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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, today, make our lawmakers instruments of Your grace and goodness. Teach them to be patient with themselves and others. Forgive them when they permit impatience to lead them astray, making them miss the wonder and majesty of Your purpose for our Nation and world. Lord, renew in our Senators the joy of belonging to You, as they lovingly yield to Your guidance. Direct their steps so that no duty will be left undone and no constructive words will be left unsaid.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 28, 2022.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. ROSEN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Constance J. Milstein, of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Malta.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, minutes ago, new data confirmed what a supermajority of Americans already knew: Democrats have plunged America into a recession. According to official statistics, the U.S. economy just shrank for the second consecutive quarter. Democrats inherited an economy that was primed for a historic comeback and promptly ran it straight into the ground.

Of course, working families didn't need any experts or statistics to tell them today's Democratic Party is a walking, talking economic disaster.

Democrats' failures are causing working families deep personal pain on a daily basis.

Americans know Democrats can't be trusted. They know it every time they fill the gas tank, every time they check out at the supermarket, every time parents stay up late at the kitchen table trying to figure out which bills they can afford to pay this particular month.

Because Democrats spent us into inflation, 90 million American households say they are having a hard time meeting expenses—90 million American households. The average household in this country is having to pay an extra \$5,300 and climbing every year just to tread water. Democrats' inflation is stealing more than \$5,000 from the average family per year, and like a supermajority of Americans already knew before this morning, it has now driven the country into a recession.

A few years back, our colleague the senior Senator from West Virginia said: "I don't think [that] during a time of recession, you mess with any of the taxes, or increase any taxes." But, alas, yesterday, Washington Democrats announced they plan to do exactly that. The Democrats who robbed American families once with inflation now want to rob the country a second time through a gigantic, gigantic job-killing tax hike.

Apparently, our Democratic colleagues do not want to be responsible for just skyrocketing prices alone. They want Americans to be faced with skyrocketing prices and higher taxes and fewer jobs all at the same time.

Democrats have outlined a giant package of huge, new job-killing tax hikes, Green New Deal craziness that will kill American energy, and prescription drug socialism that will leave us with fewer lifesaving medicines—a reckless taxing-and-spending spree that will delight the far left and hammer working families even harder.

The Democrats are going all in on a multihundred-billion-dollar tax hike

- This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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on American jobs that experts called—listen to this—the single most economically damaging part of their entire BBB plan from last year. Years of research show the burden would be overwhelmingly passed down to workers. This one tax hike alone would kill tens of thousands of American jobs.

Democrats aren't sticking it to the fat cats. They are sticking it to the same middle-class families they have already crushed with inflation.

So Democrats want to respond to their inflation crisis by killing jobs. They also want to respond to the global energy crisis by attacking American natural gas. This reckless taxing-and-spending spree includes a massive, massive new tax on American natural gas, our country's single largest source of electricity.

We all know that when you tax something, you get less of it, and Democrats want new taxes on American natural gas wells, new taxes on American pipelines, and new taxes on American LNG exporting—higher electricity bills in the summer, higher heating bills in the winter, less reliable energy for our country, and less American energy exported to our allies abroad; doubling down—literally, doubling down—on inflation.

I have only scratched the surface of all the ways Democrats want to pick Americans' pockets. They want to pour new funding—listen to this—into IRS agents so Americans end up with more audits. IRS agents get new computers and smartphones so that American small businesses get more audits.

Also, Democrats want to drain money out of medical innovation and leave terminally ill Americans with fewer real treatments and cures as a result. The experts say this Big Government money grab will literally cost Americans their lives.

But, remember, Democrats say all of these historic tax hikes are their answer to the inflation they already created themselves.

So do you hear that, America? Democrats' answer to hurting you once is to hurt you again. Democrats say the response to Democratic inflation is Democratic tax hikes.

It wasn't enough that Democrats have already destroyed your family's purchasing power. Now they want to kill your job and tax your electricity as well.

So the natural next question is, What do Democrats want to do with all that money? What spending spree do the Democrats want so badly that they will raise taxes in the midst of a recession?

Ah, here is the answer: Green New Deal nonsense and goodies for rich coastal elites. They want these job-killing tax hikes so they can spend tens of billions of dollars on slush funds for “green banks” and “environmental justice.” They want job-killing tax hikes so they can finance new handouts for wealthy households earning up to \$300,000 a year to buy an

\$80,000 electric car. Let me say that again: tax hikes so they can finance new handouts for wealthy households earning up to \$300,000 a year to buy an \$80,000 electric car. They want to subsidize rich people buying electric cars that cost more—more—than the median American household earns in an entire year.

They want to tax American natural gas. They want to tax your electricity so they can spend billions making solar and wind power look artificially ready for prime time when they are not yet—billions of dollars so Democrats can meddle in what kind of car you drive; what kind of stove, hot water heater, or clothes dryer you can afford; and how you are allowed to heat your house. This is the nonsense that Democrats are focused on—not helping you put gas in your car, not helping you afford your groceries.

They want to use the middle-class economic crisis they themselves created as an excuse to raise your taxes and ram through their Green New Deal nonsense, all of this liberal waste with no proof—none—that any of it would lead to a meaningful reduction in global emissions, much less global temperatures.

America has already been reducing our emissions considerably over the last 15 to 20 years. Countries like China have just kept on emitting more and more, totally washing out our reductions and then some. Democrats want to forcibly reengineer our entire economy out from under working Americans' feet while China keeps on emitting more and more.

Democrats are seeing American families the worst inflation in 40 years and raising them job-killing tax hikes and—and—a war on American electricity.

Our colleagues across the aisle have already completely lost Americans' trust on the economy before this reckless taxing-and-spending spree. Apparently, they now want to see how much farther they can fall.

PACT ACT

Madam President, now on a completely different matter, yesterday, the Senate should have been able to clear bipartisan legislation expanding VA benefits for millions of men and women who have served bravely in our Armed Forces. I appreciate the work our colleagues on Veterans' Affairs have done on the PACT Act. I support the substance of the bill.

But even on legislation this major and this costly, the Democratic leader tried to block the Senate from any semblance of a fair amendment process. Specifically, the senior Senator from Pennsylvania has an amendment that would ensure we do not just apply a financial bandaid to the problem but actually fix the underlying accounting issue. As written, the legislation would not just help America's veterans as designed. It would also allow Democrats to effectively spend the same money twice and enable hundreds of billions in

new, unrelated spending on the discretionary side of the Federal budget.

There is no excuse why the Democratic leader should continue to block Senator TOOMEY's commonsense amendment. A bill this important and this bipartisan deserves for us to fix the accounting gimmick, and then it deserves to become law.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, say it isn't so, Joe.

Yesterday afternoon, Democrats, Senator MANCHIN—JOE MANCHIN from West Virginia—and their leadership announced the latest version of their Build Back Better tax-and-spending spree, which they are, bizarrely, calling the Inflation Reduction Act.

Now, I have to say that when they announced it, I think it certainly blindsided the Republicans, but I think it also blindsided, I am told, an awful lot of Democrats who didn't know or hadn't been consulted about what was going to be in this so-called Inflation Reduction Act.

Let me just tell you a few of the things the bill does. It imposes a new tax on job creators. It provides funding to the IRS to harass small businesses and nonprofits. It provides tens of billions of dollars in tax credits for Green New Deal projects and the purchase of costly electric vehicles. It extends increased government subsidies for people on ObamaCare.

Well, I think the question you have to ask is, What exactly is any of that going to do to address inflation? How are more IRS audits going to help Americans who wonder how they can continue to afford to pay more than \$4 a gallon for gas? How is a new tax on businesses going to drive down the price of chicken or milk or fruits or vegetables?

As for electric vehicle tax credits, they might make purchasing an electric vehicle slightly less painful, but that is if you can afford to purchase one in the first place, especially in the midst of an inflation crisis. These tax credits are going to do nothing to cool down our overheated economy or bring inflation under control.

Then there is the fact that Democrats are attempting to help sell this bill by claiming it is going to help reduce the deficit. Well, it is not that I am not glad to see Democrats actually considering deficit reduction, even though their deficit reduction is unlikely to do much to actually reduce the deficit. Perhaps they should have thought about deficit reduction last