

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.

Even 1 unexpectedly expensive month can be challenging for many families, but at least it is actually and usually possible to recover from a single tough month. How are American families going to recover from the months upon months upon months of high inflation that have marked the Biden economy?

As I said, American families are suffering. Grocery bills are out of control. Between August 2021 and August 2022, grocery bills rose at their highest rate since 1979—1979, I was a senior in high school. Even back-to-school supplies like pencils and glue are more expensive.

The National Retail Federation reported in July that households were on track to spend an average of \$864 on back-to-school shopping—a 24-percent increase from 2019.

Utility bills have soared. Things have gotten so bad that approximately one out of every six households—one out of every six households in America—is behind on its utility bills. Unfortunately, considering the increases in the price of natural gas and electricity since President Biden took office, it is not surprising. Forty percent of households—40 percent—reported having difficulty paying for their normal household expenses.

And Gallup reports that 56 percent of Americans—well over half of the U.S. population—are experiencing financial hardship as a result of inflation.

The personal savings rate has plunged to its lowest levels since 2009, and many Americans are dipping into their savings to make ends meet. Others have taken up a side job or are pulling out the credit card. Still others have been forced to rely on food banks.

As recently as Friday, President Biden was touting his work to “finally deliver an economy that works for working families.” I have to say, I don’t know what ivory tower the President is living in, but the Biden economy is the very opposite of an economy that works for working families.

Working families in the Biden economy are struggling. They are wondering how they can make ends meet. They are cutting back on groceries like meat or milk. They are cutting back on family trips or putting off necessary home repairs. They are, as I said, dipping into their savings or charging necessities on their credit cards or visiting food banks.

A recent CBS News article discussing a new Gallup poll noted:

The findings indicate that the hottest inflation in 40 years is eating into the bedrock of the American economy—the middle-class—and even eroding the financial stability of more well-heeled households.

To repeat:

The findings indicate that the hottest inflation in 40 years is eating into the bedrock of the American economy—the middle-class.

This is not an economy that is—to paraphrase the President—being built from the bottom up and the middle out. This is not an economy that “works for working families.” This is

an economy where living standards for working families are declining.

The President has actually had the audacity to repeatedly bring up the lines of cars waiting at food banks that occurred during the height of the COVID pandemic, with the implication that things are different now in the Biden economy. Perhaps no one at the White House has read the news recently.

Here is a sampling of headlines from the past few weeks:

Las Vegas food banks experiencing heightened demand amid inflation spikes.

Here is another one:

Food banks feeling pinch of high inflation as centers juggle to increased demand for help.

Another headline:

New Hampshire food pantries struggle with rising costs, growing demand: Organizations say more people than ever need help.

Another headline:

St. Mary’s Food Bank in Phoenix sees record number of families in need amid inflation.

Yet another headline:

Mountain West food banks are strained by high customer demand and low supply.

Unfortunately, I can go on. At this point, everyone knows how we got here. Democrats took office and decided to pass a massive \$1.9 trillion spending bill, the so-called American Rescue Plan Act, that flooded the economy with unnecessary government money. And the economy overheated as a result.

When President Biden took office, the inflation rate was 1.4 percent, well within the Fed’s 2-percent target.

Democrats were warned, including by at least one noted economist from their own party, that the legislation ran the risk of overheating the economy. But they were committed to taking advantage of their new majority to push through their Big Government, Big Spending vision. And so they ignored the warnings, and their bill helped trigger the worst inflation crisis in 40 years.

But perhaps the worst part is that even after Democrats saw the damage that resulted from their American Rescue Plan spending spree, they continued to try to double down on the spending strategy that helped get us into this mess in the first place.

Democrats spent half of last year attempting to force through—if you can believe this—yet another partisan spending spree originally planned to cost up to \$5 trillion. Fortunately for Americans, those particular far-left fantasies were foiled. But that hasn’t stopped Democrats from continuing to accumulate wasteful government spending.

In August, Democrats forged through a partisan tax-and-spending bill that will raise Americans’ energy bills, reduce jobs and opportunities for American workers, and waste taxpayer dollars on a host of Green New Deal priorities, like electric vehicle tax credits

for wealthy Americans and road equity and identifying gaps in tree canopy coverage. They called this tax-and-spending spree the Inflation Reduction Act, even though—as even the Democrat chairman of the Senate Budget Committee admitted—the bill will not reduce inflation. Apparently, the title’s only function is to make the bill sound more acceptable to Americans who are sick and tired of dealing with soaring prices and economic pain.

Then, a mere 8 days—8 days—after signing the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, the President once again added to Democrats’ record of economic malfeasance with a massive student loan giveaway that could cost more than \$1 trillion and that the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget notes will “meaningfully boost inflation.” That from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

I am not sure whether the Democrats are incapable of learning their lesson or whether they consider soaring prices to be a trivial issue next to implementing their Green New Deal agenda or whether they think inflation is an acceptable price to pay for Big Government. But, whatever it is, Democrats are apparently going to continue to ignore the economic pain that Americans are experiencing in favor of implementing their far-left, Big Government, and big-spending agenda. And it appears that the American people are going to have to continue to suffer as a result.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I would ask consent to speak for up to 5 minutes before the vote.

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

NOMINATION OF ARIANNA J. FREEMAN

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the pending nominee, Arianna J. Freeman, who has been nominated to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. For those who may not know all the geography, that includes, under the jurisdiction of that court, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the Virgin Islands.

Arianna Freeman has dedicated her legal career to service, especially in the Philadelphia community. After graduating from Swarthmore College and Yale Law School, Ms. Freeman returned to Philadelphia to start her legal career. After clerking for three Federal judges in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, she joined the Federal Community Defender Office in Philadelphia. Through her experience in the defender’s office, she has briefed over 15 appeals in the Third Circuit and presented oral argument on seven occasions, including before the Third Circuit en banc, meaning the entire court. She has submitted four briefs before the U.S. Supreme Court as well.

Her legal reputation, her intellect, her ability, and her integrity are unquestioned. I will just give you three or