

very consequential week for this Chamber and for our country.

Later today, we will vote on the nomination of Elizabeth Hanes to serve as district judge for the Eastern District of Virginia. If confirmed, she will be the 75th judge this Senate majority has confirmed since the start of President Biden's term.

In the coming days, the Senate will also finish its work passing the PACT Act, the largest expansion of veteran healthcare benefits in decades and a piece of legislation that should sail through this Chamber with overwhelming bipartisan support.

Over the past few days, the Capitol steps have been the site of something we should never see in this country: dozens of veterans braving heat and heavy rain, protesting through the night, demanding that the Senate take action on their healthcare benefits. They are there right now as we speak. No veteran who has sacrificed for our country should ever have to resort to spending the night on the Capitol steps to secure their benefits, but sadly, in this case, they have.

It is unfortunate that our Republican colleagues chose to block quick passage of this bill last week even though this is the exact same piece of legislation many of them supported in June, with one small technical fix. In the coming days, we are going to give Senate Republicans another chance to do the right thing, to work with us so we can send this bill to the President's desk ASAP.

Since 9/11, nearly 3½ million veterans have been exposed to toxic burn pits in the line of duty, leading to complications like cancer, lung disease, and other illnesses, but instead of getting the care they need without delay, many veterans have had to hire lawyers and jump through hoops. They have to sue the Veterans' Administration to get the help they deserve and need, incurred as they served our country in dangerous places like Iraq and Vietnam. Is that incredible? They have wasted years fighting the VA just to get the care they need when they should have spent that time treating their illnesses. It is equally parts tragic and infuriating.

Our veterans have already given their all to defend our Nation from threats abroad. They shouldn't have to fight a second war here at home just to get the healthcare benefits they rightfully deserve. These brave Americans sacrificed everything. They risked life and limb. The very least we can do as a country is ensure they receive top care.

I urge both sides to work together to quickly pass the PACT act so we can send it to the President's desk ASAP.

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT OF 2022

Now on the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, this week, the Senate will take action on a groundbreaking piece of legislation, one that we haven't seen in decades: the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

Over the coming days, both sides will continue conversations with the Parliamentarian in order to move forward the bipartisan Byrd bath process. Our timeline has not changed, and I expect to bring this legislation to the Senate floor and to begin voting this week.

Already, leading experts have confirmed the Inflation Reduction Act lives up to its name.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget—by no means a liberal group—affirmed that “almost every one of [this bill's] policies, in and of itself, will fight inflation. And on net, the entire package most certainly will.” That is the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, whom our Republican friends often quote.

Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers—recently the Republican leader's favored economist—said, “This bill is fighting inflation” and that “this is disinflationary policy that's also going to make the economy more efficient.”

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's—again, hardly a liberal authority, someone who actually served as an economic adviser to Senator McCain—writes that our bill will have a “material economic impact” and said that the Inflation Reduction Act will “push inflation lower.” That is Mark Zandi.

In short, the Inflation Reduction Act is going to be just what the doctor ordered for bringing down costs for American families. We are excited and eager to pass this bill through the Senate as soon as we can.

Of course, of huge significance—this is one of the things that make this bill so historic—by a significant margin, our bill will also be the largest package on climate change ever—ever—passed by this Congress.

By our analysis, this bill will cut greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 40 percent by 2030—that is a lot—and independent studies corroborate this.

According to a new study by the non-partisan Energy Innovation group, the Inflation Reduction Act would not only create at least 1.5 million new jobs by 2030, it also affirms that our bill will achieve approximately 40 percent greenhouse gas reduction by the end of the decade.

Let me repeat that last part. This independent analysis says that our bill, if enacted, could cut greenhouse gasses by approximately 40 percent. That is the number we believe it does. That is a very, very, very big deal.

But with this bill, we are going to put the country on track to meet the climate goals we need to preserve for our planet, for our children, and for our grandchildren.

Now, cutting emissions is not just about protecting our planet's health; it is also about protecting our kids' health, too.

If we slash emissions, that means cleaner air for everyone, which in turn means fewer people suffer health com-

plications that arise from pollution. It means less strain on our healthcare system. It means that communities—poorer communities, minority communities—long exposed to harmful emissions can, quite literally, breathe easy at last.

In fact, the same study from Energy Innovation found that our bill could avoid as many as 3,900 premature deaths and 100,000 asthma attacks annually by 2030—3,900 fewer premature deaths, 100,000 fewer asthma attacks. These are benchmarks every single one of us should aspire to, regardless of party. Put simply, this legislation will save lives, create jobs, reduce costs, reduce inflation.

Now, over the past few days, we have heard Republicans go back to their timeworn attacks that they use virtually against any Democratic policy. They are sounding alarms that this bill will raise taxes on American families, but it does not. Here is the plain truth: The bill will not raise any taxes—any taxes—on families making under \$400,000 a year. Instead, it will close loopholes long exploited by the largest corporations that essentially give them lower tax rates than many nurses, firefighters, teachers. You won't hear Republicans admit that. Why? Because they know that their tax policies are utterly toxic in the minds of American people.

When you increase taxes on the wealthiest and corporations who pay nothing, they say: You are raising taxes on everybody. Bull. They tried it in 2017. They went out there and said they had a massive tax reduction for the middle class. They called it a “middle class miracle,” even though they were just cutting taxes predominantly on the rich. I think it was like 70, 80 percent. It was a boondoggle in favor of the rich.

They promised their tax bill would unleash a tsunami of economic activity. Instead, it led to record corporate stock buybacks, benefiting the wealthy and nobody else.

So when Republicans talk about cutting taxes, what they really mean is cutting taxes for the richest of the rich. That is how their whole philosophy is. That is the people who seem to control lots of the Republican party.

Our bill, meanwhile, will close tax loopholes in our Tax Code and not touch anyone—anyone—making under \$400,000 a year. That is common sense.

At the end of the day, the American people want us to do a few straightforward things. They want us to lower the cost of daily expenses like healthcare and drugs. They want us to lower energy costs and protect our planet for future generations. And they want to make sure that everyone plays by the same rules and that we close loopholes long exploited by powerful corporations.

That is what the Inflation Reduction Act will do, and soon, Democrats will take action to pass this bill and deliver on our promise to make better the lives of the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The Senator from Iowa.

FBI INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, we all know that Congress has a constitutional responsibility to ensure that the executive branch executes the laws and uses taxpayers' money appropriately in accordance with congressional intent. It doesn't matter whether we have a Republican President, a Democratic President, a Republican Senate, or a Democratic Senate. We all have the constitutional responsibility of checking the executive branch.

In furtherance of that constitutional responsibility, Congress has an obligation to investigate the executive branch for fraud, for waste, for abuse, and even gross mismanagement.

And if Congress finds potential wrongdoing, we have an obligation to the American people to make sure that it is public because transparency of the public's business brings accountability to those who conduct that public business.

Last week, I made public two oversight letters that I have sent to the Justice Department and to the FBI. These two letters are part of my investigation into a political bias that is infecting the Department of Justice and the FBI.

These letters are based on information provided to my office by whistleblowers, and I hope everybody knows that I consider whistleblowers as patriots. And whistleblowers have to have guts, and they do have guts.

And Director Wray has personally told me that these whistleblowers won't be subject to retaliation, as often, whistleblowers in the Federal Government are subject to retaliation, hurting themselves professionally and maybe even losing their jobs.

Now, these letters that I sent follow up on a May 31, 2022, letter to the Justice Department, the FBI, and the inspector general.

In those letters, I provided evidence of extreme leftwing bias shown by a special agent in charge by the name of Tim Thibault. He is special agent in charge of the FBI's Washington field office.

Now, he has since been referred to the Office of Special Counsel for potential Hatch Act violations. Thibault is at the center of my two letters sent last week. The first letter relates to an FBI investigation that Thibault opened on the Trump campaign and its advisers. He allegedly had help from Richard Pilger, an official in the Justice Department's Election Crime Branch within the Public Integrity Section. During Chairman DURBIN's investigation into the Justice Department misconduct, Pilger really stood out.

The committee interviewed Richard Donoghue, the former Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General during the Trump administration. He was also a key January 6 Committee witness. Donoghue testified to the Judiciary

Committee that Pilger's conduct frustrated the Department's ability to properly operate the Elections Crime Branch.

Thibault and Pilger played a major role in opening the criminal investigation into the Trump campaign. And this isn't a preliminary investigation; it is a full investigation, which requires heightened standards to go forward with that investigation.

According to the whistleblowers that contacted my office, the opening memo for that investigation is based, in substantial part, on liberal news reporting. Liberal news reports are not enough for a full investigation. The Washington Post reported on the investigation last Tuesday. However, the Post did not report that Thibault and Pilger were involved in opening that case against Trump and his advisers. Yet Attorney General Garland and Director Wray allegedly approved opening those investigations.

Now, as I have said in my letter to those two people, if you are going to open an investigation, you have to do it in the right way.

So let's contrast this investigation with what the FBI has done with the information received from sources relating to Hunter Biden. Whistleblowers have told my office that the FBI maintains many sources that have provided extensive information on Hunter Biden. That information allegedly involves potential criminal activity, such as money laundering. That is the same criminal concern that Senator JOHNSON and I raised in our 2020 Biden report. To clarify, that was way back in 2020. According to the whistleblowers' allegations, the underlying information was verified and was verifiable.

Now, here is where it is appropriate to raise questions about politics and political interference in investigations. However, instead of green-lighting the investigative activity, the FBI shut down the Hunter investigation.

So, now, how did they do that? According to allegations, in August 2020, FBI Supervisory Intelligence Analyst Brian Auten opened an assessment. That assessment was used by the FBI officials to improperly discredit Hunter Biden's information as you know what? Disinformation. Those officials allegedly included Thibault.

Then, in October 2020, an avenue of additional Hunter reporting was ordered closed at the direction of Special Agent Thibault. It has been alleged that Thibault and others suggested to FBI agents that the information was at risk of being you know what? Disinformation. However, according to allegations, the source reporting was either verified or verifiable via criminal search warrants.

Thibault allegedly ordered the matter closed without providing a valid reason as required by FBI guidelines. In other words, Thibault shut down an allegedly legitimate avenue of information. So in order to shut down Hunter

Biden sources and investigative leads, the FBI engaged in a disinformation campaign against itself and its own agents. If these allegations are true and accurate, the Justice Department and the FBI are and have been substantially corrupted.

Before I conclude, I want to know four things regarding the summer of 2020. Yes, the summer of 2020: The opening of Auten's assessment in August 2020; secondly, efforts by the FBI officials to shut down Hunter Biden's investigative activity; third, efforts by the FBI to provide a really unnecessary briefing to me and Senator JOHNSON in August of 2020—that reading was purportedly about our Biden investigation, but it had nothing to do with the Biden investigation—fourth, and lastly, leaks relating to the briefing and the liberal media and Democrats falsely accusing me and Senator JOHNSON of advancing Russian information.

All of those four data points happened as Senator JOHNSON and I prepared to finalize our September 2020 Biden report. These data points show a plan was in place at the FBI to undermine anything related to Hunter Biden.

Attorney General Garland and Director Wray, you both have an obligation to the country to immediately investigate these allegations and to clean house.

And my oversight work on this and related matters will certainly continue.

INSPECTORS GENERAL

Madam President, on another point and a much shorter point, just in case some of my colleagues are wondering how long I am going to have the floor—today, I come to speak on the importance of inspector generals, IGs, as they are called in this town.

IGs play an important role watchdogging executive branch Agencies. They help make sure that government bureaucrats are held accountable when they engage in waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayers' money.

IGs are force multipliers for Congress in overseeing our responsibility of checks and balances of the executive branch of government. They are charged with keeping Congress informed of wrongdoing and to provide objective, nonpartisan recommendations on even the most politically sensitive issues.

As of today, there are currently 13 IG vacancies throughout the Federal Government. Some have nominees; some don't have nominees; and some haven't had Senate-confirmed IGs in years.

Now, to hone in on one vacancy that I paid special attention to over the years is that of the Department of Defense inspector general. Believe it or not, that office has not had a Senate-confirmed IG in more than 6 years. The Department of Defense has an annual budget of well over \$700 billion, and to date it looks like they will have much more money the next fiscal year.