

it does, then she might just stop talking altogether at a meeting, and there would be a chilling effect on democracy.

That chilling effect is a very bad thing for democracies. In other words, it should never happen in the first place. So it is critically important for the Attorney General to make very clear to everybody that, short of violence and making true threats of violence, the Federal Government will have nothing to do with the crowds and the comments that people make at a school board meeting.

All of my Republican colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee and I sent a letter to the Attorney General telling him just that. He should make clear to all Americans that, unless there is physical violence or a threat of physical violence, Federal law enforcement has nothing to do with local school board meetings; and he ought to take into consideration the capability of local law enforcement to take care of it in the first place.

BIOFUELS

Madam President, on another subject, I would like to speak to an issue that is hurting the pocketbooks of hard-working Americans, particularly in the State of Iowa.

The media has reported that the White House has been in discussions with Big Oil regarding rising fuel prices. This is quite a surprise to some of us who have heard nothing from the administration all year; that we have got to stop fossil fuels and we have got to worry more about global warming. We shouldn't stop Big Oil, but you still have got to worry about global warming.

President Biden has called on OPEC cartels to drill for additional crude oil and discussed potentially opening up our domestic Strategic Petroleum Reserve. With rising energy prices, it is commonsense to promote additional development of energy; but with the Biden administration's sole focus seemingly being on climate change, I would think more attention would be paid to promoting an emphasis upon clean energy.

Throughout my tenure in the Senate, I have promoted alternative energy sources as a way of protecting our environment and increasing our energy independence. As the No. 1 producer of corn, ethanol, and biodiesel, Iowa leads the Nation's renewable fuels industry.

But if the President doesn't care about Iowa—my State of Iowa—the President should remember the States of Illinois and Minnesota, just as an example. Historically, blue States are also major producers of corn and soybeans, as well as ethanol and biodiesel.

A recent study has shown the expanded use of ethanol under the renewable fuel standard has lowered gasoline prices by an average of 22 cents per gallon. This saves the typical American household \$250 annually. In recent weeks, E-10, which is a 10-percent mixture of ethanol and gasoline, has sold

for 35 cents to 50 cents per gallon less than gasoline with no ethanol.

Not only is ethanol-blended gas cheaper than non-ethanol gasoline, but a recent study has also shown that ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 43 percent compared to conventional gasoline.

Considering President Biden's sudden interest in high gasoline prices, a commonsense solution would be to turn to the biofuel industry for assistance in this time of high gasoline prices.

Enhancing energy security while lowering emissions was the exact reason why Congress created the renewable fuel standard in 2005 and 2007. The Midwest has the potential to provide a solution to the multifaceted problems that this administration faces.

Instead, President Biden and his White House continue—it seems to me—to turn to Big Oil to solve the energy crisis instead of looking at the renewable fuels opportunities. Big Oil seems to then have a friendly relationship with the White House, which is completely contrary to what you would think of when they want to do away with fossil fuels.

Recent rumors in the press are saying that the administration is considering gutting the renewable fuel standard with massive cuts to the required volume obligations. This is strange considering President Biden campaigned on supporting the renewable fuel standard. He campaigned in Iowa as a friend of ethanol—yes, in Iowa.

President Biden said that “the Renewable Fuel Standard marks our bond with our farmers and our commitment to a thriving rural economy.”

Increased drilling for crude oil and increasing our dependence on OPEC is not a solution to higher prices at the pumps.

Why ask OPEC to pump more oil? Why ask Big Oil to pump more oil?

Americans need relief, and that relief can come from having a partnership with the biofuels industry, and it is past time for the administration to look to the heartland instead of Texas and OPEC for an answer.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING COLIN POWELL

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I begin today with the news that General Colin Powell, who served our Nation as the first African-American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the first African-American Secretary of State, passed away this morning at 84.

General Powell leaves behind a distinguished trailblazing legacy. Born in

Harlem to Jamaican parents, he grew up with a sister and his parents in South Bronx. He graduated from Melrose High School in the Bronx in 1954. At City College, his life changed forever when he joined the school's ROTC program, quickly becoming a standout member and earning his commission as Second Lieutenant in the Army after graduation.

From humble beginnings, General Powell's career broke one glass ceiling after another. His life was a manifestation of the American dream, a true American success story.

I join all Americans in remembering General Powell's life and his dedication to the country we love.

My thoughts are with his wife Alma, his three children, and his entire family.

SENATE AGENDA

Madam President, we begin a consequential work period for the U.S. Senate. Later today, we are going to move forward on the nomination of Gustavo Gelpi to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

If confirmed today, I believe Judge Gelpi will be only the second American citizen from Puerto Rico to be appointed to that court in its history. I cannot think of a better individual to succeed the late Judge Torruella.

Judge Gelpi is a proven champion of civil rights and a defender of the rule of law. He began his career in Puerto Rico's office as a Federal defender. In 2006, he was unanimously confirmed as a district judge for Puerto Rico.

He brings both personal and professional diversity to the bench at a time when we desperately need both. I am proud to have championed his nomination, and look forward to his confirmation today.

VOTING RIGHTS

Madam President, on voting rights, this week, the Senate will have an opportunity to engage in a momentous and urgent debate protecting the right to vote in free and fair elections.

Later this evening, I will begin the process for the Senate to consider the Freedom to Vote Act, a powerful new bill designed to fortify our democracy, protect the vote, and renew the American people's trust in our elections. After I file cloture tonight on the motion to proceed, Members can expect the vote to take place on Wednesday.

The Freedom to Vote Act is a balanced, effective, and commonsense bill. It sets basic standards for all Americans to vote safely and securely, while protecting elections from subversion. It fights back against the power of Big Money and ends partisan gerrymandering, while respecting the role of States in carrying out elections.

The bill represents the first time every single Senate Democrat has united on voting rights legislation. It is a strong bill. It advances election reforms proven to work in red, blue, and purple States across the country.

I thank my colleagues—all of my colleagues—for the work in putting this

bill together. I thank them for their dedication in advancing the simple idea that all Americans, no matter what ZIP Code they live in, should have the freedom to vote safely and securely. I want to particularly thank Senator MANCHIN, who has led the way in finding common ground with our Republican colleagues on this proposal.

It is now time for us to move forward on this legislation as promised.

Now, just so we are all clear, the vote that will happen on Wednesday is a procedural vote to begin debate on the bill. Voting yes does not mean signing on any policy or bill text; it is, rather, an invitation for Senators to come to the table to debate, to deliberate, and to compromise, just as the Senate was meant to do.

If there is anything worthy of debate in this Chamber, it should be protecting and strengthening our democracy. With everything we are seeing at the State level, the Senate must take action, and we must take action now. The right to vote is the beating heart of any democracy.

I know we can vote to protect our elections and empower all Americans to have their voices heard. I hope we can do so together across the aisle. I implore my Republican colleagues to come to the table and work with us on this issue. I implore them to turn away from spurious claims of the Big Lie that are degrading faith in our democracy.

I know many of my colleagues agree in their heart of hearts that we cannot allow our democracy to fall victim to conspiracy theories, subversion, and disinformation, but they must join us in working towards solutions. To be sure, Senate Democrats don't expect that our Republican colleagues will agree with every idea we have on voting rights. We know the disagreements run deep. But in this Chamber, Senators should not run away from debating the things we disagree about. If our Republican colleagues have good ideas, we are ready to work in good faith to listen to them, to consider them, and if they are aligned with the goals of this bill, to include them in the final text. But for any of that to happen, our Republican colleagues must agree to come to the table first. They should agree to let the Senate begin debate. That is all this first vote is. It says: Are we willing to debate voting rights, sacred and important in our democracy?

It is not acceptable to simply turn away from debating voting rights, to act as if the Congress has no role to play in the defense of free and fair elections and simply pretend like there is nothing malicious afoot at the State level. No, inaction is not an option. The clock is ticking—the clock is ticking—for this Chamber to do something to protect our democracy before these dangerous laws take root for the next election. The Senate can rise to the task if given the chance, but it must be allowed to begin its work first.

Republicans, later this week, will have a chance to go on record and show if they believe that protecting our democracy is worthy of this Chamber's attention.

BUILD BACK BETTER AGENDA

Madam President, finally, a quick BBB update. This week, Senate Democrats continue our work on finalizing our Build Back Better agenda. Congress, right now, has the best chance in years to make meaningful investments to help American families climb up to the middle class and stay in the middle class.

By passing both the Build Back Better Act and the infrastructure bill, we can improve our Nation's crumbling infrastructure, create good-paying jobs for this century, and lower costs and cut taxes for American families, while taking overdue steps to meaningfully address the climate crisis. It is a difficult task, but we are committed to getting it done.

Over the last week and weekend, I held many productive conversations with my colleagues here in the Senate, with Speaker PELOSI, and with the White House. We still have work to do. We all know that in order to pass meaningful legislation, we must put aside our differences and find common ground within our party. As with any bill of such historic proportions, not every Member will get everything he or she wants, but at the end of the day, we will pass legislation that dramatically improves the lives of the American people. We will continue to make progress and keep working until the job is done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, less than a month ago, President Biden made a surprising statement—or maybe I should say, another surprising statement. He said: My Build Back Better agenda costs zero dollars—zero dollars. That is a big, you might even say unbelievable claim.

For starters, half of his agenda is a trillion-dollar infrastructure bill that will increase the deficit by more than \$250 billion over 10 years. The other part is a multitrillion-dollar tax-and-spending spree, which leans on damaging tax hikes to cover a long list of social welfare programs to make the United States of America look more like, say, a European social welfare state. Now, how could that possibly cost zero dollars? Well, the answer is pretty simple: It can't. Even the Washington Post fact checkers gave this claim two Pinocchios.

This strategy of misleading, misstating, and—I hate to say it, but there is no other word for it—downright lying to the American people is a tried-and-true strategy of the Biden administration. Whether it is advancing legislation or dodging a crisis, there is no promise that is too big to make, even if it is patently false.

Another example. Dating back to the campaign trail, President Biden has re-

peatedly promised the American people: If you make over \$400,000 a year—excuse me—if you make under \$400,000 a year, you will not pay more income tax. Well, we have heard the same talking points from the Treasury Secretary, Secretary Yellen, and the White House Press Secretary dutifully comes out and parrots the same position again and again and again. It is almost as if, if you say something often enough, people will begin to believe it even if it is not true.

Considering the enormous amounts of spending that the Biden administration has promised, I understand why they are a little worried about the truth. All of us like free stuff, whether it is a free T-shirt at a football game or free samples at a grocery store. What folks don't like, though, is learning that they are being played and that they are still paying but maybe by different means. So when it comes to free college, free childcare, and other free programs under President Biden's agenda, most people realize there is no such thing as a free lunch. Somebody somewhere is going to have to pay for it, even if it is borrowed money. The next generation, like our pages here, when they enter the workforce, they are going to be the ones who have to pay that money back. Somebody is going to have to pay it back. There is no such thing as free.

Contrary to the promises made by President Biden and his administration, the middle class will help to foot the bill for this spending bonanza. An analysis by the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation found that many families will see their taxes increase under President Biden's Build Back Better agenda.

In 2023, 2 years from now, 18 percent of those earning between \$75,000 and \$100,000 will pay more in taxes, not \$400,000 or more. More than a third of the folks earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000 a year will see a tax increase, not people making \$400,000 or more. If this trend continues into 2027, well over half of taxpayers earning between \$75,000 and \$100,000 will pay more in taxes. And a whopping 86 percent of folks earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000 will see a tax increase.

Now, you might wonder, how can the President have it so wrong? This is not news to President Biden. He knows better. He is surrounded by world-class economic advisers, analysts, and tax experts who scrutinize and scrub every single policy before it comes to see the light of day. Yet, you might wonder, why does the President persist in claiming that his tax hikes won't impact the middle class even as he is trying to slip them a massive tax bill? I hate to state the obvious, but it is just dishonest.

Of course, all of this comes at a time when many family budgets are already underwater, struggling to recover from the fiscal impact of COVID-19. Now, from gas stations, to grocery stores, to electricity bills and restaurant checks,