

That is why I have also worked with Senator CRAPO on a bipartisan effort to build on that progress with respect to forced labor and crack down on the rest of China's playbook of abuses and rip-offs. We wrote a bipartisan amendment that deals with forced labor investigations, with intellectual property protection, and with counterfeiting. It helps level the playing field in the fight against China. It helps strengthen and speed up trade enforcement and increases transparency in trade agreements and trade law. These have been priorities of mine throughout my time in the U.S. Senate.

Obviously, I was very pleased when our bipartisan amendment with Senator CRAPO was included in the China competition bill. Overall, the bill—and it was bipartisan—is all about creating jobs by building up supply chains within the United States, investing in sensible science, and battling some of the key cost drivers—cost drivers—in inflation.

Mr. President, colleagues, Senator SCOTT voted against that bipartisan bill. The bipartisan bill passed by a vote of 68 to 32, but my colleague from Florida voted no. So I just want—as people reflect on this debate—to note for the record who exactly was working to make progress in the fight against China's worst practices and who is making speeches about them.

Second, America needs as much manufacturing capacity as possible as soon as possible here for antigen tests to meet our needs. Unfortunately, we are not there yet. The Biden administration recently launched a free-to-order testing system—free-to-order testing system—online. Sixty million households have ordered tests. That is nearly half the total number of households in the country, so there is big demand.

The President has committed to making a billion tests available through that particular program. That is on top of other programs sending millions of tests each week and month to nursing homes, rural health clinics, schools, and elsewhere. The administration is buying all the American-made COVID tests it can get its hands on, but it is not enough to meet demand.

Let's make no mistake—all steps are being taken to make these crucially needed tests available to Americans.

The Scott bill would create a shortage of COVID tests. So, in addition to voting against the bipartisan bill that really would have tackled the big issues dealing with China, my colleague has an effort to create a shortage of tests. That would be a mistake. It would prolong an Omicron wave and put lives in danger. That just isn't common sense.

The American people want the supply of COVID tests to be large enough that nobody has to camp out in a drugstore parking lot waiting for the next delivery. That doesn't mean they are in league with the Chinese Government's horrible genocide against the Uighur

people, but that is essentially what this bill is saying.

After we have dealt with the Scott proposal, which doesn't do anything to help America's working families and our children, I am going to propose something that does and does it quickly.

The fact is, there are tens of millions of families across the country who need help paying for housing and childcare and the other basic necessities of life. That is what the Senate ought to be focused on. That is what we ought to be zeroing in on because that is going to make life better for families and for kids. So when this legislation is disposed of, I am going to propose that the Senate pass a 1-year extension of the expanded child tax credit, which expired on January 1. That is something, colleagues, which really helps families, and they are hurting right now. The Senate knows they are walking on an economic tightrope, balancing the food bill against the fuel bill, and the reality is, a lot of them had extra expenses due to the variant.

I have been trying to get colleagues on the other side of the aisle for well over a month to support the child tax credit. Our colleagues on this side of the aisle have been relentless in their support for it. Child tax credit payments cut child poverty nearly in half; food insecurity among families dropped by 25 percent—story after story from parents across the country talking about how the program helped them put food on the table, how it helped them buy their kids' school clothes and helped them avoid financial ruin when a parent was laid off.

The fact is, Social Security was a bond between the government and elders. What the child tax credit has been all about is creating a new bond to try to help families, vulnerable families and their kids—an economic lifeline to them.

What I am going to propose, I think, as we move to this debate—because we will hear from our colleague from Florida—we have a choice. If you want to do something that does absolutely nothing but put Americans in a tougher spot in terms of getting the help they need to deal with COVID, that is what happens under the proposal by my colleague from Florida, or do you want to do something that will put cash into the pockets of parents so they can help their kids?

I can tell the Presiding Officer, I am sure he, as a new parent, hears this from his contemporaries: The child tax credit is going for luxuries.

I was just home. I had six townhall meetings—by the way, in mostly conservative areas—and families were using those child tax credits for buying shoes and food and essentials.

So that is what the choice here is going to be.

For the reasons that I describe now, I object to the unanimous consent request from our colleague from Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. First off, if my colleague actually wanted to help American families, he would do whatever he could to get American families jobs.

I can't understand why my colleague would object to this bill. When did the Democrats decide that they no longer care about the oversight authority of Congress?

My colleague never said that HHS couldn't find American manufacturers for these tests. He didn't go back and check to see if they did. It seems like every one of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is just another member of the Biden administration focused on covering up for Joe Biden and his appeasement of General Secretary Xi.

I am actually trying to support American jobs and American families so they can support themselves.

I want to support American manufacturers and the American supply chain. The Biden administration is actively choosing to support the communist Chinese regime and their economy instead. This is what he was elected to do, and this is the last thing American families want to see their tax dollars go for.

As stewards of taxpayer dollars, it is our duty to make sure we are doing everything we can to support the American economy, not the communist Chinese economy, especially following the pandemic and during this time of record-high inflation.

So I think objecting to this bill is a choice just to appease communist China, and it is deeply disappointing that we couldn't pass this good, commonsense bill today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. WYDEN. As if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that if the Senate receives a message from the House of Representatives that the House has passed a bill that is identical to the text of the Wyden bill that is at the desk to extend and modify the special rules for the child tax credit and the advanced payments of the child tax credit for 1 year, 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 without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object, look, I get it. I understand why my colleague is anxious. He has got to distract from the bill I came here to pass today. Democrats have shown again and again that they will do anything to cover up for Joe Biden and his weak appeasement of communist China. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, my focus has been on providing targeted help to families who truly need it. That is where my focus remains.

My colleague is well aware that this program that he is talking about is actively being debated, and there are concerns on both sides of the aisle. Just one of the many issues being discussed in the program is the program's lack of work requirements and insufficient means testing. It would be irresponsible to cut those discussions short and pass a measure that does not have the unanimous support of the Senate tonight. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, just very briefly, I would like to note that this has been the second time in about 6 weeks when I have tried to get the urgently needed child tax credit extended for another year here on the floor of the U.S. Senate—the second time.

We are hearing all over this country about families who are really having trouble making ends meet right now and how valuable to them the child tax credit would be. And twice in the last 6 weeks, here on the floor of the U.S. Senate, I have tried to get the child tax credit extended for 1 year. And I would just like to note that twice—in the last 6 weeks, Republicans have objected to the idea of extending the child tax credit for 1 year.

I don't think that is in the interest of American families and American kids. We will continue this debate.

And with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to speak for up to 15 minutes, Senator MARSHALL for up to 5 minutes, and Senator MENENDEZ for up to 5 minutes before the scheduled rollcall votes.

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

INFLATION

Mr. KENNEDY. I want to speak on two topics.

First, on inflation, President Biden's economic policies, unfortunately, have water-boarded the budgets of most Americans and most Louisianians. We see the official statistics, and the statistics are that inflation is going up 7 percent. I understand that is what the experts say, but most Americans and most Louisianians know that inflation is much worse, much worse.

I am sure that has been the experience of the good people of Georgia as well. I mean, I did some calculations before I came down today. From December of 2020 to December of 2021, the most recent numbers we have, gasoline is up 49.6 percent.

In my State, in Louisiana, it costs Louisianians \$27 more than it did last year to fill up the tank of a Chevy truck. That is every time they fill up the tank.

Used car and truck prices have increased by 37.3 percent. In New Orleans, for example, in my State, used car prices were up 38.2 percent through last September.

We all have to eat. Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, up 12.5 percent.

New vehicles, if you can find one, up 11.8 percent.

Household furnishings and furniture, up 7.4 percent. Electricity, up 6.3 percent and headed higher. Clothes, 5.8 percent. Fruits and vegetables, 5 percent. Cereals and bakery products, 4.8 percent. And I could keep going.

The truth is that most Americans are having to spend, on average, about \$3,500 more per year because of President Biden's inflation.

Now, to some people, that may not sound like much, that is a lot of money for people in my State. An extra \$3,500 out of the budget of most working Americans is a lot.

You know, I wish it weren't so, but this inflation has been caused by the Biden administration's economic policies. Inflation is not complicated. It is too much money chasing too few goods.

President Biden's coronavirus bill was the tipping point. That is clear. Now, we all voted for a number of coronavirus bills, but the last coronavirus bill was way too expensive. It was unnecessary, and it wasn't a coronavirus bill.

The President said: Oh, we have got an emergency. We have got an emergency.

And then you read the bill and find out that the bill has got nothing to do with the coronavirus and the money is going to be spent over like a 10-year period. That is not an emergency.

The current inflation has characteristics—I have not seen this—of both cost-push and demand-pull inflation, and it can be traced directly to the economic policies of the Biden administration.

And the Biden administration keeps pushing. He keeps trying to stuff more diapers down the toilet. The Biden administration wants to throw another \$5 trillion—not billion, not million, but trillion—of gasoline on the fire in the Build Back Better bill. And if we pass that, there will be another trillion dollars.

I mean, this administration spends money like it was gully dirt. I have never seen anything like it.

And then we have inflation. We have all this liquidity, which leads to inflation, and the Biden administration will not accept responsibility.

President Biden has blamed inflation—he blamed it first on COVID. Now, I will admit COVID is spreading, but I don't see people walking around coughing inflation on each other. Then he blamed it—I think he blamed it on China for a while. Then President Biden blamed it on greedy corporations. I expect next he will say that inflation originated in a bat.

But the truth of the matter is, it is not complicated. It originated with his spending policies, and it is just killing my people. It is killing them.

And, as you know, we have a lot going on here in Washington and a lot of issues in front of us that are impor-

tant—Ukraine, for example. The President shortly is going to nominate a new member to our U.S. Supreme Court. We have a multitude of bills that we are considering, and all of those are important.

But inflation is important too, and it is hurting the American people, and it is hurting the least among us the most. Yes, we are seeing inflation in terms of services, but we are seeing inflation more in terms of goods, and low-income Americans, as you well know, spend proportionately more of their income on goods than they do on services.

The President's policies, I regret to have to say, have administered a sucking chest wound on the budgets of the people in my State and the people of America, and it has got to stop.

REMEMBERING WILLIAM CLIFFORD SMITH

Mr. President, let me say one more thing, if I could. I lost a good friend in Louisiana, and Louisiana lost a good friend last week: Mr. Clifford Smith. Clifford happened to be a civil engineer, but he was so much more. Clifford was born in New Orleans, but he lived his entire life in Terrebonne Parish. Terrebonne Parish in my State is one of the southernmost parishes. It has been experiencing, for a variety of reasons, wetlands loss for decades after decades.

We started experiencing wetlands loss as soon as we levied the Mississippi River. Now, I am not saying we shouldn't have levied it, because it has obviously created a lot of commerce for America and Louisiana. But the river could no longer overflow and deposit the sediment, and the sediment has not been replenished, and the current sediment has sunk. And when your land sinks and the ocean rises, then you are going to have wetlands loss.

Clifford Smith was one of the first Louisianians, if not the first, to talk about the need for coastal restoration in my State. Clifford Smith, throughout his career at T. Baker Smith, the name of his company, created jobs for thousands of the people in my State.

He was on every board imaginable. When his church burned down in Houma, Clifford said: I will be responsible for raising the money and can rebuild the church.

It took him 5 years, and he did it. And Houma is not—it is a wonderful place, but it is not a wealthy place. But Clifford did it. He had a lot of help, but Clifford was the quarterback.

He was whip smart, and he was visionary. He was wise. He was very charming.

I have known Clifford 30-plus years. I remember when I first decided to run for office, I called Clifford and said: Will you support me? Because everybody knew Clifford Smith. Everybody respected Clifford Smith. Everybody admired Clifford Smith. And I knew if I had his support in his area of my State, it would be critical.

And he said: Yeah, Kennedy. I will support you.