

get a handle on these delays and, most importantly, get the money to New Yorkers faster so they can pay the rent.

By the way, many landlords, particularly small landlords, depend on this as well. If you worked hard—let's say you are a bus driver and you own a three-family house. When the tenants in your house don't pay you, you don't have any cushion and you have to pay the mortgage. So this bill will help with that as well, this proposal.

Right now, there are 6½ million Americans who are behind in their rent. According to the New York Times, over 400,000 renters in New York City alone owe a collective debt of \$2 billion.

Congress did its job by making sure that we have money in place to help these Americans avoid evictions. Now the States need to step it up to make sure that this money gets into the hands of renters as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KELLY). The Republican leader is recognized.

AWARDING FOUR CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDALS TO THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE AND THOSE WHO PROTECTED THE U.S. CAPITOL ON JANUARY 6, 2021

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier this week, the Senate proudly and unanimously passed a resolution awarding a Congressional Gold Medal to the U.S. Capitol Police along with other law enforcement personnel who helped defend this institution on January 6.

Today, President Biden will sign this resolution into law, and the brave men and women who served that day will receive the highest honor that Congress can bestow.

With the home of our representative democracy literally under attack, the officers of the Capitol Police, their colleagues from the DC Metropolitan Police, and others made huge, huge sacrifices to keep all of us safe.

On January 6, Congress got a firsthand reminder of a reality that many American citizens face every day; that the brave men and women of law enforcement really are the thin blue line standing between peace and chaos.

I am so proud we are adding our own colleagues in blue to the list of extraordinary Americans that Congress has honored with its gold medal.

So thank you and congratulations.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on a completely different matter, we are more than a year from the technical end of the COVID-19 recession.

There are more than 9 million job openings in the country, the most in American history by far. Three safe and effective vaccines are easily available all across our country, free of charge, for any adult who wants one. Medical contraindications are rare, and CDC data tell us that, once somebody is fully vaccinated, their risk of dying from COVID-19 absolutely plummets right down to the normal range of risk that we implicitly face on a daily basis. Vaccines may not magically eliminate the virus overnight, but the evidence tells us that vaccines can eliminate the degree to which the virus represents a unique crisis.

We may not be entirely out of the woods—the Delta uptick makes that clear—but it is time to stop governing as if we were trapped in a permanent economic meltdown. It factually is simply not the case, but the Democratic Party's far-left flank is resisting this simple fact. They were counting on this terrible but temporary pandemic to be their Trojan horse for permanent socialism. So they don't want to admit that the vaccines are transitioning COVID from a crisis into a challenge—case in point, the surreal episode that has unfolded this past week over evictions.

For a year and a half now, the government has basically told landlords they have little or no recourse if tenants stop paying the rent. This isn't just about massive corporations that some think could eat losses forever; family businesses who own one or two units have had to keep paying their bills, their taxes, and their mortgages the whole time.

Congress already sent billions of dollars to States for rental assistance. The problem is with State governments that have been pathetically slow to get the money out, but when some Socialist House Members fail to convince their own fellow Democrats to extend this nationwide socialism through legislation, they somehow prevailed on President Biden through PR stunts—PR stunts.

One day before the President's announcement, his senior adviser said the President had “double-, triple-, quadruple-checked” whether he had the legal authority to do this, and he concluded he did not. The President himself admitted that legal scholars find his position untenable, but he still caved and did it.

The far left wants to turn this terrible but temporary pandemic into a Trojan horse for permanent socialism, and the administration is letting them call the shots.

DEBT LIMIT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in just a few days our colleagues will start ramming through yet another—another—reckless taxing-and-spending spree: trillions more in inflationary spending when families just want good jobs and stable prices.

But there is something funny happening. Even as Democrats crow about how all this spending is so good and so needed, they are petrified to vote for the credit limit increase that would make it possible.

The Democrats are about to tell Republicans to go take a hike and start tееing up trillions more dollars in borrowing and spending, of course, without a single Republican vote. Ah, but at the same time, they are extolling the virtues of their latest socialist shopping list, they are afraid to up the limit on their credit card. They want Republicans to give them political cover for the partisan debt bomb that they will go right on to detonate with zero input from us. My colleagues are so mixed up on this, it is almost comical.

The sums that we borrowed and spent through 2020—through last year, through the last administration, through the actual economic emergency—were largely covered by the previous debt suspension that just expired, but Democrats want a new debt limit increase for the new borrowing and the new spending that they will fully pile up since they took power: about \$2 trillion back in March, trillions more sometime soon.

So they want to unleash another reckless taxing-and-spending spree with zero Republican input—oh, oh—but when the bill comes, they say it is time to split the check. When the bill comes, it is time to split the check. Initiating another budget reconciliation process in a 50-50 Senate is as willfully partisan, as “go it alone” as it gets, especially in a Senate that keeps proving we can do bipartisan work.

So, look, if our colleagues want to ram through yet another reckless taxing-and-spending spree without our input, if they want all this spending and debt to be their signature legacy, they should leap at the chance to own every bit of it.

So let me make something perfectly clear: If they don't need or want our input, they won't get our help. They won't get our help with the debt limit increase that these reckless plans will require. I could not be more clear. They have the ability. They control the White House; they control the House; they control the Senate. They can raise the debt ceiling, and if it is raised, they will do it.

TRIBUTE TO NICK ROSSI

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on another matter, this week, Senate Republicans are saying goodbye to some all-star staffers.

Nick Rossi, the chief of staff to our whip, Senator THUNE, has spent 15 years mastering the ins and outs of the Senate.

This former FBI agent has used his Harvard Law horsepower to steer offices, committees, and our entire conference in the right direction. Our whip

has had a whip-smart right-hand man. I won't be able to top his boss's wonderful tribute remarks from yesterday, so I won't even try, but I did just want to add my own brief thanks and congratulations.

I have gotten to see Nick's great work up close. Senator THUNE and I have a standing Monday meeting to plan the week. It is a very small meeting with very few staff. Nick has been in that room, and, every time, I have been glad he was. It is a rare thing in Washington to meet someone who is probably almost one of the smartest people in the room but who also never lets you know it, but Nick combines brilliance and humility in just that way.

So my staff and I join Senator THUNE and the whole Senate in bidding Nick a fond, if reluctant, farewell.

Thank you, sincerely, for your fine, fine service.

TRIBUTE TO ANDREW FERGUSON

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on one final matter, when you have served in the Senate as long as I have, you get to hire and work with a lot of talented people, and when you find rock stars, you try to hang onto them. As a result, when a key staff member moves on, it often means reflecting on an extended Senate career of many years, including shared memories of old war stories going back ages.

Andrew Ferguson is a different case.

It was only 2 years ago that I hired Andrew to be my chief counsel. He has only been in the Senate about 3 years. By the standards of this place, he is a spring chicken. But it has only taken Andrew this short time to leave a stunningly outsized imprint on my work, on our conference, on the judiciary, and on everyone who has gotten to work alongside of him as well.

So, a few days before Andrew concludes his Senate service, I am both happy for the opportunity to share how this happened and really, really sorry that I have to do it.

The chief counsel in my leadership office handles a portfolio that is almost comically large: judicial confirmations, law enforcement and crime, immigration and border security, some constitutional questions that intersect with the separation of powers, others that intersect with national security, sometimes arcane Senate history. It takes a lawyer's lawyer with expertise in our laws and Constitution and someone who can feel out the politics, the personalities, and the shades of gray that drive a political body.

One look at Andrew's resume told me that qualification No. 1 was, clearly, no problem—UVA Law; clerked on the DC Circuit; clerked for Justice Thomas; experience in the private sector—a lawyer anybody would be glad to hire.

Oh, but what about the second qualification?

Like I said, Andrew wasn't a long-serving Senate hand. He arrived at Ju-

diary in time to help Chairman GRASSLEY notch a win for the country and the sanity of the Senate with the confirmation of Justice Kavanaugh. He had only just been promoted to Chairman GRAHAM's top nominations counsel when I poached him.

Well, Andrew stepped into this complex role, and, boy, did he flourish.

He became a go-to leader for committees and offices across the Republican side, a key Senate liaison to both the executive and judicial branches. He added to his lawyerly chops and grew into a strategic adviser of the first-rate. Our Republican conference is a big tent with a range of visions, but Senators from across the conference have come not just to trust Andrew's judgment, but they seek it out.

Andrew's impact has been truly dramatic. I do not believe any other Senate staffer played a more crucial role in the last two Supreme Court confirmations combined. He was our side's field general in confirming Justice Barrett. Our majority spent 4 years rebuilding the kind of Federal judiciary that our constitutional order requires. Andrew played an indispensable part.

The last couple of years have brought all sorts of unusual national challenges. The 2 years that Andrew has spent with us feel more like 10. We faced scenarios that would have sounded like wild law school hypotheticals. Who would have guessed we would be fighting to protect Americans' religious freedom while the government battled an airborne virus? But our chief counsel invariably brought us up to speed on whatever the day would bring with a good head, a big heart, and great humor. And if the topic was new to him, a big stack of library books were on his desk.

It might sound like Andrew was just very dedicated to his job. That is not totally unusual. But that doesn't fully capture it. See, I have come to believe he is simply this intense about absolutely everything. Andrew takes work very seriously, but he also takes his faith seriously, and he takes family seriously. He treasures the upbringing that his parents, Roy and Susan, provided for him and his two brothers. He takes his interests seriously, his hobbies. There is an intense, infectious enthusiasm for all of it, a kind of good-natured aggression.

Now, as his colleagues will attest, all this intensity can yield, actually, entertaining results. If, for example, you took a stroll by Andrew's desk, you would often hear him shouting—shouting—excitedly at a colleague, but you would generally genuinely have no clue whether he is strongly disagreeing with the person or just agreeing with them with great gusto. He could be discussing the law, but it might also be Roman history or the Protestant Reformation or the merits of some TV comedy or his weekend plans involving the lawful exercise of his Second Amendment rights. Whatever the subject, you would get maximum enthu-

siasm, maximum force of nature, and everybody in earshot usually learns some new fact and shares a big laugh.

Different people enjoy this line of work for different reasons, but for Andrew, I think politics and policy matter so much because ideas and principles matter so much. That is why one of the most darkly funny and cynical people on our team has also been one of the most earnest and idealistic. Everything is worth thinking through. Everything is worth taking seriously because principles matter, the rule of law matters, and our country matters. That is why we come to work every day.

A lot of people first come to Washington with a warrior mentality, but the rhythms of this city sometimes lull folks into a somewhat calmer mixture. But, believe me, as I suspect the entire Senate can attest by now, we need not worry that Andrew Ferguson will be lulled into a calmer anything.

So, my friend, you may be leaving the trenches for now, but we both know there is no chance you will be able to stay away forever. You are going to miss the good fight, and I can say with personal certainty that the fight is going to miss you as well. Thank you for the law lectures. Thank you for the laughs. Thank you for an outstanding job for our country. Job well done.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

INVESTING IN A NEW VISION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION IN AMERICA ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3684, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3684) to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Sinema) amendment No. 2137, in the nature of a substitute.

Carper-Capito amendment No. 2131 (to amendment No. 2137), to strike a definition.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

NOMINATION OF EUNICE C. LEE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week the Senate will vote on Eunice Lee's nomination to serve on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. If confirmed, Ms. Lee would be the only—the only Black woman—and the only former public defender to serve on the Second Circuit. With her nomination, the Biden administration and Senate Democrats are continuing our efforts