partisan $1.9 trillion spending spree under the guise of COVID relief, mere weeks—mere weeks—after Congress had passed a fifth bipartisan COVID bill that met essentially all current pressing COVID needs.

The Democrats' so-called American Rescue Plan sent a lot of unnecessary government money into the economy, and the economy overheated as a result. You don't have to take my word for that on the damaging effects of this legislation. Here is what one Democratic economist who worked in the Obama administration had to say on the subject:

The $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan passed in the early days of the Biden administration will go down in history as an extraordinary policy mistake.

Another former Obama adviser noted:

The original sin was an oversized American Rescue Plan. It contributed to both higher output but also higher prices.

Those are warnings that came from Democrats that their so-called American Rescue Plan ran the risk of overheating the economy, but Democrats here in Congress passed it anyway. The President signed it.

What is also worse is that even after they saw the inflation that resulted from their $1.9 trillion boondoggle, they spent months last year trying to double down on the reckless spending that helped cause so much inflation in the first place. Even as inflation was steadily increasing, Democrats spent months working to pass their so-called Build Back Better bill—a multitrillion-dollar—trillion-dollar—reckless tax-and-spending spree that would have dumped more unnecessary government money into an already overheated economy. But, fortunately, their efforts ultimately failed last December.

But like a zombie, Democrats' Build Back Better tax-and-spending spree just keeps coming back from the dead. That is right. Despite the fact that our inflation crisis is even worse—worse now than it was last fall—Democrats are once again considering a version of their Build Back Better tax-and-spending spree. We don't know all the details yet, but what we do know—what we do know—is cause for alarm.

Democrats are planning to raise taxes by a trillion dollars—$1 trillion—and a substantial part of that tax increase would come in the form of new taxes on small businesses. That is right, on small individually and family-owned businesses or what are often called passthrough businesses; in other words, Main Street America, the businesses that create jobs.

In South Dakota, passthroughs, such as sole proprietorships, S corporations, and partnerships, employ an estimated 68 percent of the private sector and represent almost 100 percent—99 percent or thereabouts—of all businesses in my home State of South Dakota. Nationwide, more than 90 percent of American businesses are passthroughs, and these businesses employ tens of millions of Americans.

Small business owners' expectations for better business conditions recently hit an alltime low. Business owners are struggling with the high cost of everything, from inputs to electricity, as inflation continues to soar and global supply chains continue to be sluggish.

I recently read a comment from one small business owner in South Dakota who noted:

It's hard when you're working so hard but you're not making money. . . . We are right there right now.

''It's hard when you are working so hard but you're not making money.'' Yes, it is.

And if Democrats have their way, life for small business owners—and their employees—is going to get even harder because raising taxes on businesses will lead to a combination of lower wages for workers, lower returns for business owners, and higher prices for goods and services. It is just intuitive.

Think about it. If you are a small business owner, you are paying more for inputs and all the supplies that you need to run your business, and then government says: Oh, we are going to hand you a big, fat tax increase on top of that, what happens? Well, you can take lower profits—and some of them certainly, I am sure, will, but inevitably that gets passed on in the form of higher cost to the consumers, to the people they serve, their customers, or in the form of lower wages to their employees. That is what it is going to do. It will also make it more challenging for small business owners to reinvest in and grow their businesses.

As I said, altogether, Democrats are contemplating raising taxes by $1 trillion in their new Build Back Better tax-and-spending spree. And those tax hikes and their economic impacts are not going to be limited to small businesses, nor are they going to be limited to families bringing home more than $400,000, despite the fact that the President has repeatedly pledged not to raise taxes on families making less than that.

The nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation studied the tax-and-spend provisions that Democrats are discussing, and its analysis shows that lower and middle-income taxpayers will face significant hits from the proposed tax hikes.

The Joint Committee on Taxation analysis—again, bipartisan, nonpartisan organization studies the implications of taxing-and-spending provisions on our economy and on classes of different people in this country—that JCT analysis found that more than half of Americans earning between $100,000 and $200,000 would see a tax hike next year as well as a quarter of Americans making between $75,000 and $100,000 a year.

Raising taxes on small businesses, including passthroughs in South Dakota and across this country, is a reckless—reckless—approach to the economy.

Mr. President, we have an economy that is wobbling. I just mentioned that the inflation numbers are historic: 9.1 percent. We haven't seen that kind of inflation since 1981, back when I was in college.

We have an economy that some argue is already in a recession, depending on what ultimately the numbers are for the second quarter of this year. But some people—economists—are expecting negative GDP growth for the second quarter, which, by the clinical, technical definition, would put the country already into a recession. But most economists and people who study this suggest that there is certainly a likelihood of a recession within the next year.

So we have the prospect of a recession. We are looking down at the possibility of record inflation, coupled with a recession, and what do the Democrats want to do? Raise taxes. Raise taxes and grow government. Spend more. Flood the zone with more spending. Hit businesses with higher taxes, which will get passed on in the form of lower wages and higher prices.

So the Democrats apparently are content with the idea of a recession. They almost want to seem to guarantee that we want to get there, and I am at a loss to understand any other reason why they would be contemplating increasing the tax burden on small businesses and middle-class Americans during an inflation crisis.

Mr. President, Democrats tried their hardest last fall to double down on the spending strategy that helped plunge us into this inflation crisis in the first place. Mercifully—and I say ''mercifully,'' and I thank God for a couple of discerning Democrats who saw otherwise—mercifully, they failed.

Let's hope that common sense will once again prevail and the Democrats' latest reckless tax-and-spending proposal will come to nothing. American families are already suffering. They should not—not—have to deal with the economic consequences of yet another ill-advised piece of Democratic legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The gentleman from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, during my time in the Senate, I have spent a lot of time learning from folks who live and work along our 1,200-mile border with Mexico about the challenges that region and that border present. I have worked with local leaders who know the advantages and the challenges of living along an international border better than anyone else in the country. Of course, I have spoken with a number of Border Patrol agents—these, of course, are frontline law enforcement officers—as well as our local sheriffs and others, who have come face-to-face with human tragedy, exploitation, and many other forms of heartbreak and hardship. I have learned a great deal from the nongovernmental organizations—the so-called NGOs—that go above and beyond the call of duty to

care for the migrants who often arrive sick, abused, and malnourished. When it comes to border security and commonsense immigration policies, the input of these experts is invaluable. It is irreplaceable.

Later this week, I will be traveling back home to the Rio Grande Valley along with a number of my Republican colleagues so that they, too, can learn from the true experts about the border crisis. Senator CRUZ and I are leading a visit to the Rio Grande Valley to receive an update on the current state of circumstances at the border.

I know, with everything happening here in Washington, DC, and around the country, it is easy to lose sight of what is happening on the border, the humanitarian crisis that is occurring at the border, so I want to remind anybody who is listening about what we have seen over the last 2 years during—well, actually, it is the first year and a half of the Biden administration. For a year and a half now, border communities have been overwhelmed by the sheer number, the volume, of migrants crossing the border. Since President Biden took office, the Border Patrol has encountered nearly 3 million—3 million—people along the southwest border. That is almost an incomprehensible figure, and it is far from the normal situation.

Let me provide a little historical context. At this point during the Obama administration, an average of about 46,000 migrants were apprehended each month along the border—46,000 during the Obama administration. During the Trump administration, that number was cut in half to 24,000 migrants every month. But during the Biden administration, so far, that figure has skyrocketed. On average, more than 185,000 migrants cross our southern border every month. That is 7½ times more than we were seeing just a few years ago.

And there is no question—certainly in my mind—and I don't think any rational review of the facts would lead to another conclusion other than that President Biden's policies are the driving force for this crisis. The President ran on the promise of policies that would lead to this exact result, and we have heard stories from migrants who explicitly came to the United States because of the signals the Federal Government is sending that if you can make it to the border, you are going to be able to make it into the interior of the United States.

But even though the President's policies have encouraged many people to make this dangerous trip from their homes across the border—particularly in temperatures like we are encountering in Texas now, where for the last 33 days we have seen 100-degree-plus temperatures—these migrants are coming from their home, traversing huge expanses of land, and showing up at the border—if they do show up—as I said, sick, dehydrated, suffering from assault.

The fact is, if you visit Brooks County, TX, where Falfurrias is located, they have a Border Patrol checkpoint. What the coyotes do—that is the name given to the human smugglers—is they will transport people from the stash houses on this side of the border, up the highway, but then, before they get to the border checkpoint where the Border Patrol is, they will tell all the migrants to get out of the vehicle and here is a jug of water and maybe a power bar, and we will see you on the north side. They will have to walk around the checkpoint and then reconnect with the coyote, with the smuggler, on the north side. But the fact is that a number of these individuals don't make it; they die in Brooks County from exposure. Certainly, the coyotes care nothing about humanity but only about money. If someone is sick or lame or can't keep up, they get left behind to die.

Well, it is clear, too, that this administration has failed to prepare for what I think most people could have predicted given the green light that the Biden administration has posted at the border welcoming anybody and everybody who wants to come to the United States from anywhere in the world without complying with our immigration laws. When thousands of people are crossing the border every day, it overwhelms the Border Patrol's capabilities. That is part of the plan, because when thousands of people overwhelm the Border Patrol at the border, many of them have to go away from the border for paperwork, to process unaccompanied children and perform other tasks. So they are not there when—guess what—here come the drugs.

Last year alone, 108,000 Americans died of drug overdoses. Virtually all of those came across the southern border. The one that we are most concerned about now—but we are concerned about all of them—is opioids, synthetic opioids like fentanyl, which are enormously powerful and have resulted in the death of far too many Americans. Part of that is because of the border crisis.

Now, the drug cartels make a lot of money doing this. The human smugglers charge $5-, $10-, $15,000 a head to bring people across the border. This is a huge moneymaking criminal enterprise. But, in response, the Biden administration has failed to prepare and failed to embrace policies that would deter people from making this dangerous trip in the first place.

Last fall, I visited the Del Rio Sector with a group of about 30 Border Patrol agents at their muster. That is their meeting right before they are deployed out into the field. When they were asked to raise their hand if they would be working out in the field that day patrolling, not a single hand was raised. These men and women who would normally be out on the frontlines stopping dangerous people and drugs from sneaking across the border—they are filling out paperwork, they are watching unaccompanied children, and they are transporting migrants.

This is part of the cartel's plan. It looks like, to coin a phrase, we are playing checkers when they are playing three-dimensional chess. The cartels have simply adapted their policies to exploit what they see as weakness at the border. This is a dangerous situation. If Border Patrol agents are caring for unaccompanied children, obviously they can't patrol the frontlines. If they are knee-deep in paperwork, they can't stop criminals and drugs from coming across the border.

The chaos at the border provides an excellent camouflage and disguise for dangerous people coming across. Gangs, cartels, criminal organizations are paying close attention. They see the gaps, some of which they create themselves, and they are taking full advantage. Every day, criminals attempt to sneak across our border. The dedicated men and women of the Border Patrol arrest a number of them if they can locate them. Many of them get away. Since October, agents have apprehended more than 450 gang members. But, as we know, they are outnumbered and overwhelmed, meaning that countless others slip through the cracks.

According to some reports, more than 300,000 migrants evaded Border Patrol between October and the end of March. That is 300,000 on top of the 3 million whom I mentioned a moment ago who have been encountered during the Biden administration. So that is 300,000 additional who have evaded Border Patrol in just 6 months. These are known as ''got-aways,'' the ones Border Patrol sees on surveillance cameras. But the number could well be significantly higher.

The cartels and the human smugglers who help people illegally enter our country are not fools. They pay close attention to the rhetoric of the President and politicians here in Washington, and they watch television from their home country and see that people who show up at the border can by and large enter the country without any consequences. They know our immigration laws better than the average American, better than the average Member of Congress, and they know how to exploit them to their advantage. They will flood the system in one area to distract the Border Patrol and take advantage of the security gaps.

This is an important point. These cartels and criminal organizations are what one Border Patrol agent called commodity agnostic; in other words, they are in it for the money. If they can make money by smuggling—by trafficking in young girls or in economic migrants or drugs, they will do it because that is why they exist: because of the money they derive from their crimes.

As I suggested, one of the biggest moneymakers is drug trafficking. Since October, Customs and Border

Protection has seized more than 7,700 pounds of fentanyl and more than 120,000 pounds of methamphetamine. Add the other drugs—cocaine, heroin, and other dangerous drugs—that have been seized, you have 440,000 pounds of drugs that came into our country in only 8 months, and that is just the drugs we were able to locate and confiscate.

These criminal groups also profit off the backs of migrants. Again, to them, a migrant is not a human being. It is a commodity; it is a moneymaker, a way to wring a dollar out of somebody else's misery.

And a couple of weeks ago, we received a tragic reminder of how ruthless these criminals are. Smugglers abandoned a tractor-trailer packed with migrants in San Antonio, my hometown, leaving the truck to bake in the Texas heat. Fifty-three migrants died in what has been described as the deadliest human smuggling incident in U.S. history. It is a devastating reminder that this isn't about politics. Lives are actually on the line.

President Biden has talked about the need to treat immigrants humanely. I agree. This isn't about treating them inhumanely, but 53 migrants dying in the back of a tractor-trailer rig in 100-degree Texas temperature is not humane either.

Migrants are dying. Drugs are pouring into our country. And all the while, these criminal organizations are getting richer and richer.

I don't know how President Biden and Vice President HARRIS look in the mirror knowing that this is happening on their watch. I do know that President Biden and Vice President HARRIS have not been down to the border and talked to the same experts that I have learned from over the years. I think they would learn a lot. I would welcome them if they decided to come.

Instead, the President has sent a signal to the cartels and human smugglers that they can continue to abuse, rape, and get rich off of vulnerable migrants. We have even seen some in the administration villainize the dedicated law enforcement officers who are trying to keep our communities and our countries safe. And despite the record-breaking levels of migration, we know the President still refuses to visit the border.

He is in the Middle East. He is visiting Muhammad bin Salman and other officials in Israel and elsewhere, but he won't go to the border where this crisis is happening, in large part because of his failed policies.

As I have said, throughout my time in the Senate, I have learned a lot from these dedicated leaders in border communities who deal with this crisis firsthand. Their input has been invaluable to my work in the Senate. And I look forward to seeing some of these folks later this week and introducing them to a number of our Senate colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes prior to the scheduled votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Hearing none, without objection.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I will be brief. But I do want to talk about a serious subject. You know, 30 years ago, we wouldn't have been talking about email or social media or other things that we now rely on to receive communications, to be informed on political choices, and to potentially even support candidates that we want to support. But the reality is, today, we all have two or three email accounts, probably most of them based on Gmail. We have got access to Twitter, Instagram, Facebook—a number of social media platforms. And I have a concern that maybe it is not a level playing field for political views.

We have always had that argument, but recently NC State issued a report that seems to find that—particularly with Gmail—we have an imbalance between how information is disseminated, how candidates are able to reach out for support. What the study found is a potential political bias against Republicans in favor of Democratic candidates.

Now, I am a technology person, and I think my staff called me a bit of a nerd. I have been in technology for almost 40 years. I am not willing to jump to the conclusion that Google has necessarily created a strategy for benefitting Democrats over Republicans, but a study seems to suggest that there are legitimate questions that need to be answered.

I, for one, don't think any platform should favor either policy. I think more speech, more access is better; more informed voters, more people participating in elections. But the study seems to suggest that there is a bias in the way that we receive our information through Gmail.

I joined a letter with Senator DAINES to say: Take a look at that report, take a look at your operations, and give us your response to the assertions in the report.

I know that this is very important for the future of elections, for the future of participation in elections. And, again, I don't want a platform that biases itself toward conservatives any more than I want one that biases itself towards liberals. But I did have an opportunity to talk with technologists at Google, who dismissed the report. But that is not enough. The report has findings. And I think—in this case Google, but there are other platforms we can ask the same question.

Incidentally, Twitter 2 months ago informed me that I was not who I said I was, so they suspended my account. I tried to go through an appeal process and finally just decided I don't need that Twitter account. I am wondering if that was a result of an algorithm or the result of somebody in Twitter who didn't like what I had to say about my mother and my wife and my kids on my Twitter account because I happen to have an official account that, for some reason, it is OK.

We have got to get this straightened up, and Google can help us start by taking a look at the findings in this report and providing us hard answers for it and identifying others who may actually be responsible for the outcomes that we are, at this point, assuming are the responsibility of Google.

I think it is very important for us to go through the report, give us the information we need because we may find out that Google is, in fact, not responsible for what some of my colleagues believe is the vast majority of appeals from conservatives going into their spam filter and never being reached. There may be other reasons. We already know that Russia, China, other state actors influence public opinion in the United States through their views and exploitation of social platforms.

So the reason I come to the floor today is to basically reassert what I did in the letter to Google. Do the homework. Prove to us that there are no operations or conscious decisions made by the management or individuals in the organization to actually bias towards one ideology or the other. I need that information so that we can figure out how we can have more speech and more engagement in the political process.

But I will say this: If there is any social media platform that has an employee or an organization that is biased, those folks should no longer be working for those platforms. And if I find any evidence to that effect, I will be pursuing it aggressively. But I come to the floor to encourage Google to do the homework, know that I will be objective. And I would like to get a response soon.

VOTE ON BARR NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time is expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Barr nomination?

Mr. TESTER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

The result was announced—yeas 66, nays 28, as follows: