

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Margaret Irene Strickland, of New Mexico, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Mexico.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, over the past year and a half, senior Democratic leaders decided the upheaval and hardship of a once-in-a-century pandemic was actually a chance to justify radical leftwing change.

This isn't just me conjecturing; it is what they keep saying. Right at the start of the crisis, March 2020, the House Democratic Whip said the pandemic offered "a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision."

Just last week, President Biden said: "This pandemic has been God-awful for so many reasons. . . . But"—"but," he said—"it does present us with an opportunity." So they get points for honesty, at least. The reckless taxing-and-spending spree the Democrats are writing behind closed doors is designed to leave Americans with a socialist country they never voted for and a country that working families, in many ways, would barely recognize.

Last night, one of those many efforts hit a stumbling block. Senate Democrats were reminded the rules of this institution will not permit them to shove a massive amnesty for illegal immigrants into a reckless taxing-and-spending spree they want to ram through on a party-line basis.

Our Democratic colleagues cannot pretend that massive transformational policy changes are mere budgetary tweaks. As no less an authority than our colleague now-Chairman BERNIE SANDERS said just a few years ago, "the function of reconciliation is to adjust federal spending and revenue, not"—not—"to enact major changes in social policy." That is Chairman SANDERS a few years ago. That is a lesson he and his caucus need to relearn.

Even with the border as insecure as it has ever been, the far left wanted sweeping amnesty, and Democratic leaders dutifully tried their very best. It just goes to show you how radical this legislation is going to be.

Democrats want to tamper with Americans' Medicare and stretch the program even thinner, while it already faces fiscal challenges. They want to interfere massively with the States that choose not to bow to Obamacare mandates on Medicaid; they want to use healthcare dollars to line the pock-

ets of special interests with big union giveaways; and they want to impose socialist price controls on Americans' medicines that would leave us with fewer new treatments and new cures in the future.

It adds up to a massive leap toward socialized medicine. But somehow this still only scratches the surface.

Democrats are also trying to force through an unprecedented Federal takeover of American families' childcare options that may leave faith-based childcare providers high and dry. They want an all-out assault on affordable, reliable, homegrown American energy so the entire country could be marched toward California utility prices, California gas prices, and California electricity blackouts—just what families want.

Look, I could go on all day. The reckless taxing-and-spending spree that Democrats are writing behind closed doors is shaping up to be exactly what they promised: an effort to exploit this terrible but temporary pandemic as a Trojan horse for permanent socialism.

Now, on a related matter, Democrats have united, unified control of the Senate, the House, and the White House. Their strategy for all this transformational borrowing, spending, and tax hikes was deliberately designed to include no Republican input and to receive no Republican votes.

Since Democrats decided to go it alone, they will not get Senate Republicans' help with raising the debt limit. I have explained this clearly and consistently for over 2 months. We do not have divided government. Democrats do not need our help. They have every tool to address the debt limit on their own—the same party-line process they used to ram through inflationary spending in March and already plan to use once again this fall.

Now, look, this might inconvenience Democrats. It might delay their next reckless taxing-and-spending spree, but Democrats cannot risk the full faith and credit of our Nation to serve their own partisan timelines. Democrats decided to govern alone. Their unified Democratic government must put basic governing duties ahead of partisan wish lists. If they don't, the consequences for our country would be catastrophic.

Senate Republicans would support a clean continuing resolution that includes appropriate disaster relief and targeted Afghan assistance. We will not support legislation that raises the debt limit.

Remember, when the debt suspension lapsed in August, the debt limit was automatically ratcheted up to account for all of the borrowing that had occurred up to that date. This isn't about the past. It is about the future. And Democrats want to build a partisan future without our input. So Democrats will not get bipartisan facilitators for their purely partisan spending binge.

Democrats are fully capable of owning this step themselves. The Demo-

cratic chairman of the House Budget Committee admitted just yesterday: "We can do it through reconciliation. [But] [l]eadership has said they don't want to do that."

One party controls the entire government. They have the power to address this alone. And as I have warned since July, that is what they will need to do.

TRIBUTE TO HAL ROGERS

Madam President, now, on one final matter, Representative HAL ROGERS once described Southeastern Kentuckians by saying: "They're honest, forthright. . . . they can see through a phony in a minute flat." So it is fitting his constituents just reelected him by 70 points. He is certainly honest, forthright, and no phony.

For over 40 years, HAL has fought for his home region and delivered unparalleled support for its development and its growth. In honor of HAL becoming the longest serving Representative in the history of the Commonwealth earlier this September, I would like to pay tribute to this one-of-a-kind Kentuckian.

I first met HAL during the 1971 Kentucky gubernatorial election. He was already a rising star in the State Republican Party, having just been elected Commonwealth's attorney for Pulaski and Rockcastle Counties 2 years prior. As a fellow attorney and young conservative, I looked up to HAL and watched his career with considerable interest.

Less than a decade later, HAL was elected to the House of Representatives in Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District the same year Ronald Reagan was elected President. Since then, he has won reelection 19 times, always by a wide margin. He loves his corner of the State, and as his repeated victories absolutely prove, his constituents love him right back.

Once HAL got to Congress, he quickly went to work fighting for the issues his constituents cared the most about. His hard-won legislative victories earned him praise from fellow House Republicans who tapped him to lead the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Eight years later, he became chairman of the full House Appropriations Committee, expertly cutting spending, reducing waste, and directing funds to important projects all across the country. As a former Commonwealth's attorney, HAL used his law enforcement credentials to defend Kentucky from a wide array of threats. Before the rest of America was paying full attention to the scourge of substance abuse, HAL launched Operation UNITE.

The anti-narcotics initiative covers 32 Kentucky counties and has been on the frontlines in the fight against the opioid epidemic, helping to lock up thousands of criminals and remove millions of dollars' worth of illegal drugs from the streets.

HAL is a lead promoter of investment in Southeastern Kentucky, which for

too long has suffered economic distress and seen indifference from Washington. He united Kentucky's Appalachian counties around the Shaping our Appalachian Region, or SOAR, initiative to create a concerted effort to attract jobs and development to the region.

He revolutionized Southeastern Kentucky's water infrastructure, bringing new water treatment centers to our State and championing flood protection measures.

He wrangled Federal funding for the Cumberland Gap Tunnel in Bell County, which he described as "the most significant thing that has happened there since Daniel Boone began to bring settlers through the gap."

He helped bring the fine arts to Southeastern Kentucky through the Mountain Arts Center in Prestonsburg.

Locals are so appreciative of HAL's many projects that they dubbed the state-of-the-art Center for Rural Development in Somerset, one of his capstone initiatives, as the "Taj Ma-Hal" in his honor.

And that is not the only place in HAL's district that commemorates his service. If you visit Southeastern Kentucky, you will drive along the gorgeous Hal Rogers Parkway, study groundbreaking technical advances at the Hal Rogers Advanced Technology Center, and learn important career skills as part of the Hal Rogers Scholars Program.

Whitley County residents were so thankful for HAL's work that they even named the home of their new Kentucky Splash Water Park, the Hal Rogers Family Entertainment Center.

In Congress, we are just as fond of HAL ROGERS as his constituents are back at home. I have been proud to work alongside this premier legislator for nearly four decades. We share the same priorities for the people of Kentucky and the same vision for our State's great future.

HAL would not be the man he is today without the love and support of his late wife Shirley and their children, Anthony, Allison, and John. Later in life, HAL met and married Cynthia, a Tennessean who has also come to love Kentucky and its people.

So as HAL breaks the record as the longest serving U.S. Representative in Kentucky history, let us all give thanks to this great public servant and the entire Rogers family.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRECISION AGRICULTURE

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I have heard so many inspiring stories about how small businesses across the country adapted to COVID-19 and refused to give up, even when the odds seemed overwhelming.

Mac's Creek Winery in Lexington, NE, is a great example. Owned by two generations of the McFarland family, this winery and brewery has been a Nebraska favorite since 1999. Like so many other small businesses, they were forced to shut their tasting rooms' doors when COVID hit.

But the McFarlands soon pioneered a new way to share their work with the world. They began hosting virtual tastings through Facebook Live, inviting their community to join them from home and enjoying these Nebraska-made wines.

Their first event in March of 2020 attracted just a few dozen viewers, but their livestreams soon grew to reach thousands of people across the country. HGTV featured them on their website, and they won best virtual event at the Nebraska Tourism Industry Awards last September.

When I visited Mac's Creek earlier this year, I had the chance to see firsthand how they have bounced back from the pandemic. Mac's Creek beat the odds, and they even turned last year's hardships to their advantage. But years before COVID, they overcame an even greater challenge, one that threatened to destroy their entire business.

In 2013, herbicide drift from neighboring farms wiped out nearly all of their 4,000 grapevines. This accident cost them well over \$1 million in lost production and set their growth back by at least 5 years.

They couldn't just move their vineyard somewhere else, so just as they did last year, they looked at what they needed to do and they turned to innovation to find success. With help from a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Mac's Creek was able to buy purpose-built drones to keep an eye on their 25 acres from above. These drones can help them look for early signs of herbicide drift and stop it from happening before it even starts. And they haven't suffered another incident since.

This Nebraska business took on a risky investment to protect their crops. Their drones are an example of what is known as precision agriculture technology, and Nebraska leads the United States in its adoption.

Producers from wineries to cattle ranchers can use drones and other 21st-century equipment to look after their life's work. For example, if a corn farmer wants to use less water, precision ag technology can help them calculate exactly how much to use. They can produce the same amount of corn using as much as 35 percent less water.

If a rancher wants to equip their feed bunks with sensors that track feed intake, monitor animal health, and even measure emissions from their cattle, precision ag can help them do that.

And these technologies don't just measure inputs. Autosteer and mapping technologies can also make farms more efficient, allowing producers to use less fuel to get better results. All of

these things are potential uses of precision agriculture technology, and all of them help producers become more efficient with their resources.

This equipment, it has been around since the 1990s. But like all technologies, it is constantly changing. As it grows more advanced, the market for it expands as well. And we have seen a huge rise in demand in recent years.

Precision agriculture is revolutionizing the way America's producers put food on our tables, but these technologies aren't cheap. Many farmers with small- or medium-sized operations would love to have these cutting-edge technologies, but their cost puts them just out of reach.

The adoption of precision ag equipment has been greatest on large farms, where the savings spread across many acres can generate enough to make this equipment cost effective. This equipment has the potential to transform the way producers of all sizes manage their farms, but if it only helps a small family farmer save maybe \$5 an acre next season, a \$150,000 investment starts to look a lot less attractive.

Madam President, the World Economic Forum estimates that if just a quarter of the world's farms adopted precision ag practices, farm yields globally could increase by 15 percent. They have also shown that greenhouse gas emissions and water use could decrease by at least the same amount. Adopting these technologies in Nebraska has already helped producers reduce soil erosion and carbon output while also increasing water quality in the area around their operations. And according to a recent report about the environmental benefits of precision ag, even at the current levels, this equipment already saves 30 million pounds of herbicide, 100 million gallons of fossil fuels, and 500 million gallons of water every single year. And that is just in the United States.

These technologies can help us feed a growing population while also caring for our environment. We should be encouraging more producers to turn to precision agriculture, and that is why I am joining with the senior Senator from Minnesota to introduce a bill to create a loan program that would help them do just that.

My bill would establish the Precision Agriculture Loan Program, which would offer low-cost and low-term loans to producers who want to adopt precision ag technologies but they may be unable to make these investments through traditional banks. This would be the first Federal loan program dedicated entirely to precision ag, and instead of upward of 5 percent in interest, producers could pay interest rates under 2 percent on loans 3 to 12 years in length. These loans would cover precision ag technology that improves efficiency or it reduces inputs. My bill would help the math start to make sense for our producers who would like to adopt these technologies, but they haven't been able to afford them.