

about vaccines, and even those who seem to encourage those crazy theories often get vaccinated themselves and don't tell anybody. We have had so many of these hard-right leaders admitting: "Oh, yes, I did get vaccinated," even though they are telling people they shouldn't have to take one. "Oh, yes, I will get vaccinated, but you shouldn't have to."

If the only damage were to the person, him or herself, who didn't get vaccinated, maybe some people would say that is OK. But it is not just to them because, when there is a large pool of people unvaccinated, even if it is not the majority, that allows the COVID virus to spread, to mutate, to create new variants, and create new stronger variants. It is a pool of people. If you greatly reduce that pool, you greatly reduce the chance of a new variant, particularly a virulent one, from afflicting us in the months ahead. It is crazy.

The internet has had a role in spreading this, and so has the far right. The same people in the far right who want to tear down government and hurt working people in so many other ways are here doing the same thing—the same thing—even though, as I said, a good number of them get vaccinated themselves—hypocrisy.

There should be one message, and one message only, coming from this Chamber to the American people: Get vaccinated. Get boosted. Stay safe yourself. Keep your families, your communities, and our country safe.

The worst thing we can do is tie our own hands behind our backs and let these new variants spread and grow—new ones after Omicron and so many others. But that is what Republican-pushed "anti-vaccines" would do.

I will strongly vote against this amendment. I have strong feelings about what is good for this country and about fighting anti-science and theories that seem to, as I said, come from the same place that the flat Earth theory came from, that the theory that the Sun revolves around the Earth came from. Anti-science, nonsense, fictional belief come from there. We ought not give it a stamp of approval in this Chamber.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, from Washington Democrats, 2021 will have one major theme: ramming through inflationary spending on a partisan basis that hurts American families and actually helps China. That is how this all-Democratic Government began the year, jamming through a wasteful excuse for a stimulus bill that drove up

prices and made supply chain problems even worse. Not a single Republican supported it, and Democrats now want to end the year with another massive spree that would make it even worse.

The whole country understands that Democrats own this mess. They have seized one-party control of the economy. So you better believe that they will have one-party accountability for the resulting nightmare.

The President and his allies are badly upside down in overall approval ratings, upside down on the generic ballot, upside down on the economy. And the more the men and women of this country learn about the reckless taxing-and-spending spree that Democrats are planning next, the less they want it or anything close to it.

Democrats have wanted to transform the country alone. They want to print and borrow trillion after trillion on their own. They want to create even more inflation on their own. So, as the Republicans have made clear for months, they will have to own a debt ceiling increase as well. This week, the House and Senate have reached a bipartisan agreement to make that happen. As the Democratic leader said yesterday, the Democrats are "willing to carry the burden." And so they will.

We have reached an agreement on a one-time, one-shot statutory process that will enable Democrats to raise the debt limit at a fixed dollar amount, which they will specify. Much like the vote on an arms sales resolution that occurred yesterday and the Congressional Review Act vote that will occur today, this will be a standard expedited process, at a simple majority threshold, established by law. Democrats will get one shot at this. They won't be able to add any other amendments. And every single Senate Democrat will have to put their name to the gigantic dollar amount of debt they are prepared to pile on the American people.

VACCINES

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on another matter, for the past 2 years, as the country has battled COVID-19, I have been a strong and consistent advocate of following the science and taking precautions. That has included strong support for the safe and effective vaccines that have helped millions of Americans substantially lower their risk of death or serious illness. I took advantage of these modern medical miracles as soon as I could. I have received a booster. I have encouraged Kentuckians and all Americans to take full advantage as well. I have recorded public service announcements.

I am a survivor of childhood polio. I have watched vaccines obliterate polio in our entire country in my lifetime. Trust me, there is no bigger proponent of vaccination than I am. But here is the thing: The United States of America is a free country. The Federal Government, elites in Washington, cannot micromanage citizens' personal choices

without a legitimate basis in law and the Constitution. And that goes double for Presidents going far beyond the bounds of their office and their authority.

President Biden's absurd private-sector vaccine mandate is blatant overreach. It is illegal. The administration has already lost in Federal court and had it blocked.

Washington Democrats have lashed themselves to a mast that is very simple: Unvaccinated people should be fired. That is what they want. They don't trust individuals, families, doctors, employers, and customers to sort things out for themselves. They want every worker at a medium-sized business and up to either get the shot or get fired by President Biden. And buried in the illegal mandate is a call to explore whether it should expand to all businesses.

This is not how things work in our country, period. Workers are not happy. Medium-sized businesses are not happy, especially not in the middle of this worker shortage. And, frankly, nobody who understands our system of government is happy.

I have heard from so many Kentuckians who are affected by the administration's suite of several unwise vaccine mandates. Here is one quote:

My wife . . . was notified that if she doesn't get fully vaccinated by January 4 then she would be terminated and lose her job without severance or unemployment. . . . She has been [there] for 17 years and has nothing but exemplary reviews.

Here is another:

I will lose my job at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant. I very much enjoyed my work there and had every intention of retiring from the plant. However, due to Joe Biden's forced vaccine mandate, I will be terminated. . . . Please let a man who wants to work, go to work.

Here is another:

My firm [of] 103 employees will [either] lose about 25 to the mandate, or lay off 4 to get to 99. Which one should we do?

Remember, personally, I would encourage each of these Kentuckians to get the vaccine, but for the purposes of this conversation, that really isn't the point. You better believe I am going to stand up and fight for their freedom.

I want to thank the junior Senator from Indiana for spearheading this resolution to overturn the Biden administration's illegal mandate. I am a proud cosponsor. I will proudly vote for it and urge every Senator to do the same.

NOMINATION OF RACHAEL S. ROLLINS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on one final matter, the national murder rate just recorded its biggest jump in more than a century. In some cities, homicides have set alltime records. From Albuquerque to Milwaukee, Memphis to Des Moines, city officials reported more murders last year than in any prior year. In my hometown of Louisville, homicides this year have now broken last year's alltime record.

All last year, liberal politicians and activists made absurd and false claims about law enforcement. Here are some of them: “We need to completely dismantle” local police. Here is another one: “Policing in our country is inherently and intentionally racist.”

A leftwing messaging campaign has spent a year and a half trying to chill law enforcement and policing. A network of liberal district attorneys around the country is matching their rhetoric with incredibly soft-on-crime practices behind the scenes, and the predictable result of all this has been a collapse—a collapse—in public safety.

For example, last month a man killed six people and injured dozens more at a Christmas market in Wisconsin—listen to this—just weeks after he was released on bail for another set of violent charges. This criminal had already been arrested and locked up in neighboring Milwaukee County, but he was let out by a liberal DA who remarked several years ago:

Is there going to be an individual I divert, or I put into treatment program, who's going to go out and kill somebody? You bet. Guaranteed. It's guaranteed to happen. It does not invalidate the overall approach.

Stunning. There are now a whole bunch of grieving families in this Wisconsin city who have strong feelings about that “approach.”

Here is a headline from New York City just this week:

Man busted for assault set free, allegedly beats two random [New York City] women—then cut loose again.

Smash-and-grabs, flash mob thefts, and carjackings are increasingly facts of life in multiple major cities, but against this backdrop, Democrats just want to keep getting weaker on crime and softer on public safety.

We expect a vote today on the nomination of Rachael Rollins to be U.S. attorney for Massachusetts. Ms. Rollins has spent years in her current job as a DA pushing the idea that the State should wipe entire categories of crimes off the list of things worth prosecuting. She would rather her office not go after trespassers, shoplifters, or even those found possessing drugs with intent to distribute. This soft-on-crime advocacy should have earned the nominee a pink slip. Instead, President Biden is giving her a promotion.

I would urge all Senators to vote no. Law-abiding Americans don't want prosecutors who refuse to prosecute. They don't want city jails equipped with revolving doors. And they need leaders who will defend the rule of law.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today, as I have done too many times before and as my colleague Senator MURPHY did just last week, to reiterate what people across my home State and the entire country have been calling for for years now, calling for us to take

action here in the Senate to end the crisis of gun violence that we are seeing in our schools, in our neighborhoods, and across our country.

Last week, we mourned the deaths of four high school students following the tragic shooting at Oxford High School in Michigan. My heart goes out to those four students' families and friends, and my heart goes out to every student at Oxford High who is now carrying the trauma of that experience.

My heart breaks for every student in this country who grows up thinking something like this will eventually happen to them at their school, and my heart hurts for every parent who worries every time they send their kid off to school because—let's face it—school shootings are a very real threat in this country.

As a parent and a grandparent and a former preschool teacher, I know school is supposed to be a place where our children feel safe, where they can go to learn and grow and see friends, where they can be kids, but after weeks like last week, that feeling disappears, following school shootings like the one we saw in Michigan or threats to schools like we saw last week in my home State of Washington.

Just last week, my hometown high school, Bothell High School, was shut down over concerns about a threat of violence. Ferndale High School was in lockdown Wednesday because of a threat of a gun on campus. That same Wednesday, the day after the shooting in Michigan, threats were made targeting three schools in Mukilteo School District, forcing local law enforcement to mobilize resources and personnel—all of that in just 1 week.

While, luckily, none of those threats we saw in my home State escalated any further thanks in large part to the quick work of local officials, in the same week, Seattle saw six shootings in just over 24 hours. From January through October of this year, Seattle has already seen more than 500 shooting incidents. It is already the most shootings the city has seen in the last decade.

I am not the only one who thinks this cannot continue. I know because for years I have heard from students and teachers and parents from my State who want major Federal action to finally end the gun violence epidemic in this country. People want an end to these school shootings, an end to shootings at our churches and places of worship, an end to the shootings at our malls and stores, and an end to the gun violence that doesn't always make the news but happens on our streets and in our neighborhoods.

As Senator MURPHY said last week, we are the only high-income nation in the world where this happens. But it happens because we let it happen because, despite how many times my Democratic colleagues and I have come to the floor with commonsense, popular legislation to help prevent gun violence, our Republican colleagues

block us from even debating those bills, let alone voting on them. Think about that. They won't even allow a debate on this legislation that could save lives.

So I ask them: How many times are we going to go through this cycle? What will you tell parents in this country when they ask you what you did to stop the next school shooting? How many times will you refuse to even debate commonsense steps to keep our communities safe?

It is past time Republicans either get on board with taking action to stop these shootings or at least get out of the way. Like so many parents or grandparents, I want to stop worrying if our kids are safe in school. And like so many Americans, I am done with my Republican colleagues blocking commonsense gun laws at every turn.

At this point, you are either in favor of taking action to help put an end to these shootings or you are against them.

Washington can and should continue to build on its gun safety laws. The administration can and should continue to invest in community violence intervention programs. But here is the deal: We can't address the full scope of the gun violence epidemic in this country without taking major Federal action. Universal background checks, an assault weapons ban, and a patchwork of gun safety laws are simply not adequate. We need Federal laws in place in order to protect our families.

The fact that one party has listened to the voices of parents across the country and taken to the floor once again to call for an end to gun violence while the other listens to the gun lobby and stays silent in the face of repeated tragedy speaks volumes. Simply put, our kids and grandkids deserve to be safe from gun violence in their schools and on our streets.

I refuse to let Republican obstruction continue to get in the way of commonsense measures that will save lives. All options need to be on the table. It is time we restore the Senate to make sure this institution can actually serve the interests of the vast majority of the American public.

So I promise all parents, all the grandparents, everyone in Washington State that, despite the obstruction and silence from my Republican colleagues, I will not stay quiet, and I will keep pushing for change. And I hope the American people will do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Americans are currently dealing with the worst inflation in more than 30 years—high grocery prices, high rent prices, high gas prices, high car prices, increases in the price of household goods, and the list goes on. Inflation is so bad that it has outstripped wage growth,