at the Harrison District police station. It is basically ground zero for gun violence in the city of Chicago. They demonstrated to us the brandnew technology, the amazing technology, the video cameras, the shotspotters, new technology which they are using every single day to thwart the criminals and to prove their cases when necessary. These communities and these officers are keeping us as safe as they can, but they are up against an avalanche of guns.

The grim toll of gun violence in Chicago continues to climb upward. The officers agreed with Attorney General Garland and myself, a major problem is that we have guns being illegally sold to people who never should have had them, who never would have passed a background check, convicted felons or those who are mentally unstable. This issue is more important and more significant than any single jurisdiction. It is nationwide.

Roughly, 60 percent of the guns recovered at crime scenes in Chicago originate from out of State, primarily from Indiana, but also from other States. A person can easily buy a gun from an unlicensed seller in Indiana and drive it to Chicago in a matter of minutes that very same day to resell that gun on the streets.

Why don't we do something about this? If those who own guns agree with everyone else that we ought to keep guns out of the hands of the wrong people, why can't this Congress do that simple thing to try to slow down this gun violence?

There is one more truth we must acknowledge: Gun violence isn't just about access to weapons. Too many kids in cities like Chicago face daily trauma that is making them more likely to fall into the cycle of violence.

During the Attorney General's visit to Chicago, we joined community leaders at St. Agatha Catholic Church in the Lawndale section of the city. They have developed a successful violence intervention program called READI Chicago. It is one of the many community violence intervention programs that has received financial support from this President.

While meeting with the leaders of READI Chicago, I spoke with a young man whom I will call John. He is remarkably brave. After learning his story, one cannot ignore the similarities he shares with so many other young people in the city.

He grew up in a struggling family. He sold drugs to earn money. Like many of his peers, he ended up carrying a gun and got involved with gang violence. He was arrested, convicted, and served time in prison. Then he came back to the community and wanted to start a different life. That is how he got involved with READI Chicago, where he is now a positive force for change in his home city.

It is an inspiring story, but that young man John, in his early twenties, still remains at risk. He fears that his advocacy on behalf of this program has put crosshairs on his back in the neighborhood and that his family may even be targeted as well. Every street corner in his neighborhood, every street he crosses, comes with a risk. He has to look around constantly to see if the gang members are going to target him. But still, even under this unimaginable stress, John is looking for a new path in his life. I asked him what he wanted to do. He said he would like to apply to attend Chicago State University, which is near this area. I hope he can get there. And I hope he will be a success, but it is amazing that he still has that dream after all that he has seen.

For young people in Chicago like him, there is no quick fix. If you grew up in a family without stability and security at home, in school, or in a neighborhood, which many of us take for granted every day, it can harm your development and change the way you see the world. The CDC's landmark study on ACEs, adverse childhood experiences, tells us that exposure to trauma is linked to risk of drug use, suicide, academic struggle, and many other problems. If you are a young child experiencing this chaos, if you watch a family member get shot or violently assaulted, it leaves a scar called trauma. Trauma can stay with a child for life.

That is why violence intervention programs like READI Chicago are so important, connecting these at-risk youth with cognitive behavioral therapy, paid transitional jobs, wraparound support services, resources that support the healthy development of children who are struggling with trauma. These are the resources that will change a young person's life and set him on a better path, a path where he can discover a passionate calling and, ultimately, get back to the community.

We must invest in these long-term solutions to break cycles of violence and trauma. The bipartisan RISE from Trauma Act that I have introduced with Senator CAPITO, a Republican from West Virginia, and many colleagues, is an important step in that direction. It would provide $5 billion that President Biden has called for in his Build Back Better agenda for community violence intervention.

We in the Senate need to take immediate steps to combat violent crime. Can't we just get together and agree that we don't want to sell firearms to people who are convicted felons? It seems so obvious, and there is such public support for it. I want my colleagues to understand that the problem of gun violence isn't confined to the city of Chicago. We have cities that are much smaller downstate that are seeing an increase in gun violence as well. It is time for us to do something about it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

MIKE ENZI

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, this weekend, we received the bad news that our friend and former colleague, Mike Enzi, was involved in a serious accident while riding his bicycle.

Mike's colleagues on both sides of the aisle were sorry enough to see him depart the Chamber and begin his well-earned next chapter just a few months ago. Mike and Diana were a fantastic Senate couple in every respect, from major legislative accomplishments to the generosity and kindness they showed to everyone from Senate staff to the pages. So I know Members on both sides of the aisle are very much thinking of Mike at this time. We pray for his health and for the entire Enzi family.

DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

Now, Madam President, on an entirely different matter, American families are anxious, and they are uneasy.

The share of Americans who feels optimistic about our country's direction has plummeted by almost 20 percent just since the springtime. As recently as early May, nearly two-thirds of Americans said they were optimistic about the direction of the country. That was the highest figure that survey had reported in 14 years, but, alas, that has plummeted. Late last week, a new survey found that optimism is now a minority position as 55 percent of Americans are pessimistic. Approval of the new administration's handling of COVID–19 has tumbled. Their handling of the economy is underwater among Independents. Fewer than 4 in 10 Americans approve of their handling of immigration, the border, or violent crime.

Unfortunately, American families have ample reason to feel this way. The end of June clocked the highest annual inflation spike in more than a decade. The Democrats' stay-home bonus to workers who remain unemployed has slowed the recovery and helped to keep workforce participation stagnant. Meanwhile, last year, as the far left put the squeeze on law enforcement funding in cities across the country, America faced a 25-percent—25-percent—increase in homicides. Then, after the Biden administration was very eager to claim ownership and spike the football on the vaccination trajectory, which they largely inherited from Republican leadership, we have now seen vaccination rates in many places plateau on what this White House has been insisting is their watch.

This turn toward pessimism is especially stunning and especially sad because President Biden took office with

the wind at his back. Things were set up for a roaring success like no other Presidential transition in recent memory. Thanks, in large part, to Operation Warp Speed, set up by the prior Congress and administration, we had multiple safe and effective vaccines that were beginning to circulate widely through the country. The new administration's so-called ambitious goal of about a million vaccines per day was already happening before they were sworn in. Thanks to the five bipartisan rescue packages that the Republican-led Senate passed last year, we were primed and ready for a historic economic comeback. Americans were excited and ready to build a comeback summer for the history books.

Yet those incredible tailwinds have largely been squandered. That historic head start has been wasted through bad policy and, in many cases, needlessly divisive leadership.

After a poorly targeted partisan spending package that even liberal economists warned could cause more inflation, American families are now feeling the pain and literally paying the price. After campaign rhetoric and then policy decisions that have made our southern border less secure, a predictable crisis is playing out. After a year of anti-police and anti-rule-of-law rhetoric from too many on the political left, a violent crime surge is hammering communities and making streets less safe all across our country. Oh, and as the new administration pulls back America's presence in the Middle East in a reckless and rushed fashion, terrorist leaders are simply jumping for joy.

This is how you take a country from near-record optimism to serious pessimism in just 2-months' time. This is how you inherit favorable trends in just about every direction imaginable but produce disappointment. Our Democratic friends' big master plan is yet another reckless taxing-and-spending spree but even larger. The Washington Democrats' big idea is to borrow, print, and spend our way to even more inflation and even higher costs for American families, along with a historic set of big tax hikes to boot.

My friends across the aisle and down Pennsylvania Avenue should be less concerned about checking leftwing items off activists' wish lists. As more and more of the Democrats' partisan agenda comes online, the American people's pessimism grows and grows. The families of our country need a better approach.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, you know, there is an old saying that I have used quite often, but it bears repeating: Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.

It is a simple yet insightful concept. Human beings often like things to be easy. It is just in our nature. But the reward for easy is very short-lived. Sometimes, if you don't earn it, you don't understand it. If we work hard and challenge ourselves to improve, we reap the benefits for much longer. That is the American way.

I would tell this to my players over the years that I coached. You know, lessons learned that are applied to the football field also apply in life. You know, this country owes you one thing: an opportunity. Sometimes people just need to be shown where that opportunity is at and encouraged to take it, and that is what everyone in this body should be focused on doing: opening doors for opportunity for the people of this country.

President Biden seems determined to close those doors of opportunity by creating, it looks like, a future massive entitlement state.

My Republican colleagues and I have talked a lot about the reckless tax-and-spend plan and the cost of that plan on American families. We are seeing rising inflation, which means dollars from your paycheck are not going as far. We are seeing costs rise on everyday goods that families need: food, gas, diapers—you name it; it is going up. This is a direct result of untargeted spending this year as we are trying to recover from a pandemic, which is the worst time in the world to be throwing government money at a pandemic.

And, now, our Democratic colleagues, it looks like, want to spend $3.5 trillion more, after spending $1.9 trillion back in February. And what gets talked about less than the cost of this spending is the social and societal cost of all of these new and expanded programs. While it may not be easy to see or measure, it is no less important, and that is what I want to talk about today.

Let's remember how this started and how we got here. It started with President Biden's announcing two plans—great names. First was the American Families Plan, and then there was the American Jobs Plan. Despite their confusing and similar names, on the face they don't sound that bad. I am for American families, and I am for American jobs.

These plans are not about American families or American jobs. They are full of progressive items that can only pass the Senate through a reconciliation process. There won't be any—there won't be any—Republicans that will vote for this, and Democrats know this. So, now, here we are with our colleagues stuffing the worst parts of President Biden's agenda—I am talking about the most progressive items that only appease the far left of their base—into their latest package. And all of President Biden's progressive programs cost money, lots and lots of money. And they are going to pay for them with your taxpayer dollars, not the government dollars—taxpayer dollars.

A lot of my colleagues have expressed concern with the Democrats' tax-and-spend spree, but they aren't the only ones sounding the alarm. Folks back home have started to take notice, and there is a lot more collective wisdom among the folks back home than there has been here lately in Washington, DC.

So I brought a couple of letters with me today. These are folks from Alabama who wrote to me about their concerns with President Biden's massive spending plan. Here is what James Merrill from Huntsville, AL, wrote to me:

> I have been studying this atrocious ''Biden American Families Plan'' and it is clear that not only is the cost staggering, the implications of all the rules that will go with it will terribly impact all family life and our freedoms to manage our lives. It blatantly makes the middle-class dependent on the government—cradle to grave. A clear path to socialism.''

James, you are exactly right.

And Rosa Hill in Birmingham, AL, had this to say:

> I have just listened to President Biden . . . and the ideas are ridiculous. [We] should be helping each other, [not] the government . . . [getting] involved.

Ms. HILL makes an important point. Much of this work can and should be done by our neighbors, churches, and people in the communities. The problem is, we have been conditioned to wait for the government to do the hard work of helping the less fortunate for us rather than doing it ourselves.

Half a century ago, President Lyndon Johnson launched the ''War on Poverty.'' He and leading liberals at the time thought the answer to poverty was to dramatically increase the benefits the Federal Government would give out to the poor. Well, the War on Poverty didn't work like its backers thought it would. The following decade was filled with economic stagnation, high inflation, gas lines, spikes in drug addiction, and a horrifying rise in crimes across our country. Sounds familiar—doesn't it?—just like what is happening today.

Folks, the definition of insanity is trying the same thing over and over again expecting a different result. We have already tried this. President Biden is determined to try the same worn out policies today: throwing trillions and trillions of taxpayer money at the problem and hoping the problem goes away. It has been and still is the wrong solution.

President Biden's reckless spending spree won't help struggling American families. It will trap them in the endless cycle of dependence on Big Government and taxpayer money. Just take a look at what President Biden has proposed in his American Families Plan: