

of lies. And what happens here? Our Republican friends here in Washington have chosen a path of supine compliance, refusing to stand up to the Big Lie, bowing down before it, bowing down before Donald Trump, the biggest liar that we have ever had as an American President, except when the Capitol Building is literally under siege.

And, by the way, just parenthetically, I commend to my colleagues and to all Americans—the New York Times did a video of the siege. They even had some—they showed the siege; they showed the violence; and they had some Republican Congressmen saying it was like tourists. It was incredible. I recommend everyone should watch this. And I hope—Republican colleagues, just watch it. You were there. Just watch it. I commend the New York Times. They did a great job on it.

Anyway, the effort to fight this wave of voter suppression and Republican election rigging is strong and growing. I want to be very clear about that.

In Texas, where the Republican Governor has called a special session to reconsider one of the most restrictive voting laws in the Nation, Democrats are doing all they can to block the dangerous partisan bill. They are brave. They are bold. They are courageous, and history will show them on the side of right and the Republican Governor—I saw him on TV this morning—on the side of deep, dark, ugly wrong. Many of these lawmakers from Texas have come to Washington. I will be meeting with a group of them today to plot out strategy and to praise them for what they are doing.

President Biden will also address the issue of voting rights in a major national address in Philadelphia, using the bully pulpit to draw the Nation's attention and announce ways in which his administration can defend Americans' fundamental rights.

And next week, Senator KLOBUCHAR—always on the ball on these issues—will lead the Senate Rules Committee to the State of Georgia—your State, I say to the Presiding Officer—for their first field hearing in 20 years. It will be an opportunity to shine a spotlight on the consequences of the Big Lie and show the American people just how far Republicans have gone in order to make it harder—harder—for people to vote in the 2020 election.

The bottom line is this: Democrats will not stop fighting to protect voting rights and defend our democracy. As I said, the vote in June was the opening gun, not the finish line.

Last month, all 50 Senate Democrats united for the first time this Congress to move forward on a strong voting rights bill. Shamefully, shamefully, Republicans refused to even allow debate on voting rights legislation, hiding behind some of the exact same States' rights arguments, and very similar arguments, that southern Senators used in the 1960s to oppose the Voting Rights Act. How do you feel about that, Republicans and Repub-

lican leadership? How do you feel about using the same arguments that were used by some of the arch segregationists to stop voting rights in the Senate in the 1960s?

Last month, as I said, the vote represented the starting gun, not the finish line, in the fight to protect voting rights. As majority leader, I reserve the right to bring back voting rights and democracy reform for another vote on the Senate floor.

#### CLIMATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on another issue, infrastructure and climate. Over the past few weeks, we have seen an awful heat wave hit Oregon and Washington. Those States in the beautiful Northwest, always known for their cool summer breezes, had temperatures like 115 degrees. It was just astounding, not just a little temperature bump but dramatically unusual.

Temperatures in the Pacific Northwest climbed so high that power cables melted and roadways cracked in two. At the same time, in the American Southwest, the lack of rainfall and depleted reservoirs have led to a historic lack of water. According to the National Drought Mitigation Center, more than 77 percent of the great State of New Mexico is in a state of severe drought.

As climate change continues to worsen, extreme weather like this, unfortunately, is only becoming more common, putting our agriculture, our infrastructure, our economy, and our people's health at grave risk.

That is why I have made addressing the climate crisis in a bold way a primary focus of our upcoming debate on infrastructure. We are working with great urgency to make this happen. And we are going to do it in two ways:

First, climate change has forced us to repair and rebuild our infrastructure in a way that takes into account our new reality. Our infrastructure must become more resilient to extreme weather. In New York, I insisted that the Hurricane Sandy aid, for which New York and New Jersey got \$60 billion, focus on resiliency. And as we rebuild from Hurricane Sandy using those Federal dollars, we have done it in a way that makes flooding in downtown New York City and Long Island less likely. We need to repeat that effort across the country to deal with heat waves, droughts, wildfires, more powerful hurricanes and even more.

But, second, we must use infrastructure investment to combat climate change itself, not just make ourselves more resilient. If it keeps getting worse, resiliency goes up, global warming gets higher—resiliency goes up. We need to have this go down. That is so, so important.

And what are we doing? In President Biden's proposal and in the proposals Democrats are putting forward, we are investing in green infrastructure, clean

and renewable power, electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, and retrofitting our economy to reduce carbon emissions and slow climate change in both urban, suburban, and rural areas. Investing in both elements—resiliency and green infrastructure—that will create thousands upon thousands of good-paying union American jobs in the process.

So as discussions continue on both a bipartisan infrastructure bill and a budget resolution, Senators of both parties must understand that the issues of climate change and infrastructure cannot—cannot—be separated from one another.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### AFGHANISTAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 3 months ago, President Biden announced his intention to completely withdraw U.S. forces from the ongoing fight against terrorists and terrorist enablers in Afghanistan. I said then this was a shortsighted decision, and sure enough—sure enough—a reckless rush for the exits is becoming a global embarrassment.

Just take the reports that our forces slunk away from the strategically vital Bagram Air Base in the middle of the night without plan for our Afghan partners to secure the base or even to keep the electricity on. But President Biden remains defiant. He has rejected warnings that the government in Kabul will fall to the Taliban. He is ignoring the truth unfolding before our own eyes: Afghanistan is unraveling.

Since April 13, the Taliban has retaken administrative districts all across the country at a truly alarming pace. With military victory in reach, the group is hardly even pretending to seek a negotiated solution. It has wasted no time dragging large swaths of Afghanistan back under its repression, but President Biden appears unmoved. He says he bears no responsibility for the plight of the Afghans who fought with us.

Back in 2019, when his predecessor was contemplating a quick withdrawal from Syria, then-Candidate Biden called that notion “the most shameful thing any president has done in modern history in terms of foreign policy.”

Well, look where we are today. The Taliban is hunting down the U.S.-trained pilots who helped defend the Afghan people. It has wiped out scores of special forces resisting its advance. As the Taliban moves toward threatening Kabul, the Biden administration seems to have no plan to efficiently process special visas for the Afghans who helped us and no plan to get those people safe passage to our Embassy or, for that matter, even out of the country.

The dangers facing the Afghan people—especially, especially women and girls—are heartbreaking. The humanitarian crisis may well be historic. But this is also an awful, bungled mess from the perspective of our own national security. The President's own CIA Director told Senators this decision would be certain to inhibit our ability to collect intelligence. Gen. Frank McKenzie of Central Command confirmed this week, this very week, that intelligence collection was already suffering.

The President's top advisers understand very well that the Taliban is capable of retaking control of Afghanistan in just a matter of months. This would allow al-Qaida to reconstitute. So analysts are debating not if, not whether, but when al-Qaida will again threaten the United States from Afghanistan.

Just wait until we see Russia and China rushing into the void, exploiting our retreat to expand their power and influence in Central Asia. Just wait until the botched retreat and lingering threats end up requiring a large, ongoing presence of our military and surveillance forces in the region rather than freeing up resources for the Indo-Pacific. Just wait until the Biden administration ends up consumed with this humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan and its destabilizing effects rather than focusing on building coalitions to counter Chinese or Russian aggression.

Yet, amid all this, President Biden isn't reconsidering. Instead, he is flooring it. The administration actually sped up the withdrawal so it can accomplish it even before the darkly ironic deadline of September 11.

So I have forcefully opposed efforts by Presidents of both parties to cut and run from our work in Syria or Afghanistan. I have warned of the huge strategic price America would pay if this administration pretends that terrorists will play nicely with their political timeline. As one recent headline put it, "We might be done with jihadis but they are not done with us."

President Biden and his team are desperate to duck hard questions about Afghanistan, but the American people deserve answers. They deserve to understand the risks of this trajectory and how the Commander in Chief plans to keep us safe against a terrorist enemy that his own senior advisers admit will be allowed to regroup thanks to the President's actions.

I hope that, even in this Democratically controlled Congress, our national security committees will uphold their obligation to oversee this unfolding debacle and its implications. Ending our presence in Afghanistan will not end the terrorist war against us. Sadly, the opposite is likely to be true. This self-inflicted wound could very well make the struggle even more difficult and even more dangerous.

#### THE ECONOMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a totally different matter, Senators have just spent 2 weeks traveling our home States and hearing what is on the minds of working families. I got to spend time with all kinds of hard-working Kentuckians across the Bluegrass.

There is no question we are in better shape than we were a year ago. Thanks to the genius of science, the success of Operation Warp Speed, and the bipartisan rescue packages the Republican-led Senate passed in 2020, the year 2021 was primed and set up for a historic American comeback well before the new Democratic Congress or the new Democratic administration was even sworn in.

But Democrats still wanted to rush ahead with the huge borrowing and spending sprees they had promised their far left. Top economists, including famous Democrats, warned our colleagues to think again. Even liberal experts tried to warn our colleagues that the socialist ideas they had drawn up in 2020 were not suited to what Americans needed in 2021. Overspending and overborrowing would unleash inflation, slow rehiring, and hurt small businesses.

All that was predicted, but Democrats rushed ahead. They rammed through what the White House bragged was the most leftwing legislation in our Nation's history, and now Democrats want to follow up with an even more absurd summer sequel.

Well, let me tell you, I just spent 2 weeks hearing from my fellow Kentuckians, and they are already paying a heavy price. Manufacturers are still absolutely hammered by supply chain shocks. Employers large and small say Democrats' special bonus for workers to stay unemployed is badly hampering their ability to fully reopen and to serve their customers. Most of our surrounding States have already put a stop to this awful idea, but Kentucky's Governor, regretfully, hasn't.

It isn't just for-profit businesses, either, that are having trouble getting people back to work. I heard from one residential treatment center for pregnant women and new moms grappling with substance abuse. They said that because of the generous Federal bonus for staying home, they have had trouble finding enough support staff to even reopen one of their facilities post-COVID. About 80 percent of the people who schedule an interview don't even show up.

These backward bonuses have also invited heaps—heaps—of fraud. In California, for example, a significant share of the State's COVID unemployment benefits were paid out fraudulently, billions and billions of dollars to people who shouldn't have gotten them at all. And now—get this—Democrats want to give the California labor secretary who was in charge of that nightmare a promotion. In fact, we are scheduled to vote on her confirmation today to a leading position at the Department of

Labor. You really can't make this stuff up.

And then there is inflation. Just this morning, we learned that runaway inflation has continued to hit working families and hit them hard. Consumer prices spiked in June considerably more than had been forecast. Inflation is up 5.4 percent year over year—the fastest jump in 13 years. Stunningly, it is up 0.9 percent just month over month. Families are feeling it everywhere, from the supermarket to the gas pumps, to housing, to the used car lot, and beyond—all thanks in part to the Democrats' half-baked spending spree from the springtime. Now they want an even more absurd, even more damaging summer sequel.

What Democrats say they want to force through this summer through reconciliation would make our current inflationary mess look like small potatoes. Nobody seriously thinks our country needs another gigantic overdose of overborrowing, overspending, and overtaxing.

This isn't what the American people voted for, either. Our distinguished colleague, the junior Senator from Vermont, the chair of the Budget Committee, has been very transparent about his socialist ideology for decades, very upfront about it, but the country didn't elect a 50–50 Senate and a President who claimed to be a moderate so that Chairman SANDERS could turn America into a socialist country.

Working Americans know that is not what they voted for. This summer they will see who wants to borrow and spend trillions more dollars for no reason and who would rather help them get their jobs back, their stable prices back, their small businesses back, and their lives back.

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#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

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#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Uzra Zeya, of Virginia, to be an Under Secretary of State (Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip is recognized.

#### CHINA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last night I had an interesting dinner. Senator CHRIS COONS of Delaware and I joined two Republican Senators, and we met for dinner with eight Ambassadors from Central and South America. It was a rare occurrence which we