

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Lara E. Montecalvo, of Rhode Island, to be United States Circuit Judge for the First Circuit.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:13 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. SINEMA).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

ENERGY

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the rising costs of American energy, and this morning we found out that inflation continues to burn very hot.

Prices continue to go up and up and up. Last month, they actually went up faster than even any of the economists had predicted. Since Joe Biden took office, the prices have risen now by more than 13 percent across America. That is what families are facing. And prices have been rising faster than wages for the last 17 months. So people are feeling the heat and falling further and further behind.

Today, gas prices are still nearly a dollar and a half a gallon higher than they were the day Joe Biden took office, but Democrats are patting themselves on the back because gas prices have come down from the stratospheric \$5 a gallon during the peak this summer. Well, gas is still over \$4 a gallon in lots of States, including Nevada and Washington State, and, of course, at \$5 a gallon, very few people can afford to drive. So it is no surprise the prices fell as demand plummeted.

But yet many of the Democrats are at the White House this afternoon, apparently in the thousands, to celebrate a law that just got passed here.

These price hikes, these increases in costs, this is nothing to celebrate. And so in 15 minutes, at the White House, Joe Biden is going to lead a celebration—a party—for a bill that passed along party lines.

We have a crisis of food, a crisis of energy, a crisis of rent. People cannot afford the cost of living. In terms of energy, after 2 years in power—I come today to the floor as the ranking member of the Senate Energy Committee—after nearly 2 years in power, Democrats still haven't lifted a finger to produce a drop of additional American energy, specifically oil.

Supply is down below the prepandemic peak. Joe Biden has leased the fewest acres of Federal land for energy development of any Presi-

dent since World War II—World War II. The Biden economy is hitting record numbers—40-year record-high inflation. Food prices are up higher in terms of costs of feeding your family; the rise in prices is up higher than in 40 years—and now shutting down American energy with the fewest acres of Federal land for energy development since World War II.

Now, Joe Biden had a plan. His plan was to invite dictators to sell us oil. Officials from the Biden administration went hat in hand, just a little over a year ago, to Vladimir Putin in Russia, to Iran, to Saudi Arabia, to Venezuela. The President actually went personally to Saudi Arabia to ask for more energy and more production. He went to Riyadh to beg the Saudis to sell us more oil. It didn't work.

Actually, the Saudis and the OPEC cartel announced last week that they are actually going to slash production by 100,000 barrels a day.

When President Obama was in the White House, he went on an apology tour to the Middle East. This summer, Joe Biden went on a begging tour to the Middle East. Both were a failure. Both were a waste. Both were an embarrassment to the United States.

That is delusional Democrat diplomacy for you.

Gas prices are still a dollar and a half a gallon higher since the day Joe Biden became President. Earlier this summer, people were actually driving less than they did in the summer of 2020, during the peak of the pandemic, during the lockdown. That is why prices have dropped for gas.

But prices for everything else have gone up so high that people are still hurting all across the country, and we have Democrat policies and Democrat spending to thank for it.

People can't afford to drive. They can't afford to stay home either. That is because natural gas prices have more than doubled since Joe Biden took office.

Well, half of American homes are powered by natural gas. One expert predicted utility bills could jump 40 percent just this year.

Already, more than 20 million Americans have fallen behind on paying their electric bills because they don't have the money. This is another record. In total, the American people owe more than \$16 billion in unpaid electric bills. That is nearly double the amount they owed before the pandemic.

So you have 20 million Americans facing the possibility of having their power shut off. This is a moment of anxiety and anguish for families, and it is caused by the policies of the Biden administration.

Democrats think everything is fine because they just passed what they tout as the largest climate bill in history. I would expect to see the Secretary of Energy up there on the stage leading the cheers: Rah, rah. Look what we have just done.

They don't care about affordability, availability, the reliability of energy.

Oh, no, they are focused on something very different.

So in about 15 minutes, Democrats are throwing themselves a party at the White House to celebrate—to celebrate a bill that is not going to bring down inflation. Oh, no, no, it is going to raise it.

And it is not going to bring down the temperature either. According to one estimate, it will only reduce global warming by—I want to make sure I have this right—0.0009 degrees. The most expensive climate bill in history, taking our Nation from energy dominant to energy dependent, for 0.0009 degrees.

And the centerpiece of this law is, of course, the \$300 billion slush fund.

People say: What is it for?

Well, it is going to give taxpayer dollars to well-connected Silicon Valley elites. That is what it is going to do. It is going to be given to them so that so-called clean energy startup companies can do things with it. Supposedly, they are going to spend it on new forms of energy. We will see.

If it sounds familiar, it is because Democrats tried this the last time Joe Biden was in the White House, as Vice President. The Obama administration spent \$90 billion on a similar program. So this one is over three times as large.

Who was in charge of running that failed program at the White House back in the Obama administration?

Well, it is the guy in the White House today. Joe Biden was in charge of running it, and what was the end result? It was a national embarrassment. It was a disaster. Ninety percent of the jobs that Joe Biden promised America back then never materialized—not at all.

According to Bloomberg, Democrats spent over \$725,000 for each job that ultimately materialized. And, again, it wasn't Democrats' money that they were spending. It was taxpayer money.

Most famously, Democrats gave half a billion dollars to a company called Solyndra. They became a laughing stock in the news and late-night comedy. They were supposed to make solar panels. Two years later, Solyndra went bankrupt. The taxpayer money was gone, all to waste. And now the Democrats are saying: Let's go back to that same playbook and let's just reload with cash. Load up the money cannon and fire away.

At a much bigger scale this time, instead of \$90 billion last time, it is \$300 billion this time.

Democrats have also just gone on and extended another giveaway for people buying electric vehicles. Now, many of them are high earners, there is no question about it. At a time of record inflation, Democrats are robbing the middle class to give the money to the rich. Three out of four electric vehicle owners make over \$100,000 a year. It is not just unfair; it is unsustainable because electric vehicle prices are soaring right now.

The average price is now \$66,000 for each electric vehicle, and, I will tell

you, it is funny. The price of electric vehicles rose by \$8,000 per vehicle just recently, just a couple of weeks ago, just as soon as the Democrats crammed through their new giveaway.

And what was the giveaway—7,500? And the price of electric vehicles went up by \$8,000? Do you think that is a coincidence? I ask the body. Is that a coincidence, that the price goes up by 8,000 the day that government passes a bill to give a \$7,500 subsidy?

And, of course, to make matters worse, there is a shortage of batteries that are needed to kind of produce the electric vehicles to receive the subsidy. There aren't enough charging stations.

Electric vehicle technology is not ready for prime time. The only reason electric vehicles are on the road today is because of massive government giveaways. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to compete.

Sometimes it is said a picture is worth 1,000 words. Here is a picture of West Virginia coal miners. West Virginia coal miners right here. What are they doing? They are pushing an electric vehicle that has run out of power. They have run out of electricity, and they are trying to push an electric vehicle. These coal miners, with coal under attack by this administration, they are pushing the electric vehicle to a place the vehicle can plug in.

Well, you know, the people of West Virginia say: How did they get there? Well, you might see down here that this is a Washington, DC, license plate.

The vehicle being pushed by the coal miners were tourists from Washington, DC, and they ran out of power on the road in West Virginia. Fortunately, there were still some West Virginia coal miners nearby who were willing to lend a helping hand.

This electric vehicle was pushed by coal miners and then recharged by electricity generated by West Virginia coal—coal, public enemy No. 1, according to the Democrats.

Where do Democrats believe the electricity comes from to power electric vehicles? Electric vehicles are charged on the power grid. Nearly two-thirds of that energy is still fossil fuels. It is still traditional energy.

The extreme climate policies the Democrats are pushing are delusional. Yet Democrats are imposing these delusions on tens of millions of people.

Last month, the State of California announced a couple things. It announced that it is going to require all new cars sold in the State to be electric by 2035. Secretary of Energy Granholm gave it a big stamp of approval. She said it is the model for the rest of the country.

Just days later, California began experiencing blackouts. This is what Secretary Granholm says is the model for the rest of the Nation. This is the path to the future, she says.

Joe Biden is giving a speech tomorrow on electric vehicles. I am sure he is going to endorse what they did in California. No matter what Joe Biden says,

the painful truth is this: California is mandating electric vehicles when their electric grid already can't keep up today.

In California, gas costs more than \$5 a gallon. Meanwhile, you are not even allowed to charge your electric vehicle for much of the day—not allowed to charge it. You have got to buy one, but you can't charge it—what a solution.

Oh, and you can't turn your thermostat below 78 degrees in a heat wave.

The mandates are coming out for people who live in this mandate society, where California is leading the way and the Democrat Secretary of Energy says is the future we should look forward to. If the Democrats remain in charge, I believe this is an ugly glimpse at America's energy future.

Now, maybe Governor Newsom thinks he can run a modern economy this way in California, but it takes energy to run a modern economy. It takes affordable energy, reliable energy, available energy, and that means traditional forms of energy.

Now, Warren Buffet is known as one of the best investors in history. So what is he investing in today? Well, he is buying an American oil company. Why? Because in contrast to the left-wing fantasies, oil isn't going away anytime soon.

Renewable energy cannot yet meet demand. Only traditional energy can. It is simply a fact. Whether the environmental extremists partying at the White House today like it or not, these are the facts of life. There is still an enormous difference between renewable energy and reliable energy. There simply is no renewable energy that, all in, is cost competitive with oil, gas, or coal.

But Democrats are doubling down on expensive energy and waging war on affordable energy at a time when inflation continues to soar—record high inflation, 40-year highs—and the impacts on American families have been punishing and painful.

In Colorado, the local utility company actually took control over people's thermostats. You wouldn't think they could do that? The capacity is there to do it today. And why? Because of what they describe as an energy emergency. It was an unprecedented intrusion into the homes of 22,000 people.

If Democrats remain in charge, this is another glimpse of our energy future and of our freedom and independence—more blackouts, more restrictions on energy production, more restrictions on energy use, more price hikes, all in service of their climate religion.

And as one of the headlines in the New York Times said last week, "California muddles through another day."

Joe Biden needs to reverse course. We are a country that doesn't want to muddle through anything.

The Democratic Party needs to reverse course unless we are looking at that kind of a future. This energy crisis is a crisis of Joe Biden's choosing. We have plenty of American energy.

We have it in the ground. The Democrats won't let us get it out. All we need is for Democrats to get out of the way and let us use American energy.

America's energy future must be powered by American producers. If we want available, affordable, reliable, secure energy, we need more American energy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I understand that there is a lot that is going on in the world today. We are worried about climate change and what that is doing to our planet. We are worried about the terrible war in Ukraine and all of the destruction taking place there. We are worried about inflation and the fact that wages are not keeping up with the prices that people are paying. We are worried about the massive level of income and wealth inequality that exists in our country and the increased concentration of ownership that we see in the United States, among many, many other things that are on people's minds. But to my mind, Madam President, the American people remain and always are deeply concerned about an issue that, by definition, touches each and every one of us, and that is our collapsing and dysfunctional healthcare system.

While it is not discussed much in the corporate media or here in the Halls of Congress, we have today in the United States the most inefficient, bureaucratic, and expensive healthcare system in the world. And that is not just what I believe; that is what the American people know to be true because of their lived experience with the healthcare system.

Madam President, I would hope that all Members of Congress take a hard look at a poll that was published yesterday by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, and this is some of what the poll disclosed.

At a time when I hear many of my colleagues tell us that we have the best healthcare system in the world, it turns out that, according to this poll, just 12 percent of the American people believe that healthcare in general is handled very well or extremely well in the United States. Twelve percent.

At a time when we pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, only 6 percent of the American people believe that prescription drug costs in the United States are being handled well or extremely well. Six percent.

At a time when COVID has exacerbated the crisis, only 5 percent of the American people believe that the mental health care system in the United