

thank President Biden for finally delivering on something that previous administrations have tried to do but have been unable to complete.

BUILD BACK BETTER AGENDA

Mr. President, make no mistake, we will keep going in the weeks ahead by passing the rest of President Biden's Build Back Better agenda.

It is very simple. If we want to create more jobs, if we want to fight inflation, if we want to help families lower costs, the best thing we can do is pass Build Back Better.

Let me repeat that. Want to fight inflation? Support Build Back Better.

For all of 2021, we have seen a historic and unprecedented economic recovery compared to where we were at the depths of the COVID crisis. But there is no denying that, as our recovery continues, we must work to address supply chain troubles that have exacerbated inflation in recent months.

Build Back Better is exactly what the doctor ordered. No fewer than 17 Nobel Prize-winning economists and economists across the political spectrum have said repeatedly that Build Back Better and infrastructure together will reduce—reduce—inflationary pressures.

In just, I think it was, this morning's Washington Post, Larry Summers, one of the inflation hawks in this country, recommended passing Build Back Better as a way to reduce inflation.

The childcare investments alone will save parents thousands of dollars a year. Right now, families pay an average of \$10,000 annually on childcare for each kid under 4. Many pay more than that. That is a backbreaking expense that too many families—the majority—simply cannot afford.

Build Back Better will provide the largest investment in childcare ever. Extending the childcare tax credit will help parents save on things like diapers and groceries and gasoline.

And, of course, Build Back Better will finally empower Medicare to directly negotiate drug prices in Part B and Part D, lowering costs for millions of seniors and American families. On insulin alone, our plan would make it so that Americans with diabetes won't pay more than \$35 a month for insulin.

Mr. President, none of the things I am talking about are luxuries; none are handouts. They are daily essentials that families need to thrive and which, over the years, have grown expensive.

And America is behind this. In every poll you see, they are for of all these things.

Why will not a single Republican vote for it? Why will not a single Republican vote to reduce insulin costs to \$35, not a single Republican vote to help Americans with childcare, not a single Republican vote for the best way to reduce inflation, even though they talk about it a lot?

It is profoundly disappointing to see our Republican colleagues more focused on exploiting problems faced by the American people. Just recently, my

colleague, the junior Senator from Florida, told Americans precisely how he feels about the rising costs, inflation costs, faced by families. His quote: "[It] is a gold mine for us." It is a gold mine; that is what the Republican junior Senator from Florida said.

How cynical, how low, how wildly out of touch is that?

The same Republicans who spent years under Donald Trump cutting taxes for the wealthy are now opposing relief for the middle class and cheering for costs to go up. I hope the American people remember that. Democrats are fighting to pass legislation to lower costs. Republicans, on the other hand, think inflation is "a gold mine" for them and are rooting for prices to go up. These are the same partisan, short-sighted games that have frustrated American families, who have increasingly wondered who in government is looking out for them.

Well, yesterday, Americans got to see one shining example of what can happen when elected officials do look out for them. Build Back Better is another opportunity to do the same, and we will not let up until we pass Build Back Better and keep our promise to recapture that sunny American optimism that has long been the key to our success.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, finally, on NDAA, last night, I took the first procedural step for the Senate to begin consideration of our annual national defense bill.

Republicans have repeatedly said this legislation is urgent and needs to be taken up immediately. We have heard them say that. They have signed letters about it. With their cooperation, the Senate can start voting as early as today. We are ready to do that, and I hope Republicans can join in moving this legislation forward quickly.

This year, it is my hope and intention to add to the NDAA the bipartisan legislation the Senate passed earlier this year to boost American manufacturing, scientific research and innovation, and U.S. competitiveness.

The U.S. Innovation and Competition Act, USICA—formerly known as the Endless Frontier Act, which I championed with Senator YOUNG and with great help from so many; among them, Senator CANTWELL—would be one of the largest Federal investments in science, technology, and manufacturing in decades. It is an urgent and necessary step that will put more Americans to work in every corner of the country. It will fight inflation and relieve overburdened supply chains.

Talking about supply chains, pass USICA. Nothing will do more over the next few years to reduce supply chain problems than this bill, and especially in the semiconductor industry.

The chip shortage is not some abstract issue; it is impacting the daily lives of Americans. Cars, refrigerators, and other household appliances require chips. Supply shortages mean Americans are left waiting a long time for

these essentials. We have legislation ready to go to fix this major chip crisis. Addressing this crisis cannot wait.

A generation ago, we used to produce about a third of the world's chip supply. Now fewer than 12 percent are made in America while other countries have lapped us, particularly China. This hurts American workers, American consumers, American national security.

We should pass USICA this year—and it is a bipartisan bill—so we can strengthen domestic chip production and drive new investment in the industry to help address this shortage. If we can pass the defense bill with USICA language included, I am hopeful that we will be able to work with the Speaker and our House colleagues to find a way to get this legislation enacted before the end of the year.

Once again, before I yield the floor, my kudos, accolades, fondness, and love to the great Senator from Vermont, who will now speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). The Senator from Vermont.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished majority leader for his comments. He and I have been friends for decades. I also acknowledge the distinguished Secretary of the Senate, who is here this morning.

Mr. President, eight times the voters of Vermont—who are my neighbors, my friends, my family—have had the great faith to send me to the U.S. Senate to represent them. Yesterday, I told those neighbors and friends and my family that I would not run for reelection.

I told the Vermonters who have humbled me since my first election to the Senate in 1974 that I will leave this seat at the conclusion of my term. It is a decision I do not come to lightly but one in which Marcelle and I find great peace.

In the last nearly 47 years, the Senate has become a family to both Marcelle and me. Here we found friends, some of the best of friends, and relationships that will and have lasted a lifetime. But the Senate has always been where I have come to fight for Vermont, a State that has been my home since birth, the place where I met Marcelle, where we started our family, and to which in early 2023, we will return for good. It is time to go home.

Here is the thing about the Senate. Here is where small States like Vermont have not just a seat at the table but a voice at the table. For decades, I have been privileged to fight for Vermont, from the small grown-in-Vermont ideas like the revitalization of our historic downtowns to farm to school programs, to organic farming—all of which started small and have become increasingly popular across the country—and to Vermont's trailblazing approach to criminal justice reforms and victim advocacy, to taking Vermonters' outward view that our great Green Mountain State is open and welcome to anyone, including

those fleeing desperate situations in far-off places. On all of these issues and so many more, it has been an honor to represent the great State—the greatest State—of Vermont in the U.S. Senate.

I am going to have more to say about the challenges, the rewards, and, I am afraid, some disappointments over the last 46 years at a later time. Now I want to celebrate the accomplishments that, together with my constituents, we have achieved for Vermont over the last decades.

I want to recognize the work still to do this year in Congress.

I want to thank the unbelievably wonderful women and men on my staff and my staff throughout the years. They have steadfastly stood by me in our shared goals to deliver for Vermonters and for Vermont and for the country.

I want to thank my family—my children, grandchildren, my parents, and Marcelle's parents who were here with me to start this journey in the first Senate election who I know watch over the entire Leahy family today. I think of how my immigrant grandparents and great-grandparents and Marcelle's immigrant parents, how they must feel if they are looking down.

And, of course, Marcelle, my closest friend, my partner. The last couple of years have been challenging in ways we could never have imagined. But she was with me from the first moment of the first campaign, and we made our decision together and decided it is time to go back home.

Now, we both look forward to the hard work the coming year will bring with the same conviction that brought us to Washington in the first place; that the brighter horizons of tomorrow hold the hope of the future and the privilege I feel to serve in this body and trying to guide our wonderful country toward the future.

As I said, I will speak more about this later, but, Mr. President, I thank my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

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. McCONNELL. Mr. 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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, President Biden and his team flew to Glasgow for a glitzy conference. World leaders traveled there to attend one another's speeches on carbon emissions and climate.

The world's largest emitter was not there. China pumps out more than one-quarter of the entire world's emissions, but President Xi didn't bother to at-

tend this conference. Putin didn't show up either. He and his cronies in Moscow are too busy using Russia's natural gas to stranglehold the energy and make energy hostages out of our European friends who rushed too naively toward renewables.

This goes to the core problems with the anti-energy agenda that liberal elites want to thrust on our country—maximum self-inflicted pain for American families in exchange for no meaningful global gains.

They would have America tie one hand behind our back while our competitors and adversaries keep right on going. This hurts families and helps China.

Across the country, working families are already worrying about the big, potentially historic spikes in energy costs and heating bills that are headed their way. Here is the New York Times headline from last week: "Winter Heating Bills Loom as the Next Inflation Threat."

Futures contracts for home heating fuels have skyrocketed in price. Natural gas users have just about doubled from last year. For heating oil and propane, it is actually even worse. Our colleagues on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee are holding a hearing this morning on rising heating costs.

In Kentucky, where about 4 in 10 households are heated by natural gas, families are about to get slammed. Even more Kentucky families rely on straight electricity for their heat, and, in our State, more than two-thirds of our electrical power comes from coal. Coal literally keeps the lights on, and it keeps the cold out.

That is why the original Obama-Biden War on Coal hits States like Kentucky so very hard and why the even more radical sequel the Democrats are planning next would fall on the heartland like a ton of bricks.

The President's special envoy for climate issues John Kerry says:

[Y]ou have to phase down coal before you can end coal.

One of the President's nominees to the Treasury Department has admitted that small producers of affordable American energy "are going to probably go bankrupt in short order."

American families are staring down the barrel of skyrocketing heating bills, and the Democrats' response is to go to war against affordable American energy. The reckless taxing-and-spending spree they are writing behind closed doors and want to pass in a matter of weeks would spend hundreds of billions of dollars on Green New Deal-type policies that would saddle families with even higher prices and make our Nation even more dependent on Russia and the Mideast.

Of course, energy inflation is just one part of the huge inflation crisis that Democrats have unleashed. According to reports in one new survey, 90 percent of Americans are either somewhat concerned or very concerned about in-

flation and rising costs. Nine out of ten households are hurting. Sixty-seven percent of the country, two-thirds, say Washington needs to stop printing and spending so much and driving prices even higher.

Energy bills and gas prices are just one corner of this inflation crisis, but Democrats seem to want to ignore the people, plow ahead, and spend trillions more.

Even liberal economists who like the Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree because they agree with the far-left transformation admit it would make inflation even worse next year.

There is no part of our economy that can afford another massive dose of socialism, but Democrats are specifically targeting American energy to get hit especially hard. They are planning direct new taxes, new fees, and new regulatory mandates for energy producers. They want to make affordable, reliable energy artificially expensive to force Americans toward the less affordable, less reliable forms of energy that elite liberals would rather they use. It would hurt families badly; it would help China in a big way. That is because the Biden administration doesn't have any strategic plan to snap its fingers and turn our massive country into some green utopia overnight. They just want to throw boatloads of government money at things like solar panels and electric vehicles and hope it all works out. But China absolutely dominates the supply chains for lithium batteries, for solar panels, and for practically all the fashionable purchases into which Democrats want to dump all this money. In all likelihood, Democrats' supposedly green agenda would just provide a massive one-way gift to our adversary, the world's No. 1 emitter, the Chinese Communist Party.

This isn't Build Back Better; it is Build Back Beijing. Here is just one example: There is a raw material called polysilicon that is crucial for solar panels. According to the New York Times, more than 80 percent of the entire world's supply comes from China. About half of the world's supply comes from the Xinjiang Province, where China is brutalizing the Uighur minority with tactics that include forced labor.

There are other key resources, including critical minerals, where China has similar strangleholds. Here are some recent headlines:

"Lithium Shortage May Stall Electric Car Revolution and Embed China's Lead."

"China's lithium companies are in an investment frenzy."

Just like liberal policies are hostile to the American energy we produce here at home, they are also hostile to exploring for these critical minerals here at home. Their massive proposal is backed with anti-hard rock mining provisions that would make it even harder to stand up American supply chains for critical minerals.