

left the workforce, while about 71,000 men left the workforce. Overall, approximately 2.4 million women have left the workforce since last February. This has been a common and unfortunate trend we are seeing as a result of the pandemic, and I know for certain it is definitely tied to the fact that schools have not reopened.

West Virginia's State superintendent said recently:

There is absolutely no substitution for a teacher in the lives of a child.

He continued by saying:

There is no substitution for what that means to the community and the families—not just for the academics but for the social, emotional, [and] physical well-being.

He is absolutely right, and this is just another reason why it is so important for our children to return to school safely.

At the same time, I know there is no one-size-fits-all solution. State leaders, local governments, school administrators, and parents must take this data and these recommendations and apply them to the realities they see in their own communities.

Congress has provided \$68 billion in resources for K–12 schools that they could use last year, which schools could use to implement these strategies. For these, this may mean continuing some form of remote learning. For others, including my State of West Virginia, it means bringing every K–8 student to a 5-day school week.

Before I conclude, I want to take a moment to thank the teachers, the parents, and the students who have adjusted and readjusted over the past years.

Despite the many challenges—whether they are technical, logistical, or emotional challenges—you have tried to make it work the best you can, and for that we are all very grateful. But now we have to do the three r's. We must look at the data, listen to the stories, and look at the realities in our classrooms and in our communities.

Get our children back to school. Respect the science. Reopen the schools safely, and return students, teachers, and learning to the classroom, where it should be.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DURBIN). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I first want to thank my colleague from West Virginia and my colleague from Iowa for their focus on getting our kids back in school.

I agree with the three r's: respect the science, reopen our schools safely, and return our teachers and our children to our classrooms.

It has been almost a year since schools first shuttered due to COVID-19. In many States across the Nation, unfortunately, schools remain closed. The consequences are devastating. Being forced to stay at home is taking a significant social and emotional toll, and it also directly impacts our children's future.

Continuing to subject kids to this unnecessary virtual-learning system is not backed by science or facts. I applaud my State of Florida for getting schools reopened quickly and safely.

The science is overwhelming and clear about reopening our Nation's schools. It is safe, and it is necessary for the well-being and the future of students. The CDC confirmed last month that in-person instruction does not pose an increased risk of community transmission. Schools can and should be open, and they can do so safely.

We need to be honest about why we are even having this conversation today. The only reason schools across the Nation remain closed is because my Democratic colleagues and the Biden administration are standing with teachers unions instead of standing up for our children.

For months, we have heard Democrats preach about following the science, but now Democrats don't want to acknowledge the scientific evidence that school reopenings are safe. They are blindly following the teachers unions because they are afraid of losing campaign contributions, and they are pushing a lie that schools can't reopen without more taxpayer money.

Here is the truth: The funding they claim is absolutely necessary for schools to reopen would not even be allocated for 2 or 3 years. According to the Congressional Budget Office, Biden's COVID spending bill would distribute only \$6.4 billion to K–12 schools this year. The remaining \$122 billion would be spent between the years 2022 and 2028.

Here is another fact: Congress has already provided \$68 billion for K–12 schools, but so far States have spent just \$4 billion of that money. Schools don't need more money to open safely. Yet the Biden administration keeps clinging to this lie and doing everything possible to keep schools closed.

Last week, Speaker PELOSI said:

We want as many kids to be back in school as possible. For that to happen, it takes some money.

Also last week, Vice President HARRIS would not directly answer whether it is safe for teachers to go back to school if they are not vaccinated, despite clear CDC guidelines that it is not a prerequisite if other safety measures are in place.

And earlier this month, all 50 Senate Democrats voted against students safely returning to classrooms even after teachers have been vaccinated. We all agree that teachers should be able to receive vaccinations. I will work with any of my colleagues on a way to get vaccines to teachers more quickly.

We all agree that schools should have additional resources to ensure our students and teachers have safe, clean, and healthy classrooms, and we have allocated \$68 billion to do just that right now. But keeping schools closed doesn't make sense. It is hurting our children and America's poorest families the most.

I grew up in a poor family that struggled to make ends meet, and education was life-changing for me, just as it is for families across our great country. Every student in this Nation deserves the option of in-person learning.

It is time for the Biden administration to acknowledge that the best place for children to learn is in the classroom, and it is time for my Democratic colleagues and the President to stop putting union bosses ahead of America's students and families.

Let's get our schools open now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 8.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Gina Marie Raimondo, of Rhode Island, to be Secretary of Commerce.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Executive Calendar No. 8, Gina Marie Raimondo, of Rhode Island, to be Secretary of Commerce.

Charles E. Schumer, Sherrod Brown, Sheldon Whitehouse, Benjamin L. Cardin, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Alex Padilla, Jacky Rosen, Richard J. Durbin, Tammy Baldwin, Jack Reed, Chris Van Hollen, Richard Blumenthal, Tim Kaine, Martin Heinrich, Christopher Murphy, Maria Cantwell.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 13.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Cecilia Elena Rouse, of New Jersey, to be Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 13, Cecilia Elena Rouse, of New Jersey, to be Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

Charles E. Schumer, Sherrod Brown, Tina Smith, Tammy Baldwin, Thomas R. Carper, Sheldon Whitehouse, Patrick J. Leahy, Brian Schatz, Christopher A. Coons, Jack Reed, Michael F. Bennet, Debbie Stabenow, Chris Van Hollen, Ron Wyden, Martin Heinrich, Bernard Sanders, Edward J. Markey, Cory A. Booker.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion be waived.

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

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to conclude my remarks before recessing.

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

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today, as I have done twice before over the past month, to sound the alarm about the new administration's attacks on American energy. Yet there is still more to talk about.

President Biden has continued this assault on American energy as well as the American economy. Now he is taking that attack further. He is taking the attack on energy around the world as well as attacking the needs for energy of a number of our allies around the world. President Biden signed an Executive order to cut off all loans for coal, oil, and gas projects in some of the poorest nations in the world.

Now, some of these nations are our friends that we work with and we try

to help, and these are people who desperately need affordable energy, and they don't have it.

Democrats close to the administration have reported that what the administration and President Biden are trying to do is to "isolate" the Chinese Communist Party.

The Biden administration thinks that by refusing to make these loans to folks around the world, that the Chinese Communist Party will be shamed for using fossil fuels for energy and will shame the Communist Party of China for loans that they make to countries to develop coal-fired powerplants, natural gas plants, and other projects that use fossil fuel.

Let me tell you, the Chinese Communist Party will not be shamed. China has a totalitarian regime; China puts Uighurs in concentration camps. So I am not sure what makes President Biden and his administration think that the Chinese Communist Party will be ashamed of using an affordable reliable source of energy—coal.

In reality, President Biden, by this Executive order, is giving China a gift. President Biden is giving China another advantage on the world stage and putting ourselves at a disadvantage, if you think about it.

If the United States and those that we fund through the World Bank refuse to provide loans to those countries to build the powerplants that they need, that is going to leave a vacuum. They are going to need to use the resources that they have—if they have plenty of coal or natural gas—and the Chinese Communist Party is going to come in and make the loan.

China already funds 7 out of 10 new coal plants around the world, and thanks to President Biden's misguided effort, that is likely soon going to be close to 10 out of 10.

Just like President Biden's other energy orders, this new policy will make China stronger. It will make America weaker. China will have more influence, and the United States will have less.

Now, this order is not going to hurt China at all. The people whom it will hurt are those who look to the United States for help and for friendship. It is going to especially hurt the 840 million people around the world who don't have access to electricity today.

Developing countries desperately need the electricity. They need it to be affordable. They need it to be reliable. So if you help developing countries in terms of helping them get a stable supply of energy, it is one of the best things we can do to help people around the world in their fight against poverty.

Many parts of the world, countries with abundant energy resources, just need our help and turn to us for our help so they can use the resources that they have.

And let me give you a good example, Madam President, because you and I have traveled to various places around

the world and had a chance to see men and women in uniform and thank them for their services, as we have done, and gone to battlefields, as we have had family members who have served in the military and defended this country and our freedoms. And it has been a pleasure to be able to do that with you and share that with your family because of our united heritage of fighting or our family history of fighting for the country.

So a good example of what I am talking about is Kosovo. I have been there on three separate occasions specifically to visit members of our troops—the men and women in uniform, people from Wyoming who are serving in Kosovo. I have been there three separate times. I was there in 2019, was there previously for Thanksgiving, was there on Easter Sunday one time to be with the troops.

Well, Kosovo is one of the poorest nations in Europe, but it has vast energy resources. Despite being physically smaller than the State of Connecticut, Kosovo has the fifth largest reserves of coal in the world: small geography, massive resources of coal.

So the World Bank has cut off Kosovo's funding for a new state-of-the-art coal-fired powerplant. They have old coal-fired powerplants. They are burning coal right now.

I have talked to the leaders of the country, and they say: We need to build a new coal-fired powerplant. We need to borrow the money to do it.

Well, the World Bank has said it is only going to support new energy projects from renewable sources. So this is what Kosovo's Minister of Economic Development is saying. He said: "In a poor country [like] Kosovo . . . we don't have the luxury . . ."—the luxury of focusing only on renewable sources when they don't have that much access to renewable energy. The wind doesn't blow that much; in terms of sunny days, not at all during the winter, and they have this incredible resource of coal.

Well, the Minister of Economic Development is absolutely correct—because I have been there in the spring; I have been there in the winter; I have been there different times throughout the year. Developing countries cannot afford the elitist environmental agendas of Presidents who become climate elitists, especially those being put in charge of those issues, former Secretary of State John Kerry.

Let me repeat myself so—I want to just make this absolutely clear: We, the United States, have peacekeeping troops in the country of Kosovo. We have them right there in Kosovo. And we, the United States, are driving the Government of Kosovo into the clutches of the Communist Chinese Party because of a holier-than-thou attitude of the climate alarmists in the White House.

So we pay to put our troops on the ground, and then we say: Go to China if you need help providing power to your country.