

I am a former preschool teacher, parent advocate, and school board member. But let's be honest, you don't need classroom experience to see that right now the very last thing we should be doing is denying schools the tools and resources to help kids learn safely. The data is clear. We have real work to do to help our students make up for an incredibly tough 2 years.

Now, Democrats actually passed legislation—the American Rescue Plan—which invests specifically in helping our students recover academically and mentally. The proposal from the Senator from Arkansas would put our students' recovery and safe in-person learning in jeopardy. It would take those important public health decisions, which should be based on local conditions, away from those communities and slash funding for students and schools right when they need us the most.

Now is not the time to pull the rug out from under students in schools. Parents, educators, and, most of all, kids have been through enough. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I would simply reply to the remarks of the Senator from Washington, she asserted that I or others who oppose these mask mandates think that we know better. That is the whole point, though. It is not that we think we know better; I think that you, as a parent, know better. You know what is best for your child—not some Democratic politician, not some liberal superintendent, not some neurotic public health obsessive.

And, apparently, the Democrats have no problem using these Federal funds when it suits their neurotic policies. After all, the Department of Education last year threatened Federal funding for States and schools that did not permit mask mandates. The whole point of this exercise is this: the Democrats who think they know better than parents to make the choices for the parents' kids.

I am disappointed today that my Democratic colleagues want to continue to see kids forced to wear masks in schools across America, but, trust me, change is coming one way or another. It will be because Democratic politicians, like Gavin Newsom, run for the hills or because the American people repudiate them all in November.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Scott A. Nathan, of Massachusetts, to be Chief Executive Officer of the United States International Development Finance Corporation.

VOTE ON NATHAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Nathan nomination?

Mr. CARDIN. I ask for yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 24, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 43 Ex.]

YEAS—72

Baldwin	Grassley	Reed
Bennet	Hagerty	Risch
Blumenthal	Hassan	Romney
Blunt	Heinrich	Rosen
Booker	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Brown	Hirono	Sasse
Burr	Kaine	Schatz
Cantwell	Kelly	Schumer
Capito	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Sinema
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Leahy	Stabenow
Cassidy	Manchin	Sullivan
Collins	Markey	Tester
Coons	McConnell	Thune
Cornyn	Menendez	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Toomey
Cramer	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Crapo	Murphy	Warner
Duckworth	Murray	Warnock
Durbin	Ossoff	Warren
Feinstein	Padilla	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Graham	Portman	Young

NAYS—24

Blackburn	Hoeven	Moran
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Paul
Braun	Inhofe	Rubio
Cotton	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Daines	Lee	Shelby
Ernst	Lummis	Tuberville
Fischer	Marshall	Wicker

NOT VOTING—4

Barrasso	Luján
Hawley	Rounds

The nomination was confirmed.

(Mr. CASEY assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. HEINRICH assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomi-

nation of Executive Calendar No. 498, Douglas R. Bush, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army.

Charles E. Schumer, Jack Reed, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal, Catherine Cortez Masto, Richard J. Durbin, Jacky Rosen, Margaret Wood Hassan, Mark Kelly, Benjamin L. Cardin, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Angus S. King, Jr., Patrick J. Leahy, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Gary C. Peters, Chris Van Hollen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Douglas R. Bush, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 95, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 44 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Baldwin	Grassley	Peters
Bennet	Hagerty	Portman
Blackburn	Hassan	Reed
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Risch
Blunt	Hickenlooper	Romney
Booker	Hirono	Rosen
Boozman	Hoeven	Rubio
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Sanders
Brown	Inhofe	Sasse
Burr	Johnson	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Capito	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Kennedy	Shaheen
Carper	King	Shelby
Casey	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cassidy	Lankford	Smith
Collins	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Lee	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lummis	Tester
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Thune
Cotton	Markey	Tillis
Cramer	Marshall	Toomey
Crapo	McConnell	Tuberville
Cruz	Menendez	Van Hollen
Daines	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Moran	Warnock
Durbin	Murkowski	Warren
Ernst	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wicker
Fischer	Ossoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	Young
Graham	Paul	

NAYS—2

Hawley Scott (FL)

NOT VOTING—3

Barrasso Luján Rounds

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 95, the nays are 2.

The motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that upon disposition of the Bush nomination, the Senate vote on confirmation of the Coffey nomination.

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

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here again today to discuss the scheme by big Republican donor interests to capture and control our Supreme Court. Today, I am going to put a little spotlight on ongoing scheme operations.

As we all know, Justice Stephen Breyer will retire at the end of this Supreme Court term. As the Biden administration selects a nominee, the scheme is shifting gears to attack her even before she has been named.

A dark money front group called the Judicial Crisis Network has already announced a multimillion-dollar ad blitz against Justice Breyer's unnamed replacement, and its first ad is already up. The ad's premise is that leftwing dark money is poised to capture our Supreme Court. I am not making that up. Think of a squid. When a squid senses danger, it squirts a jet of ink into the water. The squid ink creates confusion and distracts predators, and the squid sneaks off. This new ad from the Judicial Crisis Network is squid ink.

Let's start with just a quick review of the facts. Rightwing donor interests captured our Supreme Court under Donald Trump. They did it with dark money. They used the front group Judicial Crisis Network to launder off identities of big rightwing contributors. The deidentified contributions funded political campaign ads against Merrick Garland and for Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett. Those are the facts. The road onto the Supreme Court for those three Justices was paved with dark money.

By the way, the checks were big. Four of the checks to Judicial Crisis Network were for \$15 million or more. That is a big check. Because we don't know who those donors are or who that donor is—it could all be one donor—we don't know what business they had before the Court or why it was so worth it to them or him to spend \$60 million to influence the makeup of the Court.

This new Judicial Crisis Network ad—the squid ink ad—is designed to confuse those rather conspicuous facts. They can hide who funded them, but they can't hide what they did; so, squid ink—distraction, misdirection. Their accusations of dark money corruption are a projection of the very scheme they themselves hatched and executed. As I have discussed previously in these speeches, this is a classic propaganda technique: You accuse your adversary of what you yourself have been doing.

Yes, it is maddening to have a phony front group use dark money to capture and corrupt our Supreme Court and turn it into the Court that dark money built. It is devilish, Vladimir Putin-style propaganda for that phony front group to then accuse others of exactly what it did—a false mirror of its own behavior.

By the way, that Judicial Crisis Network ad accusing a not-yet-chosen Su-

preme Court nominee of being a dark money stooge? Paid for with dark money. You can't make this stuff up.

Let's look at the Judicial Crisis Network. Start with the fact that "Judicial Crisis Network" does not exist. It is, legally speaking, a fiction. Who knew, right—an entity selling fiction that is itself a fiction. "Judicial Crisis Network" is actually a "fictitious name"—that is a term under Virginia incorporation law—a fictitious name, one of several filed by an organization, a completely different organization, called the Concord Fund.

It gets even more tangled, as dark money schemes tend to be—they are a lot like a covert operation—so let's keep digging.

The Judicial Crisis Network actually used to exist. It was once the 501(c)(4) twin of a 501(c)(3) called the Judicial Education Project. That is the state of the art these days for dark money political mischief, a twinned 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4). Tax records list the same address for both entities—conveniently an address which happens to be just right down the hall, on the same floor, in the same building, as the Federalist Society.

This twinned organization trick allows donors to shift money in and out of different shady operations with zero disclosure, and it even gives donors a tax deduction to the 501(c)(3). You could pierce that corporate veil pretty easily.

All this schemery hides the donors behind the operation. It fools members of the press who don't bother to figure it out, and it helps dark money operatives like Leonard Leo, the central organizer of the scheme—the operative for the big dark money donors—to hide their hands and shuffle money secretly around.

Leonard Leo, you will recall, ran the donor turnstile at the Federalist Society that picked Justices Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett. Then, at the tail end of the Trump administration, with no more Supreme Court appointments likely, Leo scuttled off to a new venture: CRC Advisors.

CRC Advisors was designed, as Axios reported, to "funnel big money and expertise across the conservative movement."

As an aside, CRC Advisors has an affiliate called CRC Strategies, which, among other things, brought us the infamous swift boat campaign against John Kerry—classy bunch.

Along with the inception of CRC Advisors, Judicial Crisis Network was quietly renamed the "Concord Fund," and the Judicial Education Project was quietly renamed the "85 Fund."

These became twin 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(3) political mischief operations. Concord, as a 501(c)(4), would handle attack ads and PR. The 85 Fund, the 501(c)(3), would help mask Concord's operations and donors and provide tax deductibility.

So that was the original setup, the renaming. Then these newly named

groups loaded up with all these fictitious names. They filed under Virginia law for permission to operate under fictitious names, and these are the fictitious names they registered to use.

First, Concord took its old name—its old name—and reregistered it as this new fictitious name. And so did 85 Fund, taking its old name, Judicial Education Project, and registering it as a fictitious name. Go figure why that was necessary.

Then they stood up new voter suppression projects under other fictitious names: Honest Elections Project Action and Honest Elections Project. Those two front groups—fictitious name front groups—are part of the dark money armada, along with Heritage Action and others, through which big rightwing donors orchestrated the anti-voting laws that have spread like a virus through Republican State legislatures. That didn't just happen. That was done. And as a Heritage Action employee admitted in a leaked video, they did it, quietly, through sentinels.

Concord also added another fictitious name, Free to Learn Action, and 85 Fund created the twin Free to Learn. These fronts are presumably to whip up the rightwing about so-called critical race theory when the big donors want.

Gobs of money pours into this propaganda machine. The 85 Fund's last tax filing shows \$65 million in revenues, including one \$48.5 million donation from a single, anonymous donor. If it is the same single, anonymous donor that contributed the over \$15 million contributions to the Judicial Crisis Network before, that would put one donor over \$100 million into this Court-capture scheme—and all that money for an organization with only one employee who draws a salary of over \$100,000 per year.

So no surprise, then, that the 85 Fund channels lots of money back to the CRC mother ship. Its last tax filing shows over \$12 million paid to Leo's CRC Advisors for so-called consulting/advertising services, and it distributed over \$34 million to other unnamed groups, presumably in other areas of the scheme, in a big dark money shuffle.

We are still waiting for Concord Fund records for the most recent tax year, but the previous year's filing proves the Axios reporting is spot on. Concord's top independent contractor is CRC Advisors, paid over \$4.2 million for consulting services. It is out of this pea-and-shell game switcheroo that the dark money Judicial Crisis Network ad emerges.

I have noticed recently—in fact, as recently as our last Judiciary Committee markup—that Republicans are currently reverting, often, to the same dark money line of attack as the Judicial Crisis Network. As we watch Republican Senators attack Democrat dark money, let's remember a few things. First, Republicans created, protected, and defended—and defend to this day—dark money. Republicans

block our efforts to get rid of dark money.

Republicans came first to the dark money game with billions of dark money dollars. Then, when we began to play by their rules—the rules they made, the rules they defend—they complained. I guess they hope that we will unilaterally disarm so they can pound us with dark money just as they did for years after their Republican Justices in Citizens United let the big money flow.

Well, unilateral disarmament isn't going to happen, but that is not the only reason for the squid ink. The falsehood of this ad serves to damn us all in the eyes of the public. The right-wing scheme reckons that Americans, frustrated and cynical about a slimy, dark money battle purportedly involving both sides, will tune out and turn away from what Justice Sotomayor has called the "stench" of partisanship emerging at the Supreme Court.

All this misdirection—squid ink—can then distract from their captured Court's record for the big scheme's donors. The "Roberts Five" have a pattern now, a pattern of 80–80—partisan 5-to-4 decisions, all benefiting easily identified Republican donor interests—an 80-to-0 record. It is a heck of a pattern.

And now they have a new rightwing, dark money supermajority to amp it up even further. It is no wonder polling shows that Americans believe the six-Justice Republican majority is motivated mainly by politics and that the Court's approval rating just hit an all-time low.

So a little distraction is in order. Cue the squid ink. Meanwhile, the Senate minority leader is reportedly urging his caucus to keep a low profile on Biden's nominee. I get it. When you have got your burglars inside merrily ransacking a house, the last thing you want is a noisy ruckus out on the front lawn. One liberal Justice exchanged for another isn't worth a fuss when the loot is being shoveled out the window to your gang.

If there was any honest concern about dark money on the Republican side, there is a really, really easy way to show it: support legislation to clean it up; put an end to it.

I have a bill, the DISCLOSE Act. It will end dark money in our politics and in our judiciary. Every single Senate Democrat has voted in favor of this DISCLOSE Act. Even the liberal groups that Judicial Crisis Network complains about are backing that bill.

So, my Republican friends, support it, pass the law, end the slimy, political, dark money era we now live in. They could do that, but I will make you a bet that they won't. Dark money power is too important a weapon for rightwing donors to abandon.

So, instead, Republicans in this Chamber filibuster that legislation—filibuster it—and dark money continues to corrupt our politics.

Brace yourselves, folks. Squid ink will flow in the weeks and months

ahead. For the dark money forces squirting out the squid ink, the aim is defense, defense of their mighty prize: the Court that dark money built and that dances to their dark money tune.

To be continued.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I commend my colleague for talking about dark money. I was so curious this week when I saw—I think it was—a New York Times article about the amount of dark money that came from the Democratic side of the aisle this year far outpacing anything that Republicans had spent. So I hope he is going to be successful in dealing with some of his supporters on that side of the aisle.

CRIME AND BORDER SECURITY

Mr. President, what I want to focus on today is a meeting that I had the opportunity to have last week with the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police and yesterday with Tennessee sheriffs who had come up.

And one of the things that they talked about repeatedly in these meetings is the recent crime spike. This is something on everybody's mind, and for good reason. The majority of America's 40 most populous cities saw an increase in homicides last year—40 most populous, increase, homicides. More officers were intentionally killed on the job than in any other year since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

This is why morale is low.

Shoplifting is surging, and the thieves are getting creative. Instead of stuffing merchandise in their clothing and smuggling it out the door, gangs of thieves are executing smash-and-grab raids. We are also seeing a spike in drug use. Overdose deaths were up 30 percent in 2020.

This is not trivial; it is not frivolous; it is not a laughing matter; and it is something you cannot just overlook. It is life.

And I am sorry to say that Tennessee hasn't escaped this terrible trend. In 2021, the homicide spike in Memphis set a new record. We lost more than 3,000 Tennesseans to drug overdoses in 2020.

Law enforcement officers take this personally because they see how quickly crime can destroy a community. Are they worried? Yes. Do they have reason to be worried? Absolutely. As I said, morale is low. Recruiting is hard.

But here is what struck me about my conversation with the police chiefs and the sheriffs. They don't only consider the local effects. They really see the big picture and the issue writ large for what it truly is.

You won't be surprised to know that the lack of security along our southern border came up more than once in these conversations. The chiefs, the officers see the ripple effects of the Biden administration's absolutely demoralizing failure to enforce the law.

On his first day in the White House, President Biden endorsed lawlessness

when he made it harder for Border Patrol to secure the country. That stroke of a pen caused absolute chaos on our southern border.

Border Patrol detained more than 1.7 million migrants between January and September of 2021, and 1.1 million of those people were single adults. They were not families.

Those 1.7 million were just the ones we were able to catch. We will never know how many hundreds of thousands of "got-aways" made it into the interior of the country, nor do we know what they were bringing in with them that they were trying to evade the Border Patrol.

People and drugs are flowing across the border. Just last week, I came here to the floor and told the story of the Border Patrol's \$7 million week. Between January 21 and January 28, 1 week, they seized 47 pounds of meth, 3,800 pounds of marijuana, and almost 20 pounds of cocaine—1 week.

Hopefully, those drug mules are behind bars, but, remember, those are just the drug mules we caught. We do not know what the "got-aways" were bringing in with them or how many drug mules there were or how many hundreds of women they were trafficking in for sex trafficking, for human trafficking, for gangs, for labor crews. We don't know.

My Democratic colleagues continue to spin the border crisis as a purely humanitarian issue, but what we are seeing along our southern border is lawbreaking. In many cases, it is dangerous criminal behavior. And the Biden administration is ignoring every bit of it. Don't believe what you see. Don't believe the Border Patrol. Don't believe the people who are down there running videos. Oh, no. Everything is fine. Just listen to them.

But do you know who does not believe this? Our law enforcement officers. They don't believe what this administration is saying because they see something different. Every town is a border town, every State is a border State because of that open southern border.

Our law enforcement officers can't ignore this. They can't ignore the ripple effects because they live it every single day. They put on the belt, the badge. They go out, and they do their job. They see how the Democrats' desire to ignore lawless behavior when it benefits their narrative has created a perfect storm of violence, of fear, and has empowered criminals—not quite the message you want to send if you believe in the rule of law.

Just yesterday, I had to send a letter to Health and Human Services demanding to know why taxpayer dollars are funding fresh crack pipes for drug addicts. That is right. A HHS spokesman has confirmed that the Agency is pushing a grant program that would fund so-called smoking kits with pipes for users to smoke crystal meth, crack cocaine, and "any illicit substances"—government-funded drug paraphernalia.

Every once in a while, you think you have heard it all. Meanwhile, the border sits wide open, crime is on the rise, and we are asking police departments to do more with less.

A recent survey showed that between April 2020 and April 2021, police force retirements were up 45 percent, and resignations were up 18 percent compared to the previous year. There is no coincidence there.

It is time for the administration to decide whose side they are on. Are they on the side of the American people? Are they on the side of law enforcement? Are they on the side of criminals and monsters who really are responsible for this terrible crime spike?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, when the Biden administration ordered the evacuation of families of U.S. diplomats from Ukraine last month due to the increased threats of Russian military action and crime, a Ukrainian official clapped back: "Quite frankly these Americans are safer in Kyiv than they are in [Los Angeles] . . . or any other crime-ridden city in the U.S."

Yes, that is what a Ukrainian official said. The comment really struck a nerve because it may not be so far from the truth. In fact, an L.A. Police Department detective says the out-of-control crime in the city is "so violent, we're telling people 'don't visit,' because we don't think we can keep you safe right now." The city was surrendered to criminals by the L.A. district attorney on his first day on the job in 2020 when he banned bail and prohibited prosecuting even the most serious crimes, like murder and rape, to the fullest extent of the law.

The consequences of giving "get out of jail free" cards to criminals shouldn't surprise anyone. Flash mobs of thieves breaking into local businesses are giving new meaning to "door busters" as they ransack city stores like bargain shoppers on Black Friday.

Looters are robbing trains like it is the Wild West, making off with millions of dollars' worth of merchandise, including pistols and shotguns. A Union Pacific Railroad official says that even when apprehended, criminals boast that they will face no serious charges, and within hours, they are let back out on the streets.

But most troubling, over the past 2 years, Los Angeles has experienced a shocking 94-percent increase in homicides. The L.A. sheriff says it is probably one of the biggest jumps ever, and he lays the blame on the woke policies of both the district attorney and the county board.

These senseless acts of violence aren't confined to liberal Los Angeles, and neither is the revolving-prison-door approach that is allowing career criminals to roam our streets. The U.S. murder rate hit its highest point in a quarter of a century last year. More

and more felons are being released across the country as a result of permissive policies being pushed by progressive politicians and lenient district attorneys who view punishment as the real crime.

Democrats in New York, for example, recently pushed through a State law requiring the release of suspects arrested for stalking, arson, robbery, and other misdemeanors without bail. They require the release without bail. And despite the dramatic increases in crime in New York City, a Democrat district attorney released a list of crimes—I am serious about this, folks—released a list of crimes on his first day in office that would no longer be prosecuted, including resisting arrest. The DA claims longer sentences don't deter crime or result in greater community safety.

But a former New York City police commissioner points out the obvious—that when you say you are not going to prosecute certain crimes, you are sending a strong message to criminals. And it is the wrong message to criminals. He notes that since the penalty was taken away, stealing a car has become a game. As a result, vehicle theft is driving up the city's crime rate, and the New York Post reported just last week that the Big Apple is becoming a live action version of the game Grand Theft Auto.

But the wave of crime that has been unleashed is far more deadly than just stolen property. New York City's murder rate spiked an astounding 47 percent last year, and the killing spree is continuing into 2022. The latest victims include a teenager who was working at Burger King and two young police officers.

Refusing to keep dangerous, repeat criminals with a history of violence behind bars allows anyone, at any time, to become the victim of an entirely preventable crime.

For example, the low bail set by a Wisconsin District Attorney's Office last November resulted in the release of a violent criminal with a very long list of charges going back 15 years, including running over a woman with a Ford Escape. Within days of being released, he drove that same SUV into a crowded Christmas parade, injuring more than 60 people and killing 6, including a 5-year-old child and several members of the Dancing Grannies, who were entertaining the crowds at that Christmas parade. In a split second, the joy of the season was turned into a gruesome crime scene because a violent, repeat offender was set free. The Democrat district attorney has since admitted the release was "a mistake."

Folks, we cannot afford any more of these mistakes by public officials who are putting their personal political agenda ahead of protecting our public.

If letting criminals out of jail without bail isn't bad enough, progressive politicians are even—get this—providing perks for perpetrators. The Biden administration, for instance, is allowing illegal immigrants to use ar-

rest warrants as alternate forms of ID at airports to clear security checkpoints and board airplanes—arrest warrants. Seriously, folks.

Some liberal cities, like New York and San Francisco, have cash for criminals, programs that actually pay prior offenders in the hopes that they won't shoot anyone. Great plan. That is right—the same gang calling to defund the police wants to fund felons.

A California cash for criminals program may have allowed some individuals to get away with murder. As long as the participants pledge to improve, they are still paid. Even when caught with a gun or, worse, suspected of murder, they get paid.

Folks, it is one thing to give first-time, nonviolent offenders a second chance, but rewarding career criminals by letting them loose and paying them an allowance is itself criminal.

Democrats' approach to criminal justice can be summed up as "take no prisoners" literally.

Instead of admitting their approach has backfired, liberals keep looking for excuses, and they play the blame game. To address the rise in carjackings in Chicago, for example, progressive politicians proposed banning the video game Grand Theft Auto. Perhaps the real problem is making crime all fun and games, with no real-world penalties and only rewards, just like the video game.

A retired police officer who was carjacked in his own driveway south of the city says the carjackers know that even if they are caught, "they are going to get right back out." That is because the area's State attorney promised to reduce the prison population, and by golly, she is keeping that promise by dismissing tens of thousands of criminal cases. As a result, about 100 people charged with murder in Cook County have been let out on the city streets.

The Chicago police superintendent is even warning that the Cook County court is "making us all less safe by releasing violent offenders." The horrifying numbers speak for themselves.

Chicago had more murders last year than any other city in the United States with nearly 800 homicides. That is more people than in the small community I grew up near—800 homicides.

Shootings in the city are up a shocking 63 percent since 2019. One of the fatal victims was a 7-year-old girl who was gunned down at a McDonald's by a gang member who was allowed out of prison despite being charged with other crimes. The suspects in another recent shootout, which left one dead and two others wounded, were released without charges.

Public officials charged with enforcing the law who signal that it is OK to commit crime by reducing or eliminating penalties are engaging in criminal negligence. It is time to put an end to prosecutors being partners in crime.

I took the first step towards making our streets safer by introducing legislation to increase the penalties for some

violent offenders and child predators, including life imprisonment for repeat offenders.

Folks, progressive prosecutors need to stop playing politics and start doing their job, which is enforcing the law. Criminal penalties are not just suggestions; they are put in place to protect the public. Parents shouldn't have to worry about the safety of their children, and no one should feel unsafe, especially in their own neighborhood.

Let's get serious about crime so that the only people in America who are afraid to walk the streets are the criminals.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I have two words for you today: "crack pipes"—crack pipes, not crackpots.

Many of us went to bed last night, others waking up this morning, and heads are exploding across this Nation as we learn that this administration is giving crack pipes to crackheads. I think when the history books are written about this President and 2020 through 2024, that will be the picture right next to the President's name—a picture of crack pipes being given out by this administration.

I want to come back to that in a second, though.

I have a picture of my dad today and our dog Rennie. My dad and our family—my mom, an older brother, younger sister—moved off the family farm when I was 5. My dad was a proud, proud police officer. I remember the day in kindergarten when my dad and our family dog Rennie came to visit and what a proud moment it was for me. In 3 years, my dad was head of the fire department, and 2 years after that, he became the chief of police. My dad was the chief of police in El Dorado, KS, for some 25 years.

My dad represented law in the community. He represented right from wrong, and he applied that law equally. There was never a gray area for my dad. I remember having dinner at my grandma's house one Sunday evening and the phone ringing. We didn't have pagers. We didn't have cell phones.

All I remember, my dad was saying: Stand down.

My grandma looked at us and said: You guys better hug your dad goodbye. I said: Grandma, what do you mean? She said: He may not come back.

It was a familiar story of a domestic violence, of a drunk husband with his wife on the front porch. There was always a 12-gauge shotgun. It was never a 16-gauge or a 20; it was always a 12-gauge shotgun. My dad was the person who would go and disarm that person. It happened way too often.

But I just tell that story as we reminisce because we know how important law enforcement officers are to all of us.

I remember, you know, you sit around and you listen while you are making homemade ice cream, and peo-

ple asked my dad questions about crime. I think of those crack pipes and my dad always saying that drugs and crime go hand in hand like peanut butter and jelly—the more drug abuse there is, the more crimes there were in the community.

I remember somebody asking him why would the police officers be so strict about petty crimes. Maybe it was a little vandalism. Maybe it was a broken window. Maybe it was graffiti. I remember my dad talking about, you have to set an example, that if you allow people to vandalize, if you allow people to do graffiti, if you allow people to break windows, it is just a cascade of bigger crimes.

I finished up some townhalls this past weekend—15 townhalls in the past 2 weeks—and what Americans are concerned about are inflation and crime. This is what Americans—Kansans—are telling me that they are seeing every night on their television sets. They are seeing 2 million people—maybe 6 million people—cross our border illegally, and they see this administration reward them with an all-expenses-paid vacation trip to any city in America.

America has seen riots and vandalism on television, and this administration and this party applaud them. Every night, we see looting and shoplifting, but this administration says: Don't prosecute.

Last year, America saw 5 tons of fentanyl cross the border illegally, cross our southern border—five tons. Think of five big semitrucks loaded with a ton—that is 2,000 pounds—of fentanyl. I remind everybody that 1 teaspoon of fentanyl can kill 2,000 to 3,000 Americans.

We are seeing our law enforcement officers being told to turn their backs on violent crimes, to not chase the bad guys. America sees this White House and their party turn their backs on law enforcement officers.

Again, I go back to my dad. I remember it was probably around 2014, and my dad and I were fishing, as we often do together, probably crappie fishing on a farm pond in the Flint Hills of Kansas, my favorite place to be. My dad said to me: You know, Son, I don't think this President has the back of our law enforcement officers any more.

As I visit with those law enforcement officers every time I am back—and I appreciate them coming to my townhalls and having my back—I can tell you, the law enforcement officers across this country do not feel like they are being supported by this White House.

As I think about an America of today versus growing up, I do think there has been a decay in our culture, and this "defund the police" movement from the radical left made that culture even weaker. We have members of this squad wanting to close Federal prisons. They encourage open borders. They want illegals to use arrest warrants to get through the TSA. Of course, they want criminals to get off the hook. There is this culture of lawlessness.

Again, I go back to my generation of "If it feels good, do it." I remember that saying for the first time from some song, I believe, from the early 1970s, "If it feels good, do it," and that is the way this country is acting right now. What is the result? We see crowds chanting "Pigs in a blanket, fry 'em [up] like bacon."

"Pigs in a blanket, fry 'em [up] like bacon."

The next time one of those houses is burning down that one of those people lives in, I wonder who they are going to call. If they are stranded in a motor vehicle accident, who is going to be the first one on the scene? Again, I go back to thinking about my dad and him carrying out one of my classmates in second grade from a fire. Unfortunately, my classmate didn't make it.

Three hundred forty-six law enforcement officers were shot in 2021. Seventy-three were intentional. Twenty-four were shot last month—a 40-percent increase. Ambush-style attacks increased 115 percent. We have never seen a crime wave like this across our Nation—not since the early 1990s, anyway. The United States recently saw the fastest increase in murder rates ever recorded. Violent crimes spiked. Fourteen major, Democratic-run cities are setting alltime highs for homicide records. The numbers continue to go up.

As I think about advice for this administration, I know if they had the will, they could fix this problem. I know exactly what my dad would tell them. He would say: Treat criminals like criminals. Treat police officers, law enforcement officers, like heroes. Tell them thanks. Reward them. Respect them.

It is time to re-fund the police, folks. It is time to secure the border. Let's hold criminals accountable.

It was a rare day, but I do remember my dad talking at the supper table about someone they worked so hard to convict, and a judge or DA let them off easy. We need to prosecute the smallest of crimes.

We need an Attorney General. Where is our Attorney General? Where is he? In the middle of this crime spree, where is our Attorney General? He needs to be tough on crime instead of labeling parents as "domestic terrorists."

Simply, America, it is time to get back to our values—the same values my dad raised us on. It is time to, like my dad did, apply the law equally.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, last week, a member of the Biden administration was confused—very confused—why FOX News is talking all the time about crime. That person is the Press Secretary to President Biden, Ms. Psaki. She said Americans care more about what is happening in their daily lives than what the news says about crime.

How much more out of touch could the Biden administration be? Crime is happening in Americans' daily lives all across America. Thousands more people a year are being murdered.

Violent crime has increased for 2 years, and there is no sign of it slowing down.

The administration's plan to fix the violent crime spike is merely another partisan gun control plan. That is what they think about, doing something about crime: control the guns of people who abide by the law.

They won't seriously reduce violent crime. If you do that, it focuses on issues that make up a tiny fraction of violent crimes or maybe it doesn't contribute to the problem at all.

For example, the administration wants to crack down on ghost guns, but ghost guns are involved in only a fraction of 1 percent of the crimes—particularly of the murders.

The Biden administration also wants to focus on the so-called "Iron Pipeline," and that is blaming red States for guns in crime-ridden blue States. But on that issue, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, their data shows that guns used in blue-city crimes usually come from that very same blue State.

Finally, the Biden administration wants to focus on lawful gun sellers, but we have a Department of Justice study finding most crimes are committed with stolen guns from the black market.

So I worry about the Department of Justice could use efforts to reduce violent crime as a pretext to harass lawful gun dealers and owners. Gun sales have increased nationwide because Americans don't feel safe anymore. They feel the police are not proactively policing, so they get a gun to protect themselves.

Honest people who don't break the law want to feel safe, and that makes them feel safe. I don't blame them for taking protection of their life and property into their hands.

I related recently about the increases in crime that have nothing to do with guns, and yet all we hear from this administration is about controlling guns. But what does that have to do—gun control is not going to stop criminals from pushing people in front of subway trains. Gun control won't stop flash mobs from stealing goods from stores. It isn't going to stop the thieves from looting train yards, and you see evidence of this all the time on television—almost daily—people going into stores with bags, filling it up, and just think in San Francisco some prosecutor said if you steal less than \$950, you won't be prosecuted.

So you wonder why people commit crime. If you aren't going to pay a penalty for it, why not do it? So the Biden administration is wasting precious resources and taxpayer dollars on partisan pet projects of gun control.

The Biden administration has ordered the Department of Justice to

look like it is doing something without really doing anything at all.

You know what Americans actually need to reduce violent crime? They need police forces empowered to do their jobs with the right resources and protections.

Now, we hear the Biden administration just last week in New York saying it supports police. The President himself was up there. But a leaked Executive order shows it wants to take away their nonlethal, lifesaving tools, and make it more difficult for police to get grants for funding.

Americans also need responsible bail policies—these policies that, if they were responsible, wouldn't let dangerous criminals back out onto the streets to kill people.

They need prosecutors who will actually do their job to keep violent criminals away from the vulnerable. The Biden administration has a chance to make a real difference in reducing violent crime. It is a shame that they are wasting their time and resources on a misleading message.

When you see the prosecutors in Los Angeles and San Francisco listing a whole bunch of crimes that they are not going to prosecute, it just invites lawbreaking. We need to stop this "defund the police" crusade. We need to step up prosecution. We need to eliminate progressive prosecutors. We need to make sure that people don't get bail if they are repeat criminals or a threat to society.

In the final analysis, taxpayers are paying for public safety, but in some places in the United States, they aren't getting their money's worth for public safety they pay for. Government is set up to maintain public safety, and that is what we are all about with this War on Crime, protecting the taxpayers, protecting every citizen taxpayer or not.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, oftentimes when we talk rising crime, we talk about statistics. For example, last year in Milwaukee, there were 194 murders.

As I prepared to give remarks yesterday, I got the stat that there were 26 murders already this year. That is an 86-percent increase. Unfortunately, last night there were two more murders, and now it is up to 28.

Seventy-three law enforcement officers were intentionally killed in the line of duty last year. That is the highest it has been since 1995.

We had three police officers shot in a 2-week period at the end of January. Those are just some of the statistics, and I am sure you have heard a lot more on the floor here today. But one thing I don't think we talk about enough are the victims.

I heard President Biden's Press Secretary, Jen Psaki, last week. I guess she was monitoring different TV stations, and she remarked that one com-

mentator was talking about soft-on-crime consequences, and she giggled and said what does that even mean?

Well, I will talk about what it means. An excellent article in the *Just the News* a couple days ago had some heartbreaking examples of those consequences.

Last week, we held an event about the open border, about the catch-and-release policies of this administration, record levels of people coming into this country illegally and what that represents from a standpoint of national security and homeland security and crime.

In Alabama's Chilton County, two illegal immigrants, ages 27 and 28, have been charged in the murders of three adults found shot and burned in an SUV.

In another recent case, a Florida father who believed he was taking in a 16-year-old migrant minor from Honduras, a Good Samaritan, was killed by that migrant who turned out to be much older and involved in crime.

In Florida, a 5-year-old girl riding in her mother's car was crushed to death when an illegal immigrant from Honduras crashed into the car. The driver admitted he got into the car after drinking six cans of 32-ounce beers.

In Harris County, TX, an illegal immigrant from El Salvador is charged with exiting his vehicle during a routine traffic stop and fatally shooting the sheriff's deputy in the face.

Those are just a few examples of the consequences of soft-on-crime policies. Those are crimes that were committed by illegal immigrants that take advantage of the catch-and-release policies on the border.

But we are not only just experiencing catch-and-release on the southern border, we also have catch-and-release in our criminal justice system—these no-bail, low-bail policies promoted by generally Democrat district attorneys in cities governed for decades by Democrats.

We had a tragedy in Waukesha, WI. It never should have happened. This was during the Waukesha Christmas parade, when children lined up on the street, on the curb, waiting to see Santa Claus—instead they saw a slaughter. Six innocent people lost their lives. Sixty-two people were injured—their lives forever altered.

And it didn't have to happen because the murderer had been let out on a thousand-dollar bail after having run over the mother of his child with that same SUV. That is the result—that crime, those 6 innocent victims, those 62 innocent victims who were injured, their family members, their loved ones are the consequences of soft-on-crime policies of Democratic governance.

So as horrific as those 6 murders were, as horrific as the 62 injuries were, what I can't get out of my mind are those little children sitting on the curb waiting to see Santa and instead witnessing the slaughter. How do they ever recover from that? Is that something that Jen Psaki ever thinks

about? Is that something that President Biden ever thinks about?

As Jen giggles about the consequences, these are serious consequences. We need to get tough on crime. We need to put violent criminals in jail and leave them in jail so they don't create more victims.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I think Senator BLUNT from Missouri is going to ask for recognition, and I do not object to that. But I was scheduled for earlier, and I would like to ask unanimous consent that when the upcoming rollcall is completed, I be the first Senator recognized.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Sorry, after the second rollcall, that I be the first Senator.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 5 minutes before the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, there are really few jobs in the country as difficult, as dangerous, and as demanding as the sacrifice of being a law enforcement officer. I would suggest the one job that may possibly be harder—and certainly in my view is as hard—is to be the family member of a law enforcement officer, wondering all during that working shift what might be happening to the person you care so much about.

You know the challenges to these officers and their families—the challenges they face today are intensified as local departments struggle with the staffing shortages caused by record high departures and difficulty filling the open positions they have got.

The Eastern Missouri Police Academy had around half as many recruits join in 2021 as they had in 2020. In my hometown of Springfield, MO, they have 40 vacancies right now they are trying to fill in the department.

In January, the Columbia, MO, Police Department had around 20 vacancies in a force that its maximum size would be 187 or so people.

According to the St. Louis Post Dispatch in September, officer departures in St. Louis City and St. Louis County spiked in 2021 and were at a pace to be up to 60 percent higher in each of those departments than they had been in the average year.

In the police force here, I was with Chief Manger yesterday, and he pointed out that retirements and resignations were 50 percent higher than they have been in recent years in 2021.

The new chief of police at the St. Louis County Police Force said: My biggest priority is hiring and finding people who will do these jobs.

These staff shortages are unfortunate, but they are in so many ways predictable of a movement that villainized enforcement for, I think, political gain in many cases. Officers have been demoralized by the “defund the police” crusade. They have been discouraged by prosecutors who put dangerous criminals back on the street or even put out a list of crimes that people will not be prosecuted for.

That is well beyond the standard of belief that most people would have had, actually, until they heard it, my guess would be, that, no, these are crimes that we are just not going to prosecute people for.

Police saw themselves, in many cases, forced out of the force because of a vaccine mandate they didn't agree with, often going to smaller forces that had less than 100 people.

All this is happening, really, against a backdrop of a crime wave that is harming communities of all sizes all across the country.

When I talk to police chiefs, I hear concerns that a lot of good candidates are deciding maybe law enforcement won't be the career that they want to have. When I talk to the sworn officers that I see here every day and I see at home, I hear many of them feel they just simply have a job where they face danger but they don't get enough support that they need to do the job that they need to do.

Police work has always been dangerous. We have always lost officers. They have always been courageous in their willingness to stand up, but last year was the deadliest year ever for law enforcement officers. Four hundred fifty-eight officers died in the line of duty in 2021, 128 of them from gunshot wounds or fatalities from traffic.

You don't have to travel very far away from here, just down Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, to understand what it means to lose officers and what it means to lose them in protection of the country. The marble walls there bear the names of thousands of officers who have been killed in the line of duty. Each corner of that memorial shows a lion protecting its cubs.

We have always seen law enforcement as our protectors, not as those we should somehow fear. It eats away at our society to say that we appreciate law enforcement but we really don't want to do what is necessary to support law enforcement.

I think there is no data that says one or more tweets that say “defund the police” leads to two crimes or two muggings, but it simply makes common sense that when police departments are understaffed and undertrained, it increases the risk of violent crime on the officers themselves and the communities they serve.

As the cochair of the Senate Law Enforcement Caucus, one of my priorities has been to ensure that law enforcement officers have the support and re-

sources they need to do the job they are asked to do and do it as safely and effectively as they possibly can.

We certainly all can and I think would agree—I certainly would—that there really should be zero tolerance for police misconduct. Taking the oath to support and defend and then somehow not conducting yourself in the right way, if you cross that line, you ought to be held accountable.

We need to view people on the line as people who are there to defend us, to serve us. We need to make this a profession that people want to be part of, and if they are willing to be part of it, we have provided them everything they need to be safely doing the hard work that they are asked to do.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON BUSH NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bush nomination?

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Ms. BALDWIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 45 Ex.]

YEAS—93

Baldwin	Graham	Padilla
Bennet	Grassley	Paul
Blackburn	Hagerty	Peters
Blumenthal	Hassan	Portman
Blunt	Heinrich	Reed
Booker	Hickenlooper	Risch
Boozman	Hirono	Romney
Braun	Hoeven	Rosen
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Burr	Inhofe	Sasse
Cantwell	Johnson	Schatz
Capito	Kaine	Schumer
Cardin	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Carper	Kennedy	Shaheen
Casey	King	Shelby
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Sinema
Collins	Lankford	Smith
Coons	Leahy	Stabenow
Cornyn	Lee	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lummis	Tester
Cotton	Manchin	Thune
Cramer	Markey	Toomey
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Van Hollen
Daines	Menendez	Warner
Duckworth	Merkley	Warnock
Durbin	Moran	Warren
Ernst	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wicker
Fischer	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Young

NAYS—2

Hawley Scott (FL)

NOT VOTING—5

Barrasso Rounds Tillis
Luján Sanders

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John Patrick Coffey, of New York, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Navy.

VOTE ON COFFEY NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Coffey nomination?

Mr. REED. I ask for the yeas and nays, please.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 79, nays 17, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 46 Ex.]

YEAS—79

Baldwin	Hassan	Risch
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blunt	Hirono	Rubio
Booker	Hoeven	Sasse
Brown	Inhofe	Schatz
Burr	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	Kelly	Shaheen
Capito	Kennedy	Shelby
Cardin	King	Sinema
Carper	Klobuchar	Sinema
Casey	Leahy	Smith
Cassidy	Lee	Stabenow
Collins	Manchin	Sullivan
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cornyn	McConnell	Thune
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Tillis
Cramer	Merkley	Toomey
Crapo	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murphy	Warner
Durbin	Murray	Warrick
Ernst	Ossoff	Warren
Feinstein	Padilla	Whitehouse
Fischer	Paul	Wicker
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Graham	Portman	Young
Grassley	Reed	

NAYS—17

Blackburn	Hagerty	Marshall
Boozman	Hawley	Moran
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Lankford	Tuberville
Daines	Lummis	

NOT VOTING—4

Barrasso Rounds
Luján Sanders

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

The Senator from Texas.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, folks in Texas and across the country are looking to their elected officials for sound leadership. Family budgets are being clobbered by the worst inflation in 40 years. From gas stations to grocery stores and everywhere in between, people are spending significantly more money on their basic expenses. Inflation has outpaced wage growth, giving the average worker a pay cut. That is what inflation does. It erodes and undermines your standard of living by charging more for basic goods and services.

Families aren't just stressing about their finances; they are also worried about their safety. The shocking surge in violent crime that began in 2020 hasn't just continued. In many places, it has accelerated, and last year several major cities had their deadliest year on record.

With the safety and well-being of their families at the forefront, our constituents want to know what is being done to address these problems. They are pretty basic.

What types of solutions do their representatives have in the Senate and the House? What actions are the White House contemplating and how long will it be before they can experience some relief? Unfortunately, when the voters gave Democrats the leadership of the White House and both Houses of Congress, the responsibility has largely been up to them to provide that leadership when it comes to the agenda.

Unfortunately, the real problems that my constituents in Texas are experiencing, like inflation and crime, those were the last things for our leaders here in Washington to consider. Forget real problems and real families; Democrats' governing strategy was dictated by partisan ambitions.

Our colleagues tried to give the Internal Revenue Service the unprecedented authority and manpower to snoop on the finances of virtually every single American. Now, we are accustomed to the fact that the IRS knows how much you make; that is how you calculate your taxes. But our Democratic colleagues went so far as to inquire for every family: How much money do you spend and what do you spend it on? That sort of invasion of privacy is unprecedented.

Then our colleagues on the other side of the aisle tried to get involved in the childcare business and dictate what sort of childcare and where you would be able to get that childcare and how much it would cost. Basically, saying to those who are motivated to help support families when it comes to childcare, that if you are a faith-based organization, you are not going to qualify. And because of the huge influx of money that the Democrats were planning to put into childcare, excluding a huge segment of the childcare providers was going to result in scarce supply and run up the price, further exacerbating inflation.

Then we saw when it comes to the wealthy—our Democratic colleagues like to be the party of the average working person and complain about Big Business and millionaires and billionaires. But what do they do when it comes to tax proposals? They propose to give millionaires and billionaires a tax cut by eliminating the cap on deductibility of State and local taxes in high-tax jurisdictions like New York and California. Who would have to pick up the responsibility or deficit? Well, you guessed it; it would be the middle class.

Then we saw our colleagues on the left use the last year to attempt a Federal takeover of State-run elections. Some even proposed to blow up the rules of the Senate and eliminate the filibuster, the one thing that forces us to do what doesn't come naturally, which is to work together and build bipartisan consensus.

There were proposals from the majority leader himself and others saying we are going to blow up the Senate because we cannot get our way, and the main reason we can't get our way is because we are unwilling to work with the other side of the aisle. Thank goodness two of our colleagues, the Senator from West Virginia and the Senator from Arizona, tapped the brakes, and we have not yet found ourselves in that situation.

So every one of these examples I mentioned has been tried and failed in this last year. But there is, of course, what economists call opportunity costs. We can't take back the last year that we wasted on these partisan efforts. A lot of the damage has been done. Invaluable time has been wasted on partisan legislation that was sure to go nowhere, while the most basic responsibilities of governing had been tossed aside.

Last year, our Democratic colleagues nearly dropped a debt bomb on our economy. We had to spend a lot of money during the COVID pandemic. And during the last year of the Trump administration, we did that on a bipartisan basis. But even after the imminent need for that help was subsiding, our colleagues decided to spend another \$2 trillion in the first months of the Biden administration. Only 10 percent of that was COVID-19 related and