

vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; and that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, before coming to the Senate, I was actually involved in a very, very small business. For nearly 17 years, this business had 1 location and 15 employees. After all that work, over the next 20 years, it did grow into then a regional company and a national one. All I can tell you is that that is the hardest job out there. Farming is another example where you are a sole proprietor and you have all the risk.

Whenever there are burdensome regulations that come into play, they have to be measured. You have to make sure you don't have things that are going to make that job even more difficult. Living that life as a Main Street business owner, I know firsthand how some of that stuff, even though well-intentioned, can end up being something that makes the difference whether you survive or not.

As Wage and Hour Administrator, Ms. Looman would be in charge of enforcing the Fair Labor Standards Act, which is a Federal statute dictating minimum wage, overtime pay, record-keeping, and child labor requirements for private employers. As Acting Administrator, she oversaw the end of the Trump administration's rules on joint employers, independent contractors, and overtime. These rules brought greater regulatory certainty and consistency to employers and entrepreneurs, small ones.

The Biden administration is working on their own version of these rules, which I fear will be job-killing, burdensome, and bring uncertainty to employers, employees, and entrepreneurs.

The other thing that these businesses do—unlike larger ones, this is their main source of income. Their living is made out of it. They are lucky if they scrape out a return on investment. So if it gets to be too burdensome, you are taking away, in essence, a paycheck.

Most recently, they announced a proposed rule for determining independent contractor classification. This proposed rule would have immediate and long-term disruptive effects on millions of workers and thousands of businesses at a time when the economy is facing high inflation rates and stress in the business community in general.

This position impacts too many Americans and small businesses not to have a vote for them or to have undue, burdensome regulations; therefore, I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

OMNIBUS

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, if this is winning, I am getting tired of winning. GOP leadership declared that this bill is a victory—but not unless you define victory as adding over a trillion dollars in new deficit spending.

So really, there is a debate—a big debate—within the Republican Party. Which is more important? Is it more important to add \$45 billion to military spending, or is it more important not to add \$1 trillion in deficit to our overall debt?

We now have a \$31 trillion debt. We are adding over a trillion dollars a year, and yet Republican leadership says this is a victory because we are getting more military spending. But it is a victory at what expense? Are we actually more secure? Are we more safe? Is our national security more protected by spending more on the military, or is our national security actually more threatened by incurring more debt? I would argue the latter, that \$31 trillion dollars in debt is the No. 1 threat to our national security.

It is the week before Christmas, and, predictably, Congress is considering yet another \$1.7 trillion spending bill that we haven't had a chance to see or even read.

Last night, at 1:30 in the morning, the text of this 4,155-page spending spree was released. If you thought Congress couldn't possibly spend more money than it did last year, you would be wrong. The omnibus increases spending by 10 percent compared to last year's budget. You would think that nearly 2 years of 40-year-high inflation would create some hesitation.

You would think that a looming recession, spurred largely by exorbitant government spending, would give this Congress pause. But instead of taking a minute to consider what a responsible Federal Government budget looks like, we are, instead, placed behind the barrel of a gun, forcing us to choose between letting government expire or blindly passing a \$1.7 trillion spending package that not only does not balance, but, in fact, spends over 10 percent more than last year.

How does Congress spend taxpayers' money? Well, here are just a few examples of how your government currently spends money. We found that they spent, last year, \$2.3 million injecting beagles with cocaine. It seems that their researchers were curious—despite the pain they inflicted on these dogs—they were curious to know if cocaine causes adverse effects. Guess what. Read the newspaper. Read the news. Look at the addicts across our country. You think you need to inject beagles with cocaine to know that cocaine is a bad deal?

And \$700,000 was spent to study how male parrots attract their mate. Really? We have got people who go hungry in our country. We have people that are trying to get out from behind poverty, and we are spending \$700,000 studying how male parrots attract a female.

We spent \$187,000 to study whether or not dogs help kids cope. Of course they do. Ask any pet owner. Any pet owner could have told you, and we would have saved the taxpayer \$187,000.

We spent \$118,000 to study if a metal replica, a robot, of Marvel Comics' evil warlord Thanos could snap his fingers—\$118,000. Really? They apparently hired some dude to wear metal gloves and then try to snap his fingers. You know what? They found out that it is impossible to make a snapping sound with metal fingers.

So robots of the world, be warned: It is hard to snap your fingers.

While we continue to spend ourselves into oblivion, almost every single European nation is working to shrink their deficit. We routinely look to Europe, and we say: Look how liberal, look how Big Government, look how socialized—and yet, most of Europe actually balances their annual budget.

In 2019, 15 of 26 European countries ran budget surpluses. Another eight European countries ran deficits of less than 3 percent of their GDP. While here in the U.S., in that same year, our deficit exceeded 6 percent of GDP.

Europe is a glaring example that fiscal responsibility is possible. It is not a pipe dream. In fact, if we just cut our spending to what we spent in 2019—just 3 years ago—we would actually have a balanced budget today. Instead, we have jumped from a deficit that was 6 percent of our GDP to a deficit that is 12 percent of our GDP.

We are adding debt at an alarming rate. We are adding debt at a greater pace than we ever have in the history of our country. Thankfully, some of our predecessors in Congress anticipated this lack of restraint, and they gave us some guideposts. They gave us some rules. They established guardrails and tools to keep our budget in check. For example, there is a rule called the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act—or PAYGO, for short. It requires that if you have new spending, it has to be offset by cuts elsewhere in the budget or elsewhere in the spending bill.

Despite equipping our government with this necessary tool, though, Congress, with almost every budget in recent history, abuses its power, spends like drunken sailors, and ignores the fact that a day of reckoning is coming. Unfortunately, Congress has, virtually 100 percent of the time, voted to waive the PAYGO requirements.

The American people demand accountability for the damage the Big Government spenders are doing to our families and to our Nation's economic well-being. I will not allow my colleagues to escape accountability by hiding behind 4,000 pages of legislative text.

I, therefore, will raise a budget point of order as this bill comes to the floor that will put every Member of the Senate on record as to where they stand on fiscal responsibility. Unfortunately, most of the Senators—even if they share my sentiments—they know that

this point of order will be waived. They think they can quietly vote this way and no one will notice.

Well, when American voters finally notice that people here are saying one thing at home and doing another, are promising balancing budgets and promising that deficits do matter and then come up here and vote the opposite way—one day, the American electorate will wake up and vote these hypocrites out.

There are many other points of order that can be raised on this. The budget rules are actually of some value if we would actually obey the rules. Some of the people, you see them. You see them in their States, they are at campaign rallies, they will tell you at townhalls, they will tell you on the Senate floor that we absolutely must get spending under control. They will tell you that the debt is a problem. They will tell you that it is a terrible way to run government to have omnibuses. It is terrible to put \$6 trillion together in one bill, release it at 1:30 in the morning, and pass it; and you can read about it and find out what is in it later.

I suspect you will find a lot of promises, though, that will be violated as we vote on these PAYGO restrictions. Realize that this is the law. The law of the land says you can't do this. Congress, in passing this omnibus, is breaking the law. The statute says very clearly they cannot do this.

The only way they actually can evade responsibility is they change the law. They say: Oh, well, it would be embarrassing to get rid of the law; we will waive the law. So we have laws for decades that could actually right our fiscal house and put us on a course towards balancing our budget, and the rules are waived. They disobey their own rules.

Congress does a disservice to the economy every time it waives these points of orders. What good are these procedures if they are never upheld? What started as formal guardrails to keep fiscal health of this Nation strong is now merely just a messaging tool with no real significance that allows Senators to get away with making promises they never intended to keep.

That is why, in addition to raising this point of order, I am introducing an amendment to reform our budget procedures by raising the threshold. Let's make it less easy for them to break the rules. Currently, 60 Senators can break the rules. Let's make it two-thirds. Let's make it 67 Senators necessary to break the rules. Why? Because they are bankrupting this country, both sides of the aisle. There is an unholy alliance between both parties.

One party wants more welfare; one wants more warfare. It is either the military industrial complex or the welfare industrial complex. But what happens inevitably every year is spending goes up. People come and the journalists question: What will happen? What will happen with Christmas here?

The only thing that is known to happen is this body—both parties—will

continue to add to the debt. And there is a day—there is a day when you wake up and the dollar is worthless. Right now, the dollar is losing nearly 10 percent of its value on an annual basis, but there is a day when it is 10 percent a day or 10 percent an hour.

Great countries have succumbed to the destruction of currency, and it happens through debt, through deficit financing. And it is coming to us. There is a day of reckoning, unless we wake up and say: Enough is enough. We are going to do the prudent and rational thing: We are going to balance our budget.

It is time that we take our Nation's health seriously, and it is time that we show concern for those who are being damaged and devastated by inflation. The inflation at the grocery store, at the gas pump, who does it hurt the worst? It hurts those on fixed incomes, senior citizens. It hurts the working class and the poor. Those who have most of their expenditures that go towards consumption, towards their food and groceries and gas, people who spend 90 percent of what they earn on buying the stuff that allows them to live are the people that are decimated by inflation.

So if there are people in this body who do care, who do really care about those who are struggling with the burden of inflation, the best way is to quit digging the hole deeper, quit adding to the debt, and do what even European countries can do; and that is, begin to balance our budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

OMNIBUS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased to announce that late last night, I introduced the bipartisan, bicameral, fiscal year 2023 omnibus appropriations bill. This bill invests \$772.5 billion in nondefense discretionary programs, including \$118.7 billion—a 22-percent increase—for VA medical care, and \$858 billion in defense funding. It provides \$44.9 billion in emergency assistance to Ukraine and our NATO allies and \$40.6 billion in emergency funding to assist communities across the country recovering from drought, hurricanes, flooding, wildfire, natural disasters, and other matters.

The pain of inflation is real, and it is being felt across the Federal Government and by American families right now. Our bill offers relief, certainty for the operations of the Federal Government through the fiscal year, and the resources necessary to secure the national defense. From funding for nutrition programs and housing assistance, to home energy costs and college affordability, this is a strong bill that directly invests in the American people. It is the product of bipartisan negotiations in line with the framework announced by Vice Chairman SHELBY, Chair DELAUNO, and myself last week,

and I strongly urge my colleagues to support it.

It fulfills the promise of bipartisan, landmark legislation that we passed this year, and it fulfills our promise to the American people.

If you voted for the PACT Act to care for our veterans, you should vote for this bill. If you voted for the CHIPS Act, you should vote for this bill. If you voted for the infrastructure law, you should vote for this bill. If you want to help families deal with the cost of heating, childcare, college, and housing, you should vote for this bill. If you actually want to fund the troops and their families at the levels of the NDAA, you should vote for this bill. If you want to help the victims of domestic violence, you should vote for this bill. If you want to support law enforcement, you should vote for this bill.

I will have more to say about our bill tomorrow, but our choice is clear. The alternative, a continuing resolution into the New Year, is short-sighted and wholly unnecessary. It imperils our national security, and it ignores the real pain and consequences of inflation. Without a clear path forward based on a bipartisan framework, punting on our responsibility to fund the Federal Government risks a full-year continuing resolution. Under a continuing resolution, America gets left behind. This is unacceptable.

We have a bipartisan bill. We have a path forward now. I look forward to continuing to work with my friend, Vice Chairman SHELBY, to pass this bill out of the Senate as soon as possible.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the joint explanatory statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY MR. LEAHY, CHAIR OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, REGARDING H.R. 2617, CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2023

The following is an explanation of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.

This Act includes the 12 regular appropriations bills for fiscal year 2023, supplemental appropriations providing for emergency assistance for the situation in Ukraine and for providing disaster relief, and other matter. The divisions contained in the Act are as follows:

- Division A—Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023
- Division B—Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023
- Division C—Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2023
- Division D—Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023