

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

four examples of what others have said about her work.

Former U.S. District Court Judge Giles wrote:

Ms. Freeman has the character and intellectual attributes that will lead her to be a wonderful appeals court judge. She is discerning, open-minded, logical and is both a listener and contributor to debate and conversation.

A group of appellate practitioners from the Third Circuit wrote as follows:

Arianna Freeman has the strong intellect, tenacious work ethic, and even temperament necessary to become an outstanding federal judge. Her integrity and experience will ensure that she will be ready to serve from the first day.

Third example: Given Arianna's background as a Federal public defender, perhaps most important is the praise that she has received from over 20 former Federal prosecutors. One group wrote:

We are impressed by Arianna's diligence, intelligence, dedication, and integrity. It is because of her ethics and compassion, grounded in sensibility, that we are confident she will provide sound and measured opinions, while approaching each case without bias and with respect for the rule of law.

So said 20 former Federal prosecutors.

Arianna is so well respected that her nomination has garnered strong support even beyond the State of Pennsylvania, as evidenced by a letter submitted by over 30 law school professors from across the Nation who described Arianna Freeman as a "brilliant, careful, and talented lawyer with impressive professional credentials and a strong commitment to fairness, equal justice, and the rule of law."

There is no doubt that Arianna Freeman's extensive legal experience, keen intellect, and dedication to the principles of fairness and equal justice will serve the Third Circuit well. Furthermore, if confirmed, she will not only provide a critically important professional perspective to the Third Circuit as a career public defender; she will also become the first woman of color to serve on the Third Circuit and just the third active woman on that bench.

This is an important and historic nomination not only for Pennsylvania but, of course, for the entire Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

I would like to share a final passage from a letter written to the Senate Judiciary Committee by a group of law school deans from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, led by Professor Danielle Conway from the Penn State Dickinson School of Law. They wrote:

The nomination of Arianna J. Freeman to serve as a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit is inspired and her ultimate confirmation will be inspiring. As legislative leaders in this great society, the Committee and the full Senate will be favorably rewarded with history's account of how you worked to elevate this brilliant lawyer to the bench.

It couldn't be said any better than that. I urge her confirmation and urge my colleagues to vote yes.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON FREEMAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Freeman nomination?

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) would have noted "nay."

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 333 Ex.]

YEAS—47

Baldwin	Hirono	Reed
Bennet	Kaine	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kelly	Sanders
Booker	King	Schatz
Brown	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cantwell	Leahy	Sinema
Cardin	Luján	Smith
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Padilla	Wyden
Hickenlooper	Peters	

NAYS—50

Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hagerty	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hooven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Schumer
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Shelby
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Toomey
Daines	Moran	Tuberville
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	

NOT VOTING—3

Duckworth	Hassan	Young
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The nomination was rejected.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I enter a motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The motion is entered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby

move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 1033, Lara E. Montecalvo, of Rhode Island, to be United States Circuit Judge for the First Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Sherrod Brown, Tammy Baldwin, Tina Smith, Jeanne Shaheen, Chris Van Hollen, Elizabeth Warren, Catherine Cortez Masto, Tim Kaine, Benjamin L. Cardin, Christopher Murphy, Maria Cantwell, Christopher A. Coons, Jack Reed, Gary C. Peters, Tammy Duckworth.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Lara E. Montecalvo, of Rhode Island, to be United States Circuit Judge for the First Circuit, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) would have noted "nay."

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 334 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Peters
Bennet	Hirono	Reed
Blumenthal	Kaine	Rosen
Booker	Kelly	Sanders
Brown	King	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Shaheen
Carper	Luján	Sinema
Casey	Manchin	Smith
Collins	Markey	Stabenow
Cornyn	Menendez	Tester
Cotton	Coons	
Cramer	Merkley	Van Hollen
Crapo	Durbin	Warner
Cruz	Feinstein	Warnock
Daines	Gillibrand	Warren
Ernst	Graham	Whitehouse
Fischer	Heinrich	Wyden

NAYS—45

Barrasso	Grassley	Portman
Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Romney
Boozman	Hooven	Rounds
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Burr	Inhofe	Sasse
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Shelby
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Tuberville
Fischer	Paul	Wicker

NOT VOTING—4

Cassidy	Hassan
Duckworth	Young

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SINEMA). On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 45.

The motion is agreed to.