, you are going to be warm. When you turn this air conditioner on, you are going to have comfort. When you cook your food, you are going to be able to do it. That is what we are able to do in America.

And as that transitions, there will be a transition into new technology that will replace an awful lot of what we are talking about. But we are a long way away from that, and to deprive people who need this for their livelihood, to deprive them and make them pay 10 times more for a product that is abundant—it would be different if the Good Lord didn't give us the resources. But it is a shame and a sin that we don't use the resources we have to help all humankind. That is what we are talking about.

And if you look at the process we have just gone through and where we are right now and what we embark on this evening, we will probably be here most of the night, I would say, going through the amendments. Everybody has to have their say. I agree. But we have come to the reality and we have been here long enough understanding that this piece of legislation that we have before us has to pass. The Mountain Valley Pipeline is in that piece of legislation. It still has some review processes. We are not asking for that. We are asking, basically, that the things that have been done multiple times proceed on—that it proceeds on. That is all we are asking for.

But with that, when you think about 3 or 4 months ago, we started talking seriously about the debt ceiling. We have got to address the debt ceiling. That is our responsibility to address it and make sure the full faith and credit of this country and the value of us having the reserve currency of the world is stable—that it is stable.

If we pass an amendment or any amendment—this amendment my dear friend is going to introduce or any amendment—we will default. It is as simple as that. We will default.

Now, it would be different if this had not gone through 8 years of scrutiny, in court nine times, been looked at any

way and every way, shape, and form. That would be a different thing—if no one has ever seen anything, if we are trying to slide something through. That is not the case here. No one can accuse that of happening.

So we are in the process right now of trying to move forward in this country to get the energy that we need, that we have. It is unbelievable to me when the people were thinking sometime: Well, maybe we will have Iran produce more oil. Maybe we will have Venezuela produce more.

We have it in our backyard, and we can't produce it ourselves? We want someone else to do the work that we won't do for ourselves? That is ridiculous.

You can't lead that way. You can't have the rest of the world looking at you as the superpower of the world that won't do for yourself because you don't like something. We found ways through innovation, not elimination, to do it better. And we can help the rest of the world, and we can help the global climate because of this if we work together.

But I can assure you that what we have today before us is a product that is going to help an awful lot of people—4.5 million just in one State that depends on this product to give them some relief and are paying the highest prices. They are already at the highest prices in the country except for the Northeast.

So I would say there is so much at risk right now. If we move forward and we pass this amendment that would go on this bill, that would have to go back to the House with us not defaulting. We cannot take that risk.

I would ask my colleagues—all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—instead of what we are doing, consider basically the value that this product brings. Consider also the reviews this product has gone through, and I think you will find it more than adequate and more than comforting that, basically, we have a product that is going to do an awful lot of good for America, an awful lot of good for humankind in the States. And, also, this will backfill and also help us toward where we are sending LNG to our allies around the world. There are so many benefits from 2 billion cubic feet a day—2 billion. Two billion cubic feet a day will go through this line, helping America to be energy independent.

So I encourage all of my colleagues to vote respectfully against the amendment that will be offered to strip this out of the bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I have been informed that shortly, the majority leader will come to the floor and announce his commitment and the Biden commitment to do a supplemental to make sure that the damage done by this bill is, at least, partially corrected.

This bill puts our military behind the eight ball. There is not one penny in this bill for Ukrainian assistance. As I speak tonight, Ukraine is engaged in a fight for its life. They are going on the offensive. I have high hopes in the coming days and weeks they will liberate part of their territory occupied by Russia.

The assistance we have provided in a bipartisan fashion with our European allies has made all the difference in the world. We were told after the invasion that Kyiv would fall in 4 days; but 600-and-something days later, they are still fighting. The Russian Army has been weakened and bloodied because of the weapons we have provided. I appreciate the bipartisan support to make sure we win a war in Ukraine without one American soldier being involved.

If we can defeat Putin in Ukraine, that means China will, hopefully, take notice and Putin will be stopped, because if you don't stop him in Ukraine, he will keep going and we will be in a war between NATO and Russia.

So I appreciate all the hard work of the staff to make a statement to the people who are facing threats from China, from Russia, from Iran, that we have not abandoned you. There is not a dime in this bill to deal with the threats I think we face from China consistent with the threat level. There is money in this bill but not enough. So I am hoping that those who are watching this in Ukraine understand that Senators SCHUMER and MCCONNELL are going to say in a moment: We have not abandoned you. We are going to keep helping you as you struggle to liberate your country from the war criminal Putin.

Whether you believe we should be helping Ukraine or not, I do. People in this body, on both sides of the aisle in the Senate, understand that Putin's invasion is a defining moment of the 21st century. That if he gets away with this, there goes Taiwan, and the world will begin to crumble. The world order we created since World War II would be jeopardized.

War crimes on an industrial scale by Putin cannot be forgiven or forgotten. To the brave men and women in Ukraine, help is on the way. To the people standing up to China, living in its shadow in Taiwan, help is on the way. To the American military who is underfunded because of this bill, help is on the way.

For 3 days, I and some others have been screaming to high heaven that what the House did was wrong. It is right to want to control spending, and there are some good things in this bill. But it was wrong to give a defense number inconsistent with the threats we face.

I do believe that we are on track to right some of those wrongs. To my colleagues, I am not the perfect—the enemy of the good. I vote on my share of bipartisan bills and get crap for it like most of you. But as long as I am here, I am going to speak about the

need of the Federal Government to get the defense budget right. Budgets are based on threats, not political deals. And if you think the world is safer, you have missed a lot. So, hopefully, in a few minutes, there will be an announcement that puts us on a course correction to undo some of the damage, and there will be a clear signal from both the leader and the minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, that help is on the way to those who live in the shadow of totalitarian governments and those who are on the battlefield.

To my American citizen friends, I wish there were no war anywhere. I wish China wasn't the way they are. I wish the Ayatollah didn't want a nuclear weapon and would use it if he could. I wish that Putin would not have invaded Ukraine. I wish that the world was different than it is. But if you want peace and stability, it comes at a high price.

The good news for us is that not one American soldier has died evicting Russia from Ukraine. The Ukrainians have fought like tigers. It is in our national security interest to provide them the weapons and the technology to keep this fight up. Their win is our win.

So I look forward to hearing the statement that I think is forthcoming. It does not fix this bill totally, but it begins to march in the right direction. To my colleagues, thank you for listening. Thank you for working with me and others. Victory for Ukraine.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). 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.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following joint statement from Senator MCCONNELL and me be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JOINT STATEMENT FROM SENATE LEADERS

We share the concern of many of our colleagues about the potential impact of sequestration and we will work in a bipartisan, collaborative way to avoid this outcome.

Now that we have agreed on budget caps, we have asked Appropriations Committee Chair Senator Murray and Vice Chair Senator Collins to set the subcommittee caps and get the regular order process started.

To accomplish our shared goal of preventing sequestration, expeditious floor consideration will require cooperation from Senators from both parties. The Leaders look forward to bills being reported out of committee with strong bipartisan support. The Leaders will seek and facilitate floor consideration of these bills with the cooperation of Senators of both parties.

VOTE ON MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the motion to proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT OF 2023

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3746) to provide for a responsible increase to the debt ceiling.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the only amendments in order be the following to H.R. 3746: Paul No. 107; Braun No. 91; Marshall No. 110; Sullivan No. 125; Hawley No. 93; Kennedy No. 104; Cotton No. 106; Budd No. 134; Lee No. 98; Kaine No. 101; Kennedy No. 102; that at 7:30 p.m., if any of these amendments have been offered, the Senate vote on the amendments in the order listed, with 60 affirmative votes required for adoption with the exception of the Lee amendment, Kennedy amendment No. 102, and the Kaine amendment; that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided, prior to each vote and with 6 minutes, equally divided, prior to each of the votes on the Kennedy amendments; that following disposition of the above amendments, the bill be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on the passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with 60 affirmative votes required for passage, all without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all votes after the first be 10-minute votes in length.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I am pleased—so pleased—to announce that both sides have just locked in an agreement that enables the Senate to pass legislation tonight, avoiding default.

For the information of my colleagues, this is what will happen on the floor: In a few minutes, the Senate will begin holding votes on 11 amendments—10 from the Republican side and 1 from the Democratic side.

To finish our work tonight, after the first amendment, we are limiting each vote to 10 minutes. So I ask my colleagues to stay in their seats or near the floor during the votes. Let's keep this process moving quickly. After we finish voting on the amendments, we are immediately considering final passage, and by passing this bill, we will avoid default tonight.

America can breathe a sigh of relief—a sigh of relief—because, in this process, we are avoiding default. From the start, avoiding default has been our North Star. The consequences of defaulting would be catastrophic. It