

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

So here is the bottom line: American families don't want Washington politicians waging a holy war on fossil fuels in the first place. They can't afford that nonsense. But it is even more absurd that Democrats' top-down schemes would just increase China's wealth and dominance all along the way. They don't have some smart master plan to invest in America's future. They have a plan to build back Beijing and raise American families' gas prices and heating bills even higher so that we could massively stimulate Chinese export markets. Hurt families; help China—every piece of their reckless policies fits this mold.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we are coming up on a year of Democratic governance here in Washington, and what do Democrats have to show for it? Nothing good.

On the international front, the President's most significant act was his disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, which lowered our standing with our allies and continues to jeopardize our national security.

On the domestic front, Democrats have largely ignored a massive crisis along our southern border that continues to rage because they can't take on the open borders left in their own political party.

Look at what is happening with the supply chain. There are 90 containers sitting at the port at Long Beach waiting to get into the country, and the President and his team can't really do anything about it because they are unwilling to take on the Teamsters.

If you look at our cities, homicides are up in all of our major cities across this country. It seems that perhaps a "defund the police" approach to communities' safety isn't something that sends the right signal to people who want to break our laws.

Then there is inflation. You might call it the Democrats' signature domestic achievement.

So how did we get here? How did they get us here? Well, despite their lack of a mandate and their extremely narrow majorities in Congress, Democrats came into office last January determined to expand government and implement a far-left, Big Government, socialist agenda. In their minds, the coronavirus crisis provided the perfect opportunity to advance their plans.

So despite the fact that Congress had just passed—just passed—a nearly \$1 trillion bipartisan coronavirus response bill in December—the fifth, I might add, the fifth bipartisan bill Congress had passed in just 10

months—Democrats declared that we immediately needed another piece of ostensibly coronavirus relief legislation—and not just another piece of legislation, a massive piece of legislation.

Despite the fact that the December bill had met essentially all of the pressing coronavirus needs the country was facing, Democrats decided that we needed to spend another \$1.9 trillion. Democrats were warned that the size of their so-called American Rescue Plan, which was substantially in excess of anything the economy required, ran the risk of spurring inflation.

Obama economic adviser Larry Summers warned in the Washington Post:

There is a chance that macroeconomic stimulus on a scale closer to World War II levels than normal recession levels will set off inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation, with consequences for the value of the dollar and financial stability.

That, again, was Obama economic adviser Larry Summers.

Well, Democrats passed their bill anyway. They flooded the economy with a lot of unnecessary government money, and the results have been predictable. Inflation. Significant inflation. Inflation, to borrow a phrase from Larry Summers, "of a kind we have not seen in a generation."

Last week, we found out that inflation rose 6.2 percent last year in a year-over-year analysis, the largest increase in more than 30 years—30 years.

Families are facing higher prices at the grocery store. And when I say "higher," I mean a lot higher. The price of meat, poultry, fish, and eggs was up 11.9 percent year over year in October—11.9 percent. Families are also facing higher prices at the gas pump, for housing, for electricity, for furniture and vehicles and pets and pet products, and the list goes on.

While wages are rising, they are being outstripped by inflation, which means that many families are dealing with a de facto pay cut. Think about it—6.2 percent increase in inflation. That is essentially a 6.2-percent pay cut for American families.

A big reason families are struggling with the higher cost of pretty much everything is Democrats' decision to flood the economy with unnecessary government money by passing the so-called American Rescue Plan. You don't have to take my word for it; I quoted Larry Summers earlier.

Here is what former Obama economic adviser Jason Furman had to say recently when discussing our current inflation problem:

The original sin was an oversized American Rescue Plan. It contributed to both higher output but also higher prices.

Now, you might think that the inflation that has resulted from the American Rescue Plan would be giving Democrats pause right now. You might think that they would be putting a hold, you know, tapping the brakes a little bit on any more big spending until inflation calms down somewhat

from its 30-plus-year high. But you would be wrong. Democrats are actually planning to double down on the strategy that helped cause so much inflation in the first place and pass another giant spending bill.

That is right.

Democrats are trying to finalize a new \$1.75 trillion tax-and-spending spree, the so-called Build Back Better plan—on top of their \$1.9 trillion spending spree from earlier this year.

I say \$1.75 trillion, but Democrats only arrived at that number through a combination of shell games and budget gimmicks. An honest accounting of the cost of this proposal over 10 years would reveal a much higher pricetag—some analyses and assessments suggest as high as \$4 trillion or more.

And if Democrats succeed in passing this latest partisan spending spree, Americans should brace themselves because this new flood of government money will undoubtedly make an already serious inflation situation much worse.

It is no exaggeration to say that Democrats' main focus this year has been growing the size of the Federal Government and expanding its reach into Americans' lives. No sooner had they passed their massive \$1.9 trillion spending bill in March, then the Democrats moved on to their next massive spending proposals which have been coalesced into the so-called Build Back Better bill the House is planning to take up later this week.

Other government business has been forced to take a backseat. Democrats have ignored, as I said earlier, the massive—massive—crisis at our southern border. They have ignored our inflation crisis. And they have pushed consideration of essential legislation in favor of working on their tax-and-spending plan.

This week, the Senate will finally—and I say finally—consider the fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, a month and a half after the 2022 fiscal year has started. Shipbuilding projects, military infrastructure projects, development of new combat systems, a pay increase for our troops, they have all had to wait—all had to wait—while Democrats negotiated over their Big Government socialist spending spree.

And about that socialist spending spree, despite the fact that Democrats have pushed aside most other matters in favor of focusing on their spending plan, they still haven't managed to come up with a bill that can pass the House and the Senate.

And the tax proposals they plan to use to—and I say partially—partially pay for the bill seem to change on a daily basis. And I say partially because, again, a great independent analysis from places like Penn Wharton suggest that the revenue that they would raise to pay for all the spending in the bill would fall somewhere between \$2 and \$2.5 trillion short of the