

omnibus bill through that will leave the bipartisan reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act without the new funding it needs.

Remember when I and others rewrote the Violence Against Women Act? We added the LGBTQ community, we added the Native American community, and we added money to go after those who are predators of children.

Now, Republicans may want to blame Democrats for stifling the economy, but it is their position that will short-change funding at our ports of entry and strangle the flow of commerce and the economy's ability to grow. You can have rhetoric, but then reality catches up. And you need the money to fund our ports of entry, or we all know the effect it will have on the economy.

And if they do not join in this, it will be Republicans who turn their backs on small businesses by not providing the SBA with the resources it needs to help small businesses thrive.

And sending men and women to the Moon, that funding is going to be delayed.

For months, the Democrats have asked our Republican colleagues to join us at the negotiating table, and for months we were met with dead silence. At this very moment, my door and the doors of my staff are open. They can join us in this work at any time.

Time is running out. We have to move forward. I have stayed here the past several weekends to be available for any kind of negotiations people want. So, to move this forward, I would hope we would have had a bipartisan bill on the floor by now.

On Monday, Chair DeLAURO of the House and I will introduce an omnibus bill that we believe is fair and bipartisan. It will fully fund defense at the NDAA level, and it will provide the needed increase to nondefense programs to both stave off inflation but especially to help the American people.

And to show our good faith, we eliminated the so-called poison pill riders that Republicans have objected to, and we firmly believe this bill can and should earn the votes of at least 10 Republican Senators. So I think it is a reasonable path forward.

The money runs out on December 16. I think it would help if my Republican friends accept yes for an answer. There is plenty in here for both Republicans and Democrats to declare a victory.

But most importantly, the American people can declare victory. Each side will get a large part of what they want, but the most important part, the American people will get what they need. We should call this an American bill. It is not a Republican or a Democratic bill; it is a bill for America because if we don't do it, we are going to have a continuing resolution at last year's level, with no adjustments for inflation, with real-life consequences that would entail.

I would hope no Republican wants that because if they do, we end up with a continuing resolution that lowers

funds of everything from defense to nondefense programs. It damages our economy; it damages our defense; and they will have only themselves to blame.

I would hope it won't be a case of who passes blame of a disaster but rather a case where we come together and say to America: You can declare victory.

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. SCHUMER. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, earlier this morning, the Senate Democratic caucus held elections to determine party leadership for the 118th Congress. With gratitude and humility, I am happy to say I have been unanimously elected, once again, as the Democratic leader.

I want to thank every Member of my caucus for entrusting me with this awesome responsibility. My admiration and affection for every Member of my caucus is really limitless. They are my friends, my compadres, my companions. We work together. We are an amazing unit. With only 50 votes ranging, of course, from JOE MANCHIN to BERNIE SANDERS, we have compiled one of the greatest legislative sessions in this century and even the last one in what we have done. And next year we will continue to try to do great things for our country in the next 2 years.

I also wish to congratulate and thank my colleagues who form our caucus's leadership, especially Senator SCHATZ for becoming its newest member. I also want to thank Senator MURRAY for her incredible work as assistant Democratic leader in the 117th Congress and congratulate her on becoming President pro tem-designate, succeeding Senator LEAHY, who will soon retire.

I also wish to thank my staff. They are the greatest. They are just the greatest. They have advised me and guided me over the last 2 years and helped me prepare for the Congress to come.

I would not want to go through a 50-50 Senate with anyone but them. They are remarkable, hard-working, brilliant, and just fine human beings, as well, who really care. It has been such a privilege, honor, and joy to work with them. We must now look to the future. Our focus in the Congress to come shall be no different from our focus in the Congress that concludes: getting things done for the American people.

We want to keep this Chamber active, alive, and busy, as much as possible. I make a clarion call to my Re-

publican colleagues: reject MAGA and work with us in the years to come. We have made huge strides this Congress, and I hope we can build on that because the problems of our country are many and run deep. When Americans saw us working on real issues this year, they responded positively and trusted this majority with 2 more years at the helm.

Now, it is clear that many on the other side of the aisle, our Republican friends, are unhappy with the way their party has been doing business. Some of the Republicans want to pull the party even more in a MAGA direction. That is a recipe for disaster, for their party and the country. But there are many others who know driving down the MAGA road is like following Thelma and Louise off the cliff.

We very much want to work with that group that understands that we have got to get things done in a bipartisan way and just railing and shrieking and decrying with no solutions and pure anger ain't the way to go, and it is not the way the American people want us to go.

So I urge my non-MAGA Republican colleagues to reject extremism, reject MAGA, and embrace bipartisanship. Don't just block bills next Congress for the sake of gridlock. Let us come to the table and find ways to move forward together.

Our differences run deep. Our disagreements are frequent. But that does not diminish the importance of working alongside one another when necessary to improve the lives of the American people.

I have no doubt that if we give it a good-faith effort, we can be very successful—successful beyond what anyone would think right now.

To the skeptics and the naysayers all I have to say, when you say we can't do this, I say look at the record of the last 2 years. In a 50-50 Senate, both sides found ways to pass the most ambitious legislative agenda, as I mentioned before, in a very long time—one of the most ambitious in decades and decades.

We got infrastructure done. We reformed the post office. We reauthorized VAWA. We ended forced arbitration for sexual harassment. We passed anti-lynching legislation and helped our shipping supply lanes. After the shootings in Buffalo and Uvalde, we defied the NRA and passed the first major gun safety bill in over 30 years. Together we approved the CHIPS and Science Act, passed the PACT Act, ratified the accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO, and stood with our friends in Ukraine. And a few weeks ago, we came together to pass the Respect for Marriage Act, which the House is set to approve today.

Of course, when we do not agree, Democrats will go at it alone, as we did for the Inflation Reduction Act. I know both parties fiercely disagree on the role of the government in tackling these problems, such as environment and prescription drug costs. But even

then I hope the other side would agree that lowering costs for seniors, lowering energy costs for families, and finding ways to preserve the planet are worthy causes that merit the attention of responsible legislators.

So let me say it again: I urge my Republican colleagues who are tired of MAGA, who know it is a formula for disaster, who know that it is, while embraced fiercely by a small group of extremists, it is not where the majority of Americans or even where the majority of Republicans want to go.

We have been reminded again and again that the extreme MAGA agenda is not only toxic but dangerous to our democracy. It condones and sometimes lies right in bed with those who urge violence to hurt America and destroy our democracy.

But, thank God, the American people have rejected that. If there is any lesson to derive from the midterms, that is certainly one of them. The American people don't like MAGA. They don't like hard-right nastiness. They don't like threats to democracy.

Look, I know the other side will not rid itself of MAGA overnight. And, unfortunately, some on the other side are hell-bent on doubling down on MAGA, but for the sake of the country and for the sake of the future of the Republican Party, we need to find ways to work together.

To borrow from a quote attributed to Sam Rayburn, anyone can kick a barn down, but it takes a good carpenter to build one back up. He, supposedly, used slightly more colorful language. I won't repeat that here, but you get the point.

I hope that good carpenters exist on both sides because there is still a lot of rebuilding to do across this country, and new building, new frontiers to launch bravely toward. As majority leader, I will do my best to find opportunities for both sides to work together.

So let us move forward together with fearlessness, with clarity of purpose, and with a ceaseless hunger to reward the trust that Americans have placed in all of us.

I thank my Democratic colleagues for the trust they have placed in me. I congratulate every single member of the leadership, and now let's roll up our sleeves and get back to work.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, now, there is still a lot to do before the end of the year. Later today, the House is scheduled to vote on the NDAA, and when it arrives here in the Senate, I hope both sides can come to agreement quickly, pass it, and send it to the President's desk.

Defense authorization and preservation of national security are important. I hope the Senate can act rather quickly. Equally important is funding the whole government, and we need to do whatever it takes to make that happen.

We need to make sure our whole government is postured to compete with

China, both at DOD and across the government. We need to fund our efforts to assist the Ukrainians. We need to fund our new commitments to our friends in Taiwan. While there is still more work to do before we bridge the gap, I am hopeful we can get a full government funding package done soon.

I want to remind everyone—I think people know it—that fully funding the government is the best outcome, not only for the public but for our service-members in uniform who work day and night to keep us safe. Short-term extensions will hinder their ability to work at full capacity.

I hope we don't go down that road, and I urge all sides to keep negotiating until we reach a solution.

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

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

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask that the vote not occur until after comments by Leader McCONNELL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF WESTERN KENTUCKY TORNADOES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Kentucky is approaching the 1-year anniversary of one of the deadliest tornado outbreaks in our Commonwealth's history—1 year since 80 lives were lost and a deep scar was cut through Western Kentucky. We still remember the lost and pray for their loved ones.

A few days after the storm, I visited some of the hardest hit towns. I saw how the pictures of the damage in the newspaper and on television didn't even begin to capture the local devastation in places like Mayfield, Campbellsville, Bowling Green, and Dawson Springs. Homes were literally ripped off their foundations; trees scattered like twigs; whole neighborhoods gone in an instant. The pain is still fresh, but as I have seen in multiple return visits, slowly but surely, Western Kentucky is coming back.

This weekend, Kentuckians are carving out time to honor those whose lives were lost and continue helping those whose lives were severely disrupted. Dawson Springs just erected a beautiful, solemn memorial to the 19 residents that the city lost that day. In Bowling Green, an organization is delivering handmade Christmas ornaments to storm victims. In Mayfield, even as members of the high school football team fought to rebuild their families' lives off the field, the community cheered the team to an undefeated regular season. Even in tough times—

actually, especially in tough times—Kentuckians stick together.

I am thankful to all the volunteers and charities helping us in Kentucky remember this tragic anniversary and for all the men and women who spent days and weeks working tirelessly to remove debris and to rebuild.

Things are looking hopeful in the region this Christmas. Homes and businesses are coming back. Families will gather again under one roof. The road to recovery remains quite long, but Kentuckians will stand shoulder to shoulder until the rebuilding is done, and I will keep standing right beside them.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on another matter, yesterday, I explained a simple and obvious reality that will determine whether the NDAA and government funding legislation succeeds or fails. Here is the simple fact: Protecting America and supporting our troops is not some partisan Republican priority that we will cajole and reward Democrats into accepting. Providing for the common defense is a basic, minimum responsibility of those of us in government. Passing a Defense authorization bill and appropriating the money our military needs are not rightwing demands that Democrats get unrelated goodies for going along with. The Commander in Chief's own party does not get to take our troops hostage for unrelated policy aims. Democrats will not be getting special rewards for simply doing their job.

Yesterday, I praised the bipartisan deal that our Senate and House Armed Services Committees have struck on the NDAA. The House was supposed to advance the bill yesterday, but instead the Democratic majority fell into disarray.

Some Democrats want to scuttle the Defense bill by attaching unrelated liberal demands that would guarantee its collapse. Attaching partisan non sequiturs to this carefully negotiated NDAA would achieve one and only one outcome: It would ensure that neither the NDAA nor their wish list would become law. The only outcome that partisan game-playing would produce is the collapse of this bill—a massive injury for the U.S. Armed Forces at the hands of President Biden's party on President Biden's watch.

The House needs to send us the agreed-upon bipartisan NDAA and do so without delay.

The same reality applies to appropriations. Democrats just spent 2 years using the partisan reconciliation process to lavish trillions of extra dollars on liberal domestic demands while our Armed Forces were languishing on the back burner. The Biden administration printed and spent trillions on things like welfare and solar panels like there was no tomorrow, but they couldn't even assemble a budget proposal that sufficiently funded our troops.

So my friends across the aisle have zero standing to demand actually even