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## Senate

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT OF 2022—Resumed

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3076, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3076) to provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Peters) amendment No. 4955, to modify the deadline for the initial report on the operations and financial condition of the United States Postal Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Vermont.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as spring begins, daily new cases of COVID-19 have dramatically decreased since the height of Omicron. Hospitalizations, thank God, have steadily declined. Across the country, Americans are able to remove their masks as the spread of disease seems to be lessening. Crucially, schools are open, and we need to do everything we can in our power to make sure they stay open.

All of these signs point in a positive direction. The country is turning the corner on the COVID pandemic. We are in a new moment of the fight.

But we also are at a crossroads. Either we act now to secure the progress

we have made, or we risk backsliding if another contagious variant emerges in the fall and winter. Just as we cannot allow COVID to rule our lives, neither can we fall into a false sense of complacency.

That is why the White House has requested that Congress include \$22.5 billion in additional COVID relief funding in the upcoming spending bill, and Congress should follow through with this request over the coming days. If not, we risk sliding back if another variant occurs.

This morning on CNBC, former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb reminded viewers of the key aspect of this disease. To paraphrase him loosely, cases can drop in the spring and summer, but the risk still exists for another wave to surge in the fall or winter. He is right. We all know this from sad experience.

We also know what we must do to be ready. We know a lot more now what to do to be ready than we knew a year ago. If we want to keep our schools open, if we want to keep life as close to normal as possible, if we want to be ready for the possibilities of future variants, Congress must provide the resources needed before a new variant arrives. That is the surest way to minimize cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in the future.

Let me repeat. To keep schools open, to keep life as normal as it can be, we need additional COVID investments now, not after a possible new variant arrives.

Remember, by now, all public health funding provided by the American Rescue Plan has run out. If Congress waits until a new variant arises to pass new funding, it will be too late.

And we are happy to make clear with our Republican colleagues about how this money is dedicated. The White House has already provided an explanation about how COVID money has been spent over time. Some Republicans may think it should have been spent differently, but the point is that

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we have enemies. Many strive to stop the march of freedom. Use our lawmakers to accomplish Your will on Earth. Give them the wisdom to trust Your precepts and depend upon Your guidance. Lord, judge our desires and thoughts, as You strengthen us with Your constant love. Thank You for the way You have helped us throughout our history. Spare us from the fate of those who do evil and sustain us with Your prevailing mercies. Guard those who place their hope in You and keep them safe, enabling them to tell of Your wonderful deeds to future generations.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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it has been spent. We can't pull those dollars back, and we need to provide new funding for possible variants.

Where has the COVID money been spent thus far? It has gone to vaccinate 215 million Americans. It has been used to keep schools open, to expand treatment, and to provide 1.2 billion vaccines to other countries.

Last night, Acting OMB Director Shalanda Young sent Congress a 12-page letter detailing what the new funding would do: more vaccines for children, bolstering our testing supply chain, therapeutics, and more.

If there is one thing both parties should be able to agree on it is that we should not shortchange the American people on vaccines, on testing, or on therapeutic medicines that greatly reduce the severity of the illness if you are able to take them and if we have the supply.

Again, Congress must include new funding for COVID relief to ensure our schools and our communities face minimal disruption in case another variant comes, and we should do it ASAP. The most logical place immediately to do it is in the upcoming omnibus bill.

#### INFLATION

Mr. President, on another matter, on costs to the American people, in the coming months and beyond, Senate Democrats will maintain a focus on one of the most vexing issues facing American families: lowering costs while building on the wage and job growth we have seen over the past year.

The American economy is booming compared to a year ago. The number of new jobs added to the economy is staggering. We have added more than 6 million new jobs in a single year, including the most—the most—new manufacturing jobs in decades, but at the same time, we must fiercely confront the wave of rising costs resulting from COVID's worldwide disruptions. This is the biggest economic challenge that our country must focus on right now.

Later today, at our DPCC lunch, at the request of Chair STABENOW, FTC Commissioner Lina Khan will join us to shine a light on the troubling pattern of corporate price hikes in the areas of oil and gas, prescription drugs, and other goods.

This dimension of inflation cannot be ignored. Americans are being asked to pay more at the grocery store, at the pump, and for basic goods even as they watch incredulously as some of the Nation's biggest corporations post their most massive profits.

In many instances, these profits resoundingly exceed prepandemic figures. Last fall, Bloomberg noted that U.S. corporations outside of the financial industry reported the biggest margins since 1950—since 1950—71½ years ago. It appears corporate profits are far outpacing inflation, and they are spending much of the profits on things like corporate buybacks, which are hitting record levels. So Americans are being

asked to pay more, but many mega corporations are making a killing. That is a twisted thing to see as we recover from COVID.

Democrats are working right now on a number of proposals and ideas that would ease the pressure Americans are feeling from rising costs. We must lower the cost of insulin to \$35 a month. We must make all prescription drugs cheaper. We need to help make groceries more affordable. We need to look at fixing ocean shipping bottle-necks.

I will also add that one of the best things we can do to fight inflation is to confirm President Biden's nominees to the Federal Reserve. I urge in the strongest terms possible for Republicans to drop their holds on these members. The Federal Reserve is so crucial for our economy right now, and to intentionally delay their confirmations is irresponsible.

Most importantly, we must boost manufacturing, American manufacturing, and decrease our reliance on overseas producers. The war provoked by Putin is an illustration as to why this example is important.

President Biden's State of the Union made clear that the United States remains strong and ready to face the immense challenges of our time, but to maintain that edge, we must focus like a laser on addressing costs. That is what Democrats will keep doing.

Another thing we are doing today, that is happening today, is a hearing in the Commerce Committee on shipping costs and a bipartisan bill by Senators KLOBUCHAR and THUNE that will help reduce those costs. Shipping costs affect every American. Any good that comes from overseas has to be shipped here.

#### H.R. 3076

Mr. President, on the post office, Democrats have been working all week with Republicans to push the biggest postal reform bill in years over the finish line, and, today, we are close. Today, we continue negotiations with the other side on their proposed list of amendments to the bill.

As we continue to work on a deal, I filed cloture last night on the postal bill in order to keep the momentum going. At the end of the day, the vast majority of Democrats and Republicans wants to see this bill sent to the President's desk quickly, so I hope we can arrive at an agreement to finish before the weekend.

I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their continued work, especially Chairman PETERS and Ranking Member PORTMAN.

This postal reform bill has been a long time coming, and when passed, it will ensure that tens of millions of Americans who rely on the post office every single day for medicines, Social Security checks, and other goods can make sure that the post office remains in good hands and is strengthened.

#### ENDING FORCED ARBITRATION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACT OF 2021

Mr. President, finally, I want to close by noting, this afternoon, President Biden will sign into law bipartisan legislation ending forced arbitration for sexual assault and sexual harassment.

All of us have heard the searing testimonies—searing—of those who have faced harassment or abuse at work, only to discover their jobs offered precious little in accountability. Countless careers have been derailed or undone. Worse still, countless lives have been forever damaged. For decades, workplace practices like mandatory arbitration have perpetuated cultures of abuse and unaccountability.

We can't ignore a basic reality of these clauses: They deprive victims of sexual harassment and assault of their basic rights by mandating that they seek remedy only behind the closed doors of private arbitration, with no other alternative. With the President's signature today, that will come to an end.

I want to thank Senator GILLIBRAND for leading the fight for years, and I am glad I was able to work with Senators GRAHAM and ERNST to push this bill over the finish line.

By the end of today, we will be able to say: The Senate acted; the House acted; the President acted; and now forced arbitration reform is law.

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 Republican leader is recognized.

#### NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday morning, I hosted Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, the President's nominee to replace Justice Breyer on the Supreme Court, in my office. I was glad to meet with Judge Jackson. We enjoyed a cordial discussion.

Like I have been saying, Republicans fundamentally believe the nominee, the Court, and the country all deserve better than the disgraceful displays that Senate Democrats have routinely visited on nominees of Republican Presidents. The Senate's process should be dignified, but it also must be vigorous, exhaustive, and painstaking. We are talking about a lifetime appointment to our Nation's highest Court.

This is a moment when issues relating to the law and the judiciary are directly hitting American families, from skyrocketing murders and carjackings, to soft-on-crime prosecutors' effectively repealing laws, to open borders. This is also a moment when the far left has declared open season on the very concept of judicial independence itself.

President Biden even bowed to the radicals and set up a Court-packing Commission.

Now, Justice Breyer has distinguished himself by loudly and proudly putting those radicals in their place. He has consistently denounced the concept of partisan Court packing and defended the Court's legitimacy.

One would hope his successor would follow suit, but curiously the same radicals who want to turn Democrats into the party of Court packing also badly wanted Judge Jackson for this vacancy. It is a matter of record that this nominee was the anointed favorite of these fringe groups. At this time last year, they were already spending dark money to raise her profile.

So I intend to explore why groups that are waging political war against the Court as an institution decided Judge Jackson was their special favorite.

Like I said, I enjoyed meeting the judge. She is clearly a sharp lawyer with an impressive resume, but when it comes to the Supreme Court, a core qualification is judicial philosophy. Our citizens need Justices who treat all parties fairly, apply our laws and Constitution as written, and leave legislating to us here in Congress.

I raised all these matters yesterday. I look forward to gaining more clarity about Judge Jackson's positions during the vigorous and thorough Senate process to come.

(Ms. ROSEN assumed the Chair.)

#### VACCINES

Madam President, now on another matter, our Nation faces serious challenges to our citizens' health and wellness. COVID-19 has been one of them. Abuse of illegal drugs and prescription pills is another. Heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are ever present. Many of these health crises hit Middle America especially hard and specifically rural America.

Data show that rural Americans are disproportionately likelier to die from a number of potentially preventable causes. That is why I have been focused on expanding local treatment centers and telehealth and fighting the drug epidemic tooth and nail.

Last week, I hosted Dr. Rahul Gupta, the administration's drug czar, in Kentucky. Opioid abuse is a staggering problem in our State and throughout the country. Last year, even during COVID, fentanyl abuse alone was the biggest cause of death among Americans aged 18 to 45. That is not even all drugs, just fentanyl alone.

In short, this may literally be the worst time in American history to deliberately cut healthcare access in rural America, but that is just what the Biden administration has done. President Biden told every thinly stretched doctor's office and hospital that accepts Medicare that they had to fire workers who didn't want the COVID vaccine.

Now, I have been a consistent advocate for getting vaccinated. They offer

powerful personal protection against hospitalization and death, but they do not prevent people catching or transmitting the current variant. There is no moral justification for sweeping mandates. The benefits accrue to the person who gets the shot.

What is more, the CDC's own research says that prior infection provides protection that is at least as strong as the vaccines. But the President's overreaching mandate ignores that. His policy unscientifically discriminated against people who have immunity from prior infection. They had to comply anyway or lose their job.

The President tried to force such a mandate on all kinds of workers across America. The courts slapped that down easily. But his mandate targeting healthcare workers remains in effect.

It is unfair on a personal level, but even just looking at public health, it is terrible policy for rural America. We cannot have President Biden mass firing doctors and nurses when hospitals are already short-staffed.

One hospital leader in Marshall County, KY, told me that "this is an absolute disaster. We are a small critical access hospital with 250 employees. . . . We have begun assessing areas that may have to be [literally] shut down."

A head of a hospital in Calloway County told me that "I can afford to lose not one more nurse." He said the Biden mandate "makes no sense"—no sense—"for rural healthcare."

The head of a critical access hospital in Hardinsburg says that "the mandate is devastating for Kentucky hospitals."

Clearly, many of my colleagues are hearing similar things. Yesterday, over the objections of every Senate Democrat who voted, Republicans stood up for Americans' right and Americans' healthcare access. We passed a resolution to overturn President Biden's mandate that would drain doctors and nurses out of middle America.

If Washington Democrats could safely hobnob in the Capitol all Tuesday evening with no masks, then they ought to stop pushing mass firings on essential health workers.

Unfortunately, if we know anything about this Democratic House, this commonsense measure may well die on Speaker PELOSI's desk.

I sincerely hope our colleagues across the Capitol will see reason and pass this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

#### FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD NOMINATIONS

Mr. COONS. Madam President, since President Biden took office, we have seen historic job growth and a dynamic economy. Wages are rising, and they are rising fastest for working-class Americans.

But despite this significant economic progress, today, too many American families are still facing pressing economic challenges: a global pandemic now entering its third year, ongoing

disruptions to international supply chains that result in rising prices, and now the economic shocks caused by Putin's aggression, his invasion of Ukraine and the response by the West—a united effort to impose sanctions on Russia, which will also have consequences for the global economy.

The Federal Reserve exists, in part, to address issues just like these. The Fed doesn't just set interest rates and control our money supply; it oversees banks, ensures efficient and reliable payments, promotes consumer protection and community development.

When our economy is facing such foundational challenges like the ones we are up against right now, it is crucial our institutions are at full strength.

The Fed is at its strongest with a full Board of Governors, and President Biden has nominated five of the finest economic and legal minds our country has to fill its vacancies: Jerome Powell, to serve as chair; and Lael Brainard, to serve as Vice Chair—both folks who have ably guided our economy in the years they have served at the Fed; Sarah Bloom Raskin, whom I know from college, has been nominated to serve as Vice Chair for Supervision and has demonstrated through a long career in public service at both the State and Federal level to be a highly competent regulator who has advanced the financial system that would work for all Americans; Philip Jefferson, nominated to serve as a Board Governor, has deep expertise in how monetary policy impacts employment and economic growth and an important understanding of inequality and poverty in America today; last, my good friend, Lisa Cook, whom I have known for decades. We knew each other as young Truman Scholars, folks who were volunteering a week of our time to help mentor and encourage younger Truman Scholars—a federally funded memorial to President Harry Truman.

I have known her since a stage in her life where neither one of us might have guessed that someday I would be on this floor speaking as a Senator, and I would be speaking in support of her nomination to the Federal Reserve.

She would bring a valuable new perspective to the Fed Board. Lisa, from her time growing up in a small rural town in Georgia, going on to earn advanced degrees from our Nation's finest institutions, and now as a teacher at one of our great public universities, she has built world-class expertise in economics, innovation, and banking. She understands not just abstract economic theory but how those theories impact Americans and their families in all walks of life.

Lisa served under President Obama at the White House Council of Economic Advisers, where she dealt with financial crises both here in the United States and abroad, and she has studied the macroeconomics of foreign markets in Europe and in Africa, including the way central banks have dealt with

high inflation—one of the issues right before us.

She has expertise in an emerging area of the economy that is increasingly important for our central bank regulators to understand: digital currencies and financial technology. She has supported sensible regulation of cryptocurrencies that enables innovation and allows more people to access secure and low-cost financial services.

Her data-driven approach would help the Fed navigate our continued economic recovery, and her focus on financial inclusion will be a critical perspective on the Fed Board that would help ensure all Americans can see the benefit of continued economic growth and job gains.

Overall, these are five nominees to the Fed Board with sterling credentials and strong character. All of them, on their merits, deserve the seats to which they have been nominated.

I respect the desire on the part of my Republican colleagues to conduct a full evaluation of these nominees, and all five of them have responded repeatedly, fully, and with transparency to the hundreds of questions that have been pressed to them. They have answered all the questions put to them.

The time has come to advance and confirm these nominees, and I call upon my Republican colleagues to allow a vote to proceed. To block a vote in the Banking Committee of this Senate by simply denying a quorum is no way for this allegedly greatest deliberative body in the world to conduct itself. If we are, in fact, facing the crisis of inflation and rising prices, the Federal Reserve Board must have its full membership.

So my colleagues, please, stop blocking these capable and qualified nominees and allow them to proceed.

#### NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Madam President, I serve on the Senate Judiciary Committee. And in my dozen years here, I have had the honor of participating in, and even presiding over, confirmation hearings for Federal District Courts, Circuit Courts, and the Supreme Court.

We have before us now President Biden's first nominee to our Nation's highest Court. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is an exceptionally well-qualified jurist whose experience, whose credentials, and whose evenhanded approach to the administration of justice make her an outstanding nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court.

This is an important step forward toward making our Supreme Court look more like and reflect more the diversity of people in our Nation and the diversity of experience of those who serve in the bar.

Last year, Judge Jackson was confirmed by this Senate on a bipartisan basis to serve on the DC Circuit Court, one of the most complex and significant of the circuit courts of the United States. Before that, she was unanimously confirmed to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia

where she has honorably served for 8 years. She has issued over 500 opinions, so we have a very clear idea of her approach to judging and her interpretation of the law; and she brings great professional diversity of experience to the Bench as well.

If confirmed, she will be the only Supreme Court Justice to have served as a Federal public defender. That kind of perspective on our highest Court is critical. Her work as a public defender is just one example of the breadth of experience Judge Jackson will bring to the U.S. Supreme Court.

She has also served as Vice Chair and Commissioner on the Sentencing Commission that interprets and applies criminal law and as a lawyer in private legal practice for some of our Nation's leading law firms. And, most importantly, she clerked for the Justice for whom she has been nominated as the successor, Justice Stephen Breyer.

Our President has promised to nominate someone in the mold of Justice Breyer; and Judge Jackson—in temperament, in ability, and approach—certainly fits that bill. It is my hope, it is my expectation, that this Senate and the Senate Judiciary Committee will meet this historic moment by swiftly, appropriately, and respectfully questioning this nominee in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee, bringing her to a vote on the committee, and then voting to confirm her nomination here on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR NOMINATIONS

Madam President, if I might, the last topic I come to speak to on this floor today is the critical need for us to be as attentive to the advice and consent role for nominees as ambassadors, as senior members of the State Department, and USAID positions.

There are so many positions that have been held for months and months; and many of them are being held by my colleague from the State of Texas because of a disagreement over sanctioning the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Today, finally, we stand in a place where the policy of this administration, the policy of our close and valued ally in Europe, Germany, and the positions of folks in the Senate are all aligned. There are now sanctions on Nord Stream 2. It has been stopped.

Thankfully, my colleague has lifted his holds. Yet there still remain holds from other Members of this body on other nominees, all of them well-qualified. Eight of them would serve under the jurisdiction of my Foreign Relations Committee subcommittee on economic and energy policy multilateral organizations.

So while I respect the right of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to hold a nominee for a specific, relevant policy issue, we have to provide advice and consent in a timely and respectful manner of the President's nominees.

President Biden has been President more than a year now. We have crises all over the world—whether it is in Ukraine, the violence and the aggres-

sion carried out by Putin's Russia or its competition with China or its dealing with North Korea or its advancing our interest with respect to Iran and their proliferation—we have places all over the world for which we need qualified nominees.

That is why, in a few moments, I hope to take action on the floor; but I am not yet going to take that action unless it is clear we are all prepared.

Let me briefly, in conclusion, if I might, speak to some of the folks who should be confirmed.

The Ambassador to Botswana, Howard Van Vranken, career foreign service officer in a country I have visited, a country that is an important partner to allies in Southern Africa, and where the absence of an ambassador means an absence of American leadership.

Eric Garcetti, mayor of Los Angeles, ready to serve as our Ambassador to India, a country that is a continent-wide, multifaceted, multilingual, multi-ethnic democracy—a vital partner and ally to the United States where we currently have no ambassador.

Marcia Bernicat to be Director General of the Foreign Service. If we are to recruit, retain, motivate, and place the greatest diplomats possible in the world, we need a Director General—a DG—who leads the Foreign Service from a human resources perspective.

Julietta Noyes to be Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration. A million refugees have fled the violence in Ukraine; and yet PRM has no Senate-confirmed Assistant Secretary. Think about that as a dereliction of duty by this body.

Oren Whyche-Shaw to be Ambassador to the African Development Bank. If we want to see inclusive development on the continent of Africa, how can we have no ambassador for this multilateral development bank?

Enoh Ebong to be Director of the United States Trade and Development Agency, the USTDA. TDA plays a critical role in bringing into the United States opportunities for trade and development—again, a critical vacant seat.

Christopher Hill to serve as Ambassador to Serbia. There are developments in the Balkans too complex and concerning for me to take this body's time with right now. But let me simply say, any seat, any ambassadorial post in the Balkans vacant is a missed opportunity for American leadership.

Laura Holgate to be Ambassador to the Vienna Office of the United Nations and Representative to the IAEA. We are engaged in critical final-stage negotiations, I am told, in Vienna about whether or not we will be able to further constrain and better understand Iran's dangerous conduct with regards to enrichment. We have no ambassador to the IAEA. Think about how irresponsible that is.

If I might, we cannot confront our global challenges alone, and we need these diplomats in place so we can successfully address these threats from

Russia, climate change, COVID-19, from Iran, from terrorism.

It is my hope that my colleagues who have holds reportedly on many of these nominees will relent, and I look forward to continuing to press that case today.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RELATING TO A NATIONAL EMERGENCY DECLARED BY THE PRESIDENT ON MARCH 13, 2020

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Committee on Finance is discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 38, and the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the joint resolution, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 38) relating to a national emergency declared by the President on March 13, 2020.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 3 hours for debate only, with time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Republican whip.

#### ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as of January, energy prices were up 27 percent across the board. Gas prices were up 40 percent from a year ago. Natural gas was up 24 percent. Fuel oil was up 46 percent.

High energy prices have a huge impact on our economy. Obviously, they represent a significant, direct burden on Americans trying to fill up their cars or pay the utility bills, but they also contribute to price hikes across our economy. High gas prices and other energy costs contribute to price increases on a whole host of other goods. Manufacturers facing higher transportation costs thanks to high gas prices, for example, are often forced to pass on at least some of those increased costs to consumers in the form of price hikes.

Now, while Democrats helped create our current inflation crisis with their so-called American Rescue Plan spending spree last March, President Biden is not solely responsible for high energy prices. He is responsible, however, for the fact that he is pursuing an energy agenda that is almost guaranteed not only to increase American energy prices long term but also to increase our reliance on foreign sources of energy.

Since the day he took office, President Biden has pursued an agenda that

is hostile to conventional sources of energy; namely, oil and natural gas. When it comes to energy, he is focused almost exclusively on alternative energy technology—specifically on electric vehicles, which his administration has clearly picked as its preferred winner in the clean energy stakes.

Now, I should say I am a longtime supporter of clean energy. In South Dakota, we derive a significant amount of our energy from hydropower and wind. In fact, in 2020, 80 percent of our utility-scale generation was renewal, about half of that from hydro. I have long championed cleaner burning renewable fuels like ethanol and biodiesel.

But the fact of the matter is, our Nation is not going to be fully transitioning to 100 percent zero-emission energy anytime soon no matter how much the administration would like it to. There are a lot of hurdles to be crossed before we can rely solely on clean energy. Consumers, first and foremost, need affordable and reliable energy supplies, especially consistent baseload energy.

Clean energy technology has simply not advanced to the point where it needs to be in order for us to rely on clean energy exclusively. We are going to need an “all of the above” energy portfolio for a while yet, including oil and natural gas, and it is a disservice to the American people to pretend otherwise.

We should absolutely continue to invest in clean energy and pursue clean energy technologies in a fiscally responsible manner, but we also have to ensure that our Nation has the oil and natural gas that it needs for our economy to run and for Americans to be able to afford to heat their homes and to get where they need to go.

As I said, since taking office, President Biden has pursued an agenda hostile—hostile—to conventional energy production. He set the tone on his first day in office when he canceled the Keystone XL Pipeline—an environmentally responsible pipeline project that was already underway and that was to be paired with \$1.7 billion in private investment in renewable energy to fully offset its operating emissions. He also almost immediately froze new oil and gas leases on Federal lands, sending a clear signal to oil and gas producers that his administration would be reluctant to work with them to increase American energy production.

He has continued along the same lines ever since. He seems to think that he can hurry along the clean energy future he dreams of by discouraging oil and natural gas production here at home, but he can't. As I said, clean energy sources are simply not at the point where they can solely power American homes or our economy.

The only effect of curbing conventional energy production would be to force Americans to rely more on foreign sources of oil and natural gas, and that is a big problem. It is a big prob-

lem. It is a problem because the more we rely on foreign sources of energy, the more vulnerable Americans are to energy price spikes and to global shortages. It is a problem because relying on foreign sources of energy often means relying on energy from tyrannical governments in volatile areas of the world.

U.S. imports of Russian energy have spiked during the Biden administration, and the current conflict in Ukraine is a reminder of just how big of a problem that is. In the first place, the dollars we or other nations spend importing energy from Russia are dollars Russia is free to use to prosecute its unjustified invasion of Ukraine and any other country that it decides to attack. In the second place, when you rely on another country for your energy needs, you end up beholden to that country.

Now, while we have imposed heavy sanctions on Russia, we have yet to directly sanction Russia's energy sector, and other countries have also held back on sanctioning Russian energy. There is little question that this reluctance stems from both fears of price hikes as a result of sanctions and from fears of lessening the availability of Russian energy supplies.

The truth is, we should be sanctioning Russia's energy sector. Energy production is the lifeblood of the Russian economy, and sanctioning Russian energy would be one of the most effective ways of halting Putin's imperial ambitions.

It is unfortunate that the President has not put our Nation on stronger footing energy-wise so that we could more easily weather these challenging times. The only acceptable American energy policy is an “all of the above” energy policy that invests in both clean energy technologies and conventional energy sources. That is the only way—the only way—to keep energy prices down and ensure America's energy needs are met no matter what is going on in energy-producing countries around the globe.

Now, if the President really wants to lower energy prices for American families, as he indicated in his State of the Union Address on Tuesday, he could reverse his rejection of the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would be a much welcome recognition that liquid fuels will be part of our energy composition well into the future.

He could fast-track environmentally responsible domestic oil and gas production on Federal lands.

He could work to overturn the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission decision that will make it more difficult to get approval for natural gas pipelines.

He could ensure that the Department of the Interior releases new land for responsible oil and gas development—something the Department is required to do quarterly by law.

He could encourage financial institutions to invest in conventional energy production and reinstate the January