

still steadily climbing all the time, at a historically fast pace, the worst in a generation.

Month after month after month, Democrats' policy failures are continuing to add inflation on top of inflation. The inflation rate plateauing above 8 percent does not mean that families are catching a break. It means exactly the opposite. It means that families are continuing to see prices go up and up and up all the time.

Simply surviving, just getting by, in Washington Democrats' economy costs 8.3 percent more than it did a year ago, but remember, the 12-month numbers now dramatically understate the damage the Democrats have done because it only looks back 1 year, when Democrats' inflation spiral was already up and running.

Here is the number that really matters. Since the day that President Biden was sworn in, since the day that this one-party Democratic government took power, our country's inflation rate has been—listen to this—13.2 percent. And according to President Biden, if you are angry about that, if parents are upset, if workers are frustrated, they just aren't putting things in proper perspective.

Considering the American people give President Biden a 38-percent approval rating on his handling of the economy, I would say it is the White House that needs to get some perspective, not the working people of this country.

And get this: When President Biden was asked how we can avoid a recession, since Democrats' policies have forced the Fed to raise their rates sharply, the President doubled down on his fantasyland. He suggested:

[W]e're growing the economy . . . it's growing in . . . a way that it hasn't in years and years.

But, of course, that is complete nonsense. You measure real GDP growth after inflation. From early 2017 until the beginning of the COVID pandemic, Republican policies had the economy humming along with robust growth, low unemployment, and low inflation—a great trifecta for the American people.

But now, with President Biden's policies in place, we have seen two consecutive quarters of real GDP actually falling. Once you account for the inflation that Democrats have caused, our economy is not growing at all. It is, in fact, shrinking.

Families talk about the term “shrinkflation” at the grocery store or the big-box store. That means not only have prices gone up, but the size of the package has gone down so you are both paying more and getting less. Like the size of a bag of chips or a box of cookies or the number of sheets in a roll of toilet paper or the weight of a bag of fertilizer—higher prices, smaller quantities.

And this is basically what President Biden and Democrats have done to the entire U.S. economy. Everything costs

more, even as the GDP is shrinking in real terms. Just like American families have seen their real wages plummet after inflation, the same thing has happened to the country as a whole for two quarters and counting.

So the President might want to talk to a couple of working Americans who are trying to survive under his policies before he sits down for his next TV interview.

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.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam 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.

The Senator from Illinois.

MARK FRERICHS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, 2½ years ago, a native of my home State of Illinois and a veteran of the U.S. Navy, Mark Frerichs, was abducted by the Taliban or one of its affiliates in Afghanistan.

He was working there as a contractor, and his disappearance was devastating to his family back in Lombard, IL.

Senator DUCKWORTH and I have spent countless hours and staff hours working with his family trying to find out what happened to Mark. We spoke to his sister Charlene and repeatedly raised his case with both the Trump and Biden administrations. We wanted to let them know we cared, and we joined the family on that course.

Well, today, the family's prayers have been answered. The news was released that Mark is coming home. I want to commend President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and their teams for never giving up on Mark and ultimately securing his freedom.

His sister Charlene said upon news of her brother's release that “[w]e never gave up hope that he would survive and come home safely to us.” She was right. And Mark was so fortunate to have her as his steadfast champion.

Welcome home, Mark Frerichs.

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT OF 2022

Madam President, I listened to the comments that were just made by the Republican leader about events in Washington, the state of the economy, and it was interesting, the perspective he took. He was critical of President Biden for calling a meeting of several thousand supporters last week on the White House lawn from all over the United States to celebrate the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act here in the U.S. Senate and House. You know and I know there wasn't a single Republican vote in favor of the Inflation Reduction Act. Some 6 weeks ago, we did some things that, frankly, many of us had been hoping for a long time without a single Republican vote supporting it.

The Senator from Kentucky wondered what we were celebrating. Well,

let me tell him a few of the things we are celebrating.

After years of candidates going out on the campaign trail and telling America that the cost of prescription drugs were too high, we finally did something about it—finally. After years of negotiating the price for drugs in the Veterans' Administration so we could afford to give our veterans the very best, we applied the same standard to Medicare. What does it mean? It means that the most popular and most expensive drugs that are sold through Medicare to recipients over the age of 65, we are now going to negotiate the prices to come up with a reasonable amount to charge taxpayers for those drugs.

Well, if you wondered whether or not the pharmaceutical industry can handle that kind of truth, I might remind people what they already know. Exactly the same drugs in the same boxes are for sale in Canada at a fraction of the price that we pay in the United States. The same thing is true in Europe. And we said, once and for all, we are going to do something about it. I think that is something to celebrate.

Let me tell you something else that is part of it too. We said that, from this point forward, when this bill takes effect, no recipient on Medicare will ever pay more than \$2,000 a year for prescription drugs—upper limit, ceiling, 2,000 bucks. Do you know what these same people were faced with when it came to cancer drugs and other therapies? Thousands and thousands of dollars. And we brought it home to a level—which I wish we could have done more, but it is very important as well—and that is when it comes to diabetes. Millions of Americans suffer from diabetes or someone in their family does, and we said that if you are on Medicare, you won't have to pay more than \$35 for a dose of insulin—\$35. That is a relief to a lot of people with diabetes in their family. Some of those people couldn't afford insulin, couldn't afford the doses they need, and they endangered their life in the process.

In addition to all of that, we, in this bill, did, in fact, address the Tax Code. The Senator from Kentucky said earlier that we raised taxes. We did. Let me tell you who is going to pay more in taxes. If you own a corporation that over the last 3 years has had a net profit, an average net profit, of \$1 billion a year—I am not asking for a show of hands—but if you had a net profit that averaged over \$1 billion over the last 3 years, you have to pay a minimum corporate tax of—get ready—15 percent. Fifteen percent.

Most Americans pay their taxes believing that is what the law requires, and many believe, as I do, that is the price of admission in America for a great nation. Fifteen percent—we would all welcome that rate. There are very few people at that rate. But to say that a corporation with a net profit on average of \$1 billion a year over the last 3 years finally has to pay taxes instead of escaping all tax liability—

guilty as charged. The Senator from Kentucky is right. We did that. Do you know the net result of it? The net result of it, it is going to reduce the deficit this year by \$1.3 trillion.

All this talk about the big spenders in Congress, the bill we put together for inflation reduction zeroed in on those two issues: capping the cost of prescription drugs for Medicare and making certain that corporations, profitable corporations, pay their fair share of taxes just like every American family. Those two elements were not mentioned by the Senator from Kentucky. It is understandable. But what I want to make clear is, we didn't have a single Republican vote in support of what I have just given you.

There is an additional section there that is controversial, but I feel strongly about it. I think we are facing in this world today obvious evidence of extreme weather and changes that should alarm us. Yes, it is climate change. It is global warming. And what we did in this bill was to create incentives for American families and corporations to start taking steps toward responsible conduct. It is coming. It wasn't a Federal mandate that required all the car companies to build electric vehicles. They see the writing on the wall. They realize we have to change the way that we energize transportation in America, and they want to be in front of the parade, not behind it. So do we. That was part of this bill as well. I support it. Not a single Republican voted for it. That is the reality.

Incidentally, inflation is a burden on American families and individuals. There is no doubt about it, and I am not going to sugarcoat it. We have seen some progress. For example, the price of gasoline stares us right in the face every time we drive right down the road. Well, I did some driving over the weekend, probably put 600 to 700 miles on the car in Illinois, driving around to various events, and I kept an eye out for the cost of gasoline. I don't know what it is in Hawaii or in any home State, but I will tell you that in Missouri, gasoline was selling for \$3.13 a gallon; in Illinois, closer to \$3.50 a gallon. High? Yes. But not \$5, which we faced just a few months ago. We have made some progress, and we need to continue to focus on reducing the cost of goods for families that they face every week. That is part of our mission as well.

IMMIGRATION

The last point I want to make is this. Madam President, there was a decision made by the Governor of Texas, Governor Abbott, several weeks ago to start transporting people who were legally in the United States but had just arrived from foreign countries on buses to various places around the country. Thousands of them were brought to Washington; thousands were brought to New York; and hundreds were brought to my city of Chicago that I represent.

These were people who came to our borders and asked if they could be ad-

mitted as legal immigrants to the United States, and they passed the threshold test. But let me quickly add, it is a threshold test as to whether they have credible fear for their own personal safety. They still have to face an adjudication, and the majority of them are not likely to win that adjudication. The problem we face is very obvious: It is a long time before that adjudication takes place. What are these families supposed to do when they are here waiting?

I went over to the Salvation Army rescue shelter on the West Side of Chicago to meet with some of these families and individuals who had been bused to Chicago by the Governor of Texas. I met one man, Carlos, and his family—his wife, his 5-year-old daughter, and his 8-month-old daughter as well. Through the translators, they told me their story. They are from Venezuela.

Venezuela is in a disaster situation. It is so dangerous that the United States warns travelers not to go to Venezuela, and the economy is so weak that the cost of living has gone up dramatically. Inflation there is even dramatically larger than the United States.

Carlos reached a point that, even working as hard as he could, he couldn't feed his family. So on May 15, he and his wife decided to pick up their children and try to make it to the border of the United States to try to find work. It took them 5 months, and they went through everything you can imagine; much of it on foot, and what travel they could find, they took advantage of. They were robbed, beaten up. They were pushed into a jungle situation in Panama where Carlos said, "I didn't think we were going to live through the night." It was that dangerous. They did survive, and they finally made it, and now they are here in Chicago.

I asked him what he wanted. He said, "I just want to go to work. I will take any job."

What we are finding—and the front page story in the New York Times confirmed it—is that many of these people are needed. Yes, we have unemployment of 5 million in America, but we have 11 million jobs that need to be filled. Many of them are entry-level jobs, and it is hard to get anyone to take them.

Last week, as well, I had the Illinois Farm Bureau come and see me. They started talking about their need for immigrant labor on the farms of America.

Madam President, you probably know this from your own home State, but currently half of the agricultural workers in America who are working on the dairy farms, picking crops, doing things that are pretty hard work, half of them are undocumented. We don't think twice about eating the fruits and vegetables that are the bounty of their work, but that is the reality.

Our immigration system, at this point in time, is badly broken. We need

to have legal immigration into the United States—controlled legal immigration into the United States for work purposes. Many of these people who are arriving are desperately needed for jobs that Americans won't fill. They don't want to work picking crops, for example, or on a dairy farm. A friend of mine who is a restaurateur in Chicago told me, if you removed all of the undocumented workers from the restaurants of Chicago, you would just start closing them right and left. Behind that screen door in your favorite restaurant are people working hard every single day who are undocumented.

We have to reach the point where we sit down in a bipartisan basis and do something about it. It was 8 years ago when we put together a comprehensive immigration reform bill. Democrats, DURBIN, SCHUMER—and I want to salute MICHAEL BENNET, who time and again has been able to come up with a good bipartisan approach to ag workers—and BOB MENENDEZ of New Jersey, we were on the Democratic part of the team of 8. On the Republican part, we had Senator McCain, Senator GRAHAM, Senator RUBIO, and then Senator Flake.

We worked for months, put together a comprehensive bill, brought it to the floor of the Senate, and passed it with 14 Republicans joining us. There were 68 votes on the floor of the U.S. Senate for a bill that would have addressed the very issues we are facing today. The bill was then sent over, after it passed the Senate, to the House of Representatives, and the Republican leader refused to take up it or even call it.

We had a chance, and we have to create that chance again—comprehensive immigration reform. We shouldn't do it at the expense of a poor family like Carlos's family who came from Venezuela. I would say what the Governors of Arizona and Texas and Florida are doing now is to jeopardize the safety and the health of these families. That is not fair to them. It is not American. Putting them on buses and promising them, at the end of the journey, that there are going to be jobs waiting for them, for example, is just to mislead them.

In addition, if these Governors were transporting these people in good faith to Chicago or New York or Washington, they would have the decency to tell us who is coming and when. They don't. They put the buses on the road, and they stop at a train station and turn them all loose. Many of these people know no one in those cities. We found recent evidence that some of them are in a position where they are taken away from where they are supposed to report—legally report—in this country and sent hundreds and thousands of miles away by these Governors for political reasons I can't explain. That is not who we are.

I do want to commend the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, many of the charities in our area.