

continue talks with our House colleagues on legislation that can bring gas prices down. There are several options we can take.

Now, there is a growing consensus that the Federal Government—especially the FTC—should investigate possible price gouging and price manipulation, market manipulation, that might be happening among the largest oil and gas companies in the country. This is one step we are working on out of many.

Of course, any solution involving the FTC requires that the FTC have full membership to begin with, so we are also going to keep working to confirm Mr. Bedoya as the fifth FTC Commissioner to break the 2-2 deadlock that has lasted for over a year.

It is important to note that Republicans unanimously are not voting for Mr. Bedoya, and that has paralyzed the FTC, even though its leadership would love to go after the price gouging and market manipulation. We have a few Members absent because of health issues this week, but I want to be clear that health issues will not deter us from getting Mr. Bedoya and other important nominees, like Lisa Cook, confirmed.

I urge any Republican who is truly worried about rising gas prices to drop their senseless objection to getting Mr. Bedoya confirmed. It seems it is only covering up for the oil companies and preventing a really sharp, piercing investigation of market manipulation and price gouging. There is something deeply wrong about seeing the largest oil companies, while raking record profits, asking Americans to pay more at the pump. That is why we need an FTC with full membership, so it can look under the hood of America's energy sector and drill down into why Big Oil is pumping out record profits as consumers struggle.

Again, I repeat to my Republican colleagues: If you care about lowering gas prices and care about looking at what the large companies—oligopolies—are doing, join us in voting Mr. Bedoya on the FTC. A vote against him is a vote for Big Oil and against the American driver and consumer.

#### STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Madam President, now on student debt, for over a year, one of my top priorities as majority leader has been urging President Biden to cancel \$50,000 in student debt for each student loan borrower. Right now, as discussions continue within the administration about the future of student debt, I again call on the President to take action, which he can do on his own, and hit the financial reset button for millions and millions of Americans.

President Biden has done the right thing by continuing the moratorium on student loan payments. His actions have saved millions from financial ruin during the COVID crisis. But borrowers don't just need their debts paused; they need them erased. These extensions have been crucial, but borrowers can't

indefinitely plan out their financial futures 3 months at a time with the fear hanging over them that payments would resume down the line.

With the flick of a pen, President Biden could provide millions upon millions of student loan borrowers a new lease on life. He can do it without congressional action, because we know so many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are opposed to it. He can do it without congressional action.

It is the right thing to do for our country. For generations, higher education has been a ladder up into getting into the middle class, especially for Black, Latino, and Asian Americans. Unfortunately, student debt has become not a ladder up but an anchor down, weighing Americans down. It makes it harder for borrowers to start a family, to buy a home or a car or live with financial independence.

For borrowers of color, the anxieties are magnified, often tenfold. Take this for example: The White median borrower would only owe an average of 6 percent of their student loans 20 years after starting college. Meanwhile, the median Black borrower would still owe a staggering 95 percent of their student loan debt in that same time span. Imagine being closer to retirement than to college and realizing you have only made a dent in your student loans. Millions of borrowers of color—millions more borrowers in general—live with this reality.

Once again, borrowers don't need their debts paused; they need them erased. This isn't just the right thing to do for our economy; it is the right thing to do for racial equity. I will keep urging the President to take this important step.

I will say to my colleagues, I think the President is moving in the right direction. My talks with him and the staff have been very fruitful over the last little while, and I am hopeful that he will do the right thing. We are getting closer. We are getting closer.

#### UKRAINE AND COVID

Madam President, on Ukraine and COVID funding, in the immediate future, there are two different issues that demand swift and bipartisan action from the U.S. Senate: passing another Ukraine supplemental package and approving another round of COVID funding.

In the coming days, the President is expected to send to Congress his request for action on Ukraine. We are going to make passing Ukraine funding a priority in the Senate, and I expect both sides to work together. As we have seen over the last 2 months, American support has gone a long way in helping the Ukrainian people resist and even push back against Putin's savage and immoral war, but the fight is far from over.

The Ukrainian people are fighting for survival in a contest that is very much about democracy versus tyranny. There should be no question—no question whatsoever—about which side

America stands on. We have a moral obligation—a moral obligation—to give the Ukrainian people the tools they need for as long as they need them. For this reason, I expect both sides to work in the same bipartisan way we did a few months ago to get the Ukrainian supplemental done.

We also need bipartisan cooperation as soon as we can to pass another round of COVID health funding. I urge my Republican colleagues to work with us to pass COVID funding ASAP. It is very risky for the health of the American people for Republicans to play political games at a time when we need more health funding.

Let's be clear. This is an exceedingly time-sensitive priority. According to the White House, countries like Japan and Vietnam and the Philippines are already ahead of the United States in placing orders for treatment, for medications, for vaccines. The United States is largely unable to follow suit simply because Senate Republicans have blocked any new round of funding required to make these purchases.

The longer Senate Republicans hold out on supporting new COVID funding, the greater the risk of other nations buying out all of the available supplies of vaccines and tests and lifesaving therapeutics. If they run out, it will take manufacturers months to make new doses.

So, again, to my Republican colleagues, work with us to pass COVID funding ASAP. Our country can't afford delays or political games that stand in the way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative 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 (Ms. BALDWIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### REMEMBERING MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I, along with others, had the opportunity to say goodbye to Madeleine Albright this morning—a truly remarkable life: first woman Secretary of State, a remarkable diplomat, and a friend. We had an opportunity to bond over an issue I am about to discuss: the people of Burma and the plight that they have had to endure over the years. Regretfully, as her life came to an end, things did not go in the right direction in Burma—at least not yet. I know she would not have given up hope; nor have I.

#### BURMA

Madam President, with regard to the current situation in Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi was handed yet another outrageous, sham sentence by the military junta in Burma.

For the past year, the leader of Burma's democracy movement and thousands of her fellow citizens have been detained while the Tatmadaw, which is the army, drags their country violently backward.

The generals responsible for last year's coup have met a groundswell of popular protests with brutality. As Burma's diverse ethnic minorities have found historic unity in the cause of democracy, the junta has stoked violence and division.

The Tatmadaw is holding countless citizens of Burma in prolonged detention, along with foreign nationals like the Australian economist Sean Turnell. Its political prisoners reportedly include dozens—dozens—of children under the age of 15. And its baseless prosecution of Daw Suu Kyi illustrates how long the road ahead is for Burma's democracy advocates.

The military's latest ruling against my friend is just one in an absurd list that could carry a total sentence of up to 190 years.

With every passing day, the junta's ruling generals are showing the world exactly what they are afraid of. They fear the people of Burma—their unity, their resolve, and their devotion to a democratic future. I have been proud to stand with Burma's democracy movement throughout my career. I have been paying close attention to their plight this past year. And I am looking forward to hearing soon from the Biden administration about their efforts to help. What sanctions will the administration apply to ratchet up the pressure? What additional support will they try to provide to the true representatives of the people of Burma? What will they do to ensure that restoration of democracy in Burma is a top priority for the upcoming ASEAN Summit?

The leaders and supporters of this brutal coup must be held accountable.

#### VIOLENT CRIME

Madam President, on another matter, last week in my hometown of Louisville, I sat down with law enforcement officials and local leaders to discuss our skyrocketing rate of violent crime.

The participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds, but everybody agreed murders, shootings, robberies, carjackings, and overdoses are simply out of control. Louisville recorded 188 homicides in 2021, an alltime record. Twenty-four of the victims were children.

Just recently an anti-gun, anti-police activist made national headlines when he tried to assassinate a Jewish Democratic Louisville mayoral candidate.

Jefferson County saw more than 500 drug overdose deaths last year, hundreds more than in years before the pandemic. These problems are literally overwhelming the city's coroners.

One expert I met with said that violent crime has stolen more years of potential life from Louisville than the pandemic. Carjackings are up over 200

percent in the last 2 years. We now average more than one carjacking every 48 hours. Folks on the ground say they are also seeing nonfatal shootings and gang activity increasing.

This crime spree is coming from the tiny minority of Louisville residents. One half of 1 percent of the population manages to commit an outright majority of all the city's violent crime. That is possible in large part because many are let out back on the street within days of their arrests.

Of course, this isn't just a Louisville problem. We have seen violent crime soar nationwide since the far left's national anti-police and anti-law enforcement campaign that began back in 2020. Cities everywhere are under siege. Here in Washington, in broad daylight just yesterday, there was literally an armed robbery right outside the headquarters of the FBI.

Polls show 69 percent of Louisville residents oppose—oppose—the “defund the police” movement and 66 percent want more police in their neighborhoods. But many Democrats are still unwilling to openly call for law and order in our streets. As a result, police officials say their officers feel under siege. They are worried politicians will not have their back.

Another huge factor is President Biden's failure to secure our borders. I was told at last week's roundtable that every bit of deadly heroin and fentanyl in our city streets now comes across our southern border. As long as this administration neglects to enforce our laws, every State becomes a border State.

We need to secure the border and stop narcotics flooding our neighborhoods. We need officials at all levels to back the blue, crack down on crime, and re-establish law and order.

But the Biden administration gives us just the opposite. They nominated and confirmed a Supreme Court Justice who argued that COVID justified early release for every single prisoner in Washington, DC. Just yesterday, the President issued a giant catalog of pardons and commutations, cutting sentences after sentence after sentence, particularly for convicted drug criminals. They never miss an opportunity to send the wrong signal. And until Federal, State, and local Democrats get with the program, innocent people in Louisville and across the country will continue to suffer.

#### TRIBUTE TO DAVID HAUCK

Madam President, now one final matter, the institution of the U.S. Congress relies on a whole army of diligent and dedicated people who work tirelessly behind the scenes.

Today, it is my pleasure to turn the spotlight on one such public servant who is retiring after a sterling career. David Hauck's time on Capitol Hill started here on the Senate side more than 30 years ago. He served as an elevator operator while he finished graduate school.

Dave thrived and impressed everybody. Before long, he was named the

founding director of the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. This is a small team whose work often goes unheralded, but goes right to the heart of our duties to the American people.

The OCAS ensures the Capitol Complex is an accessible, welcoming place for everyone, including Americans with different abilities or disabilities.

Obviously, there is a physical component to this. Dave has worked with the architects to honor our historic buildings, while at the same time making them accessible—ramps, elevators, wheelchair options, the new lift here on the Senate floor.

Dave has tackled everything from big infrastructure questions to the smallest details. Before any big event like a joint address or inauguration or just on a normal workday, you could run into Dave walking rounds across the entire campus searching for obstacles that less keen eyes might have missed.

But physical accessibility is just one part of what Dave and his team do. The OCAS also provides crucial services to supply American Sign Language interpreters for our meetings. They translate letters into Braille. They will consult with offices to ensure an intern or staffer has the tools they need.

It is a vital team. And for decades, their quarterback has been famous for his cheerfulness and humor, his dedication, and the thousand ways he has gone above and beyond the call of duty. Dave has spent decades in the business of unlocking opportunities—the opportunity to visit here, to meet with your Senator or your Congressman, take a job here. His excellence and dedication have unlocked door after door after door.

Dave, the Senate congratulates you on your well-earned retirement. Thank you for your devoted work to keep our government by the people and for the people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Ohio.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent—I appreciate Senator COTTON joining me on the floor and his work with Senator MCCONNELL on this.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 660, 661, 663, 739, 740, 741, 742, 804, 805, and 859; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Reserving the right to object, I want to say a few words about this matter.