

ground. You learn to not take things personally.

HAKEEM JEFFRIES exemplifies all of these traits. He is someone whom I know will both hold the line on our Democratic values while being ready to listen and keep an open mind. I know he can work with the other side whenever it is necessary. Most importantly, he is dedicated to making our country a better, more prosperous place for all people from all walks of life.

So today is a very good day for the House of Representatives, for our party, and for our country. I congratulate my friend HAKEEM on his historic election as House Democratic leader, and I can't wait to talk to my neighbor from Brooklyn four or six times a day like I did with Speaker PELOSI.

#### BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, now on Respect for Marriage, yesterday, our work of making America a more perfect place took a momentous step forward as the Senate passed the bipartisan Respect for Marriage Act. When the vote closed, the feeling on the floor was jubilation and relief, not just for ourselves and our families but for the millions of Americans across the country whose rights will be better protected under this bill.

The Respect for Marriage Act now goes to the House of Representatives for what I hope is a quick vote, and then it is on to the President's desk. And, let's remember, Joe Biden was one of the early proponents of marriage equality, even when it got some others not so happy with him.

Passing the Respect for Marriage Act would not have happened without the leadership in this Senate of so many of my colleagues: Senators BALDWIN and SINEMA—and FEINSTEIN, who originally authored this landmark bill—and my Republican colleagues Senators COLLINS, PORTMAN, and TILLIS. I thank them all.

The entire process was also a vindication of a central premise Senate Democrats and I have embraced this Congress. I have always said I have a hierarchy: First, try to get things done in a bipartisan way whenever possible. It is far better to find a way to pass legislation that will help Americans than to hold show votes that have no hope of becoming law, and that proved true on marriage equality. My No. 1 priority in the end is to find ways to get bills passed in the Senate.

So I hope that yesterday's vote is a signal that both parties can keep working together on difficult issues in the next Congress. If our Republican colleagues can shake off the MAGA wing of their party that is holding Republicans down, we can get a lot done. And it is obvious to everyone that there are many Republican Senators who don't embrace MAGA, and we say to them: We want to keep working with you. It is necessary in order to keep tackling the big problems that face our country. And if Republicans don't follow the MAGA path in the next Congress, it

will go a long way to restoring people's faith that Congress can work together and even disagree without being disagreeable.

And we don't need to wait for the new year to continue working together. In about 16 days or so, government funding is going to run out unless Congress acts to prevent a shutdown. Yesterday, I sat down with the President, with Speaker PELOSI, with Leader MCCONNELL, and with Leader MCCARTHY to discuss how we can ensure that a shutdown is avoided and that government is properly funded. For the most part, I was heartened and encouraged by the conversation.

Speaking with Leader MCCONNELL, we both believe that we must do everything possible to pass a yearlong funding package, and we both prefer an omnibus, though we have different views of what should be in it and we do need to come together on those. But both Leader MCCONNELL and I have said that an omnibus is the best way for supporting our troops, supporting our allies in Ukraine, and keeping Americans safe at home and abroad.

A CR, meanwhile, is horrible news for our troops in uniform because it will throw their families into great uncertainty and severely hinder their ability to keep America safe. It will also allow some of the countries that are not our allies, but adversaries in many ways, to gain a leg up.

With so many different new technologies, do we really want to give the Chinese Communist Party the chance to outcompete and outmaneuver us in the Indo-Pacific? Do we want our troops to protect us with one hand tied behind their backs, while our adversaries are operating at full capacity? Of course not, but that is the danger we face if we don't pass an omnibus.

Everyone is going to have to give something if we want to successfully fund the government for a full year, and while I am encouraged by the good will so far, we have a lot of difficult work to do before both parties reach a final agreement.

So just as both parties cooperated to pass the Respect for Marriage Act yesterday here in the Senate and just as we have cooperated on chips, gun safety, veterans' benefits, and so much more over the last 6 months, let's finish this session by passing an omnibus on a bipartisan basis.

#### JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Finally, Mr. President, on judges, later today, the Senate will vote to confirm two highly qualified and talented public servants to serve as lifetime appointments to the Federal bench: Camille Velez-Rive, to serve as district judge for Puerto Rico, and Anne Nardacci, to serve as district judge for the Northern District of New York.

An Albany native and one of the first women who would sit on the bench, Anne Nardacci represents Upstate New York perfectly. She is the kind of bread-and-butter candidate that Up-

state New Yorkers like, and she has built a career taking on special interests. So people in the Northern District of New York will not have to worry that she won't represent them when others come before the court who are special and powerful but don't have the right arguments.

For the last 2 years, one of my top priorities has been making sure we restore a sense of balance, impartiality, and experience to the Federal bench, and now that Democrats will keep our majority in the next Congress, that will continue unabated.

We have made historic progress so far. In the last 2 years, we have confirmed 85 judges to the Federal bench—the best pace since the Clinton administration. Those 85 judges comprise perhaps the most diverse collection of new jurists we have ever seen. Seventy-five percent of these new judges are women. I am so proud of that. Two-thirds are people of color. I am so proud of that. Many of them come from professional backgrounds we rarely see in judicial nominees. I am proud of that as well. But we are not yet done. We are going to hit the ground running when the new year begins, and our democracy will unquestionably be better off for it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### CRIME

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, a few days ago, the Washington Post published a major report on the explosion of violent crime that has startled and shattered communities all across America. This terrible trend is familiar to many of us by now, but the tragic human stories are still quite shocking.

In St. Louis, 25-year-old Damion Baker was killed in July in an attempted carjacking while escorting a woman to her car downtown. "Damion cannot just be some random number of homicide," his mother told reporters. "It's gotta look different."

In New Orleans this past March, 20-year-old old Shane Brown didn't come home from work one day. His body was found 5 days later in a canal, and his family still doesn't know why he was killed.

In Birmingham, 13-year-old Jaylon Palmore was on his front porch when he was cut down in a drive-by shooting that police say was targeting someone else. The family home now holds so many painful memories that Jaylon's parents have decided to sell it and move somewhere else.

The national media may just be coming around, but the American people

have known for a long time that the erosion of law and order is a terrible and pressing problem.

After the nationwide murder rate clocked its largest single-year increase in more than a century in 2020, it climbed even higher last year. A record-high majority of Americans report that crime in their communities is getting worse.

This is an area where our two political parties, the two sides of the aisle, have totally opposite instincts about the right way forward. Republicans are focused on making American communities safer, and we know that accomplishing that takes compassion for innocent people, not weak justice—not weak justice—for violent criminals who hurt them.

Meanwhile, Democrats are focused on making it even harder to secure real justice. They have spent 2 years doubling down on anti-law enforcement rhetoric and putting radical local prosecutors at the center of their plans to make America softer on crime.

Far-left special interests have poured massive amounts of money into political campaigns of radical, soft-on-crime prosecutors in major cities, from New York to Chicago, to Philadelphia, to Los Angeles. Up to one in five Americans now lives in the jurisdiction of prosecutors a Democrat mega-donor has handpicked for their willingness—their willingness—to ignore entire categories of criminal law.

This soft-on-crime campaign has gone to such absurd lengths, communities are taking it upon themselves to push back. Earlier this year, voters in San Francisco showed their radical left district attorney the door for using their neighborhoods as a proving ground for soft-on-crime experiments. Just earlier this month, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives impeached Philadelphia's liberal district attorney for "misbehavior in office" after violent crime in the city soared.

Here in Washington, things are no different. Our colleague, the junior Senator from Connecticut, made this crystal clear a few days ago when he kicked off a fresh wave of Democratic calls to defund the police. Senator MURPHY says that because, in his estimation, 60 percent of the counties in this country are friendlier to citizens' Second Amendment rights than Senator MURPHY would like, those communities should be punished by defunding their police forces. Fewer resources for police officers, less safety for local communities—unless every county in America kowtows to Senate Democrats' particular view of the Second Amendment.

Democrats spent all this past year insisting they don't support defunding the police, but here they go, yet again, proposing to do just that. One wonders how the American people—the people of Georgia, for example—feel about this renewed push to respond to violent crime by defunding local police. After all, the per capita homicide and assault

rate in the city of Atlanta is now even higher than it is in Chicago.

Working American families deserve safety in their communities. Grieving families deserve the small measure of peace that comes from actual justice. And the people of Georgia deserve a check and balance against Washington Democrats' reckless and radical defund-the-police proposals, not a rubberstamp.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, ask any group of Americans how they feel about the IRS and you are unlikely to come up with a lot of positive reviews and with good reason.

Repeated mishandling of taxpayer data, not to mention almost nonexistent customer service, is unlikely to gain any Agency many fans. At this point, the IRS has a disturbing record of mishandling taxpayer information. In the past 2 years alone, the IRS has inadvertently posted confidential information from 120,000 taxpayers on its website, destroyed 30 million unprocessed tax documents, and had troves of private taxpayer information end up in the hands of the left-leaning news site ProPublica.

The Agency's customer service record might be even worse. During fiscal year 2021, the Agency answered just 11 percent of the 282 million calls that it received—11 percent. That means that 250 million taxpayer calls went unanswered—250 million. And 2022 was no better. During the 2022 filing season, 90 percent of taxpayers' calls—90 percent—went unanswered.

Any business with a customer service record like that wouldn't be in business for very long. Given the Agency's record, I think most Americans would say that the IRS is ripe for reform. Democrats, however, apparently thought the IRS was ripe for more funding—a lot more funding. In August, Democrats passed their so-called Inflation Reduction Act. This legislation takes no meaningful steps to reduce inflation, but it does flood the IRS with a staggering \$80 billion over the next 10 years, a sum equal to six times the Agency's 2022 budget. That is enough money to double—double—the size of the IRS.

The bill provides for the hiring of as many as 87,000 new IRS employees, an estimate that came from President Biden's Treasury Department. That would make the IRS larger than the Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Coast Guard combined.

Suddenly and dramatically increasing the size of any government Agency

is cause for concern. Are there plans in place to make sure the money is used efficiently? Can the Agency in question handle such a swift expansion and the increased responsibility that comes with it?

These are serious questions no matter what Agency we are talking about, but these questions are particularly relevant when the Agency in question is already doing a poor job of handling its basic responsibilities.

Yet despite the IRS's record, despite the repeated breaches of taxpayer confidentiality and the nearly nonexistent taxpayer service, Democrats passed legislation to double the size of the Agency without including any meaningful accountability measures to ensure that the new funding is used responsibly.

I guess it is not terribly surprising, given that the Democrats made it clear that their main interest in supersizing the IRS was increasing government revenue. But it is deeply troubling. We should not be doubling the size of an Agency that is already notable for its failure to adequately carry out its basic mission.

Since Democrats are flooding the IRS with a lot of additional money, Americans deserve to know that money is being spent wisely and efficiently and that it isn't going to make taxpayers' experiences with the IRS even worse. That is why I and my fellow Republicans have been focused on doing everything we can to provide rigorous oversight and accountability for this new money. I have introduced multiple bills to help protect taxpayers.

My Increase Reliable Services Now Act, which I introduced with Senator COLLINS, would prevent the IRS from hiring new enforcement agents until customer service at the IRS has reached a more acceptable standard. I also worked with Senator MIKE CRAPO on a bill to protect taxpayers earning less than \$400,000 per year from increased audits.

Democrats' main reason for boosting IRS funding was to increase tax collection measures, including audits, to squeeze out revenue for their Green New Deal agenda.

There is substantial reason to be concerned that despite Democrats' protests to the contrary, some of that audit funding will be used to increase audits of middle-income taxpayers. It is hard to explain why else every single Democrat opposed an amendment to prevent the IRS from using its new funding to increase audits of these Americans.

The bill I introduced with Senator CRAPO and my Republican colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee would protect middle-income Americans from seeing new audits as a result of this new money.

Most recently, just a few days before Thanksgiving, Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY and I led our fellow Finance Committee Republicans in introducing the IRS Funding Accountability Act. Our