

the other side of the aisle have pledged loyalty—pledged loyalty—to the importance of States' rights that they are going to leave the decision on abortion to the States. But Senator GRAHAM has shown us that all his talk about States' rights means that the States have to agree with Senator GRAHAM. That is what his idea about States' rights is all about.

His bill tramples, for example, on the rights of Oregonians, who sure don't share Senator GRAHAM's view on this, and people in many other States, women and men who voted to protect abortion, women's healthcare, and women's individual freedom.

Senator GRAHAM's bill is about control. It is about government—government—mind these words—government having control over women's bodies rather than women having control over their bodies.

It is also clear that what has always been envisioned is not just a nationwide ban on abortions but criminalizing this with women and doctors at some point, I gather, possibly locked behind bars.

It is election season and Senator MCCONNELL wants everybody to forget the Republicans' top priorities include passing these extreme restrictions through Congress and the courts. I believe that Americans know better. When it comes to this kind of legislation that is so far removed—far removed—from the moderate claim of its sponsor, I think we ought to recognize what we are looking at is a total national abortion ban, criminalization, and the rights of women curtailed and the power of government over them increased.

Senator GRAHAM's bill is the next step in that direction for Republicans. Introducing his proposal, Senator GRAHAM basically confirmed that:

If [we] take back the House and Senate, I can assure you we'll have a vote [on our bill].

Madam President, I think we have a lot of speakers coming, but I think the American people ought to take Senator GRAHAM at his word. This is what his agenda is about. This is what he is going to be championing from sea to shining sea. I just hope we do everything we can here in the Senate—in this country—to make sure that the Graham bill does not see the light of day.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

INFLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday, new data showed what Texans have known and felt for months: that inflation simply is not letting up. Last month, prices were up 8.3 percent from a year ago.

Economist Larry Summers, a well-known former president of Harvard University and member of Presidential Cabinets, said that this CPI report, Consumer Price Index report, confirms that the United States has a serious inflation problem.

Rent is up 6.7 percent. If you go to the grocery store to feed your family, groceries are 13.5 percent over what they were last year. If you are a senior citizen suffering through the hot Texas summer and need your air-conditioner to work overtime, electricity to make that air-conditioner run is up 16 percent. Of course, that is just since last August, just a year ago, when we were already battling runaway inflation.

But here is an even more shocking figure: Since President Biden took office on January 20, 2021, prices have risen 13 percent. So 13 cents out of every dollar that you earn—poof—has gone away. You are that much poorer. Your standard of living has been decreased by 13 percent.

Inflation, of course, far outpaces wage growth, meaning the average American has effectively been handed a pay cut. A single paycheck doesn't go nearly as far today as it did a year ago.

This is exactly what was predicted by leading economists when our Democratic colleagues ran off with the taxpayer credit card at the end of last year. They abused the rules of the Senate to spend an additional \$2 trillion in the name of COVID relief even though less than 10 percent of the money was directly related to the pandemic.

I want to differentiate between what we did together on a bipartisan basis to deal with COVID when we spent nearly \$5 trillion on a bipartisan basis. There is no doubt this was a grave emergency, a public health emergency, economic emergency. We did what we had to do, and we got through it. But even after that, our Democratic colleagues couldn't seem to kick the spending habits and unilaterally spent an extra \$2 trillion. As I said, even though 10 percent of that money was related to the pandemic, 90 percent, then, was unrelated.

Then the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, which the President was celebrating yesterday when the stock market fell 1,200 points—this partisan bill amounts to another \$240 billion in unnecessary spending, while raising taxes at the same time.

As I said, our colleagues ironically call this bill the Inflation Reduction Act, and the White House chose yesterday—the day that the latest disappointing inflation figures were released—to celebrate its passage.

Inflation Reduction Act is false advertising. The Penn Wharton economic review of the Inflation Reduction Act said there is no reduction of inflation for at least 2 full years, and, indeed, it may actually get worse. But we all knew this intuitively, that if you keep spending this much money, you are basically pouring gasoline on the inflation fire. It is going to get worse and

worse and worse, and middle-class working families all across this country have gotten hurt as a result.

Since our Democratic colleagues took control of both Houses of Congress and the White House, Texans' lives have gotten harder, not easier. Inflation I have spoken to has skyrocketed, real wages have fallen, and our economy has fallen into a recession.

Now, this is one of the other curious things about defining terms. Our Democratic colleagues want to argue about whether two consecutive quarters of negative GDP are actually a recession or not. Well, they were when Republicans were in charge, but apparently when Democrats are in charge, that definition doesn't apply.

Much as they tried but failed to convince the American people that the Inflation Reduction Act would actually reduce inflation, it didn't, and it won't anytime soon.

Well, we know that the response to inflation by the Federal Reserve has been to raise interest rates, and they are projected to raise them at least three-quarters of 1 percent or 75 basis points, which will also slow down the economy and hurt job creation. So it looks like even more pain is coming.

RAILWAY LABOR MANAGEMENT DISPUTE

Madam President, well, unfortunately, we are also told that there is a looming rail strike that will have a tremendously negative impact on our economy. Our economy, as we all know, depends on a network of tractor-trailers, planes, trains, and cargo ships to transport products around the United States and beyond. These are the very same transportation modes that make sure that your grocery store is fully stocked, that the manufacturing plants have inventory they need in order to make their products, and that, yes, our packages that we order show up on our front door step on time.

But a massive disruption in rail transportation is likely to occur in less than 2 days' time. The unions that represent more than 115,000 rail workers have not been able to reach a contract agreement with railroad companies. Unless they reach a breakthrough soon, rail workers will go on strike this Friday, causing a national rail shutdown.

If you don't think that will have a negative impact on our economy on top of what we have already mentioned, think again. The rail system carries nearly 30 percent of America's freight, everything from agriculture to retail products, heavy equipment, automobiles, coal, lumber. We are talking about the critical products that impact virtually every sector of the economy.

It is tough to overstate the negative impact this will have. Just look at agriculture. On the front end of production, farmers and ranchers need fertilizer, seed, animal feed, and heavy equipment, all of which are likely to travel by rail at some point. Then, at harvest time, our producers rely on

timely rail service to transport their products to processing plants and then communities across the country.

If this strike goes into effect, all of those shipments will be stalled, and this comes right as we are heading into the fall harvest. Farmers and ranchers will be left with huge amounts of products they can't even transport or sell, many of these perishable products, which will simply spoil. The consequence for consumers is we will continue to see empty shelves at the grocery stores, along with higher prices due to inflation and short supply.

But this won't just impact us in the United States. Railroads move roughly a third of U.S. grain exports, which are desperately needed in global markets, particularly with what is happening in Ukraine, with Russia impeding the growing and transportation of grain to places like Africa, where people are literally starving for lack of food. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated this food insecurity. If this shutdown here in America goes into effect, the squeeze will be compounded and will be even tighter.

Of course, this is just a snapshot of the impact a shutdown will have on one sector of the economy, but the same struggles will play out when it comes to energy, rail, manufacturing, automotive, and literally just about every other sector of the economy.

This massive logjam will take a serious toll on our economy on top of inflation and the recessionary pressures we are already feeling. The freight industry estimates that a rail shutdown could cost the U.S. economy more than \$2 billion a day—\$2 billion a day.

Our country is hurtling toward a logistical nightmare, and unfortunately the Biden administration appears to be frozen and undecided about what to do. For years, our Democratic colleagues who depend on organized labor for a major part of their political support have put the demands of labor unions ahead of the needs of consumers and the rest of the American people. They have romanced the powerful labor lobby at every turn, and one of the fiercest union defenders now occupies the Oval Office.

Now, I am not opposed to people joining unions. They are entitled to collectively bargain and try to advance their livelihood and their family's way of life. But to let one special interest group basically create a logistical nightmare with this looming rail strike is just indefensible.

Well, we are seeing the consequences of this kowtowing to organized labor above the interests of any and all other Americans.

To hopefully prevent this looming crisis, President Biden has established an emergency Board to help reach a resolution and prevent this strike, if possible. The Board released its recommendations to resolve this dispute nearly a month ago, but a deal is still nowhere in sight.

In recent weeks, a number of administration officials have joined the

unions and freight companies at the negotiating table. The Secretaries of Labor, Transportation, and Agriculture have all tried to help resolve the impasse, but they have not moved the needle at all.

I don't know how much havoc is in store, but it is not looking good. Many shipments have already stopped out of fear that the operations will stop midjourney. I read that even commuter trains like Amtrak have already canceled some of their routes because they know what sort of impact this strike will have if no deal is reached by Friday.

Inflation has already sent prices to an untenable high. The supply chain breakdown is sure to send those prices even higher.

Families can anticipate product shortages across the board from grocery stores to car lots. Shoppers can expect packages that they have ordered to be delayed for days or even weeks on end. And drivers should expect to see more trucks on the highway to fill the gap when the railroad shuts down.

This is just another example of the failure of the Biden administration to anticipate and to address the problems that the American people are facing. It seems there is a huge disconnect between what is happening here in Washington among our Democratic friends and the Biden administration and what I hear from my constituents back home. And I think that is true largely across the Nation; that the elites in Washington have become completely decoupled from the rest of the country.

What that produces is special interest legislation that pleases some constituents: labor unions, climate activists, and open borders advocates.

The Biden administration and our Democratic majority have used their power in Washington to spend trillions of dollars on things that the American people don't want while compounding the problems that they are facing day in and day out: inflation, a recession, a paralyzing supply chain shutdown on the horizon, a spike in crime, and then, of course, an open border, which has allowed enough illegal drugs to be imported into the United States that it took 108,000 American lives last year. And 71,000 of those 108,000 lives were as a result of synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

Synthetic opioids are raging like a brush fire across the entire country, and we are seeing, for example, at middle schools and high schools in places like Hays County, right outside of Austin, TX, where I live, that young people, unbeknownst to themselves, ingest small amounts of this fentanyl and ultimately end up overdosing and dying from it.

So there are huge challenges facing our country. We need to do our job. We need to work together. No one is suggesting that we give up our principles. Republicans are Republicans and Democrats are Democrats for a reason—because they view the role and

the size of the government differently. Our Democratic colleagues seem to think that Washington and government is the answer to every problem. Republicans and conservatives, on the other hand, tend to favor individual initiative and entrepreneurship and investment to create jobs and an opportunity for people to get jobs and provide for their family and pursue their dream.

But there is plenty of overlap where we can agree, but we have to fight inflation. We have to deal with things like the paralyzing supply chain and the threat from a rail strike that appears now to be imminent.

We have got to do more to support our men and women in uniform—the police—as they battle crime in our neighborhoods and our communities, which seems to have gone up exponentially in recent years.

And then, of course, there is the one big, gaping, open sore that our Democratic colleagues have ignored completely, and that is our open border.

I mentioned the drugs, but in addition to the drugs, we have seen 2.3 million migrants show up at the border just since President Biden became President because they know they are going to be able to get into the country.

And they are probably going to be able to stay because the Biden administration simply does not have any plan in place to decide asylum claims—who has legitimate claims and who does not—so they engage in a program of catch-and-release. With the litigation backlogs in our immigration courts, it is no surprise that when years go by and your ticket comes up and you are told to show up in immigration court, that people simply fade into the great American landscape and avoid detection.

The only people benefiting from this, beyond the occasional migrant, are the drug cartels and the transnational criminal organizations that network people from around the world.

I know of many people who aren't from a border State like I am who think that these migrants are just from Mexico or Central America. But if you talk to the Border Patrol sector chiefs in Del Rio or the Rio Grande Valley, they will tell you they are detaining people from as many as 150 different countries.

Now, surely, the majority are from Mexico and Central America, but it ought to cause us a lot of concern when somebody can get to our back door from another country and then falsely claim asylum only to be released into the interior of the United States and never heard from again.

These are all fixable problems if we will work together, but so far, while the American people may have thought they elected Joe Biden, a moderate, they basically have seen BERNIE SANDERS' agenda.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4483

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, have you ever gone out to eat at a restaurant with a group of people, but your order was cheaper than everyone else's? Maybe you weren't as hungry or the restaurant the group picked was more expensive than you could afford so you were selective about what you ordered. Then, when the check comes, someone suggested the group split it evenly.

Now, what is your immediate reaction? You are upset, of course, because you ordered the salad not the filet mignon or you drank water, not the expensive bottle of wine. You ordered what you wanted, and they ordered what they wanted; you shouldn't be on the hook for their cost.

Sadly, this illustration is far too real, as last month, Joe Biden announced that he would cancel billions of dollars in student loans.

Now, let's be clear. He isn't canceling student debt. No, he is transferring that debt to every American taxpayer. Now a construction worker in Florida is having to foot the bill for the loans of a Harvard grad, which they voluntarily accepted for an education they received.

So here is what Democrats are trying to say to that construction worker: You didn't go to college; Democrats don't care. You will pay the debt of lawyers and doctors, and you will pay for those who want Ph.D.s in poetry. Talk about poetic injustice. You went to community college or a State school and worked to graduate debt-free. Tough luck. Joe Biden wants you to pay for the advanced degrees of the privileged few. Your tax dollars are now the money pot for other people's student debt.

Of course, Joe Biden's plan doesn't even begin to address the real reason for rising higher education costs. That is universities' decades-long practice of unnecessarily raising tuition.

As Governor of Florida, I addressed that problem and challenged our universities to keep education affordable.

Look at the University of Florida. Undergraduate tuition and fees for this academic year are less than \$6,500. It is the fifth best public university in the country. You will get a fantastic education there. Meanwhile, at Harvard, tuition fees for an academic year cost more than \$57,000.

There are ways to make education affordable, but the Democrats and elites aren't interested in those solutions. That is why Joe Biden is engaging in this reckless move even though it doesn't solve the real issue and even though he lacks the proper constitutional authority.

Everybody knows this. That is why, in July of last year, NANCY PELOSI herself denied that the President had such power.

She said:

The president can't do it . . . That's not even a discussion.

Yet now the Department of Justice is engaging in interpretive gymnastics to co-opt legislation that was passed to help our servicemembers in the aftermath of 9/11. It is a desperate attempt to stretch a good law well beyond its intent so that Joe Biden can give handouts to his liberal voters and Harvard pals.

Biden wants to spend money that Congress has not appropriated for a loan forgiveness that Congress has not authorized. It is illegal. It is unconstitutional. It is a gross abuse of authority, and I won't stand for it. Congress must assert its authority here. We have the power of the purse, not the President.

That is why I have introduced the Debt Cancellation Accountability Act. My bill would require the Department of Education to get an express appropriation from Congress before they could propose waiving, discharging, or reducing student loan debt to two or more borrowers in an amount greater than \$1 million. If we want to transfer the debt of some and make everyone pay for it, then Congress has to make that decision.

We should simply put it up for a vote. Of course, the Democrats here in the Senate won't do that. Surely, they could have passed a bill by now if they had really wanted to, but they wanted Biden to do it alone. It is easy to see why. In just the past few weeks, we have heard families from across the country speaking out against Biden's unfair and disastrous proposal. I am hearing about it from Floridians every day, and I know my colleagues are too.

I would like to thank Senators BARASSO, LUMMIS, and BRAUN for supporting my Debt Cancellation Accountability Act and for choosing to stand with me against Biden's overreach.

Let's pass this bill today to reverse Joe Biden's unlawful decision and force Congress to decide this issue.

Before I ask for unanimous consent, I would like to turn to my colleague Senator BRAUN from the great State of Indiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. I thank Senator SCOTT.

Mr. President, President Biden's student loan debt transfer does not cancel or forgive anything. These debts will still be paid. It is not like they go away.

What else does it say about the whole idea that, when you take on an obligation and you agree to it, you can just shirk it or get rid of it? There are many people across the country who would want to be in on that gambit as well. He has simply shifted the cost of repayment on to everyone, including to the 65 percent of American workers who chose not to get a college degree.

What about the aspiring plumber or electrician who borrowed \$20,000, \$30,000, or \$40,000 for his or her own business? There would be no end to it.

We should focus on getting more value out of colleges rather than giving them another reason to hike prices. Sadly, the only place where that has been focused on is in my own home State, where Mitch Daniels, the ex-Governor of Indiana, froze tuition into 10 years. That is getting more value out, and that is why their enrollment has gone way up.

With a national debt of nearly \$31 trillion, we can't continue to pile on more debt. When Senator SCOTT and I got here just a little over 3½ years ago, we were \$18 trillion in debt. We throw "trillions" around now like we used to "hundreds of billions," and it is on the backs of our kids and grandkids every time we do it.

Today, Federal Student Aid owns \$1.6 trillion in outstanding Federal assets—in other words, student loans. The loan program needs to be completely redone so that colleges will be motivated to lower costs. This is an excuse to do the opposite.

Finally, President Biden's actions are illegal in the first place. The President doesn't have the authority to cancel all of this debt. I am hoping it gets taken to court, because what does it say, again, for future generations or anyone who makes a commitment to take on debt who can shirk it with the stroke of a pen?

Even Speaker PELOSI agreed on this point, saying she didn't think it was legal. Yet it doesn't make any difference in this day and age as we plow forward.

This is why the Debt Cancellation Accountability Act requires the Department of Education to get express appropriation from Congress to pay for any Federal student loan the Department proposes to waive, discharge, or reduce.

I yield the floor to Senator SCOTT.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. I am so thankful for Senator BRAUN's support on this bill and for all of the work he has done to raise awareness about Biden's reckless spending agenda and to stand for fiscal sanity.

Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 4483 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, this is a shameful attempt by the Republicans to keep working Americans buried under mountains of student debt.