

the way, I forgot to add that we focused on our younger generation as well. And two issues they cared about most were climate and student debt. We delivered on both. President Biden took great leadership on so many of these issues and delivered on so many. So I want to thank him for his leadership. He helped set this bold agenda that we in the Senate were proud to hone and enact.

I want to welcome our two new colleagues to the Senate on our side of the aisle: PETER WELCH of Vermont and John Fetterman of Pennsylvania. I have had a chance to talk to them over the phone before and after their victories, and they will be excellent Senators.

And I want to thank all of those who knocked on doors, who volunteered, who said: This democracy should not be left to others; I must be involved. Thank you. All of that hard work has produced a very good result, at least in my opinion, last Tuesday.

So the election of 2022 is approaching the end, but our obligation to serve the American people continues. Let us move forward with the same spirit of cooperation and compromise that made the 117th Congress one of the most successful in recent history. If we do it, it will be good for Democratic Senators, it will be good for Republican Senators, but, most of all, it will be good for this grand experiment in democracy: the United States of America and its people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, last week's midterm elections reaffirmed something that has been clear for a number of years: When it comes to politics and to policy, we are a closely divided nation.

For the third straight election, our closely divided nation saw a closely fought election go all the way down to the wire. And as the dust settles, for the third straight time, the American people have chosen a very closely divided government.

Though several races for the House of Representatives remain uncalled, it appears the likeliest outcome would mean the American people have put a stop to 2 years of Democrats' disastrous one-party government and placed the House in Republican hands.

Senate Republicans have spent 2 years working to check and balance reckless policies; it will be an outstanding thing for the country to have a set of new reinforcements arriving on the other side of the Capitol.

Now, while this election underscored some of our country's close divisions, it also highlighted areas where the people are speaking overwhelmingly with one voice. The American people are not divided over what Democrats' reckless policy decisions have done to our economy and to their families' budgets. Exit polls show three-quarters of voters say the economy they are facing is "poor" or "not good."

Americans are not divided over whether the current trends in inflation, crime, open borders, and drug addiction are acceptable outcomes for the greatest country in the history of the world; everyone knows they are not.

And Americans are not especially closely divided about whether they want President Biden to keep governing like he has been or actually change course. At this point in their presidencies, every one of the last 13 Presidents dating back to Truman had higher approval ratings than the Biden administration.

One State where Democrats' policy failures have hit especially hard is the State of Georgia. Georgia families have seen cumulative inflation of 14.7 percent since January of 2021. Both of their Senators cast the deciding vote to rubberstamp the spending that made that happen. Now households in the Peach State are paying a hidden Democratic inflation tax that adds up to thousands of extra dollars per year.

The nationwide breakdown in law and order has hit Georgia hard as well. The city of Atlanta now has per capita rates of homicide and assault that are even actually worse than Chicago.

And the people of Georgia saw their State attacked, called racist, called Jim Crow 2.0 by the sitting President of the United States, and boycotted by major corporations over a voting law that just facilitated—listen to this—historic ballot access, record turnout, and low wait times for Georgia voters.

So where do Georgia taxpayers and small businesses go to get their money back after the liberal smear campaign that led to the boycotts? But the day after the election, President Biden took to the podium and triumphantly promised that he plans to learn no lessons and change nothing at all. Here was the quote:

I'm not going to change the direction.

Thirteen-plus percent inflation over 2 years, historic levels of dissatisfaction at Americans' kitchen tables, and President Biden says he will keep doing precisely what he has been doing: more inflation, more crime, more chaos, more open borders.

If Washington Democrats do not want to pivot to sanity and common sense, if they will not help us address the ways their policies are hurting families, they will encounter stiff resistance from the sizable Senate Republican Conference that half the country has elected to be their voice, to be their champions, to fight for them.

So to sum it up, we are going to fight hard for the American families this administration is leaving behind.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The senior Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, before I make any remarks in the Senate, I want to make remarks of a specific and personal nature to the Presiding Officer. The last time we were together was election night. And it was a wonderful night for you, for your family, and for the State of Illinois. Your victory was an amazing achievement, but your whole life has been an amazing achievement. And I particularly will remember when Brian brought the girls up to the stage, and they jumped all over their mom in her wheelchair. It was something that made the news and should have. It was a wonderful moment for you and your family. But it was a wonderful moment in American politics.

Your re-election in the State of Illinois was my No. 1 priority. And I didn't have to work as hard as I thought I would because they love you, and it showed in the vote. So congratulations to the Presiding Officer.

Madam President, in the fall of 1862, President Abraham Lincoln sent his second annual message to Congress. The Civil War was raging, and our Nation was really uncertain as to its future.

In the midst of what Lincoln called this "fiery trial," he called on Congress to do something that was remarkable: to assure the freedom of every American, including the nearly 4 million Black Americans living in bondage. President Lincoln said this was the only way to "save . . . the last best hope of earth," American democracy.

Last Tuesday, 160 years later, Americans across the country stood up, went to the polls, and did their part, in their time, to save the last best hope of earth. They voted to protect our fundamental freedoms and to preserve our democracy.

One of those voters was a young woman in our State named Lauren. She is a student at the University of Illinois in Champaign. The students at the university once again had to wait for hours in line. People were bringing pizzas to sustain them during their trial of waiting to vote. It worked. They voted in big numbers. And Lauren was one of them.

While she was waiting in line, a reporter with the Illinois Student Newsroom asked her, "Why, why did you come out here and vote?"

She said:

I was voting based on women's rights in terms of candidates who were supporting women's choice. . . . It's important—as a student—as a young person to come out and vote for issues that I care about.

Thankfully, Lauren wasn't alone. In this year's election, young voters continued a trend that began in 2018 and 2020: They turned out in record numbers. They realized it is the responsibility of their generation to do a better job than our generation and to keep democracy alive.

So let's start off by thanking the young people: the sons and daughters who were raised properly when it came to their civic duty, who voted for the first time last week—and, for some, it was a repeat performance—along with every other American. With their votes, they sent a message to us and to the rest of America that was loud and clear: It is time for the Big Lie to die.

Last week, in State after State, voters rejected MAGA Republicans who ran on this Big Lie that the 2020 election was stolen. This outrageous assertion, with no proof, no evidence and nothing to back it up other than the big liar, has become rampant among some corners of this country. But thank the Lord that it did not prevail on election day.

In fact, every single election denier who ran for Secretary of State in a swing State was defeated—every single one of them. So the takeaway here isn't all that complicated. I hope it is one that our Republican colleagues will finally take to heart: It is time to reject that extremist lie.

The American people are sick and tired of false claims that the 2020 election was stolen—the same claims that generated the insurrectionist mob, which on one of the saddest days in the history of this building stormed this Capitol on January 6, 2021, injuring over 149 law enforcement officials who were doing their duty to protect this building and the people in it and, sadly, leading to six deaths. Now the threats of violence continue.

After the election and the American people have spoken, can we finally join together in a bipartisan fashion to condemn all forms of violence, regardless of their political origin? It is inconsistent with the democracy that we can be proud of. And, yes, the American people are also sick and tired of right-wing assaults on our fundamental freedoms.

That young voter in Champaign I mentioned, Lauren, she is just one of millions of Americans motivated to vote after the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision earlier this year. By erasing the constitutional right to abortion—a right that millions of Americans have counted on for half a century—the Court's radical rightwing majority lit a fire in the hearts of voters across the country. And it wasn't just in the blue States. In the minority leader's home State of Kentucky—Kentucky—voters rejected an anti-abortion ballot measure.

The lesson here at this moment isn't that a Democratic or Republican issue is at stake. This is about a basic constitutional right taken away from the women of this country—the right to make their own decisions about their own reproductive health choices. People don't want politicians—Senators, Congressmen, you name it—sticking their nose into the business of doctors in the hospitals and clinics across America. We need to respect the will of the people and protect the right to choose once and for all.

Let me also add something that happened over the weekend that bears comment. There has been a lot of loose talk as to whether or not this U.S. Supreme Court is too political. It has fallen in approval ratings to record lows. The American people think it has been dominated by political decisions and political choices.

So what did four of the nine Supreme Court Justices do over the weekend? They attended the Federalist Society gala ball here in Washington. The Federalist Society is an obvious political force which chose many of them under President Trump and others, and they basically fed the story line that this Supreme Court is enthralled with the Federalist Society.

You could not become a Federal judge—and I know this from serving on the Judiciary Committee—under Presidents of the Republican Party in recent times without the stamp of approval from the Federalist Society. In fact, their stamp of approval is even more important than being judged “qualified” by the American Bar Association. Nine Federal judges chosen by President Trump failed to be deemed qualified to serve on the Federal courts of our land, but they have been stamped “approved” by the Federalist Society.

This powerful political force had a party, and they invited members of the Supreme Court. Four of the nine members of the Court came to that party: Justice Alito, Justice Gorsuch, Justice Kavanaugh, and Justice Barrett. How can they dispel the belief many people have that they are too political when they attend such overtly political events?

That wasn't the only thing we learned. One of the top issues the American people were concerned about was the state of the economy—and rightly so. My wife does most of the shopping, but I get around to grocery stores in Illinois, my hometown, once in a while and take a look at the price of things. It is clear they have gone up for almost anything. You can't miss the price of gasoline; it is right there in front of you every single day. It must create—it does create—a hardship for American families.

It makes sense to understand historically why we are facing this. We are still recovering from a once-in-a-century pandemic. Like every nation, inflation has hit working families the hardest. But the American people also recognize that this Senate majority has made steady, meaningful progress in working against inflation. We can't will it away. We can't pass a law to ban it. We can't expect even the Federal Reserve, by their monetary policy, to dispense with inflation in a quick way. We have a large, complicated economy. It is part of the global economy. We have to work together—and we have—to help working families pay their bills and stay afloat.

Just a few months ago, we passed the Inflation Reduction Act on the floor. I remember that well, and I am sure the

Presiding Officer does too. We had 41 rollcalls—41 rollcalls. It went all through the night. I think it was at least 24 hours or more, maybe 36 hours. We went straight through to finish it and get it done, and we did. In the end, the bill passed with only Democratic support. Every Republican voted against it. I am sorry that was the case because there are things in there the Republicans should join us in supporting.

Telling people on Medicare that they are never going to have to pay more than \$2,000 out of pocket for prescription drugs is a great relief. You and I both know that the cost of prescription drugs in some cases ranges into the tens of thousands of dollars, breaking the backs of a lot of families finding that they are basically disbursing all of their savings for that purpose. Now we guarantee with that bill a maximum charge out of pocket of \$2,000 a year.

If you happen to be on Medicare and are diabetic, we capped the cost of insulin each month to \$35.

Insulin was discovered by Canadian researchers. When they discovered it, the doctors who came up with this wonderful drug said: We are going to surrender our patent rights for \$1. We are finished. We don't believe any life-or-death drug should be bargained away to pharmaceutical companies.

Unfortunately, it has been. This changed for Medicare. Capping the cost of insulin means that many people who are diabetic will be able to take their medicine and afford it. That is a great thing for our future.

Do you recall, Madam President, when we had this on the floor and we tried to extend the same \$35 insulin charge to all other diabetics in the United States, not just Medicare? We needed 10 of the 50 Republicans to join us—10 of 50—to cap the cost of insulin for all diabetics in America. We failed. Only 7 Republicans would join the 50 Democrats. We needed 60 votes; we got 57.

I heard this President say—and I am sure you have too—he is going back to this issue, and he should. This is something that should be bipartisan and pass very quickly.

In the Inflation Reduction Act, we started making changes when it comes to energy policy in America.

I think the young people voting were really motivated by several things. They were motivated by the threats of losing protections against discrimination for sexual orientation. They were motivated by the Dobbs decision on choice. But they were motivated as well because we made it clear, at least on our side of the aisle, that we were going to move forward with an energy policy which is going to address global warming and give them an Earth they can live on. I think that is an important part of the future.

I am not bragging, but I will tell you that several months ago, as you know, I put solar panels on my home in Springfield. My wife and I decided it

was the right thing to do even if it didn't pencil out economically. Guess what. It is working great. The first bill we were able to compare with the previous year, we ended up generating more electricity than we purchased in the course of a month. I hope that continues. That dramatic reduction in my energy costs is also an investment in sustainable, renewable energy for the future. Those solar panels enhance the value of the home we live in.

We estimate that 280,000 families in our home State of Illinois are going to install solar panels. I am encouraging them to do that as quickly as possible. They are going to find great savings, and they are going to join us in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that threaten our future.

We also understand that we have to do much more in these fields, whether it is the cost of healthcare or whether it is the climate crisis in our country.

We want to make sure as well that the burden of government's costs is fairly shared. How can we possibly explain or rationalize that many of the wealthiest corporations in America don't pay their fair share of taxes? Families across America know they have to face their civic responsibility and pay their taxes. Very few of those families are applauding, but they are hoping that the basic social contract holds and that every corporation as well as an individual will pay their fair share. We moved in that direction with that bill.

These policies in terms of tax fairness are popular, and we saw that proof last Tuesday in the vote. The American people reelected a Democratic majority to the Senate because I believe they support the work we are doing.

I want to just comment on the statements made earlier by the minority leader from Kentucky. He really generalized the midterm election as if it was something other than what I saw.

A midterm election is tough on the President's party. Historically, every President has taken a beating. I can recall when my colleague from Illinois was President, Barack Obama. His midterm election he characterized as a shellacking, and he was right. I believe they lost 40 or 50 seats in that election. It happens, but it didn't happen last Tuesday.

We have to ask ourselves a basic question: If the Senator from Kentucky is right and everybody rejects what this President has done and rejects what the Democratic majority did, why didn't he do better? Why didn't his party do better? There is much more to the story.

We have the opportunity to build on the Senate's proud record of accomplishments starting again this week, and we should. Listen to what the American people told us. They told us: Roll up your sleeves, stop bickering, ignore the Big Lie because it is a big lie, and do something together. Show us cooperation. Can you do it?

Well, I will tell you, I reached out already to two of my Republican col-

leagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee, asking them to think about whether we can achieve anything in the next 3 or 4 weeks. I am hoping that we can. It was a good-faith effort on my part to say: Yes, we might have prevailed and we continue in the majority, but we can't get anything done unless we work together. I think that is what the American people are begging us to do now.

I will basically say that this bipartisanship is an easy task when you have Members on the other side who are willing to join with you. Our most basic duty, though, our most basic thing we can accomplish between now and the end of the year is make sure we don't face a government shutdown. Who can imagine that is good for the United States, our reputation in the world, our economy, or the people who are counting on us, to let the government shut down?

I am hopeful that in the coming weeks, before the first of the year, we can negotiate and pass an Omnibus appropriations package with bipartisan support. I am also hopeful that we can address that sword of Damocles hanging over our heads called the debt ceiling. From where I am sitting, the debt ceiling should be eliminated. It basically is a promise that we are going to pay the bills we have already incurred. Well, we wouldn't have voted for the bills if we didn't think we had to pay for them.

So this debt ceiling has to be renewed on a regular basis and has become a bargaining point for some extremists in Congress who argue that shutting down the government won't even be noticed by the American people. They are wrong. They have done it before, and we noticed. It was not good for our country, and we don't need it at this moment in history.

This week, we will also continue rebalancing the Federal judiciary by confirming highly qualified, evenhanded judges who will bring diversity to the Federal bench and who will defend our basic rights.

During this legislative session, we can do something Americans have been waiting on for decades: reform our broken immigration system. Everybody is talking about it. Now let's do something about it on a bipartisan basis. We can, and we should.

For the people—and the exact number, I am not sure—but thousands, tens of thousands protected by DACA are waiting to see if one judge in Texas is going to force them into deportation. Think about that. Thousands and thousands of young people were brought to the United States by their parents, grew up here, went to our schools, pledged allegiance to that flag every day in their classroom, and want to be part of America, and we have been unable and unwilling to come to a bipartisan agreement as to how to give them that chance.

I beg my Republican colleagues—particularly those who are leaving and

told me privately that they have always wanted to vote for the Dream Act and this time they will—give us a chance to work together to come up with a good, sensible approach to our border; a good, sensible approach to the Dream Act; and to help bring in workers we desperately need for agriculture and for some specialties in healthcare where we are having severe shortages in this country. We can do this. There is no reason we can't do it. We have the basic legislation.

Let's really do something we can be proud of in the closing days of this year. I can think of no better way to show the American people that we were listening on November 8. After years of obstruction, we need bipartisanship. I know that means compromises by me as well as by them, but that is the nature of the Senate.

Millions of voters turned out across America last week. They challenged us in the Senate. They challenged us to continue making real progress for working families in this country. Let's show them we can get it done.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

MR. CORNYN. Madam President, election day has come and gone, but there is still quite a bit of uncertainty about what the next Congress will look like, particularly in the House of Representatives.

As final ballots are being counted in a number of States, there is a lot we still don't know. But here is what we do know: We know that Democrats will maintain a razor-thin majority in the Senate, and I emphasize razor thin. In a few weeks, Georgia voters will head back to the polls to determine whether Democrats will hold 50 or 51 seats.

We won't know the result of that race until December 6 at the earliest. Now, suffice it to say, this is not the result I would have hoped for. Like all of my colleagues, I have heard firsthand about the pain and frustration families have felt due to Democrats' policies. Their runaway spending habits have fueled inflation. Their open border policies have ushered in the largest migration crisis we have ever witnessed. The epidemic of fentanyl deaths is compounded by the Biden and Democratic open border policies. Their anti-police, soft-on-crime rhetoric has harmed public safety, and their detached-from-reality energy policies have sent gas prices soaring and undermined our national security.

Best I can tell, our Democratic colleagues still don't have a plan to address any of those issues. It has become an exercise in finger-pointing, and the latest scapegoat is now the former Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Chris Magnus. Even if the Biden White House and congressional Democrats—even if they did have a plan, it doesn't look like there is much appetite for action.

If Republicans had won the majority, these issues would have been at the top

of our list, but, unfortunately, we came up short this time. I know many of my Republican colleagues are eager to have a frank discussion about the path forward for our party, and it is essential that we do so.

We need to ensure that in 2 years our policies and our message will resonate with the voters. So I agree with the need to have a frank, meaningful conversation—debate even. We shouldn't be afraid of spirited debate in the U.S. Senate. After all, debate about what our message should be and what our priorities should look like, that is essential.

Those discussions will begin tomorrow, and I hope there will be plenty of time to listen to one another and then to work toward consensus on a clear, concise, and impactful plan of action.

In terms of what to expect from our Democratic colleagues, I don't expect much to change. Given that Senator MANCHIN and Senator SINEMA—given their strong support for the 60-vote threshold for the Senate to act, I believe that will remain firmly intact. If the majority leader tries to go nuclear—as he has threatened to do time and time again—and blow up the rules of the Senate, he simply doesn't have the votes. That is the good news.

There will be no Green New Deal. There will be no court packing, no DC statehood, no mass amnesties. Republicans, maybe with some Democratic support, will block the most radical aspects of the agenda for progressives in the Democratic Party, and we will continue to fight the irresponsible spending and government overreach our colleagues have pushed the last 2 years.

Instead, we will push for common-sense policies to bring down the costs and improve the standard of living for working families. We will work to increase domestic energy production, rather than go hat in hand to autocrats in the Middle East, and we will secure the border. I hope we can do this through bipartisan progress. These are the top issues facing families across the country and they deserve our attention and, more than that, they deserve our action here in the Senate.

Unfortunately, it is not just the Senate that is in a bit of a holding pattern. Several House races have yet to be called, and it is not clear which party will hold the majority. Republicans have a lead right now, and I am optimistic that that is where things will end up in the House. A Republican majority in the House would force our Democratic colleagues to abandon partisan governance, which has dominated in the last 2 years, as they have held the White House, they have held the House, and then had a working majority in the Senate.

But now Democrats would no longer be able to abuse the budget reconciliation process to circumvent the normal legislative process. They would be forced to work in earnest to find common ground, which is what the American people, I believe, clearly want.

Again, we are all eager for the ballot counting to conclude. It has been nearly a week since election day, and everyone is eager to have a final roster for the 118th Congress.

While there is a lot we still don't know, there are some exciting things we do know. The Senate will welcome at least five new Republicans at the start of next year. KATIE BRITT, TED BUDD, MARKWAYNE MULLIN, ERIC SCHMITT, and J.D. VANCE will join the ranks of the Republican conference.

Each of these individuals is coming to Washington with a fresh perspective, right off the campaign trail, and a long list of ideas to improve the lives of folks in their State and across America.

While I am sad to see our retiring colleagues go, I am eager to welcome this new blood, this new energy, and these new ideas into the Senate.

There are also some new faces joining the Texas delegation. Given the explosive population growth in our State, we have added two new House seats this cycle, bringing the total to 38 House Members from the great State of Texas.

Next Congress, we will welcome five new Texas Republicans in the House, and I am eager to work with these men and women to solve some of the biggest issues families in our State are facing.

But if the truth be known, I am happy to work with anybody who shares my interest in trying to make life a little bit better and to address the critical issues facing American families today, which brings me to my next topic, the National Defense Authorization Act.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Madam President, while we wait for the final ballots to be tallied and run-offs to be held, there is still work to be done here in the Senate.

The first item on the agenda should be the National Defense Authorization Act. To be frank, I don't know why this is still outstanding, why we haven't acted as we have, I believe, for 61 years in a row, passing a National Defense Authorization Act, given its importance to the safety and security of our Nation.

Thanks to the bipartisan leadership of Senator REED and Senator INHOFE and our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, they completed their work in the Senate Armed Services Committee last summer, but the Defense Authorization Act has just lingered on the Senate's agenda without any action by the majority leader, the Senator from New York.

Thanks to bipartisan leadership on the Senate Armed Services Committee, they have compiled a strong bill that will strengthen and modernize our national defense. But that bill was filed on July 18, last summer. In the meantime, nothing has happened here on the floor of the Senate, now 4 months later.

The majority leader has so far refused to provide floor time for the De-

fense authorization bill. This isn't a matter of scheduling. The Senate has had plenty of time to work on the Defense bill in September, and there was certainly bipartisan appetite to get that done. But the Senate majority leader, Senator SCHUMER, the Senator from New York, could not be swayed. He hasn't prioritized our national defense, which I believe is the single most important duty of the Members of Congress.

Given our global risks, this should be our No. 1 priority. Day after day, Russia continues its unjustified assault on Ukraine. As it tries to find friends on the global stage, it is cozying up to Iran. At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party has become increasingly hostile to the West, and its threats against the people of Taiwan are as strong as ever.

North Korea has declared itself a nuclear weapons state. The global threat landscape is evolving at a pace we haven't seen in a long time.

We need a strong National Defense Authorization Act that gives our commanders the predictability they need to plan and to prepare for the future and, hopefully, to deter military conflict—what Ronald Reagan called peace through strength.

It is completely baffling to me that the majority leader has put the National Defense Authorization Act at the very bottom of his to-do list. Radical nominees can wait. Our national defense must be the top priority, and I hope he will put this bill on the floor soon.

Senators on both sides of the aisle—as I mentioned, the Defense authorization bill is a bipartisan bill that came out of the Senate Armed Services Committee and was filed July 18, last summer, and nothing has happened on the floor of the Senate since then. There is one person who can change that, and that is the Democrat majority leader, Senator SCHUMER. I hope he will decide, finally, to get this bill on the floor.

Once the Defense authorization bill passes the Senate, we still have to keep the lights on. We have a continuing resolution that expires December 16. We have just over a month until the current stopgap spending measure expires, and a government shutdown is the last thing our country needs.

Given the fact that this is the end of Democrats' unified government, where they have majorities in the House and the Senate and the White House, I worry that our colleagues will try to weigh this down with tons of partisan freight, sweetheart deals, and earmarks. I am afraid they will include every remaining item from the far left's Christmas wish list and turn a critical funding bill into a Christmas tree.

This bill should be as clean of poison pills as much as humanly possible. This is not the place to cash in on political chits; there is far too much on the line.

Like all of our colleagues, I am eager to have more clarity on the makeup of