

to our southern border. I know these South Dakotans are always ready to serve wherever and whenever they are needed, and I am grateful for their service.

You would think that the border crisis would be at the top of the Democrats' priority list here in Washington, DC, particularly when they have to call in the National Guard from States around this country, but you would be wrong. In fact, the border crisis seems like barely a blip on the Democrats' radar, and it is not the only crisis they are ignoring.

Our national security situation is taking a giant step backward with the President's disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Here at home, inflation is becoming a serious and a long-term, not a temporary, problem. Americans' purchasing power is shrinking as they have to stretch their paychecks to cover increases in everything from the price of groceries to the high price of gasoline.

But none of that really seems to matter to Democrats. Their main priority seems to be forcing through a \$3.5 trillion partisan tax-and-spending spree that would permanently expand the reach of government into Americans' lives.

Where to start when it comes to Democrats' tax-and-spending spree? Well, there are tax hikes that would put American businesses at a disadvantage on the global stage and shrink jobs and opportunities for American workers. There is a death tax expansion that could put a lot of family farms and businesses in jeopardy. There are the major new entitlements—free college, free preschool, subsidized daycare, paid leave. Yes, one of the major existing entitlement programs, Medicare, is rapidly heading toward insolvency. Yet, instead of shoring up that program, Democrats are expanding entitlements and putting the government on the hook for an unsustainable level of spending.

Then there are items that get less attention, but they are just as troubling. Traditionally in the United States, individuals have picked the winners and losers through the free market, but the more you insert government into economic and family life, the more government ends up being the one making the decisions. Government ends up picking the winners and the losers.

Take the Democrats' childcare benefit. A 2020 Bipartisan Policy Center survey found that among working families who used center-based childcare, 53 percent used a faith-based center—53 percent. But now Democrats are coming in with their childcare subsidies and in the process changing decades-old childcare funding programs to favor secular childcare providers who provide care at daycare centers. So if you are one of the 53 percent who chooses a faith-based provider for your child, you could be out of luck, not because you changed your childcare preferences but

simply because Democrats have set up their benefit to favor secular center-based childcare providers.

Democrats are repeating this pattern of picking winners and losers throughout their bill. Labor unions win under this bill. Democrats have included a special benefit that would expressly allow union members to deduct their union dues on their taxes. Meanwhile, nonunion workers can expect to pay their usual tax bills. You only get special privileges if you are a union member. If you are one of the 90 percent of American workers who don't belong to a union, then you are not going to see say help as they subsidize the dues of those who do belong to a union. I guess Democrats want to make sure that they get those union votes to come out at election time.

Of course, that is not the bill's only benefit for unions. There is funding for electronic voting systems for union elections and incentives to purchase an electric car from a union factory.

Unions, of course, are not the only winner. Electric vehicle manufacturers, for one, also win. The bill clearly endorses electric vehicles as the—the—climate change solution for the transportation sector. Other clean energy technologies—notably, biofuels—take a back seat in this bill.

I could go on all day when it comes to the spending priorities in this bill, like the fact that the bill dedicates more than \$200 million—\$200 million—to urban agriculture. That is right—urban agriculture. I am not saying that you can't have a garden if you live in a city, but urban gardens are never going to produce the volume of food needed to feed our country, and anyone who thinks they will doesn't know much about agriculture, which may be the problem here.

Democrats' tax-and-spending spree reads like the product of too much socialist daydreaming and not enough time spent learning about how things like agriculture, energy, and economies actually work. Speaking of which, I haven't mentioned the Democrats' tree equity measure—yes, tree equity. Democrats have allowed \$3 billion prioritized for what they recently referred to and have been referring to as tree equity. Now, I support and encourage planting trees, but I don't think the Federal Government can afford to spend \$3 billion on tree equity, especially when Democrats are planning to spend \$200 million—yes, \$200 million—for a park in House Speaker PELOSI's district that features luxury housing and a golf course and provide tax benefits for Ivy League universities and other well-funded colleges, including a new tax credit for higher education institutions for teaching "environmental justice" programs.

Then there are the tax credits for electric bicycles—bicycles that can cost up to \$8,000. It may be just me, but if you can afford an \$8,000 bicycle, I am not sure you need a tax credit for it from the Federal Government.

Then, of course, Democrats are planning to provide billions of dollars to fund a Civilian Climate Corps to provide government jobs for climate activists and \$20 billion for the creation of a National Climate Bank to fund Democrats' pet environmental projects.

Now, as you can see, this list goes on and on and on. The more you read the Democrats' bill with its massive expansion of government and historic tax hikes and its payoffs to liberal constituencies, the more you realize that there is pretty much no area of life the Democrats think wouldn't be better run by the Federal Government.

But my fellow Republicans and I still believe in a vibrant, private economy, and in the right of individuals and families to run their lives as they see fit. So we will continue to oppose Democrats' social spending spree, and continue to fight to secure a future of prosperity, opportunity, and freedom—freedom—for each and every American.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I and Senator CORNYN be able to complete our remarks prior to the vote.

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I just want my colleagues to know that the Senate Appropriations Committee, yesterday, released nine appropriations bills. They allocate important resources and they help to address the pressing priorities of America's families and communities, but they also promote U.S. national security.

For more than a decade, this country has underinvested in our children, in our infrastructure, in science, and in public health. Frankly, that means we underinvested in our future.

These bills include historic increases to educate our Nation's children, to combat climate change, promote affordable housing, and improve healthcare. I am proud of the work of the committee in producing these bills, and I commend each of the subcommittee chairs for their commitment to America's future.

Now, the bills comply with the topline spending allocation contained in the fiscal year 2022 budget resolution passed by both the House and the Senate earlier this year.

So you combine this with the three bills reported from the Appropriations Committee in August, the bills provide a 13-percent increase for nondefense discretionary programs and a 5-percent increase for defense programs compared to what fiscal year 2021 enacted.

The 5-percent increase for defense programs, that is consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, which was reported by the Senate Armed Services Committee on an overwhelming bipartisan vote, and it passed the House last month again with overwhelming bipartisan support.

The Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill makes long overdue investments to help care for and educate our Nation's children, including doubling the funding for Title I-A grants to local educational Agencies. That program I mentioned is the foundation of Federal support to schools across this country.

It also increases funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant by 23 percent, and Head Start by 11 percent. We do this to provide high-quality childcare and education to working families across the Nation.

It provides a 24-percent increase over last year for the Centers for Disease Control. That is done to strengthen U.S. public health infrastructure. We know we have to do that in the wake of a global pandemic that has created terrible problems in that area.

The Commerce, Justice, Science bill provides historic funding levels for the Department of Justice Violence Against Women Act programs. That is a 48-percent increase over the last fiscal year. It is the largest appropriation for the Violence Against Women Act since its creation.

The Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development bill includes significant increases to reduce homelessness and improve housing conditions and increase affordability—something that touches all 50 of our States.

The Interior bill includes significant resources to promote conservation, to preserve our natural infrastructure, and to protect our Federal lands. And we made climate change front and center when drafting these bills, and each contains new and critical funding to help combat this challenge.

For example, for the first time ever, we invested \$54 million in a new Climate Conservation Corps; and we provide historic increases, 46 percent over last year, for EPA's air and climate program. And, for the first time in 4 years, the U.S. will contribute to the Green Climate Fund and the Clean Technology Fund, rejoining the international fight—it has to be an international fight—against climate change. We had a global retreat with the last President. The United States is standing up again and is back in the game.

We also make historic investments in medical research. I don't know anybody who doesn't want us to always improve our medical research. It ensures that America remains on the cutting edge of advanced medical science and research. So we put a 6-percent increase for the National Institutes of Health, and \$2.4 billion to create the first ever Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, and that is because of the President's bold and promising proposal to accelerate the pace of breakthroughs in medicine.

And, finally, the bills contain critical funding increases for mental and behavioral health services and to combat substance abuse—something that is a problem in every single State. These

funds are desperately needed, as we saw the rates of anxiety and depression soar during the COVID-19 pandemic and drug overdose deaths are expected to reach their highest levels to date.

Now, these are just some of the highlights of the important programs funded in the nine bills we released yesterday. They make a real difference in the lives of millions of Americans, especially after the tough year and a half we faced with COVID-19. These bills demonstrate the good work we can do with a topline in fiscal year 2022 budget resolution, which was passed by the Senate and the House earlier this year.

Now, I wish we could have followed regular order and done these bills in committee, but our Republican colleagues said they would prevent any additional consideration of bills until we have a negotiated topline. I cannot and will not allow that to stop our work. It would be irresponsible. We need to move the ball forward. In posting these bills, we show the American people what we are for.

Now, some on the other side of the aisle may characterize these bills as partisan. That is simply not true. In the spirit of comity and bipartisanship, which is the tradition of our Appropriations Committee, we worked hard to accommodate the funding priorities of all Members, both Democrats and Republicans. And the posted bills reflect that effort with many, many, many of the priorities of Republicans and many of the priorities of Democrats.

I am proud of the work of this committee in producing these bills, but our job is not done. The Federal Government is existing under and operating under a continuing resolution only until December 3. Time can go by very quickly around here. Between now and then, it is imperative that we make progress on negotiating a topline—one that is bipartisan and bicameral—so we can enact these bills into law.

I think we struck the right balance with the bills we produced and made public this week. As with everything in Congress, we rarely end where we begin.

So I look forward to working with Chair DELAURO, Ranking Member GRANGER, and Vice Chairman SHELBY to move this process forward with the goal of enacting all 12 bills by December 3.

If we fail to do that, then we face a long-term continuing resolution, which would lock in outdated spending priorities that will not serve the American people, will not meet the challenges of today, and, unfortunately, will not contain those things that both Republicans and Democrats have asked and were submitted and included in the bills that we have put in.

I know that my friend and colleague from Texas is waiting to speak.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I thank my friend, the senior Senator from Vermont, for his courtesy.

Tomorrow, the Senate will vote on the latest iteration of what has come to be known as the Democrats' partisan power grab over our elections conducted overwhelmingly by the States—actually, exclusively at the State and local level.

The legislation that prompted this discussion first popped up in 2019, when the newly elected majority in the House went on a messaging bill spree. Over the last 2 years, they have tried a number of different marketing strategies to convince the American people that this overhaul was needed.

This latest version is proof that Congress isn't buying what they are selling, and that is for good reason.

Those who were advocating for a national takeover of our State-run elections, at one point they said it was a matter of election security. Then they said this was designed to help restore voter confidence. Then they said this is a way to remove obstacles that prevented people from voting.

But facts are stubborn things. In 2020, we saw record turnout. Two-thirds of eligible voters cast a ballot, and that was the highest turnout in 120 years.

I was on the ballot in 2020. The last time I had been on the ballot, 6 years previously, there were 4.8 million voters in Texas. In 2020, there were 11.3 million voters in Texas. Compared to the 2016 Presidential election, 17 million more Americans cast a vote, and we saw historic turnouts by Black, White, Asian, and Hispanic voters.

So facts being stubborn things, clearly it is time for the advocates for this Federal takeover to come up with a new sales pitch. So our Democratic friends attacked election integrity bills being passed by State legislatures, like Texas, all across the country.

The Constitution itself gives States the power to determine how their elections should be run, and States are using that authority to make it easier to vote and harder to cheat.

Our Democratic friends have tried to frame these new State laws as somehow suppressing voting rights. As we have seen, if that is the objective, they certainly are doing a lousy job at it because people are voting in unprecedented numbers.

Well, it is interesting to contrast some of the changes that our Democratic colleagues, including the Merrick Garland's Department of Justice, comparing the reforms they have attacked and those that they believe are just fine.

The Georgia law, which the Department of Justice has sued under section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, actually expanded early voting in person to 17 days. But if you live in Massachusetts, you can only vote for 11 days. I haven't heard many complaints about the Massachusetts voting laws restricting people's access to the polls. And the President's home State of Delaware, they