

friend Chairman GARY PETERS, who spoke passionately last night in defense of the bill and rebutted all of the Senator from Florida's arguments handily. And I look forward to getting postal reform passed through this Chamber very soon.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Next, on the CR, before the end of the week, the Senate must come to an agreement to pass a short-term extension of government funding in order to give appropriators more time to complete a yearlong omnibus. It is the most responsible thing we can do to support our appropriators as they continue their bipartisan work to finish an omnibus. No one—and certainly not my Republican colleagues—wants a Republican government shutdown; so I am hopeful that they will cooperate with us to pass this necessary CR, which every single Democrat wants to happen and will cooperate to make sure that it happens.

Once again, I thank Chairman LEAHY and Ranking Member SHELBY for their leadership and for working in good faith to arrive at a yearlong spending agreement. I also commend my colleagues in the House, Chairman DeLAURO and Ranking Member GRANGER, Democrat and Republican, for their work. A yearlong omnibus is a thousand times better than relying on CRs—continuing resolutions—to lurch from one short-term extension to the next. I remain optimistic that both sides will keep working together on drafting legislation to fund the government so it can fully serve the American people while keeping us safe here at home.

In the meantime, both sides should come to an agreement to make sure the CR—the continuing resolution, the short-term funding of the government—is passed by this Chamber to avoid even any hint of a government shutdown.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night I filed cloture on additional Defense nominees, including Celeste Wallander, nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. If this were any other time, Ms. Wallander's nomination most certainly would have sailed through the Senate with unanimous consent, without the need for a rollcall vote.

At the committee level, her nomination was approved with strong support from both parties; and, frankly, she should have been approved unanimously the moment she was reported out of the Armed Services Committee. Many on both sides of the aisle recognize we need her at the Pentagon now. As one of our Nation's top experts on Russian affairs, her leadership is vital right now.

Sadly—sadly—one Republican, just one, has objected to Ms. Wallander's

confirmation without offering any concrete justification. So we are going to take up floor time to advance her nomination the long way, just as we have done for many nominees who face unprecedented obstruction by a small group of Republicans. This is not the majority of the Republican Party or the majority of Republican Senators, but a small group using the Senate rules—many of which are arcane and outdated—to stand in the way and slow the whole process down, endangering our security.

Let's be clear. To intentionally delay the confirmation of a critical Pentagon position—an expert on Russia at a time when we need her in the position most—just to score political points is the definition of cynical and is actively making the American people less safe.

Sadly, Ms. Wallander is far from the only nominee being held up by these obstructionists on the right. The junior Senator from Arkansas has also placed blanket holds on a number of U.S. attorneys and U.S. marshals, men and women whose job is literally to protect the public and prosecute criminals.

If my Republican colleagues are so concerned about public safety, why are they standing in the way of confirming some of the most important law enforcement officers in the Federal Government? It is "Alice in Wonderland" logic. It is delay for delay's sake, especially when new reasons keep coming up to justify these tactics. One reason is rebutted, and then another one comes up. It seems like some of these colleagues just want to obstruct to obstruct, oppose to oppose—bad for America, bad for Democrats, bad for Republicans.

Hijacking the rules of the Senate to place blanket holds on nominees has no legitimate justification. And when it comes to nominees tasked with advancing our national defense, our diplomacy, and our public safety, it only makes the American people less safe.

As long as these delay tactics continue, we will continue to hold votes on these nominees as necessary. If that means more late nights with a large number of votes in one sitting like we had to do over the last 2 weeks, then that is what we will do.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on lowering costs, in President Biden's first year, the economy added an amazing 6.6 million new jobs, the most ever—ever—for a President's first year. This figure surpassed just about every forecast from a year ago. It is a reflection of how far our economy has come since the start of COVID and that the right leadership in office makes all the difference.

But we all know Americans still need more help, especially when it comes to lowering the cost of living. Democrats know what the American people know. The pandemic decimated our supply chains, our labor supply, and much

more, causing prices to increase for everyday items. We never had a pandemic to this extent in 100 years, and obviously it interrupted the economy and its supply chains and labor supply.

For the past year, Democrats have been the party focused on finding solutions to lowering the cost of living for everyday Americans. As early as last summer, Democrats pushed to have the Senate approve legislation to relieve U.S. supply chains and increase domestic manufacturing, which, thankfully, was bipartisan and which the House passed recently as well. Soon the conference process for that bill will begin.

But this is just one example out of many. For the past few weeks, I have heard from my colleagues about a number of proposals they have been working on aimed squarely at helping Americans better afford the basics, from medications, to the cost of food, to the cost of cars, to more. Later today, Democrats will use our weekly caucus lunch to talk more about some of the ideas my colleagues are working on.

Lowering costs must—must—be a bipartisan effort. Americans in States, those blue and red and in between, need relief as soon as possible.

While many on the other side of the aisle have spent a lot of time giving floor speeches and presenting charts about rising costs, where are their actual proposals? We don't hear what they would do to solve the problem. Attacking the problem doesn't make it any better; proposing solutions, as Democrats are doing, does. Republicans should step up and say what their plan is to fight inflation, not just point fingers. That solves no problem.

Democrats will continue to propose legislation on cost cutting, and we are going to continue to focus on helping everyday Americans find relief. Some of my Democratic colleagues have already released their proposals publicly, and I am sure many of them would welcome Republican cooperation. Instead of sitting on the sidelines, Republicans should join Democrats in our efforts to help Americans reap the full benefits of our historic recovery.

Our goal: to have the wages that have increased stay up but lower the costs down so the average American has more money in his or her pocket.

We Democrats are committed to working in good faith to get things done in this Chamber. I hope our Republican colleagues will constructively join us instead of just pointing fingers.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, at this time last year, Washington Democrats were beginning their quest to dump trillions of dollars in leftwing spending on a recovering economy that already had the preconditions for some inflation. Everybody warned Democrats to pump the brakes. Just weeks earlier, Republicans had already supported a smaller, targeted, bipartisan stimulus that had barely started to take effect. Even top liberal economists warned the Democrats' agenda could spark massive inflation.

The consequences for working families have been particularly harsh. Essential goods have played an outsized role in driving up prices overall. It is harder to put dinner on the table when eggs, meat, and fish are 12 percent more expensive. It is harder to fill up cars with gas that is 40 percent more expensive and to heat a home with natural gas that has gone up 24 percent or fuel oil that has gone up 47 percent. This is reality for millions of Americans. They are living it every single day.

Yet the Biden administration seems less interested in trying to solve this problem than in trying to persuade families that the pain is actually just in their heads. One recent story reported that members of President Biden's team were "seemingly mystified" about why the American people weren't celebrating this economy.

Well, if Washington Democrats spent 5 minutes talking to a middle-class family, I am confident they would cease to be mystified. The middle 40 percent of American earners have seen their disposable incomes fall more than an entire percentage point over the last year—entirely due to inflation. Any American who hasn't managed to secure an 8-percent pay raise in the last year has actually received a real pay cut, thanks to Democrats' inflation.

The American people are reporting their lowest consumer sentiment in over a decade. Seventy-five percent say our economy is doing badly. Almost 80 percent expect inflation to get worse. Six in ten say their family's income isn't keeping pace with their costs of living.

These are not statistics the White House can wave away. We are actually talking about human pain. A working mother in Michigan said:

I cannot buy the food that I would normally buy for my family.

In Washington State, a single mom of four who also cares for her elderly parents says she has had to take favorite family foods like frozen pizza and wings and make them "more of a treat than just a regular meal."

This is where Democrats' policies have left working families.

FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD OF GOVERNORS NOMINEES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on a related matter, this Democrat-caused inflation has forced the Federal Reserve and its Board of Governors into a very tricky position. But while the country is carefully watching the Fed Board of Governors, the Senate happens to be considering several of President Biden's nominees to that very same Board.

Later today, I will meet with Chairman Powell, whom President Biden wisely renominated to serve another term atop the Fed. Chairman Powell has proven to be a straight shooter within the mainstream of monetary policy. His creative leadership helped stabilize our entire economy through the uncertain early days of the COVID recession. I look forward to discussing inflation and the state of our economy with Chairman Powell this afternoon.

Unfortunately, several of President Biden's other Fed nominees appear to have been significantly less wise selections. One nominee, Professor Cook from Michigan State University, has previously promoted partisan conspiracy theories. In 2020, she called for a fellow academic to be fired because he opposed defunding the police.

The White House cites among Professor Cook's qualifications that she sits on the Board of Directors of the regional Fed in Chicago. She was appointed to that position just a few days before President Biden nominated her for this one.

More troubling still is President Biden's nominee to the extremely powerful position of Vice Chair for Supervision. This slot comes with major unilateral power. But the President's nominee, Sarah Bloom Raskin, has spent recent years pressuring the Fed to stop being a neutral regulator and instead become an ideological, leftwing activist body.

Ms. Raskin has argued openly that unelected Fed Governors should use their powers to declare ideological war on fossil fuels and affordable American energy.

Ms. Raskin wants our banking system to start picking winners and losers in ways that would stick American families with higher gas prices, higher electricity bills, and more dependence on China. And she wants to implement this agenda from inside one of the least directly accountable institutions in our government so that voters simply have no recourse.

The far left is already boasting that this backdoor Green New Deal would only be the first step. Democrats have already introduced legislation that would get the Federal Reserve into the racial redistribution business and inject racial preferences into our financial system. These unpopular ideas would completely upend an institution

that Americans need to remain non-political, nonpartisan, and nonideological. Fed Governors are supposed to be neutral regulators, not economic policy dictators whom voters can't get rid of.

If this weren't disqualifying enough, potentially significant ethical questions have begun to swirl around Ms. Raskin's nomination. During her time out of government, Ms. Raskin became affiliated with an obscure financial technology firm in Colorado. Shortly thereafter, somehow, mysteriously, this small company became what appears to be the only nonbank financial tech company in the entire country to receive a special master account that allowed them to directly access a core Federal Reserve system.

This is an obviously worrisome topic, but I understand that Senators have not even been able to get Ms. Raskin to satisfy their basic requests for information. So I would urge President Biden to find a better, more mainstream, more bipartisan candidate to serve this crucial institution.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Celeste Ann Wallander, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO COREY TELLEZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to say a special word of thanks to a former member of my staff who has meant a lot to me and has performed great service in my office.

Corey Tellez was part manager and part legislative magician. She was also my deputy chief of staff. She was one of the first persons I would reach out to. She seemed to always find a way to translate big ideas into legislation and then legislation into law.

Corey is driven by solid values. She has a special talent for management and organization. Every Senator