

to make sure we can move this package through the Chamber.

Now, while this funding is absolutely necessary, it is far from perfect. I am deeply disappointed that some of our Republican friends could not agree to include \$5 billion for global response efforts. I pushed them hard to include this international funding, as, of course, did Senator COONS and Senators GRAHAM and ROMNEY because fighting COVID abroad is intrinsically connected to keeping Americans healthy at home.

It is not just the right thing to do to help struggling nations, though we certainly have an obligation to help. It is also good for our country. So it is putting money overseas to prevent COVID from spreading here, because, remember, every variant—all three variants—that hit us started overseas and then came here. So that is not only humanitarian and the moral and right thing to do, but it is in our own self-interest. I know it sometimes sounds anomalous—sending money overseas is in our interest—but with COVID, where it germinates and starts the new variants, inevitably overseas, and then comes to hurt us is the right thing to do in our own self-interest, even if you had no humanitarian interest in doing it, which, of course, many of us do have a great deal of humanitarian interest.

If we don't help the developing nations of the world with vaccines and treatment, we leave ourselves seriously at risk for potential new variants. Omicron, after all, started, in all likelihood, in South Africa, where today less than a third of the population is vaccinated—fully vaccinated.

It is thus my intention for the Senate to consider a bipartisan international appropriations package that will include funding to address COVID-19, as well as other urgent priorities, like aid for Ukraine and funding for global food insecurity.

I know that many on both sides—I mentioned the names earlier—are serious about reaching an agreement on this issue. Nevertheless, this week's agreement is carefully negotiated. We bent over backward when our Republican colleagues did not want to accept certain kinds of pay-fors which we thought were appropriate and have always been used, but we thought it was so important to get this done that we did that. It is a very important step to keeping the country healthy and keeping life as close to normal in the future as we can.

I want to thank, again, Senator ROMNEY for leading the negotiations for the Senate Republicans and working in good faith to reach agreement. I also want to thank, as I mentioned, COONS, MURRAY, BURR, BLUNT, and GRAHAM for their help and support to reach this bipartisan agreement, and Chairman LEAHY and his staff for their assistance in putting the legislation together.

Finally, I want to thank the staff of the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office. They worked around the clock with us to score this legislation.

So we have taken a massive step closer to getting this important funding done, and I thank everyone for their good work to reach this point.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Now, on another happy note, the Judge Jackson confirmation, last night we took our first steps here on the Senate floor toward confirming the historic nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the U.S. Supreme Court. By virtue of a motion to discharge, Judge Jackson's nomination was reported out of the Judiciary Committee—it really wasn't reported out of Judiciary.

By virtue of a motion to discharge, Judge Jackson's nomination was put on the floor by a bipartisan vote of 53–47. She now comes to the floor for consideration by the whole Chamber. Every day we move closer to Judge Jackson's confirmation, the case and likelihood of her confirmation grows stronger and stronger and stronger. And I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have approached this process with good faith. At the end of the day, it will be our courts and the American people who rely on our courts who will benefit most from having an amazing jurist like Judge Jackson elevated to the pinnacle of the Federal judiciary.

Here is what happens next. Later today, I am going to take the next step for moving forward with Judge Jackson's nomination by filing cloture on her. My colleagues should be advised that we may have to take some procedural votes to do so, but this will not affect the ultimate result of this confirmation process.

Once I file cloture, the stage will be set for the Senate to close debate on Judge Jackson's nomination by Thursday morning. A vote on final confirmation will then follow. The Senate could then vote to confirm Judge Jackson as Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson as soon as Thursday—as soon as this Thursday. I hope we can work together and make that happen.

What better way to wrap up this work period—this productive, largely bipartisan work period—than by confirming this most worthy, most qualified, most historic nominee to the Supreme Court?

Yesterday, I said something that I think is worth emphasizing all week long: Judge Jackson's nomination is a joyous and momentous occasion for the Senate. She is truly one of the most qualified and accomplished individuals ever considered by this Chamber to the Supreme Court. She will bring a new and much needed perspective to the Court's work, while also affirming the rule of law and respect for precedent.

As I said yesterday, the confirmation of the Nation's first Black woman to the highest Court in the land will resonate for the rest of our Nation's history. Untold millions of kids will open textbooks and see pictures of Justice Jackson and understand in a new way what it means to move toward a more

perfect Union. It means that all our Nation's struggles, for all the steps forward and steps backward, the long march of our democracy is toward greater opportunity and representation for all.

So when the Senate finishes its work this week, Justice Jackson will be the first of many—the first of many. Her brilliance, her lifetime of hard work, her remarkable story will light a flame of inspiration for the next generation to hopefully chart their own path for serving our democracy and unleash so much talent that has thus far not been utilized. This gives me great hope. That should give all of us great hope.

COMMERCE HEARING

Mr. President, finally, I want to close by thanking my friend and colleague Chairwoman CANTWELL for holding a hearing in the Commerce Committee that is of great importance to the American people: ensuring transparency in petroleum markets. That hearing will occur today.

The American people right now find themselves on the losing side of a truly disturbing trend. On the one hand, the American people are paying more and more at the pump, and some of the Nation's biggest oil companies are reporting soaring profits but then using those profits to reward shareholders with stock buybacks.

This is infuriating. Prices go way up; oil companies make more profit; and what do they use it for? Stock buybacks, which do nothing to improve the economy, improve workers, or help the consumer. It is outrageous, and it is one of the reasons there is such mistrust of the big oil companies.

So I am glad that the Commerce Committee is looking into this important issue, and I urge the FTC to likewise take note.

I thank Chair CANTWELL for her work. I expect that we will see additional announcements on this matter very soon. This caucus—this Democratic caucus—is going to keep its eye out and do whatever we can to help with bringing down the outrageously high price of oil and the outrageous actions of corporate executives in the oil industry.

I yield the floor.

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 Republican leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people are seriously worried about the direction our economy is headed. Just between January and March, the share of people reporting high living costs as the most important

problem facing our country actually doubled and so did the share of those most worried about the price of gas.

Consumer price hikes have now set new 40-year records multiple months in a row. More and more American families are feeling the pinch. And 7 in 10 say they do not like how President Biden is handling it.

It was clear from the start that the Biden administration's war on affordable energy would punish American consumers, and even liberal economists warned that flooding our economy with partisan spending could trigger broad inflation.

Sure enough, American families have now endured 9 straight months of inflation above a 5-percent annual pace, and the worst effects are being felt in the most vulnerable pockets of our society.

One analysis of spending on household staples found that cost cutting "is most pronounced among lower-income Americans."

As the Washington Post reported, "lower-income workers like [Jacqueline] Rodriguez have seen some of the fastest wage growth of the pandemic era. But those gains are being eroded by the highest inflation in 40 years. . . . 'It's outrageous how much everything has gone up,' Rodriguez said. 'I go to the supermarket to buy chicken, and I have to make a decision on what meal I'm going to cook based on the prices. . . . Everything is more expensive.'"

Another group who especially remain vulnerable are seniors on fixed incomes. One retired teacher in North Carolina recently said it like this:

Just surviving day to day has become a big concern of mine—because, how in the world? . . . I'm starting to panic. I'm starting to think, "How am I going to keep paying for everything?"

Many retirees already face health challenges or other hardships so there is simply no wiggle room in their budgets.

One California man explained that cancer was the reason he had to retire in the first place. Now he is "scraping the bottom of the barrel. . . . I do most of my food shopping in markdown bins and don't buy much else."

One White House official has seemed to endorse the sentiment that inflation is "a high-class problem." A whole lot of low-income Americans and retired Americans could very readily set them straight on that.

Last autumn, the administration's top spokeswoman scoffed at what she called "the tragedy of the treadmill that's delayed."

Well, that may be the extent of the pain that inflation and supply chain problems are causing certain affluent people—people like those inside the beltway having to wait a little extra on luxury purchases—but I can assure the President's team that many Americans are hurting a lot worse than they are.

The very least the administration must do is stop digging; no more reckless spending, no gigantic tax increases

that would damage the economy even further.

Yet Senate Democrats won't give up on yet another reckless spending spree, and just last week, the Biden administration proposed to smack the country with the largest tax hike in American history.

The last thing American families can afford is more of the same recklessness that got us where we are.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Mr. President, now on a different matter, the Constitution makes the President and the Senate partners in selecting Supreme Court Justices. And as a practical matter, each Senator gets to define what "advice and consent" means to them.

For much of the 20th century, Senates typically took a different approach. Senators tended to give Presidents a lot of leeway as long as nominees checked basic professional and ethical boxes.

But then the political left and Senate Democrats initiated a series of major changes. In the late 1980s, Democrats thrust the Senate into a more aggressive posture toward nominations with an unprecedented, scorched-earth smear campaign that took aim at a nominee's judicial philosophy.

The Washington Post editorial board said back at the time that the formerly "conventional view" that Presidents would get great deference had now "fallen into . . . disrepute." They worried that a "highly politicized future" for "confirmation proceedings" might lie ahead following Democrats' actions.

Well, just a few years later, personal attacks on then-Judge Thomas made the previous hysteria over Judge Bork seem like lofty debate by comparison.

And 1 year after that, in 1992, then-Senator Biden proclaimed that if another vacancy occurred toward the end of President Bush 41's term, the Judiciary Committee should not hold any hearings before the Presidential election.

Well, that situation didn't arise that year, and once President Clinton took office, Republicans did not try to match Democrats' behavior simply out of spite. We tried actually to deescalate. Justices Ginsburg and Breyer both won lopsided votes with opposition in single digits. That was during a time when Republicans were in the majority.

But the very next time that Democrats lost the White House, the precedent-breaking tactics came roaring back.

During the Bush 43 administration, Senate Democrats, and especially the current Democratic leader, took the incredibly rare tactic of filibustering judicial nominations and made it routine.

The press at the time described the sea change:

They said it was important for the Senate to change the ground rules and there was no obligation to confirm someone just because they are scholarly or erudite.

Democrats decided that pure legal qualifications were no longer enough. They wanted judicial philosophy on the table.

So, 20 years ago, several of the same Senate Democrats who are now trumpeting the historic nature of Judge Jackson's nomination used these tactics to delay or block nominees, including an African-American woman and a Hispanic man—both, of course, nominated by a Republican President.

In one case, Democrats suggested their opposition was specifically—listen to this—specifically because the nominee's Hispanic heritage would actually make him a rising star.

Half-half-of Senate Democrats voted against Chief Justice Roberts, the best appellate advocate of his generation. All but four Democrats voted against Justice Alito, who had the most judicial experience of any nominee in almost a century.

There was no question about the basic legal qualifications of either, but Democrats opposed both. And in mid-2007, more than a year before the next Presidential election, Senator SCHUMER expanded upon the Biden standard from 15 years prior. He said that if another Supreme Court vacancy arose, Democrats should not let President Bush fill it.

Our colleague from New York proposed to keep a hypothetical vacancy open until an election that was more than a year away. During President Obama's terms, Republicans took up the same hardball tactics that Democrats had just pioneered.

But our colleagues recoiled at the taste of their own medicine and broke the rules to escape it. They preferred to detonate the "nuclear option" for the first time ever rather than let President Obama's nominees face the same treatment they had just invented—invented—for President Bush's.

Democrats did not then change the rule for the Supreme Court because there was no vacancy. But the late Democratic leader Harry Reid said publicly he would do the same thing for the Supreme Court with no hesitation.

By 2016, Democrats had spent 30 years radically changing the confirmation process, and now they had nuked the Senate's rules. Obviously, this pushed Republicans into a more assertive posture ourselves.

So when an election-year vacancy did arise, we applied the Biden-Schumer standard and did not fill it. And then, when Democrats filibustered a stellar nominee for the next year, we extended the Reid standard to the Supreme Court.

In 2016 and 2017, Republicans only took steps that Democrats had publicly declared they would take themselves. Yet our colleagues spent the next 4 years—4 years—trying to escalate even further.

Justice Gorsuch, impeccably qualified, received the first successful partisan filibuster of a Supreme Court