

to the people here in the United States. Some called 9/11/2001 a failure of imagination because we never imagined that terrorists overseas would plan and execute a terrorist attack that would kill 3,000 Americans using 2 airplanes to fly into the World Trade Center.

So now, with the embarrassing and disastrous withdrawal by the Biden administration of our troops from Afghanistan, the question is, How long will it take the terrorists to reconstitute themselves and present a clear and present danger to not only the region but also the continent of Europe and the United States? But for right now, we deserve and the American people deserve answers and accountability. And it is not just these 13 marines who lost their lives in Afghanistan; other American servicemembers have lost their lives and literally their limbs to try to deny a safe haven to terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and ISIS.

I worry that they may worry that their sacrifices may have been in vain if, in fact, these terrorists occupy this vacuum which has now been created with a very hospitable Taliban, which was responsible for hosting al-Qaida in the first place. I worry that these troops feel like their sacrifice has been in vain. But I want to assure them that they did what they were asked to do by their Commander in Chief with honor and respect and great personal sacrifice. And no matter what happens going forward, nothing will ever change the respect and the honor that we have for them and their service.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we also have a fast-approaching government funding deadline. To be specific, we have about 16 days before we will be knee deep in a government shutdown unless Congress appropriates money to keep the lights on. Following a year and a half of economic instability, there is no justification to unleash even more uncertainty on our economy and on hard-working American families. Then, on top of that, we are told that our Democratic colleagues intend to pass a \$3½ trillion—probably closer to \$5 trillion—reckless tax-and-spending-spree bill, otherwise known as reconciliation.

You know, during the last year, during the COVID-19 crisis, we worked very well together because we knew this was a national emergency that did not respect political parties or ideology or persons, and we had to do everything we could on an emergency basis to help. But that emergency is quickly getting in our rearview mirror, and our Democratic colleagues seem to be determined to continue to recklessly spend borrowed money that will have to be repaid by the next generation of Americans and to raise taxes to the highest level in recent memory, thus compounding the risk not only of inflation, which is a regressive tax on working families when the food they

put on the table, the gasoline they buy, and the appliances they buy all are seeing prices going up at very quickly escalating levels. There is a real danger that this sort of reckless tax-and-spending spree will have a very negative effect not only on them but also on our economy more generally.

For months, we know our Democratic colleagues have been debating back and forth about how much they are willing to spend on a liberal wish list. The chairman of the Budget Committee initially floated a staggering figure of \$6 trillion.

Now, I never dreamed that in my lifetime—certainly in my service here in the U.S. Senate—I would ever vote for a trillion-dollar bill, but I did during the emergency called COVID-19 because I thought it was necessary. But this kind of reckless spending is not necessary. This is an ideological juggernaut to try to achieve things to transform this country into some western European social democracy—social welfare state.

Well, after months of negotiating amongst themselves, our Democratic colleagues have now settled not on a \$6 trillion figure but on \$3½ trillion. It is still a shocking number. Nonpartisan budget experts, as I indicated, said the actual cost would end up closer to \$5½ trillion, so don't be fooled by this so-called appearance of self-restraint. This plan is chock full of damaging tax hikes, permanent welfare with no work requirements, Green New Deal climate mandates, and a laundry list of socialist policies.

A party-line vote just before the recess laid the groundwork for the biggest government spending bonanza in American history, but now some of our Democratic colleagues are experiencing a little buyer's remorse, perhaps given the rapidly approaching date for the 2022 elections, and they are expressing some remorse or hesitation before swiping the taxpayers' credit card once more.

Senators MANCHIN and SINEMA have both voiced their opposition to the extreme \$3½ trillion figure. Earlier this month, Senator MANCHIN wrote an op-ed explaining why he won't support such irresponsible spending. Our colleagues ought to read it and to consider his arguments. He said Democratic leaders in Congress have proposed passing "the largest single spending bill in history with no regard to rising inflation, crippling debt, or the inevitability of future crises."

The fractures in the reckless tax-and-spending spree aren't just deepening in the Senate; House Democrats are beginning to wring their hands, trying to figure out if they can justify such extreme spending and taxing. And I must say it certainly will require some creative thinking.

Trillions more in borrowing when American families are already being pummeled by inflation; a sweeping amnesty with no effort to control the growing immigration crisis at the

southern border; tax hikes on American families and small businesses—our Democratic colleagues are proposing the most extreme policy proposals that one might imagine in this one massive bill. So getting their Members on board is half the battle, but we are now seeing the internal debates and discussions among Democrats wondering if this is the wisest course of conduct, because there is no doubt about it—this is a massive amount of money, and Democrats are going to have to raise the debt ceiling by themselves if they want to write a check that big.

This is where things get a little kooky. Even though this is a partisan spending spree, our friends across the aisle expect Republicans to join them in raising the debt ceiling, claiming that this should be a bipartisan effort. But it is clear Democrats don't require Republican support. They can attach this credit increase to the tax-and-spending-spree bill and pass it with only Democratic support. The only problem is, they don't really want to own it. They want political cover. They want us to help them pull the pin out of the economic grenade that they are about to toss in the laps of the American people. When this reckless tax-and-spending spree inevitably blows up, they want to be able to blame someone else. They want plausible deniability.

But it is not going to work that way. Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, and folks on our side of the aisle have made it crystal clear on that point for months. If they want to spend alone, they are going to have to address the debt ceiling alone. Our Democratic colleagues can't cut Republicans out of the process when it is convenient and then beg cooperation when they need someone else to blame.

I have no doubt that our colleagues across the aisle will come up with a host of gimmicks to try to get Republicans on board. Some have suggested threatening to shut down the government or withholding critical disaster relief. To be absolutely clear, folks on our side of the aisle do not want a government shutdown. The American people and our economy are already experiencing enough pain. In my State of Texas, we suffered enough natural disasters for me to understand how critical it is to get disaster relief out the door as quickly as possible. Communities impacted by hurricanes and wildfires do not deserve to be treated as political pawns on a chessboard.

If Democrats want to charge \$5½ trillion to the taxpayers' credit card, they will have to increase the credit limit themselves, and they can do it by themselves with the \$3½ trillion social welfare bill, and they can't treat disaster victims and government funding as hostages.

Our Democratic colleagues already went on one partisan spending spree earlier this year—an additional \$1.9 trillion under the guise of providing COVID relief, when only about 10 percent of it actually addressed COVID.

That has fueled, in the opinion of people like former Democratic economists, office holders—Larry Summers, for example, who said that we are risking a growth of inflation, which will raise prices on commodities and things that people need in their daily lives in order to live and thus form an invisible tax.

As it stands today, our debt is roughly 107 percent of our gross domestic product—\$28.7 trillion and counting. Most of us can't imagine what a trillion dollars is, much less a billion dollars, but it is roughly \$28.7 trillion. And the sad news is, somebody is going to have to pay that back—somebody. I believe it is simply immoral for us to continue spending, borrow money, raise the debt, and expect future generations to pick up the tab. We know, at the same time, families are being hammered by inflation, as I said, and small businesses are still trying to lure employees back to work.

So we are not going to assist with an encore performance of the partisan spending spree that we saw earlier this year. If our Democratic colleagues believe this partisan tax-and-spending spree is a wise investment for the American people, they are going to have to sell it to the American people and up the credit limit on their own.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, border security is one of the government's most important responsibilities. A sovereign, successful Nation's self-determination and safety depend upon it, and we are no exception.

Our border security rests exclusively with the Federal Government. And the Department of Homeland Security—a Cabinet created in 2002, I believe, in the aftermath of the September 11 attack—is entrusted with this paramount duty of protecting our border.

Fusing homeland with security for its name wasn't an accident. That wordage casts the Department's purpose to protect the country from external threats, both from people and from products. And Americans pay for that Department handsomely and for its responsibilities about \$52 billion a year.

However, a grave, unprecedented crisis exists at our southern border. Our television reminds us of that fact daily. Foreign nationals are illegally crossing into our country from Mexico by the thousands every day. I heard recently that last month was the biggest number coming in for over 20 years. But illegal immigration isn't the only crime cascading over our borders.

Mexican cartels are importing deadly drugs and trafficking humans. These horrific, unabated events make very clear that the cartels effectively control our southern border. They actually manage who and what enters our country from Mexico.

But the danger is preventable. The trouble exists because the current ad-

ministration deliberately refuses to secure the border.

Homeland Security's border dereliction is inexcusable, and it happens to be life-threatening, not only from drugs but from criminals and for national security because terrorists have been arrested.

Communities across all States, then, are plagued by the crime and the drugs killing Americans by the tens of thousands every year. The figure from 2020 is over 93,000 Americans dying from drug overdoses—a 31-percent increase from just the previous year. That exceeds the Rose Bowl's capacity, as just one example of comparison.

One drug is very prolific: Mexican fentanyl, probably fentanyl coming through Mexico from China. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid. It is 50 times more potent than heroin. An infinitesimal amount, even as small as a grain of salt, can cause a death. The cartels are producing the deadly drug and smuggling it into the United States at record highs. They are also adding fentanyl to other drugs for increased potency and, of course, increased profits—often without the user of that drug even knowing that fact—and sometimes even market that fentanyl-laced drug into heroin.

Unsurprisingly, then, deaths result. From January 2019 to June of 2019, almost 62 percent of the overdose deaths involved a fentanyl-related substance.

The authority scheduling fentanyl analogs expire next month. Congress must act to permanently schedule these drugs and punish the cartels and the drug dealers who spread this poison across our communities.

We are a nation of compassion, but we are also a nation of laws. We are not obligated under any charade of compassion to ignore border crime, particularly the surge of deadly drugs killing tens of thousands here each year. But the government, as we see, sits idly by as cartel drugs poison Americans and unleash drug-related violence upon our communities.

Border security is essential in keeping our public safety threats and a cartel-controlled border presents our greatest criminal threat.

The Federal Government must be a staunch ally to the States in stopping the crime. The cartels benefit immensely from an unsecured border, and they are not exactly screening for threats to our national security and public safety.

We have reached a critical juncture and must choose who actually controls the southern border, and, consequently, our self-determination and our safety. Violent drug cartels or home security—which is it? The choice directs our future.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on another matter, today, I speak to my fellow colleagues on the extraordinary courage, bravery, and patriotism that

the men and women in our Armed Forces showed to the entire world, yet again, in the last several months in Afghanistan.

Now, we see plenty of evidence that they were placed in an impossible situation because of the bad judgment and leadership failures of President Biden.

Despite President Biden's bad judgment, our men and women in uniform again exceeded expectations. In the process of doing their job for people whom they don't even know, we lost 13 of our best who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and 18 more suffered serious injuries.

I pray—and I assume all Americans pray—for their families for the loss that those families have suffered.

Those 13 young men and women will never, and should never, be forgotten. They are heroes.

This disastrous exit was entirely avoidable, which makes the loss of life even more gut-wrenching.

Intelligent and honest people can disagree on whether the Americans should have left Afghanistan, but it is unthinkable that anyone could justify the manner in which this administration carried out this disaster.

The Biden administration left Americans behind. This is the United States of America. We never leave our people behind. I have heard from many Iowans who are outraged by this moral failure.

When he took office, President Biden arrogantly announced that "America is back." Now the world is seeing America in retreat. The Russians and Red China are crowing over this comedy.

I and others have compared the imagery and the perception to the fall of Saigon. But, remember, in that case, we had pulled our military out before we broke our promises to the South Vietnamese military.

In this case, it appears that crucial support for the Afghan military was withdrawn while we were relying on that same military to hold off the Taliban long enough to complete our withdrawal.

I have been at many briefings related to President Biden's Afghan exit. I have tasked my oversight and policy staff to do the same. Some have been classified briefings; others were not classified. What I can say—and what I believe the American people ought to know—is that this administration couldn't track the state of play on the ground in the way that they should have had the capability to do.

Every briefing gave a more dire and desperate picture than the one briefing we received before. It was obvious that this administration was losing control. Yet it was clear to me and my colleagues that the administration never sufficiently changed its posture in the region as the facts on the ground changed from bad to worse.

When the administration officials were questioned about this strategy, they often publicly responded that what they were doing was based on Presidential-level decisions.