

months. This is the largest 1-year increase in electricity prices since 1981, when the statistic was looking back into the final months of Jimmy Carter.

Even if you take out energy and food prices—two areas where the administration likes to pass the buck and pretend they are powerless—inflation skyrocketed 0.6 percent in just the month of August alone.

Eight-point-three percent inflation—just an astonishing number. And remember, this figure only looks back 12 months, but we are now more than 12 months into the Democrats' inflation spiral. Prices are 8.3 percent higher today than in August of 2021, but remember, in August 2021, the baseline, we were already talking about runaway inflation. Prices were already way up compared to the year before that. So the 12-month number dramatically understates the total damage that Democrats have caused.

Here is the comparison that matters most to American families, especially with an election in less than 2 months: How are things today compared to January 2021, when this all-Democratic government was sworn in? How are they compared to January 2021? Here is the answer: Food prices are up a total of 13.9 percent since President Biden was sworn in. Gas prices are up 58.5 percent. Electricity costs are up 21.6 percent. And the overall, across-the-board inflation rate since President Biden took office is a catastrophic—catastrophic—12.5 percent.

This very day, President Biden and Democrats are having a big celebration for their latest reckless spending bill, which they pretended would reduce inflation but which nonpartisan experts say will actually make it worse. They could not look more out of touch if they tried.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on another matter, this past weekend, Vice President HARRIS made a surprising announcement on "Meet the Press." The Vice President declared—listen to this—"The border is secure."

We are about to close the fiscal year with more than 2 million illegal immigrant encounters on our southern border, breaking the alltime record that we only just set last year. Seizures of lethal fentanyl are also on pace to exceed last year's total. They are up more than 200 percent in just the latest month on record. These are not the signs of a secure border, and the American people know it. An outright majority of the country disapproves of how President Biden has been handling this issue. The Vice President's claims aren't fooling anyone.

For years now, this crisis has stretched border communities to the breaking point and caused ripples throughout the entire country. All the while, Democrats have claimed it would be cruel or uncompassionate to have a functioning southern border or actually enforce our laws.

Now, in recent weeks, the country has been treated to one of the more striking displays of irony we have seen in quite a while.

For many years, while the citizens and local governments on the border have cried out for help and law enforcement, various Democrat-run cities and States that aren't on the border decided to set themselves up as virtue signaling sanctuary cities, where immigration laws supposedly simply do not apply. For years, much of the political left has suggested there are no legitimate practical reasons why our country would want secure borders or to enforce its immigration laws. Only racism or xenophobia could possibly explain it.

Well, for several weeks now, some of these overwhelmed States have decided to try taking some of these Democrat-run jurisdictions at their word.

Governor Abbott in Texas and Governor Ducey in Arizona have put a very small proportion of the illegal immigrants pouring into their States onto buses bound for the self-advertised sanctuary cities of New York and Washington. And do you know what? Just this very small taste of chaos, this tiny little sliver of what many places in America have been dealing with for years, has these cities' Democratic leaders outraged, anxious, and scrambling.

Eric Adams, the mayor of New York, has only had to receive in 5 weeks roughly the number of people the Border Patrol encounters in 7 or 8 hours. New York has had over a month to handle a fraction—a fraction—of 1 day's share of border crossings. Yet the mayor says having to deal with this is "horrific." New York City officials complain that they are overwhelmed.

Here in Washington, the destination for fewer than 8,000 illegal immigrants, the Democrat Mayor has declared a public health emergency. She begged the Pentagon to send in the National Guard for help. The Defense Department, of course, turned her down.

It is incredible just how quickly Democrats change their tune when they have to stomach one single spoonful—spoonful—of the policies they have been force-feeding the rest of our country. Oh, it is challenging to have waves of illegal immigrants pouring into your community? This creates challenges for housing and medical care and resource allocation and law enforcement? Who knew all this?

As one former mayor from the frontlines of this crisis put it recently, "The city of McAllen was able to deal with thousands of immigrants a day. I think they can handle a few hundred."

Maybe this will be the wake-up call the Democrats need to finally understand that functional nations—functional nations—need functional borders.

#### 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 and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Arianna J. Freeman, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. KING. Mr. President, this is going to be an unusual set of comments for me because I am going to start out with some personal history, which I hope will make sense in terms of what I want to address.

I started working in the alternative energy industry in 1983. When I say industry, it was, actually, a very small company developing small hydro projects in Maine and New England. We then worked on the development of biomass projects. We, later on, worked on wind power and then also on the development of large-scale conservation. So my professional life has largely been occupied with energy and particularly with renewable energy.

At the same time, I had a deep history in Maine in environmental matters. I represented the environmental community in Maine before the Maine Legislature, in the seventies, if you can believe that anybody around here was still doing things in the seventies. I also, as Governor, was very active in conservation matters and am proud to say that, during my 8 years as the Governor of Maine, we put aside and set into conservation and protection status more land than in the prior 175-year history of Maine combined. This has been a passion of mine, the protection of the environment, for my entire life—so the history of renewable energy development and also environmental advocacy.

I learned some lessons when I was working in the field of developing alternative or renewable energy. The most important lesson is that there is no free lunch when it comes to energy. There are always costs and benefits. There are always impacts that some people think are terrific and that other people think are not so good. There are always trade-offs.

In fact, I will never forget my going to hearings on hydro projects and having people come and object and saying: We like hydro but not on our river, not on this site, and, by the way, we don't really think you should be ruining the rivers. Why don't you go and do wind power?

Lo and behold, 20 years later, I worked in the area of wind development, of wind power, and people came to our hearings and said: We don't really need to spoil the view in our mountains. Do more hydro.

I am not making that up. I actually lived that sort of conflict.

The second lesson I learned is that you may have global goals with renewable energy but have local impacts, and you often have a controversy about a particular project.

The third thing I learned is that change is hard. Everybody is for progress. Nobody is for change. Change is difficult, whether it is for a local community, a State, or a nation.

The fourth thing: Permitting is hard. Getting permits for renewable energy projects was lengthy, time-consuming, and expensive. This was serious learning that I had during this period in that, if you want to develop even the most beneficial project, you are going to have to go through an often arduous permitting process, and somebody isn't going to like it. There always will be trade-offs.

These were sporadic, small projects. Indeed, in New England today—and I just checked this morning—about 10 percent of our electricity comes from renewables. This is after almost 40 years of the development of these projects—about 10 percent. We are now talking about a transition in energy to a fully renewable future. Well, if you do the math, that means 10 times the amount of renewable energy development which we have done in the last 40 years, in the next 10 to 15 years. People have to understand that this is a major, major change that is going to require trade-offs. It is going to require us to make decisions and to understand—again, to go back to my basic premise—that there is no free lunch.

We are now undertaking the largest and most far-reaching energy transition in human history. The transition to fossil fuels took about 150 years. Going back to around 1800, you can see the graphic goes up, but we really got into the real heart of the fossil fuel economy in the mid-20th century—150 years. We are talking about transitioning away from fossil fuels to renewables over 15 years—not 150 but 15.

We have to grasp that this is an enormous undertaking and that it is going to involve change. We are literally in a race with climate change. That is why it is going to have to happen in the next 10, 15, 20 years, because the consequences of not doing it are catastrophic, and we are already seeing that.

I think that we have reached a point at which most Americans realize that climate change is real. The fishermen in Maine know it. The loggers know it. The farmers know it. The people who work with the land and the sea and the atmosphere understand what is happening. They see it. The animals know it. They know what is happening, and that is why we have to make this transition. That is why it is so important that we make this transition, and it has got to be fast. We don't have time to do it over 150 years or even over 50 years. It is a huge change. It is going to involve dislocation, and it is going to involve trade-offs. That is really the question that I want to address today.

There is broad agreement, I believe, that we need change, that we need to develop responses to the global climate change crisis. There is certainly agreement in the environmental community as far as that question is concerned. There is nobody in the environmental community whom I know who doubts climate change or doubts the necessity of taking dramatic action to meet it. Climate change is as real as it gets, and we have to address it.

How do we address it? With nonfossil fuel electrification—fast. If we can do that, we can address the CO<sub>2</sub>. Really, what we are talking about is the emission of CO<sub>2</sub>. Is it a problem? Well, the average over the past million years of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is about 280 parts per million. It varies up and down.

People say: Oh, this is a natural cycle.

Yes, it varies up and down between 150 and 300 parts per million. It is now at about 420 parts per million. It has gone up 20 in the last 2 or 3 years. The last time we were over 400 parts per million of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere the oceans were 60 feet higher. We are in uncharted territory in human history right now. We have to deal with it, and we have to deal with it in a hurry.

Where is all of that CO<sub>2</sub> coming from? Well, here is a rough breakdown of the CO<sub>2</sub> budget, if you will: About 30 percent comes from the generation of electricity—30, 35 percent. Another 30, 35 percent comes from transportation, the combustion of fossil fuels in vehicles. The last 30, 35 percent comes from space heat and industrial use. So that is the budget that we have to deal with. How do we tackle that? With electrification, with the electricity coming from renewable sources.

Now, if you have an electric vehicle and you are feeling really good about saving the environment, you are not saving the environment if the power

for that electric vehicle comes from fossil fuels. You are saving the environment if the power for that electric vehicle comes from renewables. So that is what we are talking about, but there are problems with renewables.

Remember, I said I had worked in the wind power business. The wind doesn't blow all the time. The Sun doesn't shine all the time. The term is "intermittency." That is the issue. That is the issue with renewables—intermittency—the fact that there has to be something to supply power when the Sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow.

The answer to that is storage. The real Green New Deal is energy storage. If we can solve that problem in a cost-effective way, then we really can have a realistic, all-renewable future, because what you have with energy storage, plus renewables, is essentially baseload power without CO<sub>2</sub>. That is really the direction that we are moving in.

However—and this is what I want to really stress—you can't be in favor of electrification; you can't be in favor of renewable power; you can't be in favor of electric vehicles if you are not in favor of mining the lithium that you need for the batteries or in covering a lot of farmers' fields with solar panels. You can't have those things without paying a price. It would be nice if you could.

I would love it if I could wave a wand and say: We are going to get rid of fossil fuels, and we are going to have an all-renewable future. Yes, I want that, but we have to recognize that, in order to get there, there are some things we have to do that heretofore we really haven't been very likely to like.

One of the other issues with renewable power is that a lot of the renewable power is in places where there aren't people. So we have to get that renewable power to the places where there are people.

Do you know what that means? Transmission, new transmission lines, new rights of way. People aren't going to be too crazy about that, but you can't have a renewable energy future without having transmission, and you can't have a renewable energy future without having batteries or some storage technology that, chances are, is going to require Earth minerals that you are going to have to mine.

Geography is a problem. Technology is a problem. This will require trade-offs. We have to keep in mind that we are talking about a global goal—we are talking about literally saving the Earth—but we have to understand that there are going to be costs to do so.

Let's talk about permitting.

One of my favorite stories is when God went to Moses and said: Moses, I have good news and bad news.

Moses said: God, give me the good news.

God says: I am going to empower you to part the waters of the Red Sea, allow my people to go free, and then

have the waters come back and inundate Pharaoh's army.

Moses says: That is wonderful, God. What is the bad news?

God says: You have to prepare the environmental impact statement.

We have got to understand that permitting is part of the process of going to a renewable future.

Now, when I was the Governor of Maine, I had a very clear policy: no diminution—no cutting, no cutting corners—of environmental standards, but I wanted the most timely and predictable environmental permitting process in the country, and I don't think that those two things are in any way mutually exclusive.

When I talk here and work with my colleagues here about permitting reform, I am talking—we are talking—about the process, not the standards. We are not talking about lowering the standards, saying that you can emit more or you don't have to meet clean water standards.

I sit at Edmund Muskie's desk in my office. Lightning would strike me if I were lowering the water quality or air quality standards, but we have got to talk about a process that is timely and predictable.

The estimates are that, to permit a mine in this country, it takes about 10 years—about 10 years. We don't have 10 years to spend on a permitting process if we are going to solve this problem in time to save the country and the planet. We have got to figure out how to do this in a more timely way. How are we going to do it? I don't know the details of the various discussions that are going on here, but I have some thoughts that I have suggested to Senator MANCHIN and others.

One is one-stop shopping. You shouldn't have to go to five different Agencies. Go to one Agency that is in charge of the permitting process, and let them lead it. Don't make the applicant go to five, six, seven different Agencies.

Secondly are deadlines—real deadlines, deadlines that mean something—so that the Agency, if it says 180 days, has got to have a decision in 180 days. Eisenhower retook Europe in 11 months. There is no reason that we can't get decisions out of some of these Agencies in less than a year. So deadlines and reasonable timeframes, I think, are part of this process, and an accelerated appeals process, where the appeal of an environmental decision on a renewable energy project, that is related to renewable energy, or that is related to our renewable energy future can go to the courts and get a fair hearing but on a timely basis and not go through a long process that takes, again, years.

Another suggestion I have—and this goes back to my experience of working on renewable energy projects—is there should be some credit given for the nature of the project that you are doing. In other words, if you are doing a project that is going to contribute to

the solution of the problem of global climate change, you shouldn't be treated as a strip mall. Some weight should be given to the import and the value—the environmental value—of the project, vis-a-vis the incidental environmental costs—and I could be criticized for using the word "incidental," but the smaller environmental costs that may be involved in getting there. I think that has got to be how we approach this whole permitting question.

So why am I here today? I am here today to talk to my friends in the environmental community—and I do mean friends, people whom I have worked with all my life—to have them change the way they think about the environmental process and what they have conventionally and historically thought about this kind of action.

Historically, if you go back to the beginning of the environmental movement in the sixties and seventies—and Lord, help me, I was there—the environmental movement was about stopping things. The environmental movement in Maine began with a proposed oil refinery on our coast. People wanted to stop it because they didn't think it was the appropriate place. But if you think about that, a lot of the environmental movement has been about stopping things, stopping projects, stopping highways, stopping whatever.

What we have to do now is think about facilitating getting things done in order to get to the renewable future that we want. I think that is a very, very important way to look at this process. You can't be for EVs if you are against mining lithium.

Let me give you just a couple of numbers on what I am talking about. Copper—remember, I talked about transmission. Copper, copper wires to transmit electricity, the estimate is—I want to be sure this is right. The estimate is we are going to need as much copper annually by 2050 as has been mined in the entire prior history of the world. In 1 year, we are going to need that much. The estimate is that in order to achieve our climate goals, we are going to have to triple—triple—the grid: the wires, the rights of way, the towers. The grid infrastructure has to be tripled in order to absorb the new and transmitted—distribute the new energy that is going to be needed. If you have electric vehicles, you are going to need more wires to get the power—that is going to be a huge increase; between doubling and tripling is the estimate—of the strength of the grid.

The International Energy Agency—not me and not some commercial group, but the International Energy Agency says that by 2040—that is not that long from now, barely over 15 years—we are going to need 42 times the amount of lithium that we have, 25 times more graphite, 21 times more cobalt, 19 times more nickel, and 7 times more rare-earth elements. Now, we have two choices: We can buy those things from other countries, particu-

larly countries that may be potential adversaries. Do we really want to be dependent on China for this kind of essential material to our environmental future? I don't think so. But if we are going to say we don't want to import it, we have got to get it out of the ground here, and we can't spend 10 years deciding it. I am not saying lower the standards, but I am saying the process itself should not be used as a weapon to undermine projects that are necessary to achieve our ultimate climate goal.

This is a change. This is a change of thinking that is required by the reality that we face. I am here because I want to face that reality. I want to do something about climate change. I want to take the actions necessary, not token actions but the real deal. But it is going to involve these enormous commitments of time, effort, and money and also our understanding—particularly in the environmental community—that there is no free lunch.

On December 2, 1862, Abraham Lincoln came to this Congress to talk about the progress of the Civil War. His problem was that the Congress was being the Congress. They were doing politics, and he didn't feel they were really taking it seriously or understood the massive change that was sweeping over the country. At the end of that speech, the afternoon of December 2, 1862, Abraham Lincoln gave what I think is still the best analysis of how you deal with change that I have ever encountered, and I think it applies exactly in this situation. Lincoln said:

The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, [therefore] we must rise—with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.

And then here is the key line:

We must disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

"We must disenthral ourselves and then we shall save our country."

"Disenthral" means thinking new and different ways. Let go of the way you thought about these kinds of issues in the past. Disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our planet.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to complete my remarks before the start of the vote.

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

#### INFLATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this morning the Bureau of Labor Statistics released the August inflation numbers, and as every American who has been to a grocery store lately knows, August was yet another month of high inflation.

Consumer prices rose 8.3 percent last month from a year earlier, holding to a near-four-decade-high—40-year-high—inflation. And Americans are feeling the strain.