

of Lorenzo Cervantes and hundreds of thousands of others. And then came Vladimir Putin with this unprovoked attack on Ukraine. He thought they would be a pushover. He had this massive Russian army mobilizing over a span of months ready to attack. And when he launched his attack, he expected the people of Ukraine to fold, quit, and leave. But they didn't. They fought and they have been an inspiration ever since.

Putin wants to write a new world order. He wants to say to the living veterans of World War II and their families: You wasted your time. I can do this if I wish. I have the power. But he has run into a force he didn't anticipate. The Ukrainians have done an incredible job, an inspiring job to the world.

And I want, of course, to say a word of praise to their President. Mr. Zelenskyy started in life as a stand-up comedian. Somehow or another, he has become the world's leading stand-up President—standing up to a tyrant like Vladimir Putin, inspiring people all around the world to join in this effort to save his nation.

I am glad that the United States is on board, and we will continue to help him until Putin is finally gone. The genocide which he is inflicting on the Ukrainian people is an embarrassment to the 21st century. To think that this could happen in the so-called civilized western world is virtually unthinkable. We have got to make a stand, and I am glad that we have. I support President Biden and the NATO alliance who are standing behind the people of Ukraine.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

REMEMBERING ORRIN G. HATCH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, as the Senate convenes today, we are mourning the loss of our dear friend and legendary former colleague, Orrin Hatch.

When Senator Hatch retired 3 years ago, this body lost its longest serving Republican and its President pro tem. We also lost one of the kindest and best humored colleagues any of us had ever served with and, for that matter, the Senate's only former band manager of a Mormon folk music group.

Orrin Hatch led an incredibly full, interesting, and accomplished life. By the end of his tenure, our very funny colleague liked to poke fun at his own longevity. I remember when Orrin, a former Judiciary Committee chairman, would pretend to wistfully recall his work on Justice Joseph Story's confirmation back in 1811.

Humor aside, the reality was impressive enough. Orrin's dogged service for Utah and our Nation was a constant in this Chamber for 42 years. He was an accomplished, influential chairman of three major committees: HELP, Judiciary, and Finance. He was an essential legislator behind a long list of landmark laws—from the Hatch-Waxman law on generic drugs in the 1980s to the Americans with Disabilities Act, to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program—all back in the 1990s—all the way through to the historic 2017 tax reform that Orrin shepherded as Finance chairman. That helped engineer the best economic moment for American workers and families in modern history. There were also countless specific achievements for the great State of Utah that Orrin loved so much.

Amid all that legislative heavy lifting, Orrin was also a pivotal player concerning the Senate's part in the personnel business. Amazingly, at the time of Orrin's retirement, he had personally participated in the confirmations for more than half—half—of all the article III judges who had ever served in American history.

Orrin came into the Senate as a young, conservative firebrand. His first campaign for any public office of any kind was the 1976 campaign that landed him here. He left the Senate as a widely admired and universally liked elder statesman. His legacy is peppered with both big, principled victories, bipartisan collaborations, and a roster of friends that spanned the entire political spectrum and sometimes transcended politics altogether.

But there was never any confusing what Orrin viewed as his proudest accomplishment of all. That would be his remarkable marriage to Elaine and their loving family. Alphabetical order has perhaps never served any man better than when "Hatch, Orrin" was assigned the chair next to "Hansen, Elaine" in a Brigham Young University classroom. Decades later, Orrin said, "I can't remember a doggone thing from that astronomy class," but the two of them got 65 inspiring years of marriage and a big, happy brood of kids and grandkids out of the bargain.

So, today, the entire Senate stands with Elaine, the Hatch family, and the huge, huge network of friends, former staffers, and admirers whom Orrin leaves behind across Utah and across our country. We mourn this great loss, and we honor this great life.

INFLATION

Madam President, on an entirely different matter, the Senate reconvenes today, after Passover and Easter, to begin a new work period, but, unfortunately, the biggest problem facing the American people is still the same as it has been all year long. Rising inflation is continuing to inflict painful consequences on working families across our country. This painful problem isn't getting better; it is still getting worse.

Last month, consumer prices clocked an 8.5-percent year-on-year increase.

Inflation is now rising at its fastest pace in more than four decades. The surge is being led in large part by a 23.6-percent jump in airfares, a 35.3-percent increase in used car and truck prices, and a 48-percent spike in the cost of gasoline. These are exactly the sorts of products consumers lean on most heavily in the warmer months.

But, while March's numbers are an extra cruel twist, the American people have been feeling the effects of the Biden administration's war on domestic energy for the better part of a year. Before most folks even began to consider summer travel and long before Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, working families were already facing soaring prices at the gas pump.

Even as wage growth accelerated for a fifth straight month, workers' paychecks once again failed to keep pace with the steep surge of rising prices. Raises and bonuses are being swallowed by inflation. Real wages are down 2.7 percent year-on-year.

Democrats' runaway spending has brought us runaway inflation. Prices in the United States have risen higher and faster than in other developed economies. Even the New York Times now admits that "risks are mounting that America's ambitious spending will end up with a checkered legacy." Let me say that again. Even the New York Times now admits that "risks are mounting that America's ambitious spending will end up with a checkered legacy."

But even in the face of this painful reality, even as every measurable indicator spells out the clear consequences of reckless runaway spending, Washington Democrats are showing no sign of changing course. President Biden's response to the shaky economy he created is to propose the biggest tax hike in American history and double-digit percentage growth in domestic discretionary spending.

Democrats' policies have working families deep in a financial hole, and our colleagues across the aisle just want to keep digging.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING ORRIN G. HATCH

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, before I begin the substance of my remarks today, I wanted to note how the Senate mourns the loss of one of its fine public servants. Senator Orrin Hatch, the longest serving Republican in the history of the Senate, the sixth longest serving Member ever, passed away Saturday at the age of 88.

Senator Hatch was a friend, a respected colleague, and a legislator of rare skill. In our 20 years serving together, our disagreements were frequent. They often ran deep. But I always knew him to be a person of good faith who put the needs of his State above all else.

While nobody ever mistook Senator Hatch for anything but a principled conservative, to his credit, he was never afraid to work with his Democratic colleagues when necessary to get things done, and he would make compromises. I was in the room many times when it happened, and I will always admire him for that.

The people of Utah lost a titan this weekend, one that will not likely come through this Chamber again for a long time. My prayers and condolences go to all of Senator Hatch's family and friends, especially his wife, Elaine, and their six children and many, many grandchildren.

May he forever rest in peace, and we thank him for his lifetime of public service.

NOMINATION OF LAEL BRAINARD

Madam President, today, the Senate gavels in for the start of a 5-week work period, and there is much, much that the American people want us and need us to work on in order to lower costs and improve their daily lives. That will be one of our primary focuses. The Senate will also continue confirming President Biden's administrative and judicial nominees.

Today we will vote to advance the nomination of Lael Brainard to be Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Ms. Brainard received bipartisan backing in the committee, and I expect her to sail through this Chamber with similar bipartisan support.

NOMINATION OF LISA DENELL COOK

Madam President, as soon as tomorrow, the Senate will proceed on the nomination of Lisa Cook to sit on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Coming from humble beginnings in rural Georgia, where her family fought racial segregation, Ms. Cook would make history as the first Black woman ever to sit on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Her qualifications are irrefutable. She is a professor of economics at Michigan State, a member of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Advisory Board, and served as senior economist in President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers. In short, Ms. Cook absolutely belongs on the Fed, and I look forward to the Senate confirming her soon.

NOMINATION OF ALVARO M. BEDOYA

Madam President, this week, the Senate will also confirm Alvaro Bedoya as a commissioner on the Federal Trade Commission, breaking a 2-2 deadlock on the FTC that has lasted for over a year. Mr. Bedoya's confirmation is truly significant. If we want to lower costs, if we want to understand why the price of things like gasoline have surged, then it is important to

break the 2-2 deadlock at the FTC so it can fully examine these issues and execute its agenda.

Every time Americans go to the pump, they just know something truly rotten is going on with America's energy sector. Last year, the top 25 oil and gas companies reported \$205 billion in profits. Earlier this month, ExxonMobil alone reported its highest quarterly profits since 2008. But has any of this translated into lower prices for Americans? Has any of this gone to help resolve our energy challenges? Has any of it gone to increasing worker productivity? No, no, and no.

Instead, soaring energy profits have fueled soaring stock buybacks. In the fourth quarter of last year, oil and gas companies' stock buybacks rose by more than 2,000 percent—2,000 percent.

They are making record profits, and what do the CEOs do? They artificially increase the value of their stocks simply by buying some of it back. That is not why stock should go up.

Could they do something to reduce prices? Wouldn't that help America more? Could they do something to make their oil companies—their workers fare better? No. There is something deeply wrong, deeply wrong about seeing the largest oil and gas companies in the world drench top executives and wealthy shareholders with cash while Americans are struggling at the pump.

That is why we need a fully functioning FTC as soon as possible; so it can look under the hood of America's energy sector and determine if rising prices are, in part, rooted in shady conduct, and I believe they are. For that reason, we must confirm Mr. Bedoya by the end of this week.

And I say to my Republican friends, if you are complaining about oil and gas prices—gasoline prices, one of the best things to do is have the FTC take a look and propose action and act.

On this very same note, Democrats are also discussing and will consider other potential action to beef up the FTC's ability to crack down on potential gas price manipulation. We will have more to say on this as the week progresses.

UKRAINE

Madam President, also in the coming weeks, the Senate must make progress on several pressing legislative priorities. We must, for one, continue helping the people of Ukraine in their fight against Russian aggression.

Last Thursday, President Biden announced the emergency funding Congress approved in March is close to running out, and he is expected to make another request to Congress later this week. Two months into the war, Putin's hopes for a quick takeover have all but extinguished, thanks to the bravery of the Ukrainian people and to the aid that the U.S. and other countries have provided the Ukrainians in the form of Javelins, Stingers, and other critical weapons.

But as we all know, the fight is far from over. We must make sure the

Ukrainian people continue to have the help they need for as long as they need it. Approving additional aid for Ukraine is a must, and I expect swift bipartisan cooperation to get it done.

NOMINATION OF BRIDGET A. BRINK

Madam President, this morning, the President also announced he will nominate Bridget Brink to serve as the next ambassador to Ukraine. Ms. Brink's nomination is terrific news at a critical moment, and the Senate will prioritize her confirmation once she comes before the Senate and move her as quickly as possible. She is needed, and we will not tarry or delay.

The United States has not had an ambassador within Ukraine since 2019, and Ms. Brink is an excellent choice to lead our diplomatic mission as we stand with the Ukrainian people. She is a longtime veteran of Eastern European affairs and has already been confirmed unanimously by the Senate to serve as ambassador to Slovakia. There is no reason both sides can't work together quickly and expeditiously to confirm Ms. Brink.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, in addition to Ukraine funding, I will also keep working with my colleagues to pass another bipartisan COVID funding package. At the end of the last work period, a group of Democrats and Republicans reached an agreement on a funding package, only for every single Republican to vote against moving forward—every single one. Truly disappointing, because this funding is desperately needed.

The best way to keep life as close to normal in case a new COVID variant arises, is for Republicans to work with us to quickly approve more money for vaccines, more for testing, more money for lifesaving therapeutics, and other urgent tools to fight the pandemic.

The longer that Senate Republicans hold out on working with us to approve new funding, the higher the cost will be for our country down the line. As we have learned already, it doesn't take much for a new variant to undo a lot of the progress we have made in recent months.

So in the coming weeks, both parties must come to the table and reach a good-faith agreement to move forward on COVID funding.

It will be vital for keeping schools, churches, businesses, and our communities open if and when a future, more potent variant rears its ugly head.

AMERICA COMPETES ACT

Madam President, finally, this week, the Senate will also begin a formal conference committee with the House to finalize our jobs and competitiveness legislation. If there is anything that Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree on and move speedily on, it should certainly be a bipartisan bill that increases jobs, boosts innovation, and gets tough on the Chinese Communist Party, while shoring up our chips manufacturing here at home.