

under the CCP's control. The only thing stopping him is 100 miles of ocean: the Taiwan Strait.

But the CCP's ambitions won't end with Taiwan. India, Japan, South Korea, and many countries in the South China Sea are feeling the effects of China's aggression in ways no one expected even a decade ago. And to back up their global agenda, the CCP is hard at work expanding China's nuclear arsenal.

As Admiral Richard, the commander of STRATCOM, wrote earlier this year:

China's nuclear weapon stockpile is expected to double—if not triple or quadruple—over the next decade.

A new report out yesterday from the Pentagon paints a worse picture. It predicts that China could have at least 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030, roughly five times what they have now. As part of this expansion, China is building at least three new missile fields, each capable of holding over 100 ICBMs. And maybe most concerning, China recently tested an extremely sophisticated new weapons system that combines space capabilities with advanced hypersonics. This nuclear capable prototype could give China a unique edge over our own arsenal.

Madam President, this needs to be a wake-up call for us. We must change our approach to China. We can't keep pretending that these problems don't exist.

Thankfully, concern about China's rise is an area of bipartisan consensus here in Congress. But recognizing that there is a problem is not enough. We have to get our act together and we have to do something about it. There are many ways for us to push back against the CCP, but, by far, the most fundamental thing we can do to safeguard against China's rise is to invest in our military.

The old adage "peace through strength" still applies today, but the Biden administration has proposed raising defense spending by only 1.6 percent, and taking this year's inflation into account, that means we have a proposed cut. That defies basic logic. The world is not getting safer. Threats like China are not going away.

When we met earlier this year to review the President's budget request and write our annual defense authorization bill, the Senate Armed Services Committee debated defense cuts.

What was the result?

A huge bipartisan majority—25 of the 26 members—voted to authorize an additional \$25 billion in defense spending, which primarily supported the unfunded priorities of our commanders.

This provides our military with the real budget growth necessary to keep pace with an adversary like China. It makes critical investments in readiness and in modernization, as well as in research and development programs that help America keep our technological edge.

It also includes a number of specific investments that would strengthen our

force posture in the Indo-Pacific theater.

Most importantly, the bill authorizes an additional \$230 million to begin improving missile defense capabilities on Guam. Guam is a key element of our regional presence, but it has been increasingly threatened by China's growing arsenal. INDOPACOM commanders have warned of this threat since 2019, and the situation has only grown dire since then.

The resources authorized by this bill would begin to address this threat, and by improving our defensive capabilities in the region, we can keep conflict from beginning in the first place.

Like many of my colleagues, I am at a loss to explain why the Democratic leader hasn't brought the NDAA to the floor. Even if we voted on it today, this would still be one of the latest NDAA votes in history.

So as we celebrate Veterans Day next week and consider the sacrifice and service of America's bravest, we should all remember our responsibility as Members of Congress, to give our military men and women the resources they need to successfully complete the missions that they are given. We cannot afford to delay any longer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

BUILD BACK BETTER AGENDA

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, everything we are doing to lead our country to build back better from this pandemic is about putting workers at the center of our economy. It is about raising wages and bringing down costs.

We know what has happened in this country in the last decade. We have seen profits go up. We have seen the stock market go skyward. We have seen executive compensation explode upward. Yet wages in Nevada and Ohio and all over this country have essentially been flat. That is why this Build Back Better plan is about raising wages and bringing down costs.

We know what is wrong with our country. I said 20 years. It has been 30 years, 40 years where productivity has gone up. Workers are earning more and more for their companies and for their bosses, but they simply aren't sharing in the wealth that they have created. They have simply seen their wages flat.

It has gotten more and more expensive for families to raise a family and build a middle-class life. Healthcare, childcare, prescription drugs, higher education, housing are things the Presiding Officer and I have worked on in the Banking and Housing Committee.

Costs have doubled, tripled, quadrupled since people my age were trying to go to school and start a family. Meanwhile, people's hard work isn't paying off.

I remember in our Banking Committee, we did a hearing. It was more of a listening session. It was one where Senators were not asking questions. It was listening to people, which we should probably do more often. It was called the "Dignity of Work" session.

One woman was from southern West Virginia, who struggled her whole life and, clearly, was working hard. She said the words "working" and "poor" should not be in the same sentence. Think about that. She has worked all her life. She is making \$13—she didn't go to Harvard. She didn't go to Ohio State. She worked all her life. She worked to raise kids. She is still making \$12, \$13, \$14 an hour—and that, Madam President, as costs only ever seem to go up. Even middle-class families don't feel stable. That was before the pandemic.

We know that in this country, before the pandemic, a quarter of people paid more than half their income—more than half their income—in housing, in rent. That means if one thing happens in their lives—their car breaks down; their child gets sick, has to stay home from school; they maybe have a minor workplace injury and miss a week of work—everything can go wrong. Their lives can turn upside down because they can be evicted.

Then what happens?

We know this pandemic has upended the global economy. Supply chains are struggling. People feel their budget squeezed. They are anxious about whether prices that have gone up will ever go back down.

We heard a lot of politicians, particularly in this body, try to stoke families' anxiety for their own political gain, but they don't offer solutions. Their only answer is: Let's take power away from workers.

They think the only way to keep prices low is to keep wages even lower. That is a false choice.

We work on real solutions to bring down the biggest cost Americans face for the long term and to help families keep up with the cost of living.

Housing, childcare, healthcare—those are three of the biggest items in any family's budget. Build Back Better tackles all of them.

On the Banking and Housing Committee, everything we are doing is about making housing more affordable, whether you pay a mortgage or whether you pay rent. Housing is just way too expensive and not available to enough people, plain and simple. We need to build more homes people can afford. We need to make the houses and the townhouses and the apartments we already have more affordable, and we need to make it affordable to buy a home.

I visit communities in Ohio all the time with houses that look affordable. They are listed, maybe, at even \$50,000 or \$75,000, but families can't come up with a down payment or sometimes they can't find lenders to make the loans. Sometimes we see these lower cost properties snapped up by private equity—by investors paying cash. We are working to fix that with plans like targeted down payment assistance, expanding access to lower cost mortgages.

Look at healthcare for a moment. Monthly premiums, deductibles, and

prescription drug prices still eat away at people's budgets. In the American Rescue Plan, we strengthen the Affordable Care Act to make ACA insurance plans more affordable. Customers are saving an average of 40 percent on their monthly premiums on ACA plans because of the American Rescue Plan we passed in March. We will make sure those cost savings continue so Americans can save on their coverage.

We will make it more affordable for seniors and Americans with disabilities to get the care they need at home from a workforce that actually makes a living wage.

I was with a number of home care workers in Cleveland the other day. These are people who take care of people we love. They take care of aging parents; they take care of workers injured on the job; they take care of families. They make \$11, \$12, \$13 an hour. Some of them have been doing this for 20 years, and they still don't make a living wage.

As I said earlier, as the lady from West Virginia said, the words "working" and "poor" should not be in the same sentence.

We know how powerful the Big Pharma lobbyists are. For years—decades—many of us have fought to allow Medicare to negotiate prices with drug companies, just like private insurance companies and the Veterans Health Administration do.

I used to, as a Member of Congress, take busloads to Canada—about 3 hours away—so that seniors could buy prescription drugs in Windsor, Ontario, because it cost half as much. It was the same brand name, same dosage, same packaging, but the Canadian Government negotiates prices directly with the drug companies. The American Government doesn't.

Why?

Well, you know why. Look down the hall at MITCH MCCONNELL's office, who has been the Republican leader of the Senate for many years. Look at the lobbyists from the drug companies who line up outside his office. He is always telling people: No, we are going to do whatever the drug companies want. We know that the entire minority, the entire Republican Party here, is in the pockets of the drug companies. We know that.

The problem is we have got to get all 50 Democrats to stand up and say: No. We are going to negotiate. We are going to stand with Medicare beneficiaries. We are going to stand with people who need prescription drugs—of all ages—and we are going to negotiate on their behalf directly with the drug companies, cutting the price.

We do that with the VA. Whether it is in Reno or in Cleveland, whether it is in Las Vegas or in Columbus, the VA pays significantly less for prescription drugs than do the rest of us.

In this bill, we are finally standing up to the drug companies. We are going to start bringing down seniors' prescription costs. For the first time ever,

we are empowering Medicaid to negotiate directly. It is going to make a difference for seniors—a huge difference for seniors—who are living on fixed incomes.

Of course, we know, for young families, they face, generally, different costs. The children of working parents often get their health insurance through Medicaid or through CHIP. Right now, if a mom takes on an extra shift, or if a dad takes a bonus for a job well done, that tiny change—that small change in their monthly income—could cause their kids to lose their insurance for the month.

What kind of policy is that?

So Dad works really hard and is really good at his job, so he gets a raise; and Mom wants to work an extra shift, so she brings a little more money home.

And then we take the benefit away?

So we are saying to them: Yes, we believe in working hard, and we believe in family values, but if you work too hard and you make too much money, we are going to take away the benefit.

That kind of policy is just stupid. That is why we are including my legislation that will keep kids insured all year. It means parents won't have to worry they will get hit with a huge medical bill if their child gets sick in the same month they work some extra hours.

Of course, the biggest cost for so many families is childcare. The Build Back Better plan will ensure that middle-class families pay no more than 7 percent of their income on childcare. What a relief that is going to be.

Again, the point of this bill is job creation. Build Back Better is job creation; it is the biggest tax cut in American history for families with children; and it is to bring costs down.

One of the most oppressive, most burdensome, most difficult costs for families is childcare. For a family with one toddler and two parents who earn \$50,000 a year, our plan will save them \$5,000—\$5,000—in childcare costs. Some families will save up to \$6,500.

Think of what that means. On top of this, as I said, is the biggest tax cut for working families in American history.

In my State and in Nevada—the Presiding Officer's State that Senator CORTEZ MASTO represents—it is not much different from the rest of the country.

More than 90 percent of the families in Ohio who have children under 18 will, at a minimum, get a \$3,000 tax cut—at a minimum, \$3,000 a year. That is a real tax cut. That is not like a deduction. Those are real dollars in their pockets. Think about that: more than 90 percent of families in this country.

In my State, it is families with 2.2 million children. That many kids, that many families, will get at least a \$3,000 tax cut. If they have three children, they will get an \$8,000 or a \$9,000 tax cut in the course of a year, and that is one of the most important parts of this bill. It will help them keep up with the

costs of diapers and childcare and clothes and all of the other expenses.

One of the joys of this job is going online where we have a website. We have a "tell your story" about the biggest tax cut in American history for working families and what that means to you.

One woman wrote in and said: For the first time in my life, I can send my son to summer camp for a week.

A man wrote in from Cincinnati and said: For the first time ever, I can, finally, now afford fast-pitch softball equipment for my daughter.

Others have said: You know, now I can put aside \$100 a month for my child to go to Eastern Gateway or to Stark State or to North Central Ohio's technical or community college.

Others have said—and this is the one we hear the most. You have heard so many families talk about the last week of the month. For the people around here who make more money than this, you don't think of it much; but in the last week of the month, so many families face the anxiety of: How do I put together enough money to pay my rent this month?

Well, the child tax credit has relieved that anxiety for millions of families because they get that \$300 or that \$250 or, maybe, with two children, they get \$600 on the 15th of the month that can ease the making of their rent that time.

But it comes down to: Whose side are you on?

It comes down to MITCH MCCONNELL and the lobbyists in his office and the politicians who always do his bidding and pass their tax cuts for the wealthy and the corporations that outsource jobs, and you know that. It was 4 years ago that there was the biggest tax cut, and 70 percent of that tax cut went to the wealthiest 1 percent of people. Contrast that with our tax cut whereby 90 percent of Ohio families will get at least a \$3,000-a-year tax cut.

It is pretty simple. If you want tax cuts for billionaires, then vote against this bill. If you want tax cuts for working families, that is why you will support Build Back Better.

Do you want tax cuts for drug companies, or do you want to bring down prescription drug prices? Do you want tax cuts for big banks that won't give your family a mortgage, or do you want to bring down the cost of housing?

When you love this country, you fight for the people who make it work. You fight for their jobs. You fight for their higher wages. You fight to bring down their cost of living. That is what we are doing.

I yield the floor to my colleague from Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I rise today to speak about an issue that is very concerning and has to do with our national security and our homeland security.