

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. Rogeriee 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

and fuel. Under the Biden administration, farm production expenses will reach a record high this year. Fertilizer prices are on track to increase by 84 percent—84 percent. That is a staggering increase. Fuel prices are on track to increase 65 percent. And there is no end in sight.

Farmers are facing a huge increase in interest costs thanks to a combination of higher interest rates and record-high farm debt. Gross farm income is actually supposed to reach a record level this year, but those gains are expected to be entirely wiped out by inflation—and then some. Thanks to inflation, net farm income is expected to decrease. At a time when gross farm income is expected to reach a record level—14 percent higher year over year than last year—net farm income, inflation adjusted, is actually going to go down because of the impact of inflation.

Meanwhile, Democrats were at the White House celebrating a bill that will not only do nothing to address our inflation crisis but will drive up energy bills for American farmers and American families.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of my State of South Dakota, and addressing the needs of farmers and ranchers is always one of my top priorities here in the Senate. While it is, unfortunately, going to be difficult to stop Democrats from prolonging our inflation crisis as long as they are in charge in Washington, in the meantime, I am doing everything I can to make life easier for our farmers and ranchers.

One of my top priorities right now is preparing for the 2023 farm bill, to make it as effective as possible in addressing the challenges that are facing our farmers and ranchers. I have been holding roundtables in South Dakota to hear directly from producers about their priorities for the farm bill. So far, I have held roundtables covering row crops, conservation, and livestock. I also participated in a farm bill panel at Dakotafest and an Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce farm bill discussion at the Brown County Fair.

I look forward to continuing to receive input from producers as the time to draft the farm bill approaches. I have also begun introducing legislation—based on my conversations with farmers and ranchers—that I will work to get included in the farm bill.

In March, I introduced the Conservation Reserve Program Improvement Act, which would make CRP grazing a more attractive option for farmers and ranchers by providing cost-share payments for all CRP practices for the establishment of grazing infrastructure, including fencing and water distribution. It would also increase the annual payment limit for CRP, which has not changed since 1985, to help account for inflation and the increase in land value.

In May, I joined Senator KLOBUCHAR to introduce the Agricultural Innovation Act. Currently, the U.S. Depart-

ment of Agriculture collects reams of data on conservation practices. The problem is that a lot of this data is often not analyzed and presented in a way that would be useful for farmers and ranchers.

The legislation Senator KLOBUCHAR and I introduced would provide for better processing and development of the data that the USDA collects so that farmers and ranchers can evaluate the impact of conservation and other production practices on things like soil health, crop yields, and profitability. Our bill would make it easier for farmers and ranchers to decide what conservation practices to adopt by, among other things, helping producers identify the ways that adopting conservation practices can improve their bottom line.

In the next couple of weeks, I will be introducing another piece of legislation for the 2023 farm bill to improve the effectiveness of livestock disaster assistance for producers. Too often, producers find that accessing disaster relief programs at the Department of Agriculture is an arduous and lengthy process. I am working on legislation that would make it easier for farmers and ranchers to access the Livestock Forage Disaster Program and the Emergency Conservation Program so that producers can receive timely assistance in the wake of natural disasters like drought and flooding.

The U.S. Drought Monitor plays a critical role in triggering USDA disaster assistance, and I am working to build on my previous efforts to improve weather monitoring and the accuracy of the Drought Monitor.

This isn't a farm bill issue per se, but I am also introducing legislation today to prevent Democrats from using funding in the recently passed and misnamed, as I pointed out earlier, Inflation Reduction Act to monitor livestock methane emissions.

It is very clear that elements of the radical environmental left would like to see U.S. livestock producers out of business entirely. My legislation is designed to forestall future attempts to curtail beef production by preventing the Biden Environmental Protection Agency from using funds in the Democrats' bill to monitor livestock emissions.

Agriculture is a challenging way of life. In addition to backbreaking work in all weather, our Nation's farmers and ranchers have to contend with the uncontrollable whims of the weather, which can wipe out a herd or a crop in a day. And as if the actual challenges of the job weren't enough, over the course of the Biden administration, our Nation's farmers and ranchers have had to deal with soaring inflation.

I am incredibly grateful for all the South Dakota farmers and ranchers and all of our Nation's farmers and ranchers who continue to persevere during these difficult circumstances. I will continue to do everything I can in Washington to make their jobs easier

and to support them as they do the essential work of feeding our Nation and the world.

NOMINATION OF LARA E. MONTECALVO

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Lara Montecalvo to serve on the First Circuit Court of Appeals. Ms. Montecalvo has significant litigation experience at both the trial and appellate level and will be an outstanding addition to the bench.

She attended Swarthmore College and Boston College Law School. Ms. Montecalvo then worked in the Justice Department's Tax Division as a trial attorney. In 2004, Ms. Montecalvo began working in the Rhode Island Public Defender's Office. She became the Rhode Island Public Defender in 2020.

As a DOJ trial attorney and as a State public defender, Ms. Montecalvo gained experience in both State and Federal court. She has tried more than 20 cases to verdict, including 15 as sole counsel. In addition, she has personally handled more than 80 appeals. The American Bar Association rated her "well qualified" to serve on the First Circuit, and she has the strong support of Senators Reed and Whitehouse.

Ms. Montecalvo has shown that she is committed to equal justice. I will be supporting her and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. THUNE. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. ERNST. 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.

VOTE ON MONTECALVO NOMINATION

Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Montecalvo nomination?

Ms. ERNST. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 335 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Baldwin	Collins	Heinrich
Bennet	Coons	Hickenlooper
Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Hirono
Booker	Duckworth	Kaine
Brown	Durbin	Kelly
Cantwell	Feinstein	King
Cardin	Gillibrand	Klobuchar
Carper	Graham	Leahy
Casey	Hassan	Lujan