

hamstringing the production of everything from cars, cell phones, refrigerators, medical devices, and equipment used by our military. It has increased the cost of all of those items, and American families are paying for those costs.

USICA would help relieve them and make sure these supply chain bottlenecks are relieved. Our proposal would provide \$52 billion to help relieve those supply chain pressures and bring production back to America. Instead of relying on other countries for our chips, let's bring these jobs back home.

Typically, it is America that provides the research, the R&D in cutting-edge chips, but somehow this country has allowed them all to be made—or the vast majority of them to be made overseas. Let's make them here with good manufacturing jobs, in addition to making sure we stay at the top of the game in terms of research. USICA does both—increases R&D and increases manufacturing jobs—all here in America.

So I want to commend my colleagues for pushing this legislation forward. Of course, we will have much more work to do to bridge our two proposals together, but the House's vote this week sets us on a necessary course to passing these policies into law.

SUPREME COURT NOMINATION

Madam President, on SCOTUS, yesterday, I met with President Biden at the White House to discuss a broad range of issues on the Democratic agenda. One of the most important matters we covered was his intention to nominate the first Black woman Justice to the Supreme Court. I reiterated the same commitment I have made all week: When President Biden makes his nominee known to the Nation, I will move to have the Senate consider and confirm her as soon as possible.

I will see to it that the process is fair, that Members on both sides of the aisle can evaluate questions and get to know the nominee, but we will also move quickly. Everything seems to be on track to get that done, to move the nominee quickly through the Congress.

President Biden is not expected to announce his nominee for a few weeks, but we already know one thing: The President's pledge to name a Black woman to the Supreme Court is historic. There have been 115 Justices who have sat on the Court since 1789. Only five of them have ever been women—none until 1981. Only two have been African American. But never, never has there been an African-American woman, who still make up a bare 6 percent of the Federal judiciary. And—amazing—until 1981, this powerful body, the Supreme Court, was almost all White men. Imagine. America wasn't all White men in 1981—or ever.

Under President Biden and this Senate majority, we are taking historic steps to make the courts look more like the country they serve by confirming highly qualified, diverse nomi-

nees. A quarter—a quarter—of all African-American women who sit on the Federal bench were nominated by this administration and approved by this Senate.

Just hear that. Twenty-five percent of African-American women who sit on the Federal bench came through the Senate this year. That is the progress we have made in a relatively short amount of time.

In fact, nearly 70 percent of all the President's nominees have been non-White, dwarfing the record of every single President since at least Jimmy Carter.

Some say: Well, why is that? Because the Bench has been almost all White; as I said, 100 percent all White males until 1981. We have some ground to make up so the courts can represent America.

These aren't abstract facts and figures; who we put on the bench matters. The personal experience that each judge brings to bear cannot be merely glanced over. When Americans come before the courts and look up at those who preside in the courtroom, they should trust that those who render judgment on them will be able to understand each litigant's lived experience and bring a modicum of human understanding required to apply the law equitably. The best way—the best way—we can do that is to elevate judges from a broad range of backgrounds. Diversity, in all its forms, matters. It is good for the justice system, and it is really vital to the health of our democracy.

President Biden's nominees are also extremely well qualified. We are not sacrificing qualifications and excellence for diversity. President Biden's nominees are both more diverse and more qualified than any President's in recent history. I am proud of the accomplishments we have secured this past year to bring balance to our Federal courts.

NOMINATIONS

Madam President, now on noms progress, yesterday was a good day on the Senate floor. We held 12 rollcall votes—yep, 12 rollcall votes—on a number of President Biden's nominees to his administration and to the Federal bench. Half of these votes took place in the evening. I am glad we dispensed with them efficiently and without needless delay. I want to thank all my colleagues for their cooperation and flexibility as we moved through the large number of votes.

We want to be able to keep doing this. We want to be able to work with similar speed next time a large number of votes are lined up on the floor. Maybe some of them, like last night, will go by voice. Some of these, there is no reason to have a vote on, except a few—just a handful; not the vast majority of the other party—insist we have votes on all of them, which only lengthens the process but doesn't deter us from moving forward on these nominees.

Of the 20 nominees I filed at the end of the last work period, we have confirmed or invoked cloture on all but 3 of them, and today, we expect to hold cloture votes on the other 3.

Again, it is an unusually large number of rollcall votes for nominees who typically pass with unanimous consent. Obstruction from a small group of Republicans—only a small group; not the majority; not close to the majority—has forced us to work through these individuals one by one. But last night, with the cooperation of everybody, we were able to move quickly. So I thank my colleagues for their good work and cooperation.

BANNING OF BOOKS

Madam President, finally, once again on book banning, I want to return to the point I made yesterday about the wave of book bannings we are seeing in our public libraries and in our school districts across the country.

We shouldn't kid ourselves about the scary nature of these Orwellian attacks from the far right because when far-right legislators in places like Texas demand their schools turn over their reading lists or when a school district in Tennessee bans a graphic novel that teaches about the Holocaust or when reactionary voices hide behind claims of indecency or offensiveness anytime they attack works that explore issues of racism or identity or social injustice, then we are not seeing free expression; we are seeing intimidation.

That is what book bannings are about. They are efforts to intimidate educators and students away from exploring difficult issues, to obscure parts of our history the far right doesn't like, and to perpetuate and even champion ignorance of our own past. We don't need to look very far in history to see what happens when we go down the dangerous road of censorship and suppression. When free expression is weakened, the mob is empowered.

These unprecedented efforts by the far right to ban books that explore injustice and racism are deeply disturbing and nakedly Orwellian. They should be opposed at the State level before more damage is done to our students and to our country.

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. McCONNELL. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE FEDERAL RESERVE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, this morning, the Banking Committee

is examining three of President Biden's nominees to the Federal Reserve Board of Governors.

The Fed is one of the most consequential institutions in America. Its decisions have massive ramifications for our citizens and for the world economy.

At the same time, since its independence is paramount, the Fed's structure insulates the Governors from short-term influence and political pressure. When an institution this important is this independent, the guardrails that confine its power are extremely important.

Now, Congress has given the Fed a statutory mandate that is really very clear and very limited. The Fed's dual mandate is maximizing employment and stabilizing prices. That is it. That is what the Fed exists to do.

The Fed is meant to serve as our central bank. It is not meant to act as an unelected superlegislature that dabbles in broader economic policymaking should it strike its fancy.

Its current leader, Chairman Powell, understands this keenly. But, unfortunately, President Biden's nominee for the powerful No. 2 slot wants to destroy this crucial distinction.

Less than 2 years ago, Sarah Bloom Raskin launched a PR campaign saying the unelected Fed Governors should pursue liberal environmental goals that elected Democrats cannot get through Congress through the banking system.

That bears repeating. President Biden's nominee for Fed Vice Chair wants unelected bureaucrats to financially bully the private sector into policy changes which lack enough support to become law the honest way.

So let's get more specific. Ms. Raskin has argued repeatedly in print that the Fed should ideologically pick winners and losers in the energy sector.

In 2020, she said unelected bureaucrats should have excluded companies that employ Americans and produce American energy from widely available rescue loans because oil and gas are not green enough for liberals' liking.

Now, this is the same old Democratic war on fossil fuels and middle America being smuggled into a dangerous new forum.

Washington Democrats want to raise Americans' gas prices. They want to make electricity even less affordable. They want it to cost more to keep your family warm in the dead of winter. And now they want to do all this in a radical new fashion where voters could never hold them accountable.

The stated justification for this power grab is that climate change may impact the future of our economy; so therefore, it is the Fed's business—what nonsense with no limiting principle. Every major policy could affect our economy. Opening this Pandora's box would transform the Fed from an apolitical central bank into a hyperpolitical superlegislature. It would turn the venerable institution

that is supposed to safeguard the American dollar into enforcers for a radical agenda that can't make it through Congress.

So you had better believe liberal activists are already acknowledging this would not stop with climate issues. They have got a whole list of ideological goals they would like the Fed to literally force on our country.

A year and a half ago, Democrats introduced legislation that would assign the Fed the mission of racial redistribution. They want to hardwire a kind of financial affirmative action plan into our banking system.

Look, the American people don't want these wild ideas. So their elected Representatives actually don't support them. Now the far left wants to transplant these radical campaigns out of Congress and into our central bank, where American voters don't get a say. This is just another example of today's Democratic Party's refusing to work within the basic rules and institutions and, instead, trying to steamroll the guardrails to get their way.

Ms. Raskin's crusade would hurt working families, kill American jobs, make our Nation less independent, and cripple the Fed's independence in the process. She wouldn't even need her colleagues' votes to do this damage. The Vice Chair for Supervision has significant unilateral powers. She might be able to do this all by herself.

Here is the bottom line: Working families can't afford a nominee who is dying to jack up their bills and gas prices. Kentuckians and middle Americans can't afford a central banker who wants to bankrupt our industries and kill our jobs.

The global economy can't afford for the Fed to become a partisan battlefield, and the American people will not accept their central bank acting like some woke—woke—superlegislature where citizens get no say.

IRAN

Madam President, now, on an entirely different matter, this week, two of America's closest partners in the Middle East made history.

The UAE welcomed a President of Israel for the first time, laying another diplomatic stone on the foundation of the Abraham Accords. But within mere hours of President Herzog's historic arrival, we were reminded of the dangers that an increasingly violent Iran is willing to impose on anybody who pursues peace.

For a third straight week, the UAE was targeted by a Houthi missile attack—of course, made possible by Tehran. Last week, the terrorists targeted an airbase that hosts 2,000 U.S. personnel, and it was American-made missile defense systems that intercepted the strike.

The United States faces these same Iranian-backed threats, alongside partners like Israel and the UAE, but you wouldn't know it—you wouldn't know it—by looking at President Biden's foreign policy.

A year ago, the State Department removed Yemen's Houthi terrorists from its list of foreign terrorist organizations. Since then, the Iranian proxy terrorists have only increased their attacks, underwritten by Iranian money and technology—so much so, in fact, that, last month, the Biden administration was reportedly considering reversing its decision.

Iran's strategy is to use violence to drive the United States out of the Middle East—small wonder they would double down on this strategy after the administration's humiliating retreat from Afghanistan—and the failure to respond forcefully to Iranian-backed attacks against U.S. troops in the region has eroded our deterrence and dramatically increased the risk to U.S. personnel.

If this administration chooses to shrug or look the other way when terrorists target our friends and our interests and if they continue to withhold military capabilities from partners threatened by Iran, then they should not pretend to be surprised when traditional American partners in the Middle East start looking to Moscow and to Beijing to fill the vacuum.

Of course, the biggest distraction keeping this administration's attention from protecting our interests in the Middle East has been its ongoing obsession with returning to the Obama administration's failed 2015 nuclear agreement.

Since President Biden took office, he has made rejoining the deal an overriding diplomatic objective, but by blaming their predecessor's "maximum pressure" approach and demonstrating an unwillingness to respond forcefully to Iranian-backed terrorist attacks, the administration has effectively taken the threat of sanctions or military action literally off the table, neutering their own diplomacy right at the outset. So it is no wonder the hardliners in Tehran are holding out for more concessions from the soft-liners in Washington.

Now, look. It is not just Republicans who are concerned. Senator MENENDEZ recently expressed similar concerns on the Senate floor and called upon the Biden administration and our partners to "exert more pressure on Iran to counter its nuclear program, its missile program, and its dangerous behavior around the Middle East, including attacks on American personnel and assets."

Recent reports suggest some of Biden's own diplomats also share these concerns and have literally withdrawn from the team over concerns the administration's top negotiator is taking too soft a line on Tehran.

So, a year ago, Republicans made it clear to President Biden that, if his administration were interested in having a bipartisan foreign policy, they would find willing partners here in the Senate.

For my part, I recommended the President focus on securing bipartisan