this week, and they weren't good. Inflation was even higher than expected. It was very clear that soaring prices are likely to continue for quite a while, but as usual, it doesn't seem to concern the Democrats one bit.

The President was asked Tuesday if he was concerned about August's even-worse-than-expected inflation report.

His answer? ''No, I'm not.''

It was just one more tone-deaf moment for the President and the Democrats.

On Tuesday, the President and the Democrats gathered at the White House to congratulate themselves for having passed their so-called Inflation Reduction Act, a bill that will do nothing—nothing—to reduce inflation. That is not just my opinion. That was the conclusion of the nonpartisan Penn Wharton Budget Model and of the Democrat chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, who referred to the bill as the ''so-called Inflation Reduction Act'' on the Senate floor while admitting it would do nothing to solve our Nation's inflation crisis.

But that didn't stop the Democrats from celebrating yesterday. For most of us, of course, it is difficult to understand what there was to celebrate. Leaving aside the issue of the 40-year-high inflation, we already know that the bill will also fall short in another respect—on deficit reduction.

The Democrats' claims that the bill would provide meaningful deficit reduction were always somewhat dubious, but even granting the Democrats' rosiest assumptions, President Biden wiped out any deficit reduction when he announced his massive student loan giveaway 8 days—8 days—after the Inflation Reduction Act was signed into law.

So no inflation reduction, no deficit reduction. Oh, one other thing: The Inflation Reduction Act will drive up energy bills for Americans.

So the question is: What was there to celebrate?

Well, for the Democrats, the Inflation Reduction Act marked a chance to finally push through some of their far-left, Green New Deal fantasies, things like electric vehicle tax credits to help wealthy Americans buy electric cars, more than $60 billion—$60 billion—for ''environmental justice priorities,'' including $1.9 billion for things like identifying gaps in tree canopy coverage, and the list goes on. So I think the Democrats are pretty satisfied with themselves over finally jamming through elements of their Green New Deal agenda.

Then, of course, they succeeded in extending increased ObamaCare subsidies that will push Americans off of private healthcare plans and into government-run care.

Then—then—there are the tax hikes. The current Democratic leader once said, ''You don't want to take money out of the economy when the economy is shrinking,'' like it has in the previous two quarters. But those days are gone. For the Democrats, raising taxes has become an article of faith.

And it goes far beyond raising money to help pay for their Big Government spending. The Democrats believe raising taxes on corporations and well-off Americans is good in and of itself, even if those tax hikes have a negative effect on less well-off Americans and the economy. The tax hikes that the Democrats have included in their so-called Inflation Reduction Act will, indeed, have a negative effect on our economy and on the hard-working Americans who help support it. The Democrats' tax hikes on businesses will result in slower growth, lower wages, and thousands of fewer jobs, and the Democrats' tax hikes on conventional energy will result in higher energy prices for working families.

In addition to raising taxes, the other main way the Inflation Reduction Act raises revenue is by increasing IRS audits and placing new burdens on taxpayers.

The Democrats' bill contains a whopping $80 billion in increased funding for the IRS. That is an increase in funding which represents six times the annual budget of the IRS today. More than half of those funds, or $46 billion, are earmarked for increased IRS enforcement. Just 4 percent is for improving customer service, which should tell you all you need to know about where the Democrats' real priorities lie.

The bill would provide for the hiring of as many as 87,000 new employees, which would more than double the current size of the Agency and make the IRS—make the IRS, if you can believe this—larger than Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Coast Guard put together, combined.

In the lead-up to the passage of the Democrats' bill, the Biden administration put out a statement declaring that the money for IRS enforcement would not go to the increased audits of households making less than $400,000. Because we had reason to doubt that that would be the case, the Republicans put forward an amendment to the bill to prevent the IRS from using its new money to audit those Americans. Every Democrat—every single Democrat—voted against the amendment. So, I guess, the Democrats are happy to oppose more IRS audits of middle-class Americans in theory, but they don't want to cut off the possibility of those audits in practice if they end up needing them to help fund their Green New Deal spending.

I don't need to tell anyone that the IRS is notorious for mishandling sensitive taxpayer data. As recently as this month, we learned that the IRS had inadvertently posted confidential taxpayer data of around 120,000 individuals on its website—private taxpayer information that was available to the general public.

Then, of course, there was last year's leak, or hack, of confidential taxpayer information that was shared with the left-leaning ProPublica and was used to advance a partisan agenda for which, I might add, neither the IRS nor the Biden administration has provided any accountability.

Then there was the infamous targeting of conservative groups for extra scrutiny under the Obama IRS, and the list goes on.

I haven't even discussed the IRS's record of grossly underperforming—some would say nonexistent—customer service. During the 2022 tax season, just 10 percent of taxpayers' calls—10 percent of taxpayers' calls—to the IRS were answered by an IRS employee. What we need to be doing is holding the IRS accountable, not setting tens of thousands of new IRS agents loose on taxpayers' accounts.

Earlier this week, I joined my Republican colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee to introduce legislation to prevent the IRS from using its new funding to audit American workers or small business owners earning less than $400,000 per year.

I also introduced a bill this week, along with Senator COLLINS, to improve taxpayer service at the IRS. Our legislation, called the Increase Reliable Services Now Act, would prevent the IRS from hiring new employees for enforcement until customer service at the IRS had reached a more acceptable level. It is unacceptable—unacceptable—that taxpayers have a 1 in 10 chance of receiving assistance when calling the IRS, and the Agency should not be allowed to increase enforcement hires until it has achieved at least a basic level of customer service.

So we have 87,000 new employees, which is double—double—the size of the current IRS workforce, and we have $80 billion, which is six times the current annual budget of the IRS, with a specific focus: going after taxpayers in this country to try and get, raise—whatever—more revenue to fund the Democrats' Big Government fantasies. At the same time, 1 in 10 taxpayers is getting his calls returned at the IRS.

I will continue to work to increase IRS accountability and prevent hard-working Americans from being squeezed to fund Democrats' Green New Deal spending.

Like the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan spending spree that came before it—which, I would add, helped plunge our country into our current inflation crisis—the Inflation Reduction Act is a bad deal for the American people, and all of the self-congratulatory White House parties in the world aren't going to change that basic fundamental fact.

Americans are experiencing serious economic hardship, and Democrats are doing nothing to help.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Iowa.

RAILWAY LABOR MANAGEMENT DISPUTE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as of 12:01 tomorrow morning, our Nation's transportation system was set to come to a screeching halt. It now sounds like we have a bit of a reprieve, but we still have a threat.

Since 2019, railroads and unions have been negotiating a new contract. Two months ago, President Biden appropriately appointed members of what is called the Presidential Emergency Board. This Board recommended the largest pay increase in industry history at 24 percent, in addition to an annual bonus and healthcare changes.

President Biden promised to be the ''most pro-union president'' in history, but even President Biden's recommendations weren't enough for these unions. A few unions continued to hold out and, in fact, took us to the verge of a nationwide strike.

A railroad strike would really plunge us back into the supply chain issues that have just now started to somewhat improve. These trains that would be stopped actually carry the food we eat, the gas for our tanks, and the energy that heats our homes.

Already, I am hearing from grain elevator operators in my State that they are having trouble transporting their grain. Hazardous cargo, like the chlorine cities need to purify drinking water, stopped moving earlier this week. Amtrak has canceled long-distance routes. Maybe they are going to be up and running now, but at least they were getting ready to stop.

But what I just described is the tip of the iceberg unless these unions agree to a long-term deal. The last thing we need is for grain shipments to grind to a halt right as farmers are going to the fields to harvest their grain. Iowa corn and soybeans can't feed the world if they are stuck on the farm or in the local elevator.

That is why I cosponsored Senator BURR's joint resolution to prevent all of this. The resolution would mandate that both sides adopt the recommendations of President Biden's emergency Board. Then, of course, if we pass that, the trains would keep running.

We are just learning about a tentative deal that would let unions back away from the cliff. If they don't, then Congress must step in and pass the joint resolution to keep our economy going. The alternative is unacceptable.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to complete my remarks before the rollcall.

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

E-CIGARETTES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, September 9, 2021, over a year ago, was supposed to be a historic day in America's efforts to stop the purveyors of candy- and fruit-flavored e-cigarettes from preying on America's kids. September 9, 2021, was the deadline, and it was set by a Federal judge for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to finally—finally—clear its enormous backlog of applications from e-cigarette companies seeking to sell their products in America.

Companies that can prove that their vaping products are, in fact, ''appropriate for the protection of public health,'' they can go ahead and sell their products legally, but e-cigarette products can't meet that standard. They can't demonstrate a benefit to public health. Vaping, as we know, is dangerous and addictive, and these companies, like the tobacco companies of years gone by, are preying on our children.

FDA had a legal mandate to ban these products from U.S. markets on September 9, 2021, but the Food and Drug Administration failed to meet the deadline—not by 1 day, not by 1 week, not even by 1 month. Last Friday marked the 1-year anniversary of the FDA's failure to meet this Federal court order.

As of today, the FDA has completed reviews of about half of these e-cigarette products that represent a large share of the market. As a result of FDA's inaction, dangerous, kid-friendly e-cigarettes remain available on store shelves without FDA review or authorization. The cops are not on the beat.

There are consequences to this action. The Truth Initiative is a nonprofit consortium of health groups that aims to protect young people from using tobacco. It estimates that, in the year since the FDA missed the court-ordered deadline to approve or reject e-cigarette applications, nearly 2½ million kids in America started using vaping products. Many of these young people will go on to develop nicotine addictions, with serious harm to their health. That is the human cost of this FDA failure.

Now the FDA says: Well, we might be able to finish this by 2023, 2 years after the Federal court-ordered date. And that is not the only deadline the FDA has blown when it comes to protecting kids from nicotine. After parents and public health groups demanded the FDA take action against candy-flavored, nicotine-spiked e-cigarettes, the vaping industry came out with a brandnew miracle product designed to evade FDA jurisdiction: synthetic nicotine. Products like Puff Bar are incredibly popular with middle and high school students. These new synthetic nicotine products include all the health dangers of traditional e-cigarettes, none of the regulation. When Congress learned about this loophole, we changed the law to say that the FDA had jurisdiction over synthetic nicotine products.

To make matters worse, even when the FDA does review a product and issues a denial, many e-cigarette companies just ignore them. It has reached a point that they are not viewed seriously. The No. 1 regulator of food and drugs in America, when it comes to protecting our kids from these deadly, addictive products, isn't viewed seriously.

The FDA has the legal right and the legal authority to do so. They can pull these products off the shelves tomorrow. Yet, with respect to illegal e-cigarettes, they do nothing—nothing.

Look, I understand they are understaffed. I understand they are underresourced. FDA is not currently authorized to collect user fees for e-cigarettes, as it does for so many other products. And Congress fails to appropriate the funds many times that they need.

These are real problems, but they do not absolve the FDA of its repeated failure to effectively regulate e-cigarettes. I am at my wits' end when FDA continues to miss these court-ordered deadlines, fails to enforce orders, and shows a lack of urgency when it comes to vaping products.

Last week, I asked Health and Human Services Secretary Becerra to step in. If FDA cannot or will not do its job, then it is time for the lead Agency, Health and Human Services, to take a more active role. The FDA cannot continue to let unscrupulous e-cigarette companies flout the law and put their own profits ahead of the health of our kids. This has to stop.

DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

Mr. President, on a related matter, Congress has a big decision to make in the next few weeks. Every 5 years, Congress must reauthorize FDA user fee programs. These programs authorize FDA to collect user fees from companies they oversee: prescription drug companies, medical device companies. These fees help provide the funding that FDA needs for staff.

In fact, almost half of their funding comes from user fees. But we shouldn't settle for a clean authorization of FDA user fees. We should give FDA the authority to collect user fees from e-cigarette companies, and we should provide FDA with new authority to protect America's health by better regulating the dietary supplement industry.

I want to thank the members of the Senate HELP Committee, especially its chairman, Senator PATTY MURRAY, for including my proposal for better regulation of dietary supplements in the committee-passed bill.

But I fear this commonsense proposal may be lost in the sauce in the closing days of this fiscal year.

Many people are surprised to learn that today dietary supplement companies are not even required to register their products with the FDA. They aren't required to tell the FDA even the ingredients of their products.

If you are going to put a product on the shelf in America, most Americans walking into that drugstore or that vitamin shop believe that there has been