

budget resolution for producing text to review.

I expect our committee chairs will provide an overview of all the work that each of their committees have done over the last 4 weeks in drafting legislative text, and the entire caucus will have the chance to offer feedback so we can continue to move this process forward.

This will continue to be a collaborative process. Everyone—everyone—is going to have input into this legislation. But, of course, our unity is our strength, and if we are not unified with 50 votes, we can't get anything done. So we all must come together.

Now, I am pleased to say, after working for weeks over the summer on our reconciliation bill, we are making great progress toward bringing the bill to the floor.

Now, while Democrats are fighting to strengthen the middle class, our Republican colleagues, unfortunately, are resorting to the same, tired, predictable objections they raise about practically any Democratic proposal. Rather than explain why they oppose supporting families or expanding healthcare or taking action on climate change, they spent the last several months recycling old accusations about “liberal wish lists.” And rather than engage our policies on the merits and have a real debate, too often they raised unwarranted and incorrect points about how these programs will impact inflation.

I remind my colleagues of a report released not long ago by the chief economist at Moody's Analytics, Mr. Mark Zandi. When Mr. Zandi examined the Democrats' two main legislative proposals, our infrastructure bill and our Build Back Better legislation, he concluded these packages would provide a massive boost to our economy. Specifically, he said our program would “lift the economy's longer-term growth potential” and would “lift productivity and labor force growth”; that is, our proposal will do exactly what we said it would do, according to this impartial arbiter, Mark Zandi.

And as for the Republicans' overheated rhetoric on inflation, Mr. Zandi dismisses such concerns as “overdone” and said our two infrastructure bills are designed to “ease”—his words—inflation pressures.

Let me repeat that. According to Moody's top economist—hardly a fervent liberal—the Democratic proposals would actually ease inflation pressures, not raise them.

When you strengthen worker productivity, when you increase supply chains, the push to inflation decreases—decreases. And he also said that, in the long term, it would help grow our economy so that more Americans can get to and stay in the middle class.

Compare that to the signature accomplishments that Senate Republicans forced when they were in charge: a massive tax break for corporations

and the wealthy that did little to help everyday Americans.

That is the difference between a Democratic majority and a Republican one. We are fighting to strengthen American workers and American families. Republicans seem only worried about protecting those at the very top.

And, in addition, to those with inflationary concerns, we are going to pay for our proposal. The Trump tax cuts, which every Republican voted for, created a \$2 trillion deficit.

So let's be realistic here. Let's be honest here. The charges of runaway inflation are just wrong, especially when you consider we are paying for it, when Republicans were so willing to give tax cuts to the rich without paying for them at all.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on another subject—one that the Presiding Officer cares about a great deal, among the many other things you care about a great deal—voting rights. All year long, Senate Democrats have committed to passing legislation to protect the most sacrosanct right in our democracy, the right to vote. On two occasions, Senate Democrats voted unanimously to begin debate in the Senate on this critical issue, and both times Republicans formed a wall of total opposition against any progress on voting rights in the U.S. Senate.

But Republicans' refusal to work with us is no excuse for not getting something done. So later today, my colleague, Senator KLOBUCHAR, along with Senators KAIN, KING, MANCHIN, MERKLEY, PADILLA, TESTER, and WARNOCK, will be introducing the Freedom to Vote Act, a compromise voting rights bill that I intend to schedule a vote on in the very near future.

To piece this bill together, I am proud to have convened and worked with eight Members of my caucus—four progressives and four moderates—in bringing this bill to fruition. The compromise proposal contains many of the important provisions of previous voting rights bills championed by Senate Democrats, particularly by my colleague Senator MERKLEY. It will protect the right to vote and put a stop to partisan gerrymandering and the scourge of dark money in our politics. Critically, the legislation also incorporates important feedback from election officials and includes new measures to promote greater voter confidence in our elections while stopping partisan election subversion. This is a good proposal, one that nobody in this Chamber should oppose.

My colleague Senator MANCHIN is working with Republicans to secure support for the bill, and we look forward to hearing what changes they might make on legislation. I applaud Senator MANCHIN for his work here. He has always said that he wants to try and bring Republicans on, and now with the support of Democrats and this

compromise bill that Senator MANCHIN had great input into, he can go forward in that regard.

The fact of the matter is that this legislation is critical for stopping some of the most egregious assaults against voting rights happening at the State level. A few weeks ago, the Governor of Texas signed one of the most sweeping voter suppression bills in the entire country. It comes on the heels of other restrictions sprouting across the country—from ending election day registration in Montana, limiting after-hour drop boxes in Florida, and even making it a crime to give food and water to voters at the polls in Georgia.

No one can look at these restrictions with a straight face and say they have a legitimate purpose. They have only one goal. It is a despicable goal. It is a nasty goal, making it harder for younger, poorer, non-White, and typically Democratic voters to access the ballot.

Republicans lost the election. Biden is President. I am majority leader. Instead of doing what you are supposed to do in a democracy—win over the people you didn't win before—they are trying to stop the people who didn't vote for them from voting. That is autocratic, anti-democratic—small “D”—and not what America is all about. It is a new phase of what used to be called “Jim Crow.”

The Freedom to Vote Act is a necessary step to put an end to these assaults on the franchise. As majority leader, it is my intention to hold a vote on this bill as soon as next week, as I mentioned.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, finally, on debt ceiling. In the long history of our country—the long, long history—the United States has never defaulted on its obligations to pay its debt. The full faith and credit of the United States has been the bedrock of our country's economic prosperity—a spotless record that both parties have, for years, worked together to preserve.

No matter who was President, Democrat or Republican, in the past, the other party always stepped up to the plate and said: We can't let the country default.

Until most recently, when President Trump was in office, Democrats stepped up on three separate occasions to work with Republicans to suspend the debt ceiling and continue to ensure that the U.S. was able to pay its bills, even when there was a Democratic majority in the House. We did not resort to hostage-taking or proclaim that it was the other side's responsibility. We simply knew that when it came to the debt ceiling, it was important to put aside political differences and act responsibly, no matter who sits in the Oval Office.

We know that failing to raise the debt ceiling would be—as the Republican leader has said in the past when

Trump was President and he was arguing that Democrats should join him, would be a disaster. Well, if anything, that is an understatement.

Just yesterday, one top forecaster said that “a failure to raise the debt limit will have serious negative consequences.” So in the immediate future, we need to raise the debt ceiling again. As in previous instances, it must, must, be a bipartisan endeavor, and the reason is simple: We have to get this done.

But much of the recent debt we need to pay for was incurred during the Trump administration. In fact, President Trump added nearly \$8 trillion to the national debt, \$5½ trillion of which was since the last time the debt limit was suspended until Trump’s final day in office.

So, in other words, \$5½ trillion of this debt is totally under Republican management, in a sense, because Trump was the President and Leader MCCONNELL was the majority leader. Democrats think that we got that. That is when the debt was created, with Republican votes—lots of Republican votes. Both sides, led by a Republican Senate, as I said, incurred much of this debt. Senators from both parties overwhelmingly voted in support of the many laws that contributed to this obligation. So neither party can wash its hands of responsibility to pay the bills.

Leader MCCONNELL keeps talking about the new spending the Democrats have done. That is not this debt. This debt, \$5½ trillion, was all under Trump and when McConnell was the majority leader. Leader MCCONNELL was the majority leader.

Some Republicans recklessly, irresponsibly, so overwhelmingly politically seem eager to push our economy to the brink of total catastrophe by suggesting they will oppose any effort to raise the debt ceiling. And rather than urging their colleagues to immediately drop this reckless idea, the Republican leader—shame on him—seems to be giving it his blessing, if not promoting it.

If the United States defaults on its debt, it will harm every single American in this country, including potentially those who rely on Social Security and the members of our military. The consequences will reverberate around the world and will cause irreparable harm to the global economy at a time when we are all working to lift ourselves out of a once-in-a-century pandemic.

So any efforts to play nasty, political games with the full faith and credit of the United States is reckless, irresponsible, and despicable. It could pose permanent damage to the U.S. economy and is a complete nonstarter.

In America, when it is time to pay the bills, we do it without exception.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, here is a quote to start the day:

I do think we’re in very serious danger of repeating almost all the mistakes of the 1960s and early 1970s.

That is Larry Summers, the senior advisor to two Democratic Presidents, about the risk of inflation we face today.

As one report explained:

The former Treasury secretary has been warning since February that President Joe Biden’s big-spending agenda was creating the risk of an inflation spike this year, potentially cutting into the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oh, but Washington Democrats have spent trillions—trillions—of dollars on pet liberal projects. They have been printing and wasting money like there is no tomorrow, and American families are hurting as a result.

Inflation has more than overtaken the average worker’s wage growth since last year. Employers are raising wages higher and higher, but their workers’ paychecks go less and less far. Families’ incomes and savings are eroding right before their eyes.

Democrats have done this proudly—proudly—on a party-line basis. Back in 2020, during the teeth of the COVID emergency, Congress worked across party lines to pass massive rescue packages that Republicans and Democrats had written together. Virtually every serious expert agreed that after the last relief bill that we passed in December, the economy was primed and ready to go.

But our Democratic colleagues wanted more. Like they admitted from the start of the pandemic, they wanted to use the crisis to “restructure things to fit [their] vision” [from a temporary emergency to permanent socialism].

They bragged the bipartisan bill they passed in March was the most leftwing legislation in American history. Now they want to dwarf that bill with a reckless taxing-and-spending spree that would cost trillions more and bury the country in job-killing tax hikes.

When it comes to spending and the economy, President Biden, Speaker PELOSI, and the Democratic leader have made a conscious decision: They don’t want Republican-governing partners. They want to go it alone. Well, with one exception—just one exception.

No, Republicans won’t have any input into the massive, reckless tax-

ing-and-spending spree that will stick middle-class families with higher costs, lower wages, and a socialist country they didn’t vote for.

But Democrats do want Republicans’ help with just one thing. They want us to help raise the credit limit to make it happen. They want us to help clear the path for their partisan, job-killing agenda, which we oppose.

So let’s make this perfectly clear, in case anybody is in doubt. The debt suspension that just expired in August automatically covered the borrowing that had been accumulated before that date. This is the discussion about the future. This isn’t the last 4 years, when we were reaching bipartisan government funding agreements, bipartisan appropriations, and bipartisan COVID bills.

Democrats have made a different choice. They want to make policy all by themselves. So they can come up with the financing on their own as well. The Democratic leaders have every tool and procedure they need to handle the debt limit on a partisan basis, just like they are choosing to handle everything else.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on a completely different matter, providing for the common defense and protecting the American people is one of the fundamental responsibilities our Founders entrusted to the Federal Government. It is a core obligation of the Commander in Chief.

Yet, to a deadly degree, a parade of mistakes in Afghanistan tells us President Biden and his team have failed this most basic test of competence. For 20 years, the United States has successfully kept terrorists from staging another major attack on our homeland.

Over the years, we have reduced our own military presence in Afghanistan, secured greater assistance in foreign partners, and supported local Afghan forces who did the vast majority of the fighting. This strategy kept al-Qaida on the run. It kept the Taliban from taking control, and it kept Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terror.

In only a matter of months, President Biden and his team have squandered all of that—squandered it. The collapse we witnessed wasn’t inevitable. It didn’t happen on its own. It happened because President Biden pulled the plug on our Afghan partners and pulled the rug out from under our allies who were with us in this shared fight.

Everyone seemed to realize this is a historic disaster for the United States, except maybe the President and his loyal retainers.

Secretary Blinken points to the frantic evacuation of 100,000 desperate people as a huge success. Seriously? They initially didn’t envision having to evacuate anyone. The number of people evacuated is not a metric of success for