

It is not fair. Of course, he is absolutely right. It is not fair that once-safe neighborhoods have become war zones. It is not fair that children are being murdered.

Or look at what is happening right here in the Nation's Capital. Right here in Washington, law and order have been in a free fall. Over the weekend, in broad daylight, a rideshare driver had his car stolen by a group of men brandishing rifles. City-wide, Washington is averaging a carjacking every day. Homicides this year are up 17 percent. Just yesterday, two 18-year-olds, fresh off a carjacking spree in a nearby county, came right here to the capital, ran into two separate Capitol Police vehicles, and then tried to flee on foot. Fortunately, the Capitol Police brought them into custody.

Yet the DC City Council is so completely captured by the woke far-left, they have responded to the crime wave with a new criminal code that—listen to this—reduces penalties even further. That is the response of the DC City Council.

Just last week, the council overrode the mayor's veto and pushed through a measure that shreds—shreds—the maximum punishment for gun crimes. It eliminates almost all mandatory minimum sentences. It will clog up the court system with massive expansions of new jury trials for misdemeanors.

Well, the good news on this front is that the U.S. Congress gets to have the final word over reckless local policies from the DC government. Senate Republicans will have a lot more to say on this subject. Stay tuned.

The American people know crime is getting worse, and they know it hasn't happened by accident. From Los Angeles to Philadelphia, to Chicago, the Democratic Party has backed radical district attorneys who have tried to unilaterally take parts of the local criminal code offline. They simply decline to prosecute serious crimes, from drug possession to criminal threats, as a matter of principle. In some cases these woke prosecutors are seeking early release for felons convicted of violent crimes.

Many other Democrats have spent years fanning the dangerous flames of the far-left's antipolice rhetoric. Of course, studies have proven that public hostility to police leads directly to more crime, including more homicides, in the at-risk communities that need law and order the most.

Furthermore, the Biden administration and Senate Democrats have spent 2 years working to stack the Federal judiciary with former public defenders and others whose sympathies lie more with criminal defendants than with innocent victims.

Nobody is arguing that criminal defenders should never become judges, but this has been a dramatic, deliberate transformation project that is skewed overwhelmingly in one direction. Even the New York Times has admitted it has been "a sea change in the world of traditional nominations."

The Biden administration never misses an opportunity to make crime even worse. Deaths from cocaine have quintupled over the past decade, but, just a few weeks ago, this President and his Attorney General took the radical and borderline lawless step of unilaterally reducing the penalties for dealing crack.

These liberals respond to soaring overdose fatalities by going even softer on drugs.

Democrats are struggling with the basics. Actually, this shouldn't be that hard. Drugs belong off the streets. Career criminals belong behind bars, and far-left politicians who put innocent citizens last belong far away from the levers of power.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I get into my remarks, there is just some floor business.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 23, H.R. 26, S.J. RES. 4, H.R. 22

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand there are four measures at the desk that are due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 23) to rescind certain balances made available to the Internal Revenue Service.

A bill (H.R. 26) to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 4) removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

A bill (H.R. 22) to prohibit the Secretary of Energy from sending petroleum products from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to China, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the measures on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to their further proceeding en bloc.

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

WELCOMING PETER WELCH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, I believe this is the first time our new

Senator from Vermont is sitting in the Chair.

Congratulations. There will be many more opportunities just like this.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as the debate over raising the debt ceiling continues, Leader MCCONNELL said something yesterday that, I think, is right on the mark. He said that when it comes to moving a debt ceiling proposal through Congress, the House should go first. He is correct. Not only should the House go first, but they must quickly show the American people what their plan actually is for avoiding a first-ever default on the national debt. So far, we haven't heard anything beyond vague and troubling talking points about the need to cut Federal spending. That is not going to fly when you are in the majority, as Speaker MCCARTHY, of course, is. The substance and details make all the difference. The debt ceiling is not some political game, and Speaker MCCARTHY has an obligation to level with the American people on what precisely the new House plans to do in order to avoid a default.

President Biden and the Speaker have reportedly agreed to sit down in the near future on this topic, and the Speaker is apparently heralding this development as some sort of big win or concession. But look, Speaker MCCARTHY sitting down without a clear plan is no win. Sitting down to talk about the debt ceiling without a plan is like coming to the table with no cards. President Biden, meanwhile, has a plan. He has cards. He has been clear that there must be no brinksmanship and no default on the debt ceiling.

Speaker MCCARTHY, what about you? The House GOP is threatening spending cuts. Well, what are they? why the evasion? Why is your conference hiding from the American people?

House Republicans, where are your cards?

Again, I want to be clear that the debt ceiling is a subject of the highest consequence, and using it as a bargaining chip—using it as brinksmanship, as hostage-taking—as Republicans are trying to do, is exceedingly dangerous because if the House of Representatives continues on their current course and allows the United States to default on its debt obligations, every single American is going to pay a terrible and expensive price.

The consequences of default are not some theoretical abstraction. If default happens, Americans will see the consequences in their daily lives. Interest rates will go soaring on everything from credit cards and student loans to cars, mortgages, and more. That is thousands of dollars for each American going right out the door. That will happen and through no fault of their own.

Retirement plans, like 401(k)s, would lose their value, robbing people of their hard-earned livelihoods. For millions

of Americans who one day dream of owning a home—their own piece of the rock—a default would add \$130,000 to the lifetime cost of a new home. Imagine spending years putting a little bit of your paycheck aside every month in order to buy a house, only to find out that suddenly that dream is entirely out of reach because radical politicians in Washington bumbled their way into a financial catastrophe. That is precisely the danger we approach, thanks to the House GOP's reckless approach to the debt ceiling.

None of this need be inevitable or even likely if only House Republicans would quit their radical posturing and work with Democrats in a serious way to raise the debt ceiling together, and we should do it soon, not months from now when America finds itself staring straight into the abyss of a financial catastrophe.

I would remind my Republican colleagues they did it before, when Trump was President, three times, with no Democratic obstruction or hostage-taking, and we did it once together when Biden was President. Much of this debt comes from spending when Trump was President, voted on by a Republican House and a Republican Senate. So it is a bit of hypocrisy now to say that they can't do it again and are holding it hostage and are playing a dangerous form of brinksmanship. It shouldn't matter who is President. These are still bills we already incurred that must be paid for the good of all Americans.

NATIONAL SALES TAX

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the Republican national sales tax, the House Republicans keep churning this stuff out. It is unbelievable. In the 118th Congress, it is already a tale of two parties: Democrats united on one side, Republicans in chaos on the other.

While Democrats are laser-focused on making life better for everyday families, Republicans are making it clear they want to help the very, very wealthy—the ultrarich. While Democrats want to embrace collaboration and bipartisanship wherever possible, Republicans seem to be trapped by MAGA extremism. That is the contrast in a nutshell: Democratic unity versus Republican chaos, Democratic unity versus Republican chaos.

Yesterday, I joined with President Biden, the Vice President, Leader JEFFRIES, and Democratic colleagues from both Chambers to talk about how we Democrats can maintain our unity and turn it into action in order to help the American people.

Later today, I will join with Leader JEFFRIES to further highlight the contrast between Democrats' "people first" agenda and Republicans' radical plans—radical plans—for a national sales tax.

Multiple extreme-right Republicans say that Speaker MCCARTHY has prom-

ised them a vote on their national sales tax bill, which they guilefully refer to as the "FairTax Act." Nothing could be less fair to the American people. In a universe of bad ideas, a Republican national sales tax reigns supreme. This proposal, pushed by the MAGA fringe, who now controls the House Republican conference, would impose a 30-percent tax on every single purchase Americans make just as inflation is beginning to drop. This so-called FairTax is truly foul legislation for American families.

For young families who want to buy a home, well, the Republican tax plan would add nearly \$125,000 extra on top of the price you pay for your house—an impossible sum for many young people struggling to get their start in life.

And what about Americans out there thinking of buying a car? Under the Republican tax plan, the average American would pay \$10,000 more on that single purchase alone.

What about seniors getting ready for retirement? A Republican national sales tax means people's life savings would suddenly lose 30 percent of their value. Imagine working your entire life, playing by the rules, paying your taxes, saving a little of each paycheck only to have Republicans swoop in and erase nearly a third—a third—of what you have saved up.

And it doesn't end there.

Under the Republican tax plan, a mere trip to the grocery store would be torture. Eggs are high enough right now at \$4.25 a dozen. They would be \$5.50 under the Republican plan. Milk, right now, is \$4.40. It would cost \$5.70 under the Republican plan. The same holds true for everything else: bread, produce, canned goods, cleaning supplies, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, diapers—you name it. All of it would go up by a third for millions of families—millions, tens of millions, probably hundreds of millions. It would be a devastating blow.

But do you know who wouldn't mind a Republican national sales tax? The ultrarich, the ultrawealthy. The top 1 percent of our earners wouldn't notice much change in expenses. That is who would win under the Republicans' proposal—the very, very rich—because their taxes would be greatly reduced even further, even worse than under the Trump tax cuts. No wonder, then, that even Grover Norquist—no friend of the Democrats—calls this bill a "terrible idea" and an "assault on your retirement savings."

Look, if Republicans want to start their majority with a debate on their national sales tax bill, Democrats would welcome it. Let the American people see which party is fighting for everyday folks and which party is trying to rig the game in favor of the ultrarich. It is a debate the American people need to see.

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

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

118TH CONGRESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the new Congress is a chance for a fresh start, and we need a fresh start. We cannot afford a repeat of the past 2 years.

Despite the fact that Democrats controlled Congress by the slimmest of margins in the last Congress, Democrats acted as if they had a mandate for radical, far-left change.

Democrats shoved through multiple partisan spending sprees, including the so-called American Rescue Plan Act which kicked off our current inflation crisis. And what they got through was mild compared to what they wanted to push through—from a Federal takeover of elections to some of the most extreme abortion legislation in the world. Fortunately, some of the Democrats' most radical proposals didn't ultimately make it through Congress, but not for a lack of trying on Democrats' part.

Despite the fact that they had nothing more than a technical majority, Democrats did their best to eliminate a voice for the minority party in the Senate by attacking the Senate filibuster rule. Some contemplated packing the Supreme Court to secure judicial support for Democrat policy priorities. And Democrats' rhetoric was often as extreme and divisive as their policies, with the standout example being an address the President gave a year ago this month in which he suggested that half the country was racist.

Mr. President, we have had another election, and the American people rejected one-party rule by electing a Republican House of Representatives. They have created a situation in which both parties will have to work together to get anything done.

I hope this will mark a new less partisan moment here in Congress. I hope we can move on from the past 2 years and start afresh to work together to address the challenges facing our country, because there is a lot that we can do together.

Despite the partisanship of the Democrat agenda over the last 2 years, there were still moments that reminded us that there are many areas where we can agree or are close enough to work together.

I introduced a number of bipartisan bills in the last Congress, and I am looking forward to working with colleagues of both parties on a number of issues in the new Congress.

One major piece of legislation we take up every few years is the farm bill, which has a strong bipartisan history. During my time in the Senate, I have introduced farm bill legislation with both Democratic and Republican