

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Elizabeth Schoff Watson, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### ABORTION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, this is a dark, enraging moment for our Nation. I have made that clear already, and so have so many of our Democratic colleagues. But I am speaking on the floor today because we cannot back down for a minute. We cannot lose sight of the terrifying reality that Republicans want to end the right to abortion, and they are within weeks of accomplishing that goal.

Very soon, the Supreme Court is set to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and fulfill Republicans' decades-long goal of controlling women's bodies and rolling back everyone's fundamental right to decide whether or not to start a family.

Let me say that again because it is shocking, and it is true. In a matter of weeks, women across the country will lose a constitutional right they have had for half a century. The steady march forward to secure women's rights that generations before us fought for will be reversed, and my daughter and granddaughters will have fewer rights than I did.

Women will be forced to carry pregnancies to term when it is not right for them, and Republicans will be responsible. This is the future that they have been fighting for. This is the America that they want, and they are not done yet.

Republicans are hell-bent on rolling back the clock. Last week, they blocked our bill to protect *Roe* and the right to abortion, but they are not going to stop at overturning *Roe* and shredding patients' rights to make decisions about their own bodies. In States across the country, Republican lawmakers are banning abortion without exceptions. They are targeting people who help a woman get an abortion, doctors who are providing essential healthcare, friends and family members who are just supporting a loved one, and even the drivers just doing their job and helping patients get to medical appointments.

Republicans are working around-the-clock to make it harder for women and families to control their own futures. They are coming after the birth control and IUDs that tens of millions rely on to plan a family on their own terms. They are coming after Plan B. They are even putting patients' ability to get the IVF care they need to help start a family at risk.

My Republican colleagues right here in the Senate have made clear that they have their sights set on something really extreme: They want a na-

tionwide ban on abortion. Republicans aren't content with some States banning abortion and creating health crises that spill across State lines; they want to eliminate the right of every woman in America to get an abortion in Washington State and everywhere else. It is not hypothetical, and it is not some far-off worry. It is appalling, and it is completely backward.

Republicans want to force us all with them into their time machine, but we are not going to let them. Democrats are fighting Republicans' increasingly extreme policies at every step of the way.

In the coming weeks, we are going to remind each and every American of the rights that Republicans want to rip away. We won't allow Republicans to run and hide from the reality of their extreme agenda. We are going to be on the floor each week highlighting how Republicans are doing everything they can to hit rewind on our rights, highlighting every protection and freedom that Republicans are ripping away from people across the country, and we are going to show the country how Republican policies hurt everyone. We are going to expose the Republicans' radical and unpopular views on everything from abortion to family planning to sex ed. We are going to make clear who is hurt most by their extremism.

This fight did not end when the Republicans blocked the Women's Health Protection Act last week—far from it. People across the country are fed up with Republicans' attacks on their rights. They are fired up, and they are fighting back, and so am I, and so are my Democratic colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4249

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, last week, President Biden tried to blame me for the current inflation crisis. In a speech where he couldn't even get my State right—I proudly represent Florida, in case he needs another reminder—he attacked me and tried to blame the record inflation he created on Republicans. I guess he has also forgotten that he is the President and that it is his policies that created this mess. And, by the way, Democrats are in control of the House and the Senate.

What is clear to the American people is that Joe Biden is to blame for the inflation that is hurting them more every day. Families I talk to in Florida are sick and tired of this President's failures. They are sick and tired of seeing an incoherent, confused man ramble on in the White House, with no plan but to blame everyone else but himself for the problems he created.

Last week, the Biden administration reported that the Consumer Price Index, our main measure of inflation, increased 8.3 percent year-over-year, and the latest Producer Price Index, released just a day later, showed wholesale inflation in April increased 11 per-

cent over the year. These price hikes hurt real families, and they are impacting every industry. We see it in the price of groceries, like milk, eggs, and meat. We see it in the price of gas at the pump and electricity for your home. We see it in the price of used cars and in the cost of transportation. Everything is going up, and some products, like baby formula, are nearly impossible to find.

It is causing families to make impossible choices. In March, a Census Bureau report found that over the last year, 24 percent of Americans reduced or went without basic items such as food and medicine as a way to afford their energy bills. In my home State, 26 percent of Floridians had to make this impossible choice.

Let's be clear. The financial pinch families are facing, the supply chain crisis families are facing, and the skyrocketing prices families are seeing are because of the radical spending agenda being pushed by President Biden and Democrats in Washington. Their reckless government spending has sent our economy into a downward spiral. Our debt has grown to over \$30 trillion, and Biden wants to push it up to \$45 trillion even as our GDP is contracting. Inflation has risen to the highest levels in over 40 years. It is wrecking our economy.

We need bold action to fix this mess and help families struggling to keep up.

I came to the floor to stop the insanity and introduce a budgetary point of order. My bill would stop any non-defense discretionary spending that would increase the deficit over the 10-year budget window when the average annual CPI inflation is 3 percent or higher. The Federal Reserve's target for inflation is 2 percent, so setting the bar for the point of order 50 percent above this target is totally reasonable.

My point of order would not even apply during time periods when inflation is at or slightly above the Federal Reserve's target. Of course, we need flexibility for emergencies, so my bill would allow this point of order to be waived if two-thirds of the Senate agree that deficit spending during times of elevated inflation is desperately needed. Further, my point of order would not apply to funding our armed services nor would it apply to any mandatory spending, such as Medicare or Social Security.

This is commonsense legislation. This bill would put in place the same scrutiny that families, especially poor families like mine when growing up, use in order to stay on budget. It is the same kind of careful examination that small business owners have to do to make sure they can pay their employees and make ends meet. The inflation we are seeing right now is unsustainable. It is time for action. I hope we will all come together to agree to this point of order.

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed

to the immediate consideration of S. 4249, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, if the Senator from Florida's bill were to pass, it would make routine domestic spending bills nearly impossible to be passed in the U.S. Senate, freezing spending at current levels.

I worry that the Senator from Florida believes the false impression that inflation does not impact the millions of Americans who benefit from non-defense discretionary programs. These are people who have to go to work every single day and try to figure out if they are going to have enough money to put groceries on their table. This bill would make things worse for the American people, not better.

As an example, this year, the cost of the veterans medical care system is expected to grow by \$21 billion. We have all heard the patriotic speeches of how we stand behind our veterans when they answer the call, but I wonder how many VA hospitals and clinics in Florida would have to be closed if this proposal were to be approved. I know there are a lot all over the country that would have to be closed.

Natural gas costs have grown by 35 percent this year. Do any of us who may be from a State where the weather can get warm want to tell our constituents who rely on the LIHEAP program to cool their homes "No, you don't need air conditioning because the money is not going to be there"?

If Florida is struck by another hurricane this summer and the Senator from Florida's constituents look to FEMA for fuel, food, and water, will the Senator tell his constituents "Sorry. Inflation was too high. You are on your own. We can't respond to that emergency"?

In 2017, Members on the other side of the aisle lined up to vote for a \$1.9 trillion tax cut for the wealthy—a tax cut that I believe has contributed to the inflation we now see in the country. There is nothing in this request to roll back those tax cuts. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4250

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I disagree with my colleague's objection, but I think this issue is too important not to try to get something done today.

So, instead of enacting this point of order when the CPI reaches 3 percent, how about we raise it to 8 percent? Our current CPI level is at 8.3 percent. We see how bad things are right now. When the CPI gets close to where we currently are—inflation levels that we haven't seen since the 1980s—that is

when this point of order would take effect.

At 8 percent inflation, we have reached a crisis point. It only stands to reason for Congress to start looking closely at every bill that increases the deficit. Such deficit-increasing bills should only be passed by Congress when absolutely needed.

Again, this point of order could be waived in the Senate with a two-thirds majority. I think this is reasonable and that we owe it to American families to start holding Congress accountable for the reckless spending that we know fuels inflation. Hopefully, my colleagues can agree to pinning this point of order to inflation at 8 percent.

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 4250, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LEAHY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4251

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I was hoping we could arrive at a deal today, so let me try it one more time.

Eight percent inflation, I think, is really high. Remember that the Federal Reserve's target is 2 percent. I am just here to see if we can work something out and get something with which we can control excess spending. So I am going to try one more time. I want to give Democrats a chance in Congress to step up and fight for families all across America who are being devastated by raging inflation. There is no reason not to get this done.

My colleague objected to setting this point of order at 8 percent, but certainly no one can object to saying that, at 12 percent inflation, things need to change. Inflation over 12 percent would be an even bigger emergency. We haven't seen the CPI that high since Jimmy Carter.

Think about it this way: Things are really bad now, and 12 percent inflation would be a 50-percent increase over the already sky-high prices we are seeing today. Remember, we started at 3 percent. Now I am offering my colleague a point of order that can only be triggered at 12 percent.

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 4251, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object—and I will—I think back over the years to some of the debates.

I remember, during the Reagan administration, when we heard so many speeches from President Reagan and his supporters on how they had to balance the budget. He did this at a time when he doubled and tripled the national debt, all the time telling everybody how they were balancing the budget.

Then I heard the objections to President Clinton's budget, saying that it didn't do the wonderful things that the Reagan budget did even though, of course, it gave the United States the first surplus it had had in decades.

Every so often, reality catches up with rhetoric, and because of that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I am clearly disappointed that we have had three opportunities to try to do something here that was going to try to stop the reckless spending that is causing this inflation.

I think all of us know that inflation is way too high. We also all know that reckless government spending is driving up the cost of inflation all across this country. I hope the Democrats in Washington will start figuring out how we can get inflation under control. It starts by living within our means. It starts by making sure that we live within our budget and that we stop wasting money.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, one of the ways you try to save money is, again, not with rhetoric but with reality.

I would urge everybody to join with us on both sides of the aisle who are working to get our appropriations bills together so we can reflect the actual needs and go forward with that. Again, rhetoric is easy; reality is a tad more difficult.

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

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

INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, with the President of the United States soon to be departing on his first Asia trip, I rise to speak today about U.S. policy in the Indo-Pacific, an area of the world that I know very well, having served as U.S. Ambassador to Japan prior to joining the U.S. Senate.

While U.S. foreign policy in recent months has focused largely on Eastern Europe, we cannot take our attention away from our Nation's greatest strategic adversary, namely, the Chinese Communist Party. Confronting communist China is the essential responsibility of our time, as the China challenge—and how the United States and