

see impacts in our own personal lives or the personal lives of our close family and friends in one way or another.

It would be risky and perhaps foolish to think that such a day could never come. Maybe a few months ago people would think that, no more. Justice Thomas put his cards on the table. He said that he is very open that the Supreme Court's decision protecting same-sex marriage should, in fact, be reconsidered. And often when Justice Thomas says it, his other four MAGA Republican Supreme Court colleague Justices are thinking the same thing.

To anyone who says that the High Court would never be so reckless as to overturn a decision that has protected this fundamental right of millions of people, all I say to this is: Wake up. Look what they did in the Dobbs decision.

Passing marriage equality in the Senate is all about making sure such a danger never—never—materializes. Millions of Americans, tens of millions of Americans will breathe a huge sigh of relief if we do this. And it is the right thing to do.

We know that America has trod on the long path towards greater equality. We know that when the Constitution was written, millions of Americans were enslaved. In many States, you had to be a White male Protestant property owner to vote, that would leave the presiding officer and me out. They know that, and they know that most Americans are proud that we have made progress.

There are some dark forces encapsulated, embodied in the MAGA Republicans, so many of whom are in this Chamber, who want to take steps backward. We are not going to let it happen. We shouldn't let it happen.

So I truly hope, for the sake of tens of millions of Americans, that there will be at least 10 Republicans who will vote with us to pass this very, very important bill.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people's No. 1 priority is runaway inflation that is smashing their family budgets and crushing our economy.

Yesterday, the latest inflation report showed that soaring prices are still completely out of control. Inflation has totaled 13.2 percent since the day President Biden took office. We just had the worst 12 months for both food inflation and electricity inflation since the fallout from the Carter administration.

President Biden and our Democratic colleagues chose to celebrate—celebrate—this awful inflation report with a so-called inflation reduction party yesterday at the White House. While the Dow Jones plummeted over 1,000 points, while the S&P 500 lost more

than 4 percent of its value in 1 day, while American families can't afford gas, groceries, or electricity, Washington Democrats partied on the White House lawn to celebrate their policies. That is what happened yesterday.

This is what Democrats do while our economy crumbles. They subsidize luxury electric cars; they make plumbers and retail workers eat the graduate school debt of doctors and lawyers; and they throw a party for themselves on the White House lawn.

CRIME

Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, when you combine the border crisis and the violent crime crisis, law and order ranks as the American people's No. 2 priority, second only to the inflation crisis.

While Democrats' economic policies have waged war on working families' financial security, their soft-on-crime policies have eroded America's physical security. Cities, towns, and neighborhoods across the country are reeling from a wave of violent crime. Just last weekend my State, Kentucky, experienced a spate of murders and attempted murders that rattled residents and literally overwhelmed the police.

Lexington saw four separate shooting incidents on Saturday night alone, leaving nine hurt, some with life-threatening injuries. A Lexington Police Department veteran described it as "a pretty much unprecedented night in my 20 years." Officers were so tied up that they were unable to respond to other crimes and disorder.

Louisville also saw a flurry of violence; the second highest number of homicides in one weekend this year; six people murdered in just 3 days.

Both cities documented record homicide numbers last year, and Lexington is on track to do so again. For Louisville, this is the third consecutive year of triple-digit killings.

Now, of course, this crisis isn't just hitting Kentucky. These trends are nationwide.

For years, the far left has impugned the motives and honor of police officers and taken aim at their funding.

For years, top liberal donors have poured money into campaigns of radical district attorneys from big cities whose whole stated agenda is to not prosecute crimes.

For years, Democratic elites have pushed for letting violent criminals out of prison. Democrats just nominated and confirmed a Supreme Court Justice who argued as a DC district judge that COVID justified—listen to this—letting every single prisoner in Washington, DC, custody out of jail and back on the streets.

This has been an intentional, strategic campaign from the far left, and now Americans are being robbed, carjacked, assaulted, and murdered. Their families are being poisoned with illegal drugs.

Just weeks ago, Senator RUBIO gave the Senate a vote to increase funding for fighting crime and keeping dan-

gerous criminals locked up. Every Senate Republican supported this; every Democrat joined on party lines to block it.

Later today, our colleagues from Tennessee will hold a press conference to discuss the horrifying case of Eliza Fletcher, a 34-year-old mom and teacher in Memphis, whom a career criminal forced into an SUV and murdered while she was out for her morning run. The suspect had multiple violent crimes on his rap sheet dating back to age 14 and had just been let out of prison early for a prior kidnapping.

So there are far too many tragic stories like Eliza Fletcher's being written every day and every week all across our country.

Entire neighborhoods have become unwalkable. In many places, public transit has become nearly unusable.

A few months ago, the Washington Post profiled 1 day in the life of a female immigrant busdriver in Denver who gets screamed at and threatened by lunatics on a daily basis.

Just yesterday, a 49-year-old was stabbed in the back while riding the subway in New York City after he asked another passenger to just quiet down.

Our Democratic friends like to talk about fairness and compassion. There is nothing fair or compassionate about letting cities descend into violence and chaos. There is nothing fair or compassionate about legislating like career criminals deserve fifth and sixth chances more than young mothers deserve the right to go out for a morning jog and come home alive.

Stable prices, reliable energy, secure borders, and basic public safety are four of the most basic duties that any government in a civilized country owes its citizens. These things are the absolute minimum that American families ought to be able to count on—the bare minimum—and the Democrats' one-party government cannot deliver it.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, on another matter, it has been encouraging to see good news regarding the Ukrainian people's fight to defend or reclaim their sovereignty.

Latest reports indicate that Ukraine has recently liberated 2,400 square miles of their own territory from Russian hands.

The sight of a democratic nation beating back totalitarian aggression continues to inspire the free world. It should make other thugs think twice about following in Putin's footsteps. But, obviously, it is not nearly time to ease up. An axis of authoritarians is still pushing hard for Ukraine to fail.

Iran is equipping the Russian military with armed drones like the ones they and their proxies have used against American forces in Syria and Iraq and against our Israeli, Emirati, and Saudi partners.

North Korea is reportedly refilling Russia's artillery stockpiles, and the PRC has publicly supported Moscow's narrative through every Russian atrocity.

So our Ukrainian friends may still face a long, hard struggle to achieve victory as they define it, but Western countries can help by stepping up the pace of our collective assistance.

Ukraine's hard-won successes on the battlefield could have come actually even earlier if the Biden administration and European allies that take their cues from Washington had been quicker and more proactive to deliver the capabilities Ukraine actually needed.

Ukrainian forces are working wonders with Western equipment. They have quickly integrated cutting-edge systems like HIMARS and Javelin and Stinger missiles.

The West's hesitance to put these capabilities in the right hands has cost lives. Horrors could have been avoided if the Biden administration and our European partners hadn't been self-deterred from providing these tools sooner.

The Ukrainians need more of the weapons we have been giving them; they need to start getting them faster; and they also need new capabilities like longer range, ATACMS, larger drones, and tanks.

Not all of these weapons need to come from America. Make no mistake, our allies are looking to us for signals. President Biden should be clear with Western Europe about the need for them to make meaningful, specific contributions to Ukraine and to do it quickly.

He should be clear with our allies that our defense holiday is over. It is time for all of us to rebuild our militaries and defense industrial bases. This will take urgent investments, regulatory reform, and prioritization to expand our capacity to produce critical munitions and systems. These short- and long-term steps alike are in Europe's vital interests, America's vital interests, and the entire free world's.

Beijing, Tehran, and other authoritarian regimes cannot think for 1 minute that trampling free people's sovereignty will go unpunished.

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. REED. 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.

NOMINATION OF LARA E. MONTECALVO

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues who voted yesterday, on a bipartisan basis, to advance the nomination of Lara Montecalvo to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. I look forward to her confirmation later today.

She will soon fill the seat that is being vacated by Judge O. Rogerie Thompson, who is a trailblazing and outstanding jurist whom I was proud to recommend and who is taking senior

status. She will continue to hear cases on a more limited basis, along with Judge Bruce Selya, another distinguished judge from Rhode Island who has taken senior status and who continues to hear cases on the First Circuit.

Like Judge Thompson and Judge Selya, Lara Montecalvo is someone with great integrity, intellect, and capacity for judicial independence. I am delighted that President Biden nominated her for Rhode Island's traditional seat on the First Circuit. I am pleased that the Judiciary Committee reported her nomination on a bipartisan vote. And I am grateful to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who voted yesterday to advance her nomination.

Her resume speaks for itself. As Rhode Island's chief public defender, Ms. Montecalvo has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to upholding our constitutional rights, including the Fifth Amendment right to due process and the Sixth Amendment right to counsel.

Ms. Montecalvo was a gifted student, who holds degrees from Swarthmore College and Boston College Law School, where she graduated magna cum laude in 2000.

After graduating from law school, she was immediately drawn to public service. She started her legal career at the Department of Justice for 4 years, focusing on civil tax matters in the Federal courts. In 2004, she joined the Rhode Island Public Defender's Office and has risen through the ranks to lead that office.

Ms. Montecalvo has more than 20 years of experience as a trial and appellate attorney. She has appeared in just about every court in Rhode Island, including in the State's highest court. Her extensive courtroom experience will add valuable perspectives to the deliberations of the First Circuit.

But it is more than her resume. Within the Rhode Island legal community, Ms. Montecalvo is known for her zealous advocacy for her clients and her keen sense of justice. She has won accolades from judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials. And individuals across the political spectrum have endorsed her nomination, including five Rhode Island attorneys general and two former U.S. attorneys, one appointed by President Obama and one by President Trump.

I know Ms. Montecalvo will serve on the First Circuit with honor and distinction as she has at every step of her legal career.

I urge my colleagues to confirm this highly qualified nominee to serve as a judge on the First Circuit.

I yield the floor.

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. THUNE. 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.

AGRICULTURE AND INFLATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, Democrats and the President gathered at the White House to celebrate their so-called Inflation Reduction Act—a bill that will do absolutely nothing to reduce inflation.

You don't have to take my word for it. The nonpartisan Penn Wharton Budget Model said this about the bill's impact on inflation:

The impact on inflation is statistically indistinguishable from zero.

“[S]tatistically indistinguishable from zero.”

Or you could take the word of the Democrat chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, who admitted on the Senate floor right here that the so-called Inflation Reduction Act would not reduce inflation. That is right.

To describe yesterday's celebration at the White House as tone deaf would be putting it mildly. Democrats had a big party to celebrate a bill that may fulfill some of their Big Government fantasies but will do nothing to fix the inflation crisis facing our country. Meanwhile, Americans were dealing with the release of August inflation numbers, which were even higher than expected and made it very clear that the soaring prices will continue for the foreseeable future.

One of President Obama's top economic advisers noted yesterday:

Today's CPI report confirms that the US has a serious inflation problem. Core inflation is higher this month than for the quarter, higher this quarter than last quarter, higher this half of the year than the previous one, and higher last year than the previous one.

That is from one of President Obama's top economic advisers, who made that statement yesterday.

Yet Democrats and the President somehow thought yesterday was a good day to celebrate fulfilling some of their Big Government fantasies.

I guess Americans struggling to afford their soaring grocery bills can be comforted by the fact that, thanks to Democrats' legislation, their tax dollars will now be going to fund electric vehicle tax credits for wealthy Americans, not to mention road equity and identifying gaps in tree canopy coverage—yes, provisions in the bill that they were celebrating yesterday. Meanwhile, the pain of inflation is permeating every aspect of our economy.

During the month of August, I spent a lot of time traveling around South Dakota, and naturally I spent a lot of time talking to farmers and ranchers. One thing I heard over and over is the toll that inflation is taking on agriculture.

In addition to the normal challenges every American is facing from inflation, like high utility bills and high grocery prices, farmers and ranchers are facing massive increases in the price of essential inputs like fertilizer