

the Democrats' bill would contribute to inflation through 2024 and have no material impact on inflation in the long term.

Inflation has hit working Americans hard. Their grocery bills have ballooned. Rents have skyrocketed. Filling up their cars costs 75 percent more per gallon than it did when the President took office. Their utility bills have increased. And the list goes on.

Families are having to cut back on purchases and dig into their savings or pull out their credit cards—or in some cases, visit a food bank—to make ends meet.

And what does Democrats' tax-and-spending spree do to help? Nothing. Americans are dealing with the worst inflation in more than 40 years, and Democrats' bill does nothing to help end our current crisis.

So what does the bill do? Well, for one thing, it raises taxes. That is right. Our economy has shrunk for each of the past two quarters—in fact, by any common definition we are now in a recession—and the Democrats' bill raises taxes by hundreds of billions of dollars.

Here is what the Democratic leader previously had to say about raising taxes in a recession.

If we're in a recession and we're in a difficult economic time, I don't think Sen. Obama or anyone else is going to raise any taxes. You don't want to take money out of the economy when the economy is shrinking.

That is something the Democratic leader has previously said.

President Obama himself expressed a similar sentiment when he said:

[T]he last thing you want to do is to raise taxes in the middle of a recession.

"The last thing." Apparently, that doesn't apply when Democrats have Green New Deal projects they want to pay for.

The Democrats' bill attempts to offset the cost of the Green New Deal spending spree by raising taxes on American businesses, particularly—particularly—manufacturers. The proposed book minimum tax would be a \$313 billion tax hike, with roughly half of that increase falling on American manufacturers.

I don't think I need to tell anyone the likely outcome of raising taxes on businesses, particularly when the economy is contracting. The likely outcome is less growth, lower wages, and fewer jobs.

According to an analysis from the National Association of Manufacturers, in 2023 alone, the bill would reduce real gross domestic product by more than \$68 billion and result in 218,108 fewer workers in the overall economy—218,000 fewer workers in 2023 alone. That is according to the National Association of Manufacturers if the Democrats' bill passes.

The Democrats' bill also raises taxes on the energy sector—specifically, on domestic oil and gas production. It is another face-palm move from Democrats.

Currently, gas prices are 75 percent higher than they were when President Biden took office. Electricity prices are up. The cost of utility gas service is way up. And yet Democrats think it is a good idea to raise taxes on domestic oil and gas production. Apparently, Democrats want our current high energy prices to stick around for the long term.

So what are Democrats going to use all that tax-hike money for? Well, for one thing, they are going to use it to fund Green New Deal projects; critical priorities like monitoring gaps in tree canopy coverage and road equity and funding—funding—for the post office's purchase of electric delivery vehicles.

And then there are the multiple slush funds for Green New Deal projects and the tax credit for the purchase of a new electric car or truck. Of course, you will only be able to use the credit if you can afford to spend somewhere in the neighborhood of \$60,000, which is the average price for a new electric vehicle, while we are in the middle of a recession.

So it would almost undoubtedly be mostly Americans with higher salaries—and according to the bill, up to \$300,000 per household—who would be able to make use of this credit. So it is a tax credit to buy electric vehicles for rich people.

But I guess Democrats think electric vehicle tax credits for wealthier Americans are a good use of taxpayer dollars.

What else is in here? I mentioned the bill's tax hikes, but the Democrats' bill also attempts to raise revenue by increasing IRS audits and enforcement. That is right. The Democrats' bill would more than double the current number of IRS employees, making the Agency nearly three times larger than the U.S. Customs and Border Protection—the Agency, I might add, that is charged with security at all of our Nation's borders—and more than 50 percent larger—this is the IRS on the Democrats' plan—more than 50 percent larger than the entire U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Democrats give the IRS a whopping \$80 billion in additional funding over the next 10 years. Of that \$80 billion, 57 percent goes to enforcement; 4 percent goes to taxpayer services. That is right: 4 percent. This is an Agency that only succeeded in answering about 1 out of every 50 phone calls during the 2021 tax season, and yet 4 percent of the \$80 billion is going to taxpayer services. Fifty-seven percent goes to enforcement so that the IRS can spend more time harassing taxpayers around this country. Democrats are focused not on improving the IRS's responsiveness to taxpayers, but on boosting the number of IRS audits.

I still haven't mentioned the bill's socialist-style price controls for prescription drugs—price controls that would result in fewer new drugs and treatments. A study from last November found that Democrats' price con-

trol plans would result in 135 fewer new drugs through 2039. That is a lot of potentially life-changing and lifesaving treatments to lose.

Then, of course, there is Democrats' plan to expand Obamacare subsidies to higher earning Americans, a move which would drive up the cost of health insurance.

I could go on.

Most Americans remember the lead-up to Democrats' American Rescue Plan spending spree last March. We were promised—they were promised—at the time that passing that bill would have big benefits for our economy and for American families. Well, we know what actually happened. Democrats' reckless spending spree helped trigger the worst inflation for decades, and American families have suffered as a result.

Now we are being asked to swallow a similar story about the Democrats' latest spending legislation. This bill will help our economy, we are told, even though we know it would make life harder for American businesses and workers at a time when the economy is already contracting. Make no mistake about that. This is the second consecutive quarter where we have had negative economic growth, negative GDP growth, in our economy.

It will help inflation, Democrats claim, even though a nonpartisan analysis said it would do nothing—nothing to help alleviate our current crisis.

It will reduce our deficit, Democrats say, relying on some very shady accounting measures to reach their supposed deficit reduction number.

It will help lower energy prices, the President claims, even though new energy taxes would further inflate near-term energy bills during a season of already historic prices.

You would think Democrats might have been chastened by their disastrous American Rescue Plan spending spree, but you would be wrong. Apparently, Democrats are determined to get in another disastrous spending bill. And, once again, it will be the American people that will be left to suffer the consequences.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, the Republican leader knows I am a huge fan of his. Every Thursday, we gather, along with Senator GILLIBRAND, we gather in a Bible study, bipartisan Bible study. Most people think we would never pray together, read the scripture together, much less agree on anything, but we do that every week. We agree on a lot of things. In this one area, I am afraid we don't see eye to eye, as he knows.

As a leader prepared to lead the floor, I just want to remind us all of this: Two weeks ago, the United Kingdom broke its record for the highest recorded temperature multiple times, reaching a high of 105 degrees Fahrenheit. How high is that? They don't

have air conditioning in most places of England. They don't have air conditioning—105 degrees. Airport runways that week were melting in the United Kingdom. Railways in the United Kingdom were buckling from the heat, with riders warned to stay home.

Over 1,100 people that week died in Spain and Portugal from heat-related causes. Wildfires in France forced about 30,000 people to evacuate. Organizers planned to pour—listen to this—tens of thousands of gallons of water on the course of the Tour De France big bicycle race in order to keep the road from melting. And more than 40 million people in the United States are under extreme heat warnings across, in our country, the Great Plains and California.

Something like 60 million Americans will likely see temperatures at or above 100 degrees. Last week, they actually did, as I understand it. Nearly 60 percent of California has been dealing with excessive drought while 20 percent—20 percent—of Texas experiences exceptional drought, the most extreme level on the drought scale. Firefighters continue to battle huge wildfires across the United States—12 States, no less—wildfires as big as my State of Delaware.

The reason why we have put together legislation that actually addresses these tale of horrors is because it is getting worse. The scientists and people who we look to for advice on stuff like this say it is not going to get better any time soon; it is going to get worse.

In Louisiana, you know what they lose from sea level rise every 100 minutes? They lose a piece of land the size of a football field. I will say that again. In Louisiana, they lose a piece of land to the sea the size of a football field—not every 100 days, not every 100 weeks—every 100 minutes.

Something is happening here, and I think what it is, is exactly clear. There is way too much carbon in the air. The question is, What are we going to do about it? And there is something that we can do about it that not only addresses the climate crisis so these young pages sitting down here will not only have a planet to live on, but some day, they will have kids and grandchildren, and there will be a planet for them as well. That is why we have to do something.

Here is the good thing about the PACT Act that we will be voting on later this week. It is paid for. Larry Summers—the former Secretary of Treasury, former president of Harvard, renowned economist—basically says this package is not only balanced in terms of its budgetary effect, but in terms of its effect on inflation, it is actually counterinflationary.

The idea that somehow the IRS would get more money to do their job, let me say this: I have been on the Finance Committee for a number of years here in the Senate. Every couple of years, we have the Commissioner of the

IRS come before us. I don't care if it is a Democrat or Republican administration. They beg us to provide resources for the IRS so they can do their jobs.

The people that actually get audited the most are actually poor people. Folks that get audited the least are wealthy people, maybe the big corporations. The IRS needs resources. They need human beings; they need folks with the right skills; they need the kind of technology—they want to do their jobs. If they do that, they can collect hundreds of billions of dollars, not by raising taxes but by making sure people are paying their fair share of taxes. That is what we are really trying to do with this legislation. It is paid for. It actually works against inflation.

It helps people, particularly people who happen to be older and actually need access to pharmaceuticals. The legislation we have actually says if you happen to be a senior citizen and you are on Medicare Part D for the drug program, there is no way you are going to pay over \$2,000 in a year—no way. Today, you pay a lot more than that. We put a cap on that.

But by the same token, as a Senator from a State where we actually have a big interest in biopharmaceuticals—our whole area, including Philadelphia, New Jersey, and so forth—we don't want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. We want to make sure they are still successful. We don't want to stifle innovation in the biopharmaceutical world. This legislation does not do that. It does not do that.

It does say with the jobs for which there is no competition, there has to be some cap on the ability to raise the price of those drugs. I think it is common sense. I think it is common sense.

Some of us have heard the term “unforced error.” My detractors have sometimes said: I am guilty of making an unforced error. If truth were known, we all make unforced errors. Our Republican friends made an unforced error here. What they have done is they chose—because of their anger or unhappiness with the agreement with Senator MANCHIN and Senator SCHUMER to move forward and address climate change in a way that is paid for and actually adds to economic job creation—they were unhappy and, unfortunately, they, apparently, took their anger out on the ability for us to move to legislation that actually helps the veterans deal with injuries they suffered in their lives from being exposed to toxic substances from these burn pits around the world.

I know a little bit about the military. I am the last Vietnam veteran serving in the U.S. Senate. We had a bite out of this apple in Southeast Asia in the Vietnam war. It was called Agent Orange. It was called Agent Orange, and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese were exposed to Agent Orange. But a lot of folks in American service, men and some women, as well, were exposed. They had all kinds of

maladies. And later on, they had questions that we are thinking about: Are we going to make sure you are eligible for care from the VA and don't have to pay for all of it out of their pocket? We have done that and, I think, in a very appropriate way. We did it decades ago. I am privileged to be a supporter of that, as were many of our colleagues, Democratic and Republican.

We have a different kind of situation, but it is a similar situation in that we have a bunch of veterans who served in places like Afghanistan and other places where they breathed air that was toxic. It is not their fault. And later on, they became sick. The question is, What do we do about it?

The veteran service organizations have been very angry at our Republican colleagues. I am glad our Republican friends have come back and said: We realize we voted to derail the PACT Act to help veterans from these burn pit injuries. We realize we maybe shouldn't have done that. We all make mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes.

I am the only Democrat I know in this body who ever quotes Richard Nixon. Richard Nixon used to say that the only people who don't make mistakes are people who don't do anything. Think about that. That is pretty good, huh? The only people who don't make mistakes are people who don't do anything.

They made an unforced error. They voted in a way that was not consistent with their interests and not consistent with the interests of veterans, of which I am one.

They have an opportunity here—I will say this in a spiritual tone here—they have an opportunity to atone for their sins, and my hope is they are going to do that.

I hope at the same time as we do that, we will keep in mind this list of horrors that just went down—going on in the face of the Earth just a week or 2 ago. We have to do something about it. It is real. We have to do something about it. Time is not on our side. Time is not on the side of these young people here who are like 16, 17 years old.

I have one last point here. I am going to go back to what some people say—I am privileged to chair the Committee on Environment and Public Works. We have jurisdiction over clean air, clean water, climate change, roads, highways, bridges, water, sanitation—a bunch of stuff, good stuff. As a result of that, we have the opportunity to write legislation that hopefully addresses a real cause, a real problem.

One of the problems we found in climate change is the biggest source of carbon dioxide, the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions comes from the cars, trucks, and vans that we drive, the vehicles that we drive. That is the biggest source. There used to be—as Senator GILLIBRAND knows—a bank robber, Willie Sutton. He used to rob a lot of banks. He finally got caught. He was dragged into court, and

at trial, the judge said: Mr. Sutton, why do you rob banks?

Your Honor, I rob banks because that is where the money is.

One of the reasons why we want to encourage people in this country to buy vehicles that don't spew out a lot of greenhouse gases is because that is the biggest part of where our emissions are. Thirty percent of greenhouse gases in this country come from cars, trucks, and vans. We want to encourage people, as they are ready to buy a new vehicle, to consider an electric vehicle.

One of the things that I really like about the bill that we are going to be debating later this week is, we actually encourage people to buy not just the new, expensive vehicles, but to buy used electric vehicles. So the middle- and lower-income people who may not be able to afford a new electric vehicle, they can buy one. If they want to be good to the planet, kind to the planet, they can buy a used one. We provide a modest tax cut for them.

The tax cuts, I might add, in the bill that we will take up later this week are a lot more modest than they were originally. I think that is a good thing.

Again, we all make unforced errors. I know I have, and I believe—I say this lovingly—our Republican colleagues made a big one, and I think they regret it. They have the opportunity to do something about it and to do the right thing.

Let's do that. Let's do the right thing by veterans, and let's move on. And then later this week, we will take up another challenge, and that is, how do we save this planet and make sure that my kids, my grandchildren, our grandchildren, have the opportunity to have a planet that is worth growing up on?

I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS HEATH ROBINSON HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS ACT OF 2022

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to legislative session and resume consideration of the House message to accompany S. 3373, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany S. 3373, a bill to improve the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant and the Children of Fallen Heroes Grant.

Pending:

Schumer motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill.

Schumer motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill, with Schumer amendment No. 5148 (to the House amendment to the Senate amendment), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 5149 (to Schumer amendment No. 5148), to modify the effective date.

Schumer motion to refer the bill to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, with in-

structions, Schumer amendment No. 5150, to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 5151 (to the instructions (Schumer amendment No. 5150) of the motion to refer), to modify the effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 5152 (to amendment No. 5151), to modify the effective date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 5 p.m. is equally divided.

The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I rise to discuss helping our servicemembers exposed to toxic burn pits.

For days now, servicemembers and their families have been camping outside this very building in desperation. They are pleading with us, they are begging us to pass this bill. They have been out there all weekend in 90-degree heat, sheltering themselves from thunderstorms, as well as oppressive humidity. I have been down there to visit them three times now, and I can tell you, they are exhausted. They miss their families. They want to go home, but they will not. They will not go home until the job is done because the suffering they are enduring now pales in comparison to the suffering they, their fellow veterans, or their fellow family members experience every day because of the injuries sustained because of the exposure to the toxins released at these burn pits.

Last week, before it became clear that the PACT Act would fail, these families came to DC ready to celebrate. The mother-in-law of SFC Heath Robinson, who died because of burn pits, came with Heath's daughter Brielle, who was excited to finally celebrate her father's legacy finally coming to fruition. Instead, we had to explain to a crying 9-year-old girl why this would not be happening, why the Senate had failed them.

So I don't want anyone to just listen to me rattle off a bunch of statistics or facts about burn pits; I want you to listen to these people, the families, people who are literally giving every ounce of their being in service to this country, people with families, people with kids, people who are willing to upend their lives at the very moment's notice to fight for the values that make us who we are. Instead, when their lungs were filled with toxins, the government turned its back on them when they needed us the most. We made a promise to them to care for them when they came home, and that promise has been broken.

Failure to pass this bill again is not just some small disappointment, something that can be easily brushed off or disregarded; failure to pass this bill quite literally for many is a death sentence because every single day, every hour, every minute they don't get the healthcare they need to save their lives is just another minute lost to the diseases that are devouring them. It is another minute they won't have to be with their loved ones, to hug their children; another minute they don't get to be with their loved ones to kiss them

goodbye; another minute they cannot do the things they love to do. So we don't have time to wait another week, another month; we have to do this now.

This is what is at stake with this bill. It is the lives of the men and women who went to combat for this country over the last many decades and unfortunately have been so riddled with disease because of that exposure that they need our help. They need the VA to cover their healthcare. That is what this bill does. This is what they deserve.

I hope that this Chamber can come back together again where it was before last week to do the right thing, to stand by those who stood by us, to stand by those who went into the breach, to stand by those who are now suffering and dying because it is a debt that we owe them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, late tonight, the Senate will vote on my amendment No. 5185 to the PACT Act, and as my colleague from New York was just saying, it is time that we deal with the issues of toxic exposure. As a member of the VA Committee, this is something I have worked on for the last few years.

Tennessee has a large population of veterans, and we have talked a good bit about this issue and how they receive their care.

One of the concerns that we had discussed in committee, in our hearings—we have discussed it with our VSOs, and we have discussed this issue as we have talked with veterans who have come to us and to our meetings—is their frustration with having access to the queue but not getting access to the care. I think we have to look at this and say: Those are very different.

Now, I join our veterans in being frustrated with the fact that there is access to the queue to get on that wait list but not getting that care. So the amendment I am offering is not political. It is not controversial. It is a simple but much needed improvement to the PACT Act that will allow toxic-exposed veterans to gain access to community care to ensure they have a speedy process to care.

The amendment is critical to the success of this program, and we all want the program to be successful, but what we know is that the VA is not capable of implementing the PACT Act as it is written. They have neither the infrastructure nor the personnel to do that.

What we have learned is that the VA cannot deliver what is promised because it does not have the capacity to handle the increased cases. Secretary McDonough said as much in testimony submitted to the VA Committee in March of this year.

Right now, the claims backlog at the VA sits at 168,000 cases. The PACT Act as written will increase that backlog by more than 1 million cases.

Right now in Tennessee, this is the practical effect of this in Tennessee: