

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

2021 proposed rule that would prevent large American financial institutions from blacklisting the conventional energy sector.

Finally, he could also get serious about leveraging American agriculture as an energy solution, specifically restoring integrity to the renewable fuel standard. This means not only setting robust blending targets and rejecting specious small refinery exemptions but approving advanced fuels from corn kernel fiber and restoring the year-round sale of E15.

These measures and others like them, combined with clean energy investment, would help lower energy prices now and in the future and help put our Nation on a path to long-term, full energy independence. It is the best decision President Biden could make for American families struggling with high energy prices, and it is the best decision he could make for the long-term security of our country.

I hope he will rethink his hostility to conventional energy production and spend the next year of his administration embracing the kind of “all of the above” energy strategy that this Nation so desperately needs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object. I will say to Senator THUNE while he is still on the floor, he knows I have great respect for him and his views on all kinds of issues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senator, there is nothing to object to.

Mr. CARPER. All right. Then I will just wing it. When I do have the opportunity to object, I want to explain why.

Having said that, Senator THUNE knows we look for opportunities to work together. This is just one of those instances where we don't see entirely eye to eye.

Mr. President, right now, the American people face two existential threats to our way of life. One is the threat really to the world order posed not so much by Russia but by Putin, the President of that country. The other is the threat of climate change.

The legislation we are discussing today assumes that we must ignore the threats of climate change in order to wean our Nation off of foreign oil from countries like Russia, but this is a false choice.

Since the Arab oil embargo of 1973, some have argued that if we simply drill more oil, we can be free of the price whiplash caused by international disruptions in the global oil market. This wasn't true during the Arab oil embargo. It wasn't true during the Iranian revolution. It wasn't true during the 1990 Gulf war or, more recently, during the Iraq war. And it is not true today. Yet the legislation before us clings to a false understanding of oil markets. We have drilled more, but the oil prices that we pay are still impacted by global events.

Instead, we need policies that help our economy smoothly transition off of oil, while at the same time give consumers more choices to fuel their cars, their trucks, and their vans. We need to give consumers real fuel choices that are domestically produced, better for the climate, and that aren't tied to global oil markets. The choices could include electricity from nuclear energy, an issue on which the Presiding Officer and I strongly agree; biofuels made by our farmers, which Senator THUNE strongly agrees and has alluded to; and fuel cells running on clean hydrogen produced in many cases by our refineries. All of these options are things that we should be pursuing—that we should be pursuing—and on which there is wide consensus. In doing so, we buffer our economy against the threat of Russia and the threat of climate change.

With that, when it is appropriate for me to object, I am ready to object.

I am yielding the floor to our colleague from Missouri, Senator HAWLEY.

And let me say to him, I don't object lightly, and my hope is that we will—we haven't had a chance to talk about this before today, but I look forward to that conversation in the days ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3741

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to this administration's dangerous policy of American weakness and in support of the strong men and women of the United States' energy sector, who are ready to step forward to return this Nation to energy independence, to burnish this Nation's strength, and to show the Russians what the United States is capable of.

It will be lost on no one that we are approximately a week into the largest conventional military attack in Europe since 1945. Vladimir Putin's brutal war of choice against the Ukrainians continues as we speak. It grows worse, more devastating, and more brutal by the hour, and it is time that, in the midst of this war, we confronted a basic fact: that Russia isn't so much a country as it is a gas station, and Vladimir Putin's gas station is open for business and pumping away, and this administration—this administration—has made the decision to make this country more dependent on Russian oil, to make the world more dependent on Russian oil, to embolden and empower Vladimir Putin at a time when the world can ill afford it, and it is time to change course.

And we can change course. We can change our energy production policy. We can open up our energy sector to make us once again the dominant energy producer in the world, to make us truly energy independent, to make us energy strong, to put Russia in its place, and to put the United States at the head of the energy sector worldwide.

But that is not where we stand right now. Today, the United States is im-

porting—in the midst of this conflict, in the midst of Russian aggression, the United States is importing—buying from Russia to the tune of 670,000 barrels of oil every single day. It has nearly doubled just in the past year.

Now, I would submit to you that whatever you think about this administration's geostrategic policies—this is, after all, an administration that has managed to lose two sovereign nations in the space of 6 months—whatever you think of that record, this is not sustainable. This is not good for the world. This makes America weaker, not stronger, and this is a time for American strength.

What did Joe Biden do when he came to the Office of the President of the United States just over a year ago?

Well, among his first actions was to cancel the Keystone Pipeline, to halt a leasing program in Alaska, to issue a halt on all new oil and gas leases, as well as drilling permits on Federal lands and Federal waters. By the way, that accounts for about 25 percent of U.S. energy production.

He directed Federal Agencies to get rid of all support for fossil fuels. He imposed new regulations on oil and gas and methane emissions. He hired new SEC regulators to propose new climate regulations, and the list goes on and on.

And these policies have had their effect. I will give the President credit where credit is due. His policies to throttle down our energy production have been successful. He has succeeded in making this Nation energy dependent.

In 2019, in 2020—for the first time, certainly, in my lifetime—the United States actually exported more energy than it imported. We were energy independent, and, even better, we were becoming the energy supplier for the world.

Who is the energy supplier for the world now? It is Vladimir Putin, and that is because, at least in part, of the policies that this administration and President Biden have deliberately sought to pursue.

Look, the statistics don't lie. Why is Russia able to pursue this war of aggression in Ukraine?

Well, at least in part because of this: They supply 20 percent of Europe's oil—Russia alone, 20 percent of Europe's oil—40 percent of its gas, 20 percent of its coal. Russia supplies to the tune of 55 percent of Germany's natural gas alone—just Germany's, 55 percent. Now, can we wonder why our German partners were slow to want to sanction Russia, to provide lethal aid to Ukraine when they needed it before the invasion occurred? It is because Russia has Europe in a stranglehold.

And that should be no excuse. I am not saying that the Europeans deserve an out—not at all. But I am saying that Vladimir Putin has used his power, his energy production, to try and project new power in Europe, and, unfortunately, he is having success.

It ought to be our policy to reverse his power projection, to shut down his gas stations—his gas station of a country—by returning this country to energy independence and energy dominance, and we can do it.

This is not a pie-in-the-sky pipe dream. We have been there before. We were just energy independent, just a few years ago. We know what to do. It is actually pretty simple. All we have to do is roll back the disastrous policies that this administration imposed just a year ago, roll those back and allow the American worker to get back to work on our pipelines, on our rigs, drilling and pumping natural gas and producing biofuels like the ones that we produce, the kind that we produce in my State. Put American energy back to work. It is actually pretty simple.

Sometimes, Ronald Reagan once said, there actually are simple solutions, not easy ones but simple ones. This one is simple, it is direct, and it is time that we took it.

And that is why I have introduced legislation, along with Senator GRASSLEY and Senator HAGERTY and Senator TUBERVILLE, that would do just this. It would reverse the disastrous energy policies of this administration, the policies that have emboldened and enabled and empowered Vladimir Putin and the Russian military, and return this country to energy strength, return this country to energy dominance.

I can't put it any better than this: If you will give—if the President of the United States would give—the American worker a chance—give the folks who man those pipelines, give the folks who work the oil rigs—give them a chance to show what they can do, and I will tell you what they will show you: They will show you that they are the best in the world. They will show you that they are the strongest in the world. They will show you that this country is the strongest in the world, and they will put the Russian energy sector to shame.

And, by the way, Joe Biden's policy was to green-light the Russian pipeline, Putin's pipeline, Nord Stream 2. He lifted sanctions on it when he came to office; imposed limits on our own energy production but lifted them on the Russians.

Here is a suggestion: Shut down Putin's pipelines. Shut down Putin's energy sector. Open ours up. Do just the opposite of what President Biden did a year ago. Shut down the Russian energy production, open up American energy protection, and show the world what the American people can do.

And that is what the bill that I have introduced, along with my cosponsors, who I am proud to have with me—that is what it would do. It is very simple, Mr. President, and I would suggest to you that the time is of the essence.

I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of S. 3714 and the Senate

proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CARPER. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, our colleague from Missouri was not on the floor when I spoke earlier. I want him to have the opportunity to hear some of the concerns that I and a lot of other people in this Chamber and this country have with respect to the request that he is making.

So I reserve the right to object, and let me just take a minute or two to again state why that is.

Today, the American people face two existential threats to our way of life. No. 1 is the threat to the world order posed not by the Russian people but by Vladimir Putin, their leader. And the other is the threat of climate change to us.

We just received from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration an update 2 weeks ago about what it is going to look like in this country in the years to come.

We have already seen the sea level rise roughly a foot in the last several decades, and what we are going to see in the years to come is more of the same, only faster.

If you add up the GDP of every coastal county in this country—from the east coast, the gulf coast, the west coast, the Great Lakes—it adds up to a GDP that would be making the third largest country in the world. And what we are going to see is a great assault—a continued assault—on those coastal counties, whether it is New Jersey or whether it is Delaware, whether it is Louisiana, California—whatever.

In Louisiana, they lose to the sea every 100 minutes a piece of land the size of a football field. The Presiding Officer spent some time on a football field. And every 100 minutes—think about that—the size of land in Louisiana, the size of a football field goes back to the sea.

Our State of Delaware is the lowest lying State in the country. The seas around us are rising. My State is sinking. We have seen, gosh, five storms on the west coast bigger than my State. We have seen winds—hurricane-force winds—in Iowa destroying like half the crops. We have seen temperatures—90-degree temperatures—in the Arctic Circle, the hottest summers on record year after year after year. Something is happening here.

And with apologies to Stephen Stills, it is exactly clear. And what the problem is—it is way too much carbon in our air, and it is increasing. We need to address that. We need to address that in ways that will actually create jobs, a lot of good-paying jobs. I think we

can agree on that, and that is what we ought to be doing.

So having said that, the legislation we are discussing assumes that we must ignore the threats of climate change in order to wean our Nation off of foreign oil from countries like Russia. This is a false choice. This is a false choice.

Since the Arab oil embargo of 1973, some have argued that if we simply drill for more oil, we can be free of the price whiplash caused by international disruptions in the global oil market. This was not true during the Arab oil embargo. This was not true during the Ukrainian revolution. It was not true during the 1990 Gulf war or, more recently, during the Iraq war, and it is not true today.

Yet the legislation before us today clings to false understanding of oil markets. We have drilled more, but the oil prices we pay are still impacted by global events.

Instead, we need policies that help our economy smoothly transition off of oil, providing good-paying jobs for a lot of Americans, while at the same time giving consumers more choices in the way that we fuel our vehicles—our trucks, our cars, our vans.

We need to give consumers real fuel choices that are domestically produced, better for the climate, and that are not tied to the global oil market.

The choices could include electricity from nuclear energy, something the Presiding Officer and I and others agree on. The choices could include the biofuels made by our farmers, something that Senator THUNE was speaking about earlier. The choices could include fuel cells running on clean hydrogen produced by our refineries. All these options are things we should be pursuing. As it turns out, if we do—and there is a lot of bipartisan support for doing what I have just outlined—we will actually address this climate crisis that we face on this planet, and we will produce one heck of a lot of jobs for people throughout this Nation. In doing so, we buffer our economy against the threat of Russia and the very real threat of climate change.

And with that, reluctantly, I must object to the gentleman's unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Delaware for his remarks, which I appreciate. It is a privilege to serve with him, as we do, on the Homeland Security Committee, and work with him as we do—as I have—and I look forward to working together, hopefully on this issue, and others in the future.

We do disagree on this issue. We have an honest and, I think, principled disagreement. It is one that we ought to talk about. I am glad we are talking about it here today, and I suspect it is one, ultimately, that the American people are going to have to weigh in on

because the differences are pretty significant. And that is fine. That is democracy.

But I just want to highlight two things where I think we have a principled disagreement. The first is the idea that, if we produce more energy in this country, it won't have any effect on prices, energy prices, or make us energy independent.

I would just ask the American people, I mean: Does gas cost more today than it did before Joe Biden became President? Yes, it does. Are you paying more for groceries? Are you paying more, if you are a farmer, for fertilizer? Are you paying more for every input that is associated with energy today than before Joe Biden was President? Unfortunately, yes, you are.

Inflation is out of control in this country. Inflation associated with the fuel that Americans use to fill up their trucks and their vans and that they use to heat their homes is out of control, and there is a reason for that. This is the reason for that. We are not producing energy in this country like we were. We were energy independent in 2019 and 2020. It is not as if it can't be done. It has been done. Prices were lower. It is basic supply and demand.

But there is also a national security aspect to this. Why would we want to be dependent on a totalitarian state that is invading its neighbors and is seeking to establish energy control of Europe and beyond?

Why wouldn't we seek to thwart it? And why would we ask the American people to pay more, day in and day out, to heat their homes, for fuel for their cars? Why would we put them through that? Why would we ask them to do that?

I just submit to you that there is a real tradeoff here, and the administration has chosen the wrong side of the tradeoff. Put the American energy sector back to work.

One other comment. I know that the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, former Senator Kerry, has expressed similar concerns about climate change and has said recently that he fears that the crisis in Ukraine will distract from the urgency of climate change.

Well, I submit to you that the crisis in Ukraine—the existential threat to that proud and sovereign nation which is now in danger of being extinguished, the threat to stability in Europe that Russia now exerts, and the threat that China will exert to the world—yes, indeed, that may distract from climate change, but that is just reality. It is time we face the most pressing security threats that we have. And putting Americans back to work and lowering their gas prices and their fuel prices, making American families safer and more secure and making our enemies less secure, that is a good policy, and it is one that I hope we can have.

So, again, I thank my colleague and my friend, the Senator from Delaware, and I suspect it won't be the last time we talk about this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Iowa.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, 2 years ago this month, things started shutting down due to COVID. We shut down the American economy; basically, 22 million people, all of a sudden, were unemployed. I think we learned a lot in the last 2 years, and if we have another pandemic, I don't think we would do it that way again. I think we have learned a lot from mistakes, and a lot of bad mistakes resulted from that decision.

So, in March 2020, employees were furloughed or sent home to work from home; schools were closed; events were canceled. Everyone was told to stay home.

Now, 2 years later, a lot has changed in the fight against COVID. Tests and treatments have been developed. Anyone who wants a vaccine can get one. High-quality masks are available free for anyone who chooses to wear a mask. Those masks protect the one wearing it, regardless of the choices of others around them, whether they make a choice to wear a mask or not. Restaurants, theaters, and sports venues are filling back up again. Demand for air travel is above prepandemic levels.

Yet our Federal Government remains frozen in time, operating as if it were still the spring of 2020. Federal Agencies remain shuttered to the taxpayers who fund it. Expensive office buildings in downtown DC are sitting deserted. Fifty percent of the executive branch workforce is still working remotely, and most have no plans to return to the office.

Some Agencies, such as the Veterans' Administration, had previously announced efforts to return to in-person work. Those plans have been indefinitely postponed. The U.S. Capitol Building, where we are right now, is closed to the public, despite nearly every State capitol building in the country finding a way to reopen.

Federal employees are here, as we all know, to serve the taxpayers. Agencies like the Veterans' Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, and Social Security Administration that are responsible for processing benefits and tax refunds need to be fully operational. It is pretty plain and simple.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service offices, located in every Iowa county and most counties in most States, are responsible for signing up farmers for the Conservation Reserve Program and for crop insurance. Right now, those county offices are the busiest as farmers prepare for the upcoming crop year. These county offices still require employees to work from home. The U.S. Department of Agriculture employees have to meet with farmers to go over detailed maps of their land, making it nearly impossible even with video calls. I have received letters from farmers and USDA employees alike

who are frustrated that they can't have in-person meetings.

We all know that backlogs persist across the Federal Government and show no signs of abating. The National Personnel Records Center, responsible for providing service records to veterans seeking their benefits, has not been fully staffed since March of 2020. They have a backlog of records. Those requests are so massive that it would take years to correct. For 2 years now, the Agency has been processing emergency requests only while the other requests just pile up. This Agency needs employees in the office to function. They are currently staffed at just 25 percent capacity. They have announced that they will not return to full operational status until "the public health emergency has ended."

Now, who knows when that will happen?

I guess veterans waiting to finish their application for benefits will just have to wait as well.

Now, we know the abysmal record of the IRS. It only answered 9 percent of its calls, and those are called customer support calls. They are already warning that this tax filing season is going to be a mess for those filing, and there is still a backlog of unprocessed returns from last year. Yet thousands of IRS employees remain out of the office.

Those trying to become U.S. citizens have been stuck in limbo for years. Records that the USCIS needs to process their applications are locked in the Federal records centers which are only open 25 percent of capacity.

Even a few Agencies that have announced a plan to return to in-person work are not acting with any sense of urgency. The Social Security Administration announced the reopening of field offices in April. So I guess they figure those who have already been waiting for 2 years can wait another 2 months.

My staff who help Iowans with their casework told me that the average number of days to get assistance from a Federal Agency has doubled now to 335 days. It takes almost a year to get an issue with a Federal Agency resolved. This is completely unacceptable.

In the spring of 2020, it seemed as if there was no choice. Caution at that time was warranted. But I might remind the heads of Federal Agencies that even at that time, millions of Americans did not work from home. We saw it on television all the time, and it is still a problem in a lot of places—not enough nurses, doctors. But regardless, they didn't work from home. Nurses, doctors, and first responders still went to work in person. Employees at grocery stores, delivery drivers, and warehouse workers still showed up to work in person at the height of this pandemic, when nobody really knew what was all involved. For millions of Americans, working from home was never an option. Their jobs were essential and

they continued to work to keep our society and economy functioning.

While some Federal employees may be able to do their job effectively from home, the persistent lack of responsiveness from Federal Agencies make it clear that not all can work from home.

It is certainly not acceptable to tell taxpayers that they must wait for services that they need because those in charge are too skittish to make a return-to-work plan. It is past time for Agencies and their heads to set a date for employees to return to serving the people in person.

That is why I was very glad to join Senator WICKER in an introduction of a bill that he calls, by the acronym, the RETURN Act, which would require Agencies to share their plans to bring back the workforce within 30 days. I would urge my colleagues to support this bill and get the government back to work.

I also urge President Biden—and when I bring up the name “President Biden,” don’t forget that some of this stuff started under the Trump administration and continues today, so this is not just a Democratic problem when I say President Biden. But I also urge President Biden, now in charge, to follow the example of Iowa’s Governor Reynolds and show leadership on this matter. Iowa schools have been fully open in Iowa for more than a year. Governor Reynolds has ended the State’s public health disaster emergency proclamation. This doesn’t mean ignoring the spread of COVID-19 going forward. Of course, there should be accommodation for those at high risk, but there is absolutely no justification for maintaining a state of emergency as if it were still March of 2020.

Taxpayers have a right to have their government be responsive. Americans are back to work. It is time for the Federal Government to catch up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on Tuesday evening, President Biden delivered his first State of the Union Message to Congress and to the American people. His remarks were timely, strong, and statesmanlike.

He touched on many topics. I think his message really boiled down to two profound questions: How do we protect democracy in other nations, particularly in Ukraine, which is now entering the second week of a horrific and unprovoked invasion by Russian forces; and then he asked, how can we protect and preserve democracy here in America?

Dictators like Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping want the world to believe that democracy is nothing more than chaos and gridlock. The people of Ukraine are showing the world just how wrong these despots are.

I speak to you today from the comfort and safety of the Senate Chamber

in the United States of America, in Washington, DC, on a beautiful spring-like day. But I have to reflect for a moment on what life must be like at this very moment in Kyiv, in Ukraine, and what it must be like in Lviv; two cities in Ukraine that I visited where bombs are raining down on innocent people—children, women, and men who are losing their lives because Vladimir Putin believes that he can restore the Soviet Union to its borders.

We have all seen the video of the Ukrainian grandmother, armed with nothing more than sunflower seeds and courage, confronting Russian soldiers.

We have seen ordinary Ukrainian men and women and teenagers taking up arms, making Molotov cocktails, building barricades, taking down highway and road signs to confuse the invading Russians—even laying down their lives to stop Russian tanks and convoys.

In the back of my mind, I am sure I am thinking what many Americans are thinking: Could I do the same thing? Could I bring together the courage at this moment to stand up and fight if my home is at stake, if my family is at stake, if my country is at stake?

The Ukrainians are answering that message every minute of every day. Their courage and unity in the face of this Russian barbarity is inspiring the world.

For months, President Biden, Secretary of State Tony Blinken, and others in the Biden administration have worked behind the scenes to revitalize the NATO alliance. That critical alliance emerged after the last great land war in Europe in 1945 from the allies who came out of it and said: Never again. We will stand together to stop any invader against the NATO coalition, the NATO alliance.

The Biden administration has worked behind the scenes to remind this alliance that there comes a moment when you have to bring to this alliance the courage and direction to stand for the kind of democracy which we are all committed to.

Two years ago, we had a President who took Putin’s word over the assessment of America’s own intelligence Agencies and said he threatened to pull the United States participation out of NATO. Today, we have a President who actually shared U.S. intelligence with our allies to show Putin for the liar that he was from the very start.

NATO is more unified today—thank you, Vladimir Putin, for that—than it has ever been since the Cold War or the end of World War II. In fact, nations that are not formally part of NATO—Sweden and Finland, for example—have stepped up, in concert with the NATO alliance, to stand our ground and protest what is happening in Ukraine and to protect Europe—even Switzerland. Switzerland, which is famously neutral in all major conflicts, has come out of its neutrality and made it clear that they, too, stand against the Putin invasion.

In his State of the Union Address, President Biden urged Congress to approve billions of dollars in emergency military and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine. Sign me up. I will vote for that in a second, and I hope it comes soon. We need to agree on an aid package without delay and get it to the President as quickly as possible, not just for the humanitarian purpose but for the purpose of showing American unity with the resistance in Ukraine.

Ukrainian ordinary citizens are dying today because of Vladimir Putin and the bombs and missiles he is launching. As in every war, innocent Ukrainians will soon be facing greater suffering, greater hunger—even starvation. In the year 2022, is it imaginable that this is happening in Europe? We must rally the world to support those still in the Ukraine, assist our allies in neighboring nations who are housing and feeding neighboring Ukrainians who have fled their homeland. They estimate 800,000 to a million Ukrainians have left the country to find safety nearby.

Once again, let me thank the people of Poland. They have been opening their doors to the people of Ukraine for many years, and now, they are being called on in an extraordinary way to harbor these refugees and to take care of them at this moment of need. They are fleeing Putin’s war, and their numbers are growing dramatically. Some have suggested that a humanitarian airlift is a possibility. I don’t want to rule that out. Let’s explore that and see whether that is the best way to provide relief to those still in Ukraine facing Putin’s attack.

President Biden also promised to form a high-level task force to enforce U.S. sanctions against Putin, sanctions against Russia’s political elites, and sanctions against the corrupt oligarchs. That always brings a cheer here in America because people think that those who have been engaged in a kleptocracy in the name of personal greed should be held accountable. The thought that they are shopping in New York City or buying luxury condos and apartments in London or are harboring their yachts in any country is disgusting.

They need to pay a price. We shouldn’t just freeze their assets; we ought to seize their assets and hold them to rebuild Ukraine amid the devastation that the Russians are causing. Putin wants to be a czar. He and his cronies have become a pariah.

We will support Ukraine, but we also have work to do to strengthen our own democracy. We also have to remember that the bordering nations, the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, are especially vulnerable to Russian aggression. They, as members of the NATO alliance, know that they have friends at their back, but we have got to reinforce that to the people of those small countries who worry about their very survival.

Let’s take a look at home. As the President said, we have finally moved

to a safer direction with the pandemic. What a relief it was to go to the State of the Union Address and not wear a mask. Following doctors' orders, I might add, we listened to the medical experts who told us it is safe now not to be wearing a mask unless you are in a particular category of people. So most of us enjoyed one of the first public gatherings of a political nature where we were without masks and relieved to be so. We need to get back to our normal routines. We need to get our kids back in school—all of them—as quickly as possible.

We added 6 million new jobs last year, an alltime record. Things are good and positive, but inflation still is haunting this Nation. Wages are up; inflation is up. But it is not just our Nation. Inflation is a global problem. COVID-19 constricted the economy of the world. We are now emerging from it with new jobs, new businesses, new appetites, and new consumption. It is all good. But the cost of it is inflation.

I trust that we can bring this under control soon. Inflation is real. It is eating away at families' wages and savings and their faith in the future. When people work hard and can't get ahead, that is not just an economic problem; that can be a threat to our democratic spirit because it can open the door for anti-democratic demagogues.

In his State of the Union Address, President Biden laid out a plan to help American families afford big-ticket items that are essential; restore the enhanced child tax credit; help parents raise their kids and themselves out of poverty; help families with quality affordable daycare, childcare; expand family and medical leave so workers don't have to choose between caring for an ailing member of their family or a terminally ill parent and keeping their jobs; make healthcare more affordable and accessible; expand veterans' health benefits to cover more cancers and other service-related health conditions; and make prescription drugs more affordable by letting Medicare negotiate the price for medication.

Just one simple thing seems to be so popular across this country, cap the monthly cost of insulin at \$35—\$35. There are some 34 million people who are suffering from diabetes in this country, and of course their families are pulling for them every day. Think of all of the lives that could be improved if insulin were affordable. If a fourth or half of those who are diabetic have to now ration their insulin and risk their health, that is just wrong in a great nation. We should have insulin at affordable prices, and \$35 a month is that. It is an outrage that the price of insulin has been raised countless times to more than \$300 a vial.

As we support the Ukrainian people and their immense courage, I hope we will also find the courage to protect America's future.

TRIBUTE TO TOM BALANOFF

Mr. President, when it comes to the American labor movement, I selfishly

say all roads lead to Chicago. At the turn of the 20th century, workers from all walks of life and from every corner of the globe joined together in support of a simple but profound belief: An injury to one is an injury to all.

Few leaders have embodied that philosophy of solidarity and mutuality more than Tom Balanoff, president of the Service Employees International Union—SEIU—Local 1 in Chicago and the union's State council. If you are a worker in Illinois or a worker anywhere in America, there is a good chance you know Tom. He has devoted his life not only to building a strong labor movement but a more inclusive one.

Now, he is retiring from his post as president of Local 1. Though his leadership will be missed, he leaves behind a formidable legacy.

He helped build a global labor movement, led by essential workers. I am talking about janitors, security officers, airport staff, and nursing home and home healthcare workers who are reclaiming their power in the workplace.

As president of Local 1, Tom Balanoff transformed the chapter into one of the most influential forces in the American labor movement, and every step of the way, he held true to the chapter's progressive roots. Formed in Chicago in 1921, Local 1 was the first racially integrated union in America, bringing together immigrant janitors from across the globe who were fighting for better working conditions.

From that moment on, SEIU has been synonymous with merging the fight for workers' rights with the fight for social equality, and Tom has carried that legacy to new heights. He has been a steadfast champion of racial equality, gender equality, and protecting the rights of immigrant workers, and he has assembled the most diverse leadership team in SEIU's history.

Importantly, Tom's commitment to leading a socially conscious labor movement is steeped in a proud family tradition. It began when Tom's grandfather, James Balanoff, immigrated to America from Bulgaria and found work in a live chicken shop on Commercial Avenue in Chicago. Since then, each generation of the "Battling Balanoffs" has been grounded in a commitment to defending the rights of working people in and outside of the workplace.

The Balanoff family notes with pride that both Tom's father and grandfather attended the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre, where police opened fire on unarmed protesters at the gate of the Republic Steel Company in South Chicago, killing 10 men and injuring scores of others. If the police had hoped to fracture union solidarity, the massacre had the exact opposite effect on the Balanoff family and many others.

The Balanoff family has stood by workers. Tom's father, James Jr., organized steelworkers at a time when manufacturing was the dominant in-

dustry in America, and he eventually rose to be president of the largest steelworkers union in America, Local 1010, in East Chicago, IN. Tom has been helping lead the charge for justice for all since he was in middle school—middle school—when he and his siblings were the only White kids in class to protest racial segregation in American schools.

By the time Tom was ready to follow in his family's tradition of union activism, America's economy was going through a dramatic shift. Factories were shuttering and good-paying union jobs disappearing, shipped overseas. As more and more Americans left the factories and found new opportunities in airports, hospitals, nursing homes, offices, and coffee shops, Tom discovered his life's mission: defending the rights of the service workers who make our economy tick. To complement the commitment to economic and labor justice that runs in the Balanoff family's veins, Tom earned a master's degree in labor and industrial relations from the University of Illinois.

For decades, whenever and wherever his skills were needed to protect the rights of workers, you could count on Tom Balanoff to be there. He worked for the International Association of Firefighters here in Washington, for the Allied Industrial Workers in Chicago, and the Cement, Lime and Gypsum Workers in Kansas City before then-SEIU president, John Sweeney, spotted Tom's exceptional abilities and brought him to work for SEIU in Washington, DC.

Tom would go on to serve as trustee of John Sweeney's old SEIU local, Local 32BJ, in New York City. After a successful tenure there, he returned to Chicago, first as SEIU Local 46 trustee and eventually as president of both SEIU Local 1 and president of the Illinois State Council.

Tom always has seized opportunities to uplift disempowered workers. In 2005, he traveled down to Houston to help unionize janitors who were being paid as little as \$20 a day. In the heart of one of the most anti-union States in the country, Tom secured a contract for more than 5,000 janitors that doubled their pay.

Never content to settle, Tom kept the victories coming. Just a few months later, he helped thousands of janitors in Cincinnati, Columbus, and Indianapolis win a similar contract. It was a testament to his lifelong belief that, when working people of all identities come together, they win.

In the world of politics, my friend Tom has been a champion of the downtrodden. Several years ago, he helped launch the progressive caucus in the Chicago City Council, despite facing significant political headwinds. Today, more than a third of the city council members belong to that caucus.

Perhaps the most consequential decision Tom ever made as a political changemaker was in the year 2003, when he became an early endorser of a

community organizer running for the U.S. Senate by the name of Barack Obama. That endorsement helped pave the way for former President Obama's stratospheric rise in the world of politics.

And a few years later, Tom became the first labor leader in America to endorse Barack Obama's campaign for President. At the time, Tom and I were part of the same lonely club. I was the first U.S. Senator to endorse President Obama's candidacy in 2007, and for more than a year, I was the only Senator to do so. But Tom and I knew that Barack Obama was the leader this country needed.

We had seen firsthand the amazing work he had done in Chicago, helping displaced workers rebuild their lives and partnering with churches to launch job training. We knew that President Obama had what it took to unite our country. And without Tom's support, his candidacy may never have gotten off the ground.

Tom has said one of the leaders who inspired him most during his career was Nelson Mandela. A few years after the end of apartheid, Nelson Mandela wrote: "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Tom has dedicated his life to enhancing the freedom of others. He has stood for immigrant workers so that they could find a voice in the workplace. He has stood in solidarity with Black workers protesting against racial injustice. And he has worked to protect our communities and our children by demanding climate justice as well.

In one of his final acts as president of Local 1, Tom helped make history again. He handed the reins of leadership of that storied local to the first Black president of the SEIU's State council. Greg Kelley is a proven champion of working people in Illinois and across the country. And I might add that when I sat down for breakfast to congratulate Greg on this new opportunity, he reminded me that he had once been an intern in my Senate office—something I am very proud of.

Tom Balanoff is leaving his post at a promising moment for the working people of America. Since the beginning of the pandemic, service workers have come together to demand safer working conditions, higher wages, and better benefits.

For instance, in December, workers in Starbucks in Buffalo, NY, voted to unionize. It will be the company's first-ever union. And those workers will soon be represented by Starbucks Workers United, an affiliate of SEIU. This moment is a culmination of Tom's decades of service to the labor movement.

I want to thank Tom Balanoff for everything he has achieved for working families in Chicago, throughout America, and literally around the world. He has cultivated progressive political power and helped build a fairer econ-

omy that rewards hard work, not just wealth.

Loretta and I wish him a long, joyous retirement with his wife Hetty and their two kids.

Tom, I am looking forward to seeing you some day soon in Highland Park—watermelon juice on me.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Illinois.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I join the senior Senator from Illinois' affection for Tom Balanoff. He truly is an icon for labor, not just in Illinois but across the country.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, I rise today to speak on Ukraine.

With Russian troops firing outside, one Ukrainian woman was rushed outside and down out of the hospital by hospital staff. She was reportedly forced to give birth in a makeshift ICU in the hospital's basement with the sound of shelling surrounding her and with more than 100,000 Russian troops closing in on the area.

Elsewhere in Eastern Ukraine, mothers and their newborns are being hurried from neonatal intensive care units to makeshift bomb shelters, with the blankets swaddling their babies the only armor they have protecting them from the explosions and missiles crisscrossing the skies above them.

And all across Ukraine, little boys and girls are being born in subway car shelters, where some of the first words they hear are the cries of older children asking their own parents: "Mommy, will we die here?"

This is the everyday, every-moment waking nightmare for those who call Ukraine home right now. This is the new normal for new moms struggling to learn how to breastfeed their newborns; the new reality for new parents who, just last week, were trying to figure out how to afford both diapers and next month's rent, yet who are now just desperate to get their 1-week-old to the 2-week-old mark.

Why is this their new reality? For what? For a brutal and senseless war, a war as unjust as it is unjustifiable, as needless as it was unprovoked; a war whose violence has already torn families apart, yet whose cruelty has failed to fracture the unity of Ukraine itself.

Three decades ago, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States and Russia asked Ukraine to give up their nuclear weapons in exchange for security guarantees under the Budapest Memorandum. Ukraine did so voluntarily, handing them over instead of keeping them for their own defense because the Ukrainians so desperately sought peace and a democratic rule-based order.

Now, Russia has unilaterally broken that agreement, shattering that peace, and Ukrainians are once more laying down their lives for those same democratic principles.

The contrast is stark. Vladimir Putin is fighting for autocracy, using aggres-

sion and irresponsible, unprovoked escalation. Ukraine meanwhile is fighting for freedom.

Vladimir Putin believes himself to be some sort of neoimperialist, actively attacking neighboring democracies in an attempt to restore the Russian Empire.

Well, today, I want to speak to all the Ukrainians who found a home in Illinois and all of them who are strewn across Europe who have been forced to flee their nation in the wake of this violence and to all who are still in Ukraine praying that they will be able to wake up again tomorrow. Let me say this clearly: We are with you. The free world has not been fooled by Vladimir Putin's schemes and lies. We know that he is no hero for Russians or anyone else. He is a violent mobster and a bully, an egomaniac who uses his own power to abuse those with less power, a tyrant who uses the levers in his control to level those who are in his way, someone who uses weapons of war to murder children from afar, who turns toddlers into orphans from hundreds of miles away from the safety of his hallowed halls and heavily fortified mansions.

And yet, even with less power and less money, despite being outnumbered and outgunned, Ukraine has shown an incredible will to fight, putting up the fiercest of resistance against Putin and all that he stands for. That is because cowardice will always falter in the face of courage.

Ukrainians are redefining that word "courage" every day that they repel Putin's unprovoked aggression. That is because those fighting for reasons of ego and greed will always stumble in the face of those fighting so that their children can climb out of bomb shelters, so that their third graders can go back to school, so that their families don't need to live every hour, breathe every breath with the kind of fear that Putin thrives on.

And while I wish more than anything that Putin had never started this war and that those tanks had never rolled through their nation's streets, now the world will know the strength that typifies the Ukrainian people. They will know that Kyiv is synonymous with courage. They will know that though buildings in Odessa may crumble, the heart of the Ukrainian people will never waiver.

I am in awe of those men, women, and children. I am in awe of the troops doing everything in their power to protect them. And I am honored that the Illinois National Guard helped train some of those Ukrainian soldiers, with our Guard members advising Ukrainian forces just last year on how to improve their defense capabilities.

They are our brothers and sisters in arms; and their bravery, their resilience, and their determination over this past week has reminded the world that, as a certain retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and son of Ukraine once said in this very Chamber: Right matters.

They have shown us once more that a tyrant's lies will never blot out the courage and the goodness of a people determined to fight with and for one another.

That is just one reason why I support President Biden's request to dedicate at least \$6.4 billion in humanitarian and military aid to help those under siege in Ukraine, and it is why I am doing everything in my power to help keep Ukrainians in the United States safe by granting them temporary protected status.

Look, this is no 21st-century Cold War; it is Putin's war. It is a coward's war. Vladimir Putin is no savior. He will bring no glory to the Russian people. All he will bring them is travesty and economic ruin. He is no champion. He is an embarrassment, and the history books will reflect as much.

Twenty-eight years ago, when we asked Ukraine to give up those nuclear weapons, they did so, choosing peace, choosing to end the threat of bloodshed and destruction, choosing democracy. So now, we must stand with them as they so desperately seek peace once more.

They have chosen democracy time and again. Today and all the days that this terrible war wages on, it is time for this democracy to choose them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Texas.

ENERGY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, 15 years ago, an environmental group called the Clean Sky Coalition launched an ad campaign targeting coal. The ads featured faces covered in soot, with the headline: "Face it, Coal is Filthy."

Of the many controversial ad campaigns we have seen over the years, this doesn't seem particularly noteworthy, but these ads at the time sparked so much outrage that they were eventually pulled.

You might wonder why. An environmental group attacking coal is hardly front-page news. Why was this ad campaign different? This wasn't a matter of what was being said; it was a matter of who was saying it and why.

It quickly came to life that the group behind the ad was only about 2 weeks old, and the entire "pro-environment" effort was sponsored by a natural gas company seeking market share over coal.

As they say, politics makes for strange bedfellows—in this case, environmentalists and natural gas companies were both anti-coal, though, for very different reasons.

Knowing that the American people wouldn't respond to the argument that coal is bad because it means less business for the gas companies, this particular company found a deceptive and manipulative way to help shape public opinion.

Today, we are seeing a similar push but with much greater reach and far higher stakes. Just as one company used the guise of environmentalism to

attack its competition, Russia today is using the same tactic to boost its own profits and enhance its power.

The Office of Director of National Intelligence released a report in 2017 outlining some of Russia's disinformation campaign, on everything from U.S. elections to U.S. energy policy.

Of course, one of the Kremlin's favorite tools is its intentional propaganda outlet known as RT, formally known as Russia Today.

According to the report, RT ran anti-fracking programming in the United States that highlighted environmental and public health concerns. That is right. The propaganda arm of the Russian Federation, RT, was running anti-fracking programming in the United States. And you might ask yourself: For what purpose?

Well, the Director of National Intelligence report in 2017 said: This is likely reflective of the Russian Government's concern about the impact of fracking, which is a device to release natural gas from shale. The report said this is likely reflective of the Russian Government's concern about the impact of fracking in U.S. natural gas production on the global energy market and the potential challenges to Gazprom's profitability—Gazprom, of course, being the Russian Federation's energy company.

In short, all of this propaganda on Russia today and the opposition to fracking that they were encouraging would be good for the sale of Russian gas as opposed to natural gas produced here in the United States.

Russia can't seem to dominate the global energy market on its own, so it tries to take down the competition. It is not just a matter of dollars and cents; it is a matter of geopolitical power. This isn't a farfetched conspiracy theory that was crafted to combat the Green New Deal. As I said, it comes from an unclassified report from the Director of National Intelligence Office 5 years ago—2017.

Knowledge of this practice likely predates that report by a number of years. Reporting indicates that even Hillary Clinton spoke about those malign activities in a 2014 speech. She warned about what she called "phony environmental groups" that were funded by the Russians.

Russia is no stranger—in fact, they are expert at disinformation campaigns, and it doesn't abide by the same moral and ethical codes as the rest of the world.

The past several days have shone a light on how far Putin is willing to go to increase his own power. I am not suggesting that all environmental groups are funded by the Russian Government—not in the slightest—but we need to be clear-eyed about Russia's efforts to shape U.S. policies and European policies for their own benefit. We need to be hyperaware of the ways decisions made in Washington could benefit Moscow and empower Putin to the detriment of our allies in NATO and in Europe.

Unfortunately, the energy cards in Europe are currently stacked in Russia's favor. From day one, the Biden administration has taken hostile actions toward American energy suppliers and sent even more business to Russia.

Only hours after the President was sworn in on January 20, 2021, he canceled the permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline and halted all new energy leasing and permitting on public lands and waters. His administration effectively discouraged investments in new production, and now the United States is producing less oil and less natural gas. Production is, in fact, down about 1.2 million barrels a day in the United States, and that has to be made up somewhere because the world continues to consume energy. It needs energy in order to survive and to thrive. Where does it get that energy when the United States does not produce it? Well, you guessed it—it gets it from Russia, and it gets it from OPEC, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sadly, the buck doesn't stop there. In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration hasn't taken any effective action against Putin's energy weapon. Even though the administration has imposed sanctions on Russian banks and oligarchs, the country's lucrative oil and gas industry remains untouched. This is their primary financial asset.

I remember our friend John McCain, when he was still alive, used to joke that Russia is a gas station masquerading as a country, making the obvious point in a humorous way.

Russia continues to use these oil sales and natural gas sales and the captive markets that it has in Europe and in other places around the world in order to finance its war against innocent Ukrainians. There is no question but that the revenue from these exports—and we have seen the price of oil since Putin invaded Ukraine again—the price of a barrel of oil go up to \$115 a barrel. And there is no question that he is using the revenue derived from the sale of that \$115 barrel oil to kill innocent Ukrainians and to violate their sovereignty and to commit war crimes. We simply cannot continue to supply Russia with the blood money it needs to carry out its nefarious actions.

I am proud to cosponsor legislation that was introduced by our friend from Kansas, Senator MARSHALL, to ban the purchase of Russian oil in the United States. We have the great fortune of living in a resource-rich country, and there is no reason we should be importing Russian oil, now more than ever.

The President said he does not want to target Russian oil and gas because of the impact it will have on prices here at home. Well, we already know that because of inflation—because of shoveling money out of Washington, DC, out into the great American economy, inflation has already caused prices at the pump and prices in the

grocery stores to rise. Given the fact that gas prices have already risen 40 percent since President Biden took office, I understand his concerns, but that doesn't mean Russia should get a free pass.

Rather than identify ways to offset global demand for Russian energy, President Biden is inadvertently playing into Putin's hand. He is not calling for any more American-made oil and gas; he is calling for less.

Tuesday evening, President Biden said he wants to double America's clean energy production, including sources like wind and solar. I want to be clear, I support an "all of the above" energy policy. As I have said time and time again, Texas produces more energy from wind than any other State in the country, and it is an important part of our energy mix.

Every day, though, Texas is also making serious strides in energy innovation. This is the way to solve the problem; it is to innovate—not to regulate, not to tax, not to punish, but to innovate. We need to continue to find ways to innovate cleaner sorts of energy as we eventually transition, as we must at some point in the future—maybe decades from now—from petroleum-based products to some other source of energy.

I believe we need to continue to encourage innovation and diversification of our energy sources, but the fact remains today that renewables are not close to being able to supply the energy needs that our country demands. As it stands today, renewables—solar, wind—comprise less than 20 percent of our electricity generation. We know the Sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow, and when Mother Nature fails to deliver an adequate supply of energy, we need some other source of that energy, which means American-produced natural gas and oil.

If the President continues to wage a war on American oil and gas companies, we won't be able to protect ourselves or our allies.

One of the great things about the shale gas revolution is our ability to ship energy overseas to our friends and allies around the world. Unfortunately, the infrastructure has not kept up with the demand, leaving our friends and allies dependent on Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation for their only choice. We need to provide them more choices, and that means produce more here in America of clean-burning natural gas and then exporting that LNG to our friends and allies around the world so they aren't subject to Putin's extortion and demands.

Our top priority needs to be, when it comes to energy, to pursue independence. If we are able to bolster renewables, invest in carbon capture technologies, and take other steps along the way to reduce emissions, that is a great goal for us to pursue. But our No. 1 priority here, today, and now should be for the United States and our allies

to be energy secure. Right now, Europe is not energy secure; it is energy insecure because of the intentional acts of Vladimir Putin to make Russia the sole source of energy needs for countries in Europe and the policies restricting the development of our American-made energy here in the United States.

Just a few years ago, we were almost there when it came to energy security. In 2019, the United States became a net total energy exporter for the first time since 1952—a net total energy exporter. The last time we did that, it was 1952, and we maintained that status through the year 2020. But President Biden has, for reasons that are inscrutable to me, turned back the clock, taking us from an era of energy independence back to the oil crisis of the 1970s.

For decades, leaders in our country fought to reduce our reliance on foreign oil in anticipation of a global crisis exactly like the one we are facing now. We can't erase all of this progress we have made at the exact moment when we need that progress and that production the most.

Russia will always use energy as a weapon to tear down and intimidate its adversaries. The United States, conversely, must use it as a tool to lift up our allies and improve global energy security.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise today to decry yet again Putin's horrific actions against Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

As we bear witness to this deadly war and the consequences of this fossil fuel-funded invasion, I stand here again to denounce our own addiction to fossil fuels, along with Big Oil's relentless attempts to sabotage clean and renewable energy with the support of the Republican Party.

We can see in the coverage on television that the corporate profiteering by Big Oil and the American Petroleum Institute—the American Prevarication Institute—has once again played a part in war and destruction. And all are enabled by the GOP's fealty to oil, gas, and the fallacy of American energy independence. It is a tale of Republican hypocrisy, all funded by the fossil fuel industry. It would be absurdly comic if it weren't so horribly tragic.

Oil profits are the engine of Russia's economy, and natural gas is the geopolitical weapon it wields to threaten Europe's energy security. Nearly 40 percent of Russia's entire revenue is derived from oil and gas exports. Russia's tanks, armored vehicles, and artillery are funded by dirty fossil fuels purchased by other countries, including the United States of America. We are part of the funding of Vladimir Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine. We import oil from Russia. That oil goes to Putin and his cronies.

We have a moral moment here to provide all possible humanitarian aid to

the Ukrainian people. We have a moral moment here to cut off the money pipeline that is funding the missiles and the tanks that are destroying the homes of the Ukrainian people. And we have a moral moment here to reject the bad-faith arguments that are using this horrifying invasion to push for more drilling and money to fossil fuel companies, more lands and waters lost to the extraction of oil and gas, and more profit for Big Oil at the expense of American pocketbooks as our consumers are tipped upside down at the gasoline pumps all across our country, shaking money out of those pockets and sending it to Big Oil and sending it to Russia.

During 2021, Russia supplanted Mexico as the second largest exporter of crude oil and petroleum in the United States. On average, we bought more than 600,000 barrels of oil from Russia every single day of 2021. That is more than \$17 billion in American money going to Putin and his oil-soaked oligarchs.

We need to shut that money pipeline to Putin off before it does any more damage. That is why I announced my Severing Putin's Immense Gains from Oil Transfers, or the SPIGOT, Act this week. This bill would conclusively lift the veil on the Russian fossil fuel industry's corrupt dealings, while requiring the United States to eliminate carbon-polluting imports from Russia, moving the United States toward a future that is no longer dependent upon Russian oil but dependent upon our own renewable resources.

Global oil markets will adjust in the short term and long term to our import ban on oil. In the short term, we can actually supplant any supply disruptions with an additional release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. A 10-percent release of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve would backfill all of our Russian imports for 100 days or, to put it another way, we have a Strategic Petroleum Reserve of 600 million barrels. If we deploy 600,000 barrels a day, we can do it for 1,000 days in a row in order to make sure the Russians understand that we are dead serious about this.

Putin's \$630 billion central bank reserve that he thinks is going to protect him and his economy—well, that chest is filled with the spoils of oil and natural gas. A lot of it is money from American consumers. It is not just the sales to the United States or Europe but the interconnected dirty energy markets that feed off this fuel-soaked firestorm.

If we want to truly dial-up the pressure on Putin and his oligarchs, we need to end our deadly addiction to Russian fossil fuels and help our allies to do the very same thing. If we want to truly say no more to fossil-fueled war, we need to pursue the pathway to peace that is powered by domestic clean energy—international clean energy revolution led by the United States.

But instead what I hear from Republicans and on FOX News and from the

American Petroleum Institute is the same classic refrain of: “Drill, baby, drill.” Their insidious answer to war, to rising prices, to any crisis that they can use for their own purpose is more drilling and more leases.

Well, where has the “American Prevarication Institute” argument gotten us so far? One, skyrocketing exports, which hike up our prices to American consumers and feed into the global fossil fuel addiction; public lands and waters the size of Indiana that are locked down by unused fossil fuel leases, which companies squat upon to pad their own asset base and prevent renewable development; wars and national security threats, driven and paid for by Big Oil’s craving for more profits; climate chaos with more than \$700 billion worth of damages caused by extreme weather disasters in the United States over the last 5 years alone—\$700 billion worth of damage to us, to the United States, from climate in the last 5 years.

In 2015, Congress repealed the crude oil and gas export ban that had been in place for 40 years in our country so that we would keep our oil here. It was repealed with unanimous support of the Republican Party, on the other side of the aisle, and it allowed for the sale of U.S. crude and natural gas on the global markets.

I warned at that time it would be a huge mistake for our country to take that action. It was the worst of all worlds. It led to recordbreaking amounts of U.S. oil going to foreign nations without benefiting U.S. consumers. Pain at the pump was not eased and neither was our dangerous dependence on illicit foreign oil. And every time—every time—the Republicans call for more leasing, for more pipelines, for deepening our addiction to fossil fuels, they cry crocodile tears. They said we need to plunder our own lands and waters in order to lower prices for Americans, in order to ensure national independence from foreign oil sources, and then they exported that oil overseas. That was their plan all along. It wasn’t so secret. It was obvious because that is how the American Petroleum Institute—the American Prevarication Institute—works.

But that argument is now leakier than an old oil tanker, and it has been proven again and again. Every bill that came up approving the Keystone XL Pipeline—drilling for oil off our coast, selling off our public lands to whatever bidder showed up—I just asked the same thing every single time. In 2011, in 2012, in 2015, every time, I asked Republicans if they would agree to ban any exports from these projects and keep Americans from bearing the environmental and health burden from projects that provide no benefit to their own families, to their own States. And every time, the Republicans blocked or rejected my amendments—every time. That proved their arguments won’t hold water.

The Big Oil-backed push to extract more and more from American lands and waters was never about helping Americans at the pump. It was about pumping up the profits of Big Oil by getting a higher price out on the international marketplace for American oil, for American natural gas. That was their plan.

I am sick of the hypocrisy. I am sick of letting the American Petroleum Institute’s prevarication triumph over the truth. I am sick of watching Americans deal with the climate crisis with dirty air, with dirty water, with high gas prices just to help the oil companies make a buck by getting the highest price they can on the international market exporting American oil.

The Republicans’ push to use the crisis in Ukraine to line Big Oil’s pockets isn’t about addressing inflation at home. It is about inflating fossil fuel profits for Big Oil and big gas. In 2021, as gasoline prices increased by over 50 percent, ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, BP and Total Energies recorded their biggest profits that they had seen in 8 years.

In 2015, before the Republicans lifted the export ban—before the American Petroleum Institute got the Congress to vote to lift the ban on the export of American oil—China imported 191,000 barrels of oil from the United States. Now we send four times as much oil to China as we did back in the beginning of 2016 after the ban was lifted. To put it another way, we now import from Russia 600,000 barrels of oil a day, and we export to China 600,000 barrels of oil a day. What is wrong with that picture?

Our natural resources go to China, which they then use to fabricate products, which then they sell back to us undermining our own industries. And meanwhile, to make up for it, we import 600,000 barrels of oil from Russia and line the pockets of Putin, which allows him to buy the tanks, the planes, the infantry to assault and destroy a democracy in Ukraine.

This is a formula for failure of historic magnitude. And it was all so clear in that debate in 2015 when the Republicans led the effort to lift the ban on the export of our oil. It was oh-so clear what was going to happen, which is why I led the fight here on the Senate floor to block the lifting of that ban.

But I don’t want to hear from the Republicans with their crocodile tears how much they care about importation of oil from Russia because the bottom line is, we now import 8.6 million barrels of oil a day into the United States. We now have a crisis on our hands that we have to ultimately deal with. We export 8.6 million barrels of oil a day. We export out of our country 8.6 million barrels of oil a day.

So I hear from Republicans, “Oh, we need energy independence.” Well, what are we doing exporting 8.6 million barrels of oil a day? What is that all about? We know what it is all about. It is about the American Petroleum Insti-

tute. It is about Big Oil and Big Gas getting a higher price on the international market than they get on the domestic market. That is what it was all about from the very beginning. We have an opportunity here to stop, finally, Big Oil’s relentless quest for profit, which is funding Putin’s war at the same time it undermines our competitiveness with China.

More leases are not going to help our allies in Europe. We are already sending our oil to the highest bidder. Oil and gas companies already have leases the size of Indiana. Let me say that again. The oil and gas industry has bid for, over the last two decades, leases to drill on the property owned by the American people. And 53 percent of those leases have yet to be drilled upon. That is the truth. If they are serious—which they are not—they should start drilling. If their crocodile tears are real, in fact, they should just start drilling.

But, of course, they are not going to because they—by squatting on those lands—keep the price of oil high. They keep the price of natural gas high. And Japan and South Korea and China right now get more of our imports than any other country. If oil companies really wanted to help Europe get off Russian gas, they could do that right now with the resources they have. Let me say that again. Oil companies could help Europe get off Russian natural gas right now with the resources they have, but that is not what they want. They want unfettered profit, more public lands, and more power on the global market. And that profit—that oil-soaked power—has directly fueled Putin’s war on Ukraine.

So there is a different pathway, and we have to commit to destroying demand for Putin’s dirty energy business model by powering our country with clean, American-made renewable energy. And we can power our way to peace. An additional 16 million electric vehicles on the road in the United States would replace all of the oil that we import from Russia on a daily basis.

By passing the \$555 billion investment in clean energy and climate justice, we can build a “made in America” clean energy economy that delivers real energy independence. We can unlock a safe, healthy future and untether ourselves from Putin’s dirty profits. With tax credits and rebates in wind and solar, offshore wind, transmission, electric vehicles, heat pumps, and advanced domestic manufacturing, we can cut costs at home while cutting off Putin’s money pipeline. These investments would reduce our dependence on global oil markets and instead power our country through localized clean energy.

Our Federal climate policies, our Federal energy policies are exactly what we need in this moment—this national security, moral, and economic moment. We don’t need to power our Nation on Russian oil and sell off our forest and seas for an unnecessary Big

Oil land grab when they already have an area the size of Indiana that they are not drilling on because that increases their profits right now. We don't need to pay for Russia's invasion of Ukraine through Russian imports while paying higher prices at the pump to support profiteering and exports.

Let's wake up and win the renewable race to the future. Let's reject fossil-fueled greed for what that is—just greed. Let's protect our allies by destroying Putin's business model and delivering a future powered by domestic clean energy. That is the promise of peace. That is the promise to the whole world, to live on a safe planet. This is the promise we must make to the next generation of American young people and young people of the world, that we are going to power a clean energy revolution of wind and solar and all-electric vehicles and battery storage technologies, and we are going to destroy the business model of Russia and destroy the business models of other petrostates around the world with American innovation.

That is what the young people of our country and the world should expect from this generation and this Senate in 2022 on the floor of the United States Senate. That is the debate which we should have this year on behalf of a safer, more peaceful, more healthy, and more moral world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UKRAINE

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I call on this body to support the people of Ukraine fighting for their lives right now, today. Our mandate to act is clear.

Here is a little bit of history for this body. In 1994, in the months following the end of the Cold War, Ukraine was very fragile, working through the challenges of establishing and sustaining democratic government, while sitting atop the world's third largest stockpile of nuclear weapons, arms abandoned in the final days of the Soviet Union.

The United States intervened. In exchange for protection by the greatest superpower in the history of the world, Ukraine dismantled and surrendered their nuclear armament entirely. That agreement made the world a safer place, but Vladimir Putin called the United States to the carpet on our agreement last week. He gambled that America would again abandon our partners, as we did in Afghanistan. Putin gambled that U.S. treaties and agreements are no more valuable than the paper they are written on. He didn't bet against the Ukrainians, where he has every military advantage in a head-to-head conflict. His criminal invasion—now a bloody war of aggression against Ukraine—was a bet against American supremacy.

We cannot allow Putin to get away with it. The American people don't want us to either. Over 80 percent of Americans want us to do more to bring

down Vladimir Putin, stand with Ukraine, and end this conflict. They are not just feeling the impacts of the invasion at the gas pump, the grocery store, and in their retirement accounts; they feel it in their hearts.

We are the greatest Nation on the face of the planet. We stand for freedom. But our greatness and our standing are only as strong as our world. The American people know it, and they are looking for us to act.

Unfortunately, the U.S. response to this point is at best incomplete. It is tepid. It is halfhearted and impassive to the Russian bear that is looking to clamp down on the free world. This President and his administration are allowing the Germans, the Canadians, the Latvians, the Dutch, and the Swiss to lead in arming Ukraine.

This body, my colleagues, I implore you, we can do more, and we can do it better. We have seen the classified reports. We all understand, all 100 of us, that the Ukrainians are in dire need of our aid right now—not tomorrow, not next week, now. We also know the volume of not just combat capability but logistics supplies, secure communications equipment, and medical kits that we have purchased and staged all around the world to secure our partners.

My amendment does not spend another dime of taxpayer money; it calls on the Secretary of Defense to mobilize existing equipment, including provisions meant for Afghanistan, to arm Ukraine. This equipment will never be used by U.S. forces, but it is simply sitting in warehouses across the world. It belongs at the Polish border and in the hands of Ukrainians, who are fighting for their lives as I am speaking here on the floor today.

We know we have capabilities that we bought for the Afghans that could be loaded and flown to Poland to help our counterparts. That is open source. That information is out there. We have other capabilities as well that you all know belong in the hands of our Ukrainian friends. This administration's doctrine of appeasement has provided more arms for the Taliban than for the sovereign nation of Ukraine, and it is not even close.

The administration's abandonment of Afghanistan drew deserved condemnation from Democrats and Republicans in this body, but today and every day we don't act to arm our partners in Ukraine, we will be held to account. If we don't act now, this body's lack of immediate attention and action on this matter will be recorded in history.

We took an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." That obligates us to secure the homefront but also to stand with our allies and partners. Our oath demands Congress—just as it demands our men and women in uniform—protect the American people. That vow compels us to honor our commitments abroad, stand with freedom, and do

what the American people sent us here to do.

The fight for Ukraine doesn't end today. I will continue to advocate for already procured equipment and capabilities that are programmed, budgeted, contracted, purchased, and sitting in containers unused to go to those who need it the most.

Let's execute our oath today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

S.J. RES. 38

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I rise here today—we are going to be voting here later on. In a recent Monmouth poll in January, respondents were asked if they agreed with this statement: "COVID is here to stay and we just need to get on with our lives [and live with it]." Seventy percent said they did agree with this, including half of all Democrats.

We have been through 2 years where we have been from here to there on it—if an early believer, take it seriously. We didn't know what it was going to have in store for us, but I think we do now.

So often you hear: Listen to the data; look at the science. Too often, it has kind of been the political science of it.

Vaccinations and natural immunity mean that a large majority of our country is already protected. Hospitalizations, serious illness, and even death from COVID we can see are really going in the right direction, thank goodness.

As therapeutics continue to improve, it is clear that most Americans are right—COVID is here to stay. It is endemic. We can't marinate in fear. We can't have lockdowns. We can't have one-size-fits-all for across the country. We have got to get on with our lives.

President Biden recently extended the Federal state of emergency under the National Emergencies Act indefinitely. I would like to point out, he is not alone there in the sense that most of our Governors have done the same. I only think in Florida and in Iowa—I would say that I am guessing most citizens living in a lot of these places would like their Governors to do likewise. This state of emergency makes robust powers available to the President during a crisis. It includes forgiving student loans, imposing travel restrictions, capital investments in neighborhoods deemed to be disproportionately affected by COVID.

When this emergency was first declared 2 years ago this week, it was needed. It was uncertain. It was gratifying to see that, in a bipartisan way, in March of 2020, we came together. But we have learned so much since then. Now, I think it has become a burden.

I cite 3 weeks ago—it was in a classroom in Las Vegas. You ought to look it up. It was announced there—this is different, but it was a mandate. It was that you had to wear a mask in the classroom. The kids, I think, embodied

what this whole process has been about and that we are at a different place. It looked like they won the State championship in something.

We are there. Congress has a responsibility to vote on whether to approve these emergency declarations, as we will today.

Every State and community is easing COVID restrictions, and many of them have eliminated them entirely. Ideally, you fight something like this with maybe general guidance from here, but you let government where it is closest to the people dictate how this stuff should happen and how long it should be there.

It is past time for the President and Governors across the country to give up the extra powers granted to them under the COVID emergency declarations. If we are going to live with this virus and move forward as a country, we must end the national emergency authorization, and other Governors across the country should follow suit.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. I rise today in support of S.J. Res. 38, a resolution to terminate the COVID-19 national emergency declaration.

After nearly 2 years of living under this state of emergency, the American people are worn out and yearning to breathe free. They long for their God-given freedoms and for leaders to take their side.

We as a nation must begin to learn to live with COVID. The robust powers this emergency declaration provides the Federal Government are no longer necessary, and Congress must debate and ultimately repeal them in order to begin the process of unwinding the powers the government took hold of during the peak of the crisis.

As we contemplate what returning to normal means, most Americans accept that COVID will likely never be entirely behind us, and setting zero COVID cases as a victory condition is more harmful than good.

That being said, of course, we have to respect the virus and protect the vulnerable, but we also must accept that personal responsibility, not government mandates and restrictions, must govern our approach to the virus going forward.

We must repeal this emergency declaration today to deliver a symbolic victory to our citizens that normalcy is around the corner and that limited government and our constitutional rights still reign supreme. It is high time to stop talking about restrictions and the unknown. We must chart a new course to victory today that respects the virus and our freedoms.

Let's look back on the recent history of this national emergency declaration. On March 13, 2020, President Trump first declared the national emergency concerning the novel coronavirus disease outbreak.

Two days prior, following an alarming rate of transmission, the World

Health Organization had declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. Little was known about the rapidly spreading virus at the time, but President Trump's declaration was intended to grant himself, as Chief Executive, additional authorities to bolster the Federal Government's efforts to control the virus and ease the burden on our healthcare system.

Less than a week later, California became the first State to issue a statewide stay-at-home order, and lockdowns, mask mandates, school closures, and capacity limits commenced all across the Nation.

These were the earliest and most frightening days of the pandemic, when our understanding of the virus was minimal and all measures were needed to react to a globe contagion unlike anything seen in nearly a century.

Almost a year later, and just over a month after his inauguration, in February 2021, President Biden justifiably went on to extend the COVID-19 national emergency declaration for another year, a requirement under the National Emergencies Act that had it not been acted on, would have resulted in the automatic termination of the declaration.

At the time of President Biden's initial extension, only 50 million doses of the vaccine had been administered, and eligibility was largely limited to healthcare workers, first responders, and the most vulnerable populations. It would still be weeks or months before all adults would be eligible in all 50 States. Viral treatments and therapeutics were scarcely available to the public. All the while, the potentially more severe and contagious Delta variant was brewing in other regions of the world before it was detected and became the dominant variant here at home.

The situation on the ground in the United States has changed drastically since those early stages of the pandemic. Thanks to American innovation and Operation Warp Speed, the United States has now multiple vaccines available to all Americans over the age of 5. Everyone ages 12 and older is eligible for a booster shot if they want that inoculation.

In fact, more than 550 million shots have been administered in the United States, with 215 million people fully vaccinated, including 89 percent of individuals 65 and older. Additionally, the FDA has authorized two oral antivirals, and monoclonal antibody treatments are available for those at high risk of becoming seriously ill. Well done. Well done.

Omicron is now the dominant variant in the United States, accounting for 97 percent of the cases. While more contagious, Omicron tends to result in more mild symptoms in infected individuals. In Kansas, the daily case average in recent weeks has decreased 99 percent. Let me say that again. The daily case average has decreased 99 percent. Hospitalizations are down about

80 percent, and deaths are down 98 percent. Nationally, we are seeing drastic decreases in these same three categories as well. But perhaps even more importantly, today, at least 94 percent of Americans have some level of immunization.

Accordingly, States in every corner of the Nation are repealing indoor mask mandates, including blue States that have most adamantly enforced them. Yes, indeed, freedom-loving Americans who are worn out by the draconian lockdowns and mandates are giving a sigh of relief.

Despite all these advances in our position of a much greater understanding of the virus, President Biden stealthily extended the national emergency declaration once again on a late Friday afternoon 2 weeks ago.

Next, let us lay out some of the effects these policies have had on the American people and why we must abandon this approach, shrink the Federal response, and move toward a more nimble and effectively locally based community strategy that allows individual citizens and local health officials to exercise and promote old-fashioned self-responsibility and individual choice.

The first COVID-19 wave in the spring of 2020 took the world by surprise. The spread of the cases globally and in the United States was met with government-ordered lockdowns abroad and here at home. In just a few weeks, lockdowns put more than 10 million Americans out of work, with 6.6 million people applying for unemployment benefits in the last week of March alone.

These lockdowns, some of which extended for months in certain States, and the subsequent mandates and requirements that still remain in place have had dramatically negative impacts on our quality of life and had been minimally beneficial.

A recent study from Johns Hopkins University found lockdowns only reduced the COVID-19 death rate by 0.2 percent—0.2 percent—2 out of 1,000. These researchers noted that while “lockdowns have had little to no public health effects, they have imposed enormous economic and social costs where they have been adopted.”

These costs have been felt at an alarming rate in a number of aspects of American life. Drug overdose deaths rose by 30 percent in 2020, hitting the highest number ever recorded. Symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder and the use of mental health care among adults increased by 36 percent from August 2020 to February of 2021.

The numbers for our children are even more troubling—our children, our grandchildren. The CDC found between March and October 2020, emergency department visits for mental health emergencies rose by 24 percent for children ages 5 through 11 and 31 percent for children ages 12 to 17 years.

In addition, emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts

increased nearly 51 percent among girls ages 12 through 17—51 percent—in early 2021 compared to the same period in 2019.

School closures in the 2020–2021 academic year left students, on average, 5 months behind in mathematics and 4 months behind in reading. Disadvantaged and low-income schools disproportionately, of course, felt that impact.

These societal ills have been compounded by mask mandates, vaccine mandates, and isolation orders. Keeping this emergency declaration in place will cause—will cause—public health officials and governments at all levels to maintain the possibility of allowing them to remain or resurrecting them.

And much like America's alcohol prohibition a century ago, these mandates will make criminals out of all of us, as we all are guilty of disregarding them at one time or another. This only creates more disrespect for law and order. We can't allow this to happen.

And I have to add this: The mortality rate from COVID for the United States is 75 percent higher than Sweden's—75 percent higher than Sweden's—despite Sweden issuing no shutdowns or mask mandates. Not surprisingly, Sweden's economy is humming ahead of ours at a 5-percent rate above prepandemic levels.

All this being said, once again, I beg this administration and the national media to stop fearmongering, to share all the science, and, please, let our people go.

The Democrats' COVID obsession has also resulted in out-of-control spending and massive debt. Congress has appropriated \$6 trillion. That is 6 times 10 to the 12th—6 with 12 zeroes after it—\$6 trillion to respond to this crisis. This means Federal spending to combat the pandemic has well surpassed the \$4.1 trillion the United States spent waging World War II. Throw in the roughly \$1.5 trillion on World War I, the Korean war, Vietnam, and the Gulf war combined, and it still would not exceed what has been spent on COVID relief.

Let me say that another way. We borrowed from my children, my grandchildren, your children and grandchildren. We borrowed and spent more money on COVID than all the major wars combined form the 20th century.

While the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act passed with nearly unanimous consent in both this body and the House, President Biden and the Democrats in Congress insisted more was needed.

Despite warnings from economists on all ends of the political spectrum that it would harm our economy, Democrats rammed through a highly partisan \$1.9 trillion more of a spending package that has overheated our economy. This bill was in response to a problem that was already fixing itself.

Shockingly, I have to point out, only 9 percent of this funding was related to healthcare, and less than 1 percent was dedicated to vaccines. Instead, the funding, like the drawdown, unneces-

sary, heavy-handed health restrictions, was meant to implement drastic changes in our way of life and system of governance and expand Big Government socialism, not to mention it has resulted in the highest level of inflation we have seen in this country in 40 years. As one economist put it, the U.S. stimulus has been in a "category of its own" and has resulted in more inflation than almost any other advanced economy in the world.

With hundreds of billions of dollars of funds for schools and State governments unspent, the President announced during his State of the Union that he plans to send a supplemental COVID relief funding request to Congress. Our Nation's emergency posture to this virus is driving out-of-control spending, fueling inflation, and strapping our children and, again, our grandchildren, with more than \$30 trillion in debt.

Indeed, at this time, our national debt is a greater threat to our Nation than COVID. This alone is another reason to end this declaration.

Now let me turn to the executive's emergency authority—the executive branch's emergency authority and Congress's role in delegating those powers. Since article II of the Constitution does not grant the President emergency powers, all such authority is granted by Congress. Many of these authorities are provided through three laws: the National Emergencies Act, which is what we are focused on today; the Stafford Act; and the Public Health Service Act.

All three have been applied by this administration to the COVID response, but the National Emergencies Act grants congressional oversight over a declaration by the President. Before I get into the need to exercise that congressional authority, let me quickly discuss what repealing this emergency declaration will not do. Let's talk about what it won't do.

First, terminating this emergency declaration will not impact the title 42 order currently in place and being exercised at our southern border that allows border officials to expel illegal aliens. Again, this will not impact title 42. The crisis at the United States-Mexico border has been fueled by this administration's decision to resume catch-and-release, halt construction of the border wall, and promise half a million dollars to immigrant families who broke our laws.

As a result, the number of illegal aliens crossing our southern border is at the highest level in more than 20 years under President Biden.

I can assure you, Republicans' intention is not to take away the only tool being utilized at our southern border to stem the tide of illegal immigrants pouring in. The authority for this order lies within the Secretary of Health and Human Services' public health emergency declaration made on January 31, 2020, under the Public Health Service Act.

The most recent internal review of title 42 submitted by CDC Director Walensky on February 2 found that the order needed to remain in place. Republicans agree—we agree—that the external threat of COVID coming across the border unchecked from other nations preserves the need for this order to remain in place and for us to pass legislation outside of these emergency declarations to further secure our porous border.

Second, terminating the emergency declaration would not impact the waivers issued by the HHS Secretary. Let me say that again. Terminating the emergency declaration would not impact the waivers issued by the HHS Secretary. These critical flexibilities—including increased access to care via telehealth—have been crucial to our ability to combat the virus. The telehealth waivers will not be impacted by removing the NEA.

And, in fact, I am a cosponsor of legislation to make many of these successful telehealth waivers permanent, and we must do so after the public health emergency expires, and we return to normal.

Until today, Congress has failed to fulfill our duty and oversight responsibilities laid out in the National Emergencies Act, ceding immense, unchecked power to the executive branch. We must, as the Democratic Representative from the great State of Kentucky, Romano Mazzoli, stated when this bill was being debated in 1975. I will quote Representative Mazzoli, the Democrat from Kentucky.

Consciously and deliberately [we must] force ourselves to come to grips periodically—and ultimately—[deal] with the vexing problems of national emergencies. The blame as well as the glory will be on the shoulders of the Congress. . . . But that is as it is supposed to be—that is the responsible course.

The blame and the glory should remain on the shoulders of Congress, and that is why we are here today. We are here today to debate this responsible course moving forward.

While the COVID-19 emergency declaration has not utilized all powers provided to the President, major actions have been taken as a direct result of the declaration. Our Ready Reserve remains active, our Coast Guard is stretched, and the staggeringly expensive student loan relief remains in place.

More importantly, though, this declaration drives our Federal Government to maintain its massive emergency response infrastructure and drives leftwing politicians in Congress to push harmful mandates and unrestrained spending.

These powers are no longer needed. We have tools to minimize the impact of this virus and truly live with it.

This idea of living with COVID is not a fringe position held by Republicans. Democratic New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy recently said it was time to, and I will quote him, "learn how to live" with it. Democratic Governors in

Nevada, Rhode Island, New York, California—I will say California again—Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, and Oregon have announced they are lifting certain mask mandates and easing other restrictions.

Internationally, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand are working towards “living with COVID” phases. Just last week, the British Prime Minister announced that part of his “living with COVID” plan would even include the repeal of legislation and legal requirements for those who test positive for COVID to self-isolate.

While President Biden claimed during his State of the Union Address that—and I will quote him—“we are moving forward safely, back to . . . normal routines,” his actions don’t match his words. His call for a “reset” and claims to be loosening government intrusion into our lives by way of COVID restrictions are only half-truths. We know this because all these next items are true:

Despite being presented with the devastating effects of lockdowns, school and indoor mask mandates, and other restrictions, the President renewed the Federal Government’s national emergency declaration again. In fact, the President just hours ago issued a veto threat of this resolution should it make it to his desk—the President promising a veto before we even have this vote on the Senate floor.

The CDC continues to hide data points they believe would be “misinterpreted” by those outside of the swamp they view as ignorant. The people—the people—are so much smarter than they are given credit for. This data gives information on who is receiving booster shots, the effectiveness of vaccines for certain age groups, and figures related to reinfections. This allows the Federal Government to suppress information that contradicts their one-size-fits-all policy and approach and preserves intrusive government policies.

Next, despite the President patting himself on the back for relaxing mask mandates, we still have in place the CDC order that requires masks on airplanes, in Ubers, and on your children’s schoolbuses.

The administration has only withdrawn one of their vaccine mandates, the OSHA mandate on employers with more than 100 employees, after—only after—the Supreme Court struck it down. Three mandates are thankfully enjoined by the courts, but deadlines for the CMS mandate on healthcare workers are beginning to be enforced.

Just yesterday, on this floor, 44 Senate Democrats voted to keep the mandate in place despite its constitutional violation of State police powers, harm to an already weak healthcare workforce, and outdated science that guided the promulgation of the rule.

Next, the President’s National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan asks Congress to approve funding that would expand the production of vaccines to 1 billion doses a year. That equates to

three doses for every person—three doses per American. Do they plan to mandate these? Dr. Fauci recently led us to believe that indeed might be the case, and I will quote Dr. Fauci: “The potential future requirement for an additional boost . . . is being carefully monitored in real time.”

While we prevented separated members of the military from receiving dishonorable discharges for choosing not to get the vaccine, the Defense Department has kicked out hundreds of our bravest service men and women.

How can the President downplay the progress we have made in our ability to combat the virus? And, more importantly, how can he continue to pursue an invasive and coercive Federal response that has eroded our freedoms and spread misery throughout this Nation? Does he not hear the cry of the people who have given him the power to be President?

As the United States enters the third year of COVID-19, 70 percent of Americans agree that it is time we accepted that COVID is here to stay and that we just need to get on with our lives—70 percent of Americans. We can’t get Americans to decide where to go to lunch together, let alone on an issue this big, and 70 percent of Americans maintain these policies are no longer about science or about public health or the will of the people. That is all a guise.

This is about power and using a global pandemic to grow government and lurch our Nation toward socialism. The suffering caused by the government’s actions has had an immense impact on the daily lives of Americans in ways that will take years to correct, if ever.

We now know that these actions were wrong. The same people who argued to keep this emergency declaration in place are the same people who were wrong in their advocacy for these government actions.

They were wrong when they told you not to be afraid to go to Chinese New Year celebrations when the first cases were detected in the United States.

They were wrong when they said it was racist to suspend inbound travel from China.

They were wrong when they called you a conspiracy theorist for believing it was possible for this virus to have developed in nature or to have leaked from a laboratory.

They were wrong when they told you lockdowns must remain in place.

They were wrong when they told you masking your children was the only way they could attend in-person classes safely.

They were wrong when they told you massive stimulus spending was necessary and would not lead to inflation.

They were wrong when they told you that inflation would be transitory.

And they were wrong when they denied that natural immunity provided a strong defense against COVID infection and severe symptoms. They were wrong when they denied that natural immu-

nity provided a strong defense against COVID infection and severe symptoms.

They have been wrong nearly every step of the way during the response to this pandemic—always a day late and a dollar spent in the wrong direction. Yet here they are, these same individuals who now reside in the White House and hold majorities in Congress, telling us it would be detrimental to our own health to repeal the President’s national emergency declaration. Their motivation is not genuine. It is a blatant effort to further extend the massive accumulation of power that the Federal Government has extended across America for the last 2 years.

Today, the Senate has an opportunity to act to rein in this control and reassert our article I authorities. The Constitution demands it. The authors of the National Emergencies Act demand it. The protection of American liberties demands it.

We have the tools to protect the vulnerable and our populous is near full herd immunity, with 94 percent of Americans having some level of immunity now. Let’s not listen to those who have wronged us and have been proven incorrect countless times before throughout this pandemic. Let’s listen to common sense and reason. Let’s listen to science, and let’s listen to the people.

Let’s abandon the COVID obsession and groupthink that has infiltrated the highest ranks of government, and let’s return the ability to make decisions related to the virus back to the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from Montana.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3214

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, all in 1 year, President Biden killed the Keystone XL Pipeline; he banned new oil and gas leases on Federal lands; then, of course, he ended up begging OPEC and Russia to produce more abroad and then gave the green light to Russia’s Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. These actions diminished American energy security. It hurt our allies and empowered our adversaries. They put the United States and our partners in the cross-hairs of Russia and Vladimir Putin.

At the State of the Union Address, I heard the President say we need more “made in America,” “made in America,” “made in America.” What I didn’t hear him say was that we needed more “made in America” energy or more “made in America” oil and natural gas.

My bill, the Supporting Made in America Renewable and Traditional Energy Act, or the SMART Energy Act, will help get the United States back on track and ensure that our country will remain not only energy independent and energy secure but that it will become a global energy dominant player.

My bill supports an “all of the above” American energy portfolio. I want to emphasize that. It is an “all of the above” American energy portfolio.

It doesn't exclude renewables; it includes renewables by requiring the Biden administration to restart oil and gas leasing and kick-start renewable energy development on Federal land and waters because now, more than ever, we need to be supporting American energy development to help lower energy costs for American families and support our allies.

Take a look at what is happening in Europe and Russia as it relates to energy prices and national security, all of which, of course, are interconnected. We should examine what Germany has done over the course of the last 10 to 15 years as an example of what not to do. By the way, it takes, I guess, a war on Germany's doorstep to suddenly provide clarity for the Germans to see, yes, they need to be increasing their investment in NATO. Now, they just in the last 2 weeks decided they are going to permit two new LNG ports. While looking in the rearview mirror, they shut down 11 nuclear plants, and they shut down coal plants. They were not moving forward with LNG plants. Instead, they wanted that Nord Stream 2 Pipeline built to Russia. Well, they have changed their thinking on it.

We can't let America get to that same point of following this path of the very dangerous ideology of shutting down "made in America" energy because, as Europe has continued to stop investing in traditional energy, they have become more dependent on adversaries like Russia for energy, and now, the cost of energy is skyrocketing. Sadly, this, indeed, is a sneak peek into the path that America is headed down if the Biden administration continues to stonewall traditional American energy development. We can't let this happen.

Listen, I support an "all of the above" energy portfolio. I am grateful I represent a State that has "all of the above energy." We have bright skies; we have solar potential; we are a head-water State; we have amazing hydro resources; we have got winds that come off our mountains for wind energy. Yet an "all of the above" approach includes not just renewables but oil, gas, nuclear, and coal.

That is why it is critical that we pass my bill today to promote renewable and traditional energy here in the United States. It is good for growing jobs, strengthening our energy security, supporting our allies, and keeping a reliable and cost-effective source of energy for the American people.

The question we should all be asking ourselves is, Do we want the world to be looking to Russia for energy or to the United States for energy?

My bill supports the latter, and I urge my colleagues to pass it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of S. 3214 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. Further, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be

considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, I rise today to object to the motion from the Senator from Montana to pass this bill through unanimous consent.

This push to put every square inch of Federal land up for sale is not a new one. It has been the plan of the American Petroleum Institute from the beginning of recorded time. It is not helping the Ukrainians in their fight, and it is not helping our European allies. It is helping inflate the profits of big oil and big gas companies.

In 2021 and 2020, we exported more crude oil and petroleum than we imported. Since 2015, when every Republican on their side lifted the ban on the exportation of American oil—that is what they wanted is their plan, that of the American Petroleum Institute—we now export 8.6 million barrels of oil out of our country every single day. Without question, whenever I have heard anything about energy independence, well, that was the natural consequence of lifting the ban on the exportation of our oil, and now, it is up to 8.6 million barrels a day.

As a matter of fact, in 2021, we actually exported 650,000 barrels of oil a day to China as we were importing 600,000 barrels of oil a day from Russia because that is what the American Petroleum Institute wanted—a globalization of this oil market—with the American consumer and the American economy just caught, ultimately, in an economic crossfire, which is where we are right now. We give China our natural resources so that they can produce a finished product. Meanwhile, we have to import 600,000 barrels of oil from Russia to make up for that, which they then use to pay for the planes for the navy and for the infantry, right now, working to destroy the democracy of Ukraine.

So the answer is for the United States to chart a new course. In 2021, 2020, 2019, and 2018, we exported more natural gas than we imported. We don't have a fossil fuel supply problem in the United States at all. We are supplying fossil fuels all around the world right now. We are sending our fuel to Japan, to China, to South Korea. Fossil fuel companies are sending their products anywhere they can get the highest price—raising costs for all of us at home.

By the way, again, understand that that is the key. Once they get it out of the United States and put it on a ship—natural gas or oil—they then get the highest price in the world for it, but they leave behind less oil and natural gas in the United States. With that diminished supply, that leads to an increase in prices for consumers for home heating oil, for gasoline, and for the

natural gas to heat their homes. That has been their plan since 2015, to lift the ban on the exportation of American oil and natural gas.

Still, they are unfinished, and they want to be able to drill and frack every single inch of our national forests, our public lands, our coastlines. They want to add to their stockpiles of leases that they are squatting on already. Here are the numbers. It is absolutely astounding. Again, it is all part of the American Petroleum Institute's control of our domestic and foreign policy.

Right now, onshore, in our forests and fields and plains, 53 percent of all of the leases that the American Petroleum Institute—Exxon, Chevron, you name it—already has one. By the way, it is 2 bucks an acre—2 bucks an acre. They are not drilling on them, and they have had their leases for 5 years, for 10 years, for 15 years, for 20 years.

Then we hear from the American Petroleum Institute that we need more land that you will lease to us on public lands that we can buy for a couple of bucks, and we promise—we promise—we will start drilling on it, but just give us more land—even though they already have an area the size of Indiana that they have bid for and now, from the American people, on public lands, have the right to drill. But they are not doing it.

Offshore is even worse. On our pristine coasts from Maine to Florida, 77 percent of the existing leases which the American Petroleum Institute has, they haven't even drilled on them yet. They are sitting there. Yet they are coming here and saying: We need even more that we can get at this bargain basement price of a couple of bucks an acre.

That is their business plan, and it is just so disingenuous for the American Petroleum Institute to just continue to try to exploit crises while they, themselves, are not doing their own job, because it is inconsistent with the huge profit-making goals which they have.

Using the crisis in Ukraine and rising oil prices to push for more pro-oil policies doesn't make sense. Our oil addiction is what added more than \$17 billion to Putin's pockets last year. Let me just say that again. We in the United States, at the gas pump, sent \$17 billion to Putin for his war machine just in 2021.

So let's just not pretend that we need to plunder every inch of our country in order to protect our allies or to lower gas prices. Oil and gas companies want to frack and extract so they can continue to send American fuel abroad while they plead energy independence and send that to China as the highest bidder.

That is not our plan. It can't be our plan. We have to have a true, clean energy independence that helps rid the world of Putin's business model and leads the way to an American-led, international clean energy revolution. The Republicans right now are blocking the clean energy package that we have in the U.S. Senate.

For every 16 million all-electric vehicles we deploy, we back out the equivalent of all the oil we import from Russia. With the next 16 million, we back out all of the oil we import from Saudi Arabia. That is the plan for young people in our country and for young people around the world. If we do that in coordination with our allies, that destroys, in the long term, the business model of Russia and of the Middle Eastern nations that have us addicted to their oil.

I just think that we are at a critical time, and we need big plans; but one of them cannot be that we are saying to the oil industry that you can exploit this crisis, because if they are serious—and I will just finish on this note.

When we debated in January of 2015 the Keystone Pipeline, I made the amendment here on the Senate floor, saying, if we build this Keystone Pipeline, that we have to keep all of the oil here in the United States—it is the dirtiest oil in the world, the tar sands of Canada. In a straw that they wanted to build right through the United States, with all the environmental risks taken by the American people, they would then export it. So my amendment said, if we build this pipeline and take all of the environmental risks, that the oil should stay here.

Every single Republican voted not to keep it here. They all said that that oil can be exported to any country in the world.

Secondly, back when I was in the House of Representatives, I would make the amendment each year. If you want to drill off the coastlines of the United States, then any oil which is found has to stay here in America; otherwise, the beaches and the fishing industries of the United States take all the risks, and the oil companies reap all of the profits by putting that oil and natural gas on the international markets.

Every Republican voted no. We are not going to have a ban on the exportation of that oil and gas even though it endangers the drilling and would endanger the beaches and the fishing industries of the United States.

So it has always been about an export strategy, and that is all this is as well. It is an attempt to get more leases that they would then hoard—squat on—wait for the price to go higher, and then in their own good time, they would begin to drill, but it would only be in their interests, not our national interests.

As a result, because of the long, unfortunate history of the relationship between the American people and the American Petroleum Institute, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, clearly, we have two different philosophies and strategies moving forward as we deal with the crisis that is unfolding in Europe and Ukraine.

We need more “made in America” energy. It is the Green New Deal, purely clean energy and not including an “all of the above” energy portfolio that I believe is a very dangerous direction to head, as we have seen exactly what Germany has encountered over the course of the last 10 years.

They marched down that path, and now, they find themselves in a very, very dangerous position. And they have had to reverse the course because they had the same kind of ideals that the Senator from Massachusetts was talking about. Now, they have had to wake up and look at the reality of the situation and change course.

By the way, it is not every inch. This bill simply says we need four lease sales. We are asking for a minimum of four lease sales. That is what we are asking for.

And when the President shuts down the Keystone Pipeline, shuts down oil and gas leasing in this country, combined with what we see going on with FERC being major impediments to building more pipelines, combined with nominees and those who have been appointed in the Biden administration and who are very anti-oil and gas, it chills the capital markets. This is a long-term direction we have got to continue to go down.

Again, this bill also includes wind, solar, and geothermal priorities as part of it. So it is all of the above.

I just think it is very dangerous to say we are going to bet the Nation’s future on only one segment of the energy economy and not also ensure we have oil and gas and coal as part of our broader portfolio.

Just ask the Germans if they thought that was a good idea when they went down this path 10 to 15 years ago.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, just in response to the Senator, we have never had an “all of the above” strategy, truly. We have had an “oil above all” strategy. That is the problem that we have. That is the hole that we have dug for ourselves.

It is time for the United States to finally put a plan in place that backs out the imported oil from Russia, backs out the imported oil from the Middle East, and the only way we can do it is if we pass the climate provisions in President Biden’s plan.

By 2030, the goal is to have 40 percent of all of our vehicles being all electric—no oil, no gasoline. Do you know what that does? It destroys the business model of Russia. It destroys the business model of the countries in the Middle East that need that petrol dollar from the American consumer in order to fund all of their nefarious activities.

Germany is going 65 percent all-electric vehicles by the year 2030—9 years from now, 65 percent all electric.

So if we put this together and we are serious about it right now, we will de-

stroy the long-term threat fueled by our own addiction to energy, Europe’s addiction to fossil fuels, and it will just send us on a clean energy future.

But in order to do it, we need a true “all of the above” strategy, not “oil above all.” That is how we got here. And if we are going to do it, we have to pass that comprehensive clean energy package out of the Senate this year and put it on President Biden’s desk.

That will scare Putin and his cronies vacationing in Sochi. That will put a fear into the hearts of the oil monarchs of the Middle East because they will know once and for all that we are serious about not allowing our American consumer dollars to fuel conflicts around the world.

Again, I appreciate the time.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled vote: Senator LANKFORD, myself, up to 5 minutes; Senator MARSHALL for 2 minutes; Senator SCHUMER, up to 5 minutes.

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

S.J. RES. 38

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, we are about to vote on an issue dealing with the national emergency here in the United States dealing with the pandemic.

There has been no great shock that we have functioned under a lot of additional authorities that are happening, but I want to provide a bit of clarity into this conversation as well.

The measure that we are dealing with right now dealing with COVID and the pandemic that is here, we also know there is a global pandemic; and improving the medical situation here doesn’t necessarily mean improving the medical situation everywhere, nor should it change what is called title 42.

A quick explanation on this. The Surgeon General, the CDC, and HHS all work together with the President to be able to recommend that, based on the public health crisis that we are currently under, title 42 states this:

Whenever the Surgeon General determines that by reason of the existence of any communicable disease in a foreign country there is a serious danger of the introduction of such disease in the United States, and that this danger is so increased by the introduction of persons or property from such country that a suspension of the right to introduce such persons and property is required in the interest of the public health, the Surgeon General, in accordance with the regulations approved by the President, shall have the power to prohibit . . . the introduction

of persons and property from such countries or places [they] shall designate.

That is title 42.

Why that does matter to us? Because in the last 2 years, our country along our border has been managing much of the border based on title 42. Now, it is no secret to anyone in this room—I would assume everyone in this room knows—we had the highest number of border encounters—that is people illegally crossing our borders—last year in the history of our country. Over 2 million people illegally crossed our borders. What some may not know is, last year, 900,000 of those were brought into the system in the United States; 1.1 million of those were turned around at the border with title 42 authority; meaning, because of the pandemic, because of the risk and the crisis, the introduction of additional individuals who are likely to have COVID, they were turned around at the border.

The concern is—and I have raised this concern over and over with CBP—what is your plan postpandemic for the title 42 authority?

Now, I want everyone to think about last summer—last summer what was happening in Donna, TX, last summer what was happening in multiple places along the border where our facilities were overrun with people and not manageable. That was when we were introducing 900,000 people into the country. What does that look like this summer if there are 2 million people in that group coming across?

That is why I want to make it very clear that what we are voting on now has no effect on title 42 authority. We continue to have serious health concerns, as title 42 states, in many other countries; and I have continued to encourage DHS to have a plan in place. Currently, they do not. It appears that their plan is, once title 42 goes away, all 2 million will get into the country. I think that is a serious problem, and I think it is something we should address.

In the meantime, we should not relieve title 42, and this vote does not change anything with the Surgeon General's decision on title 42. By the way, it is a Surgeon General position that has been in two administrations in a row to be able to be maintained on this.

So just to clarify, for this body, this vote has nothing to do with title 42; that is a Surgeon General responsibility; but this body needs to do additional oversight to make sure DHS is paying attention to what is happening at our southern border because we could very well have 1.1 million additional people illegally cross into the country, not just across the border and be returned but actually into the country in the days ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, one of my favorite tasks up here is to give folks from back home a tour of this

Capitol. We meet them in the Crypt, and we go through the Old Supreme Court, and we walk up the back steps into the Capitol's Rotunda. And I love to say nothing. I love to just watch the folks look up at the walls and gaze at all the famous statues—statues of Eisenhower and Reagan.

There are portraits in that Rotunda, each with a story to tell. Perhaps my favorite portrait is one by John Trumbull; it is a painting of General George Washington, depicting in 1783 his resigning his commission as Commander of the Continental Army. Everyone looks at that painting, and they see in the President—at that time General—George Washington's hands his commission, that piece of paper that he is handing off to the Continental Army.

Behind him, there is a throne; and importantly, it is an empty throne with King's robes on it, seemingly to say that George Washington said: I will not be a King; I will throw my robes off, and we will have a Republic, a democracy.

I would ask our President to throw off his robes. I would ask him to listen to the people and end this declaration of emergency.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. I will be brief as I conclude.

Mr. President, as our country turns the corner on the COVID-19 pandemic, we stand at a crossroads. We can either take steps to keep America ready in case new variants arise—and the odds are high they will arise—or we can backslide and undo everything we have done, at great cost, to get our country closer to normal.

Today, the Senator from Kansas is advancing a proposal that would precisely handicap the Biden administration's ability to fight the pandemic and heighten the danger that all our progress is suddenly unraveled in the future. We have learned how to fight the pandemic; we are better at it; this undoes it for some kind of ideological reason.

This proposal to hinder our COVID preparedness is as damaging and risky as it is unnecessary, and it should be voted down. It is going nowhere if it passes.

The national emergency declaration, which this proposal would immediately terminate, has been one of the most powerful and best tools for mobilizing the Federal Government to combat the pandemic. It has made it easier to acquire medical supplies, to provide resources for healthcare works, and has helped cut redtape under the Defense Production Act. It has also offered student loan borrowers critical relief by clearing the path for suspending student loan payments—a lifeline for tens of millions. Do we want that undone?

Just as it looks like we are turning the corner, why on Earth would Republicans risk bungling it all by crippling America's ability to remain prepared

for the future? The best way to ensure that we keep schools open and cases low is by staying at the ready, and that is what these emergency powers enable us to do. We don't know if new variants will come or not, but if they do, they can appear with frightening speed, and we need to be prepared.

By prematurely terminating the national emergency declaration on COVID, it will be harder to ensure we have enough supplies, enough support for healthcare workers, and risks throwing tens of millions of student loan borrowers into needless uncertainty and anxiety. It is a wrong move. I will vote against it today.

And I ask for the yeas and nays.

VOTE ON S.J. RES 38

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will read the title of the joint resolution for the third time.

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

The yeas and nays have been requested.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY), and the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote or change their vote?

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 68 Leg.]

YEAS—48

Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hagerty	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hoeven	Rubio
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Shelby
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Toomey
Daines	Moran	Tuberville
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	Young

NAYS—47

Baldwin	Casey	Hickenlooper
Bennet	Coons	Hirono
Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Kaine
Booker	Duckworth	King
Brown	Durbin	Klobuchar
Cantwell	Gillibrand	Leahy
Cardin	Hassan	Lujan
Carper	Heinrich	Manchin

Markey	Rosen	Tester
Menendez	Sanders	Van Hollen
Merkley	Schatz	Warner
Murphy	Schumer	Warnock
Murray	Shaheen	Warren
Ossoff	Sinema	Whitehouse
Peters	Smith	Wyden
Reed	Stabenow	

NOT VOTING—5

Burr	Inhofe	Padilla
Feinstein	Kelly	

The joint resolution (S.J. Res 38) was passed, as follows:

S. J. RES. 38

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, pursuant to section 202 of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622), the national emergency declared by the finding of the President on March 13, 2020, in Proclamation 9994 (85 Fed. Reg. 15337) is hereby terminated.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

ENERGY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, in Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speech to the European Parliament this week, he made it clear that the time for long-winded negotiations is over. He said that in Ukraine, "We're dealing with reality . . . we're dealing with real life."

The footage coming out of Ukraine is absolutely horrifying. Putin has shocked the world with the level of brutality he is inflicting on civilians—men, women and precious children. But remember that none of this happened overnight. These last 3 months of bluster and buildup from Moscow were more than just idle threats. We saw it coming. And still, it is abundantly clear that Joe Biden and his advisers have not accepted this reality.

I have come to the floor more times than I can count to remind my colleagues how dangerous it is to remain entangled with governments controlled by dictators and mad men.

I am encouraged by the growing level of bipartisan awareness of this danger but discouraged by how long it has taken us to get there. It took the better part of 2 years for this body to rally around supply chain security.

I am sorry to say my Democratic colleagues' priorities were out of order during the height of the pandemic, even when it came to something as simple as holding Beijing accountable for unleashing COVID and destroying the global economy.

Too many people had fooled themselves into believing that diplomacy with China required dependence on China. And just like that, we found ourselves at the mercy of Xi Jinping.

It has taken all-out war in Ukraine for many of my colleagues to learn the same hard lesson about Vladimir Putin and our entanglement with Russia's state-controlled energy sector.

It is the same old story. What started out as interdependence has turned into a serious vulnerability. It is especially true for our European counterparts who bet everything on their gamble with Moscow and played right into Putin's hands.

Now, here we are. Russia is the world's largest gas depot; Europe is on the brink of an energy crisis; and the world is dipping into strategic petroleum reserves to avert chaos. Yes, we are all in this mess together, but we ought not to be. It did not have to be this way.

It is hard to believe that before Joe Biden took his oath of office, the United States of America was energy independent. That is correct. Go back and look at the numbers, 2019, 2020—energy independent. It took a lot of hard work, but, yes, we got there.

President Trump opened up all Federal lands for new oil and gas exploration. He also approved the Keystone XL Pipeline, which created thousands of jobs and would have brought energy production closer to home.

Trump also used sanctions against Russian energy companies when he needed to. He used them against Gazprom and the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline, and also against Rosneft for helping Venezuela evade oil sanctions. It worked. The proof was right there in front of us. You could see it.

Then, along comes President Biden, and what did he choose to do? He had a choice. He made a decision. Yes, it was intentional. It was to satisfy the leftists who are running the Democratic Party.

So what did Joe Biden do? He crushed American energy. That is right. He suspended all of those oil and gas leases on Federal land. On the very first day of his administration, he took great pride in saying one of his first actions, one of the very first things that he did, was to kill the Keystone Pipeline, and then he blocked new energy infrastructure. And then, for good measure, he made those pesky Nord Stream 2 sanctions go away.

What had Vladimir Putin asked for? He wanted Nord Stream 2, no sanctions. Joe Biden gave it to him. He did not even put any conditions on it. None. Zip. Old buddy, old pal, this is what you wanted? I am going to give it to you. I will give you Nord Stream 2—at the same time locking down U.S. energy production.

For the Members of this Chamber who come from energy-producing States, if you are supporting President Biden in this endeavor, then you are supporting actions that disadvantage your State. Think about that—jobs, Keystone, having energy independence, which, as we are seeing, this has quite an impact on our Nation's security and on our global security.

Well, for all of those actions that stopped energy production, the Democratic Party loved him for it, of course. As I said, they are being run by the far-left wing. The environmental lobby? Oh, they loved and praised Joe Biden for this, and at first the Europeans kind of liked it also.

But then look where it got us. We fell out of energy independence and into a rat's nest of entanglements with one of the world's most belligerent dictators.

Russia is now our third largest supplier of crude oil. The EU gets around 40 percent of its gas imports and more than a quarter of its oil from Russia. Instead of using Keystone to send 830,000 barrels of crude oil per day to refiners in Nebraska and Texas, we depend on Russia to give us over 600,000 barrels per day.

Our German friends have finally questioned the wisdom of their failed energy scheme with Moscow, but they are still vulnerable. Everyone is vulnerable.

Putin is using energy as a weapon. This is not up for debate.

There was an interesting article in Tuesday's Wall Street Journal, revealing that Russia is still exporting its oil and natural gas throughout the world. Gazprom and Rosneft pull in around 30 percent of Russia's budget revenues. That is right—two companies. As I said, Russia, is a big oil depot, and they have an army. Thirty percent of the country's oil revenues are from Gazprom and Rosneft. And as of right now, they have been able to completely avoid major Western sanctions. Shameful.

They have managed to do this even though we know this gives Moscow some level of control over the rest of the global economy. These companies are Putin's economic lifeline and his best leverage against the West, his best leverage against Ukraine.

I am quoting from the Wall Street Journal article:

In recent months, Mr. Putin deployed Gazprom, the largest exporter of natural gas to the European market, as a geopolitical tool by throttling deliveries to the continent. European officials and analysts have said. That exacerbated an already-growing gas deficit and led to a surge in prices.

Both companies have always denied having a political agenda and insisted they are pursuing legitimate business interests, but in recent years European officials and foreign-policy experts have said Gazprom in particular has been acting as a foreign-policy instrument for the Russian government.

The article goes on to detail how Putin is financing his war against Ukraine with the help of these puppet corporations. Energy is his most powerful economic weapon, and the only way to neutralize it is to cut off the revenue stream.

Sanctions related to the SWIFT banking system and other financial punishments are important, but they are not going to be a silver bullet.

The Biden administration has repeatedly said that sanctions against the Russian energy sector would be too radical, but I would suggest that perhaps the Biden administration is not the best judge of what is too radical when it comes to regaining energy independence.

I would remind my Democratic colleagues that it was the Biden administration that decided that oil and gas leases on Federal lands were too radical; that the Keystone Pipeline was too radical; and that sanctions on Putin's pipeline to Western Europe, that was too radical.

Joe Biden didn't let energy independence slip away. He was and is the architect of its destruction.

When you go fill up your car, every time, \$20, \$25 more, Joe Biden did that. When you look at logistics costs and delivery fees that are coming to you because of the price of gas, you can thank Joe Biden that you are paying these higher delivery fees. When you look at the cost of packaging and products and it is costing you more, because energy affects inflation, this is what Joe Biden has done in 1 year—in 1 year.

We were energy independent. We were a net exporter of oil and gas—an energy exporter. And now look at where we are.

In this week's State of the Union Address, the President made no indication he intends to clean up the mess he has made. Why is that? It was intentional. This is what they intended to do to you, the American citizen. This is what they have done: Keystone, new pipeline infrastructure, returning us to having to ask OPEC—who, by the way, the OPEC nations, they are the third largest holder of U.S. debt.

You know, colleagues, this makes no sense. When you could be exporting energy, but you are importing it from people who do not wish us well, from Russia—from Russia—who is using those proceeds to carry out this war in Ukraine, this makes no sense. It is why the President does not intend to clean up this mess.

No, the climate-obsessed Biden administration is going to drag the country into a future defined by many of the same unsustainable green energy policies that threw Europe into chaos. They would rather buy Russian oil and fund a war in Ukraine than produce oil here in the USA.

This is a policy that defies logic.

The time for passing the buck is at an end. Sanctions on the Russian energy sector aren't radical; they are a means of survival, and we need to use them now.

This week, we saw some truly stunning demonstrations of solidarity with Ukraine. And on behalf of our common cause for freedom and liberty, the free world has said no to Putin's war. But if we don't back up those declarations, we are inviting more chaos.

This week, Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.N. reminded us of the cost of this willful blindness—and, yes, it is willful blindness. He said:

If we fail to respond now we will face much more than criticism. We will face oblivion.

It must not happen. Now it is time to act, time to help Ukraine, which is now paying the ultimate price for the freedom and security of itself and of the world.

Joe Biden won't be able to soft-talk his way out of this impending disaster that is unfolding right before our eyes.

I would implore all of my colleagues, each and every one who claims to be inspired by President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian freedom fighters, to fol-

low their example. Do your duty and put yourselves between the American people and the evil that Putin will surely inflict on us if we don't use every option available at our disposal to stop him.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, while we gathered in the House Chamber for the State of the Union Address, the whole world was watching for President Biden's comments on Putin's rapidly escalating invasion of Ukraine. I thought the President did a good job expressing our steadfast support to Ukraine. That strong message was conveyed to the international community during his address, and the appreciation from both sides of the aisle was reflected in our collective response. It was a moment when we felt complete unity in the Chamber.

Unfortunately, it was the only moment of unity in the entire address. The overwhelming majority of the President's speech was geared toward a specific audience—his liberal base.

Over the course of an hour, the President boasted about spending billions on unnecessary wish list items, pushed his "climate first" agenda, and laid out his Big Government social justice platform.

It was a message tailored for residents of the Hamptons rather than those who live in Hampton, AR. The voters in Austin, TX, but not Austin, AR.

Arkansans are worried about paying their bills, putting food on the table, and the price of gasoline. The cost of almost everything is on the rise, and every American is feeling the pinch. And we are not talking about luxury items here; we are talking about necessities. A gallon of gas costs almost a dollar more than last year. Electricity bills are skyrocketing, and food inflation is at its highest rate since the Carter administration.

The main thing my constituents and, quite frankly, most Americans outside of the beltway needed to hear was a plan to bring down inflation, end the supply chain bottlenecks, and restore our workforce to full strength. President Biden barely touched on these issues. When he did, it was to cast blame for inflation on businesses and industries that are doing their very best to maintain operations in the face of historic supply chain and labor challenges.

The President claimed that businesses should simply lower costs to reduce inflation, as if lowering costs in the face of increasing government mandates, increasing input costs, labor shortages, and overregulation was possible. There is a major disconnect between the struggles Americans experience every day and the image the President and his team are desperately trying to project.

This is most apparent in rural America. The President and his team often

boast about record high farm income but never acknowledge the fact that the financial gains family farmers, ranchers, and foresters will see will soon be reduced by record high production costs. Land, machinery, labor, fuel, seed, and livestock feed prices are all increasing dramatically. Fertilizer prices have spiked as much as 300 percent in some parts of the country, and at the same time the administration is levying tariffs on our fertilizer imports. Every portion of the food chain remains strained as labor shortages and supply chain issues continue to hinder our ability to get food from farms to tables.

For many, the increased costs of farming are deterring them from continuing in the industry. It is pushing the next generation of farmers down a different career path instead of carrying on the family business. The family farm operations that once populated my home State of Arkansas in large numbers will be eroded away if we don't make rural America and farming more economically stable.

This is bad news for rural America. In most of our rural communities, agriculture is all that is left. Agriculture is Arkansas' largest industry, adding around \$21 billion to our economy every year and accounting for approximately one in six jobs.

But rural Arkansas is hurting. My home State has 75 counties, and 55 of them lost population in the last census. I suspect the same trend is likely happening in each of our colleagues' States. The exodus is fueled by the desire to leave rural America to pursue economic opportunities outside of farming. And that is so unfortunate, as the family farms that color the landscape of rural America are the true building block for a better future.

Reversing this trend should be at the top of our to-do list. Our agenda needs to benefit more than urban and suburban America. It needs to reach and help the 60 million Americans living in our rural communities. When people leave our small rural towns, we run the risk of losing schools, hospitals, and other vital infrastructure needed to sustain these communities. We must find solutions to rebuild economies and secure livelihoods in rural America.

President Biden only mentioned the word "rural" once in his entire State of the Union Address. He continued to push his Build Back Better agenda, which favors big city liberals at the expense of rural America and pledged to resurrect this doomed package.

My advice to President Biden: It is time to stop pushing that boulder up the hill. Instead, make good on your pledge to unite the fractured country. That starts by abandoning these misplaced priorities and focusing on the needs of all Americans.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

POLICE REFORM

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam President, this week President

Biden's State of the Union speech addressed an issue I have long worked on. It is the issue of police reform. After years—and I do mean years—of Democrats' touting unpopular "defund the police" policies, they have finally seen the light—maybe it is the light on their sinking polling numbers—and are now voicing support for funding our men and women in uniform.

Crime is one of the top issues people across this country are facing. Homicides are up 44 percent in major cities since 2019, and minority communities that have been impacted the most are crying out for help.

Eighty-five percent—85 percent—is the number of the increase from 2019 to 2020 in the murders and the violent crimes in Black and Hispanic communities. In addition, last year was one of the most dangerous, deadliest years for law enforcement on record, with the most officers being shot in the line of duty since they began tracking the numbers. That is nearly a 70-percent increase in officers being shot while simply trying to do their duty, take care of the community, and return to their families.

So this is not an issue between law enforcement or the minority community; this is an issue of both. Today, 80 percent of African Americans all over the country want the same level of policing or higher levels of policing. They want their neighborhoods safe because they understand more than anyone else—with the 85-percent increase, they understand the importance of the presence of character-driven law enforcement officers patrolling our communities.

The numbers simply do not lie.

That is why we must increase funding for police departments so they can have the training and the equipment, the resources necessary to do their jobs, keeping themselves safe and the neighborhoods that they patrol safe at the exact same time.

In his speech this week, President Biden named things I have been working on and supporting for years along with my Republican colleagues. We have literally been supporting the issues he raised for the last 2 or 3 years.

My legislation, the JUSTICE Act, was filibustered on this very floor by Senate Democrats in 2020. It contained hundreds of millions of dollars for the very things President Biden, under duress and in an election year for so many Democrats, is now advocating for.

In my bill, as an example, we funded training; we funded storage; and we funded the purchase of more body-worn cameras for our officers because the polling and the stats are undeniable. When violent crime against our officers goes down, violent crime against the community goes down.

We funded training on alternatives for the use of force. We funded deescalation training. We addressed the issues of behavioral health. We funded

efforts to ensure law enforcement officers come from diverse backgrounds that reflect the communities that they serve, but Democrats refused to support those efforts.

Fast-forward to 2021. The legislation that I was negotiating over the last year would ban choke holds, with the only exception being the life of the officer. We took a strong stance on no-knock warrants. We worked to provide support for officers who were experiencing PTSD, and we supported providing co-responders to scenes where there was a mental health episode happening.

The truth is, we were almost there—getting a bill done—when my negotiating partners left the table.

In this election year, I am glad to hear that President Biden and Democrats are now, suddenly, talking positively about an issue that every community around the country has been talking about for the last 2 years.

I want more than talk. I want to see action. I am still at the table. I am still waiting for anyone, from anywhere, at any time, to show up at this table and take care of our police officers so they can continue to take care of our communities. I look forward to reintroducing legislation very quickly to refund the police after so many efforts to defund the police have succeeded in cities across our great Nation.

I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to come back to the negotiating table, which I never left, so that we can ensure the proper level of funding for our officers, who provide great levels of safety for our communities.

Also, for the last 3 years, I have worked really hard with my friends across the aisle on lynching legislation—lynching legislation that has failed in this body 200 times—and we passed it. We passed it twice under Republican leadership, in this Senate, only for it to fall apart in the House. Well, the House has taken up that legislation, and they have renamed it. That is a good thing if they will pass it. If it takes a new name and minor tweaks to get this legislation signed into law—legislation that has failed 200 times—I welcome a new name; I welcome some technical changes. I think we are almost there on this, too.

This is the year, and now is the time that we do the right thing, not for Republicans or Democrats but for Americans, who have watched with bewildered eyes and confused hearts the government fall short on issues of importance to them again and again and again. Let this year be the year we put politics to the side, and we get it done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I want to start by commending my colleague from South Carolina. He just spoke about his police modernization efforts over the years and of his passionate commitment to this issue, which comes from his heart.

I hope that the other side is hearing that because I think there is an opportunity now to come together, particularly in light of the speech the other night by the President, to say, let's do two things. One, let's help these communities to be able to be safer and help the people who live there, but, also, let's increase the amount of respect and gratitude for our police officers. Those two are not inconsistent. In fact, they are complementary. That is why I appreciate the work that he has done and will do.

UKRAINE

Madam President, tonight, in Ukraine, the bombs are already raining down on the cities of Kharkiv, of Kyiv, and other towns and cities throughout Ukraine. Indiscriminate bombings—artillery, missiles—are killing innocent civilians. Already, thousands of civilians have been killed.

This was a totally unwarranted, unjustified, atrocious invasion of a free country, of an independent sovereign country. Here on the floor of the Senate we have an opportunity to do something about it, which is to act on legislation called the supplemental appropriations bill, which provides more funding and help for two things: one, the military response.

We need to do everything we can—we need to flood the zone—to help the Ukrainians be able to defend themselves. They want more help, and they need more help, and I think the American taxpayer, from what we have already done, should be proud of that, but we need to do more and do it quickly. We can't wait for the redtape and the bureaucracy to finish up before we send small arms, before we send more Stingers to be able to shoot down airplanes, or more Javelins to stop these tanks that are coming into Kyiv. You saw that long column.

We should do more. We should provide more funding for the kind of airplanes that we don't have but that other countries do that they might be willing to provide, we are told, if we provide compensation to them—MiG fighters that they can use—because airpower is so important.

We should provide more in terms of the drones that countries like Turkey can provide, and we can help finance, to be able to give them the ability to do things like stop that murderous column that is on its way to kill civilians in Kyiv tonight.

So my hope is that, on both sides of the aisle, we put aside whatever differences we have and focus on this immediately. The funding is needed to be able to ensure that we have a sustained effort here—because this is not going to be a matter of hours or days; it is going to be a matter of weeks and months—and we need to do everything we can do to help the freedom-loving people of Ukraine defend their liberty, their freedom, their independence, their sovereignty.

H. R. 3076

Madam President, today, on the floor of the Senate, we are also talking

about Postal Service reform. This is about saving the post office. It is in big trouble.

In my view, if we don't put some reforms in place in the post office and do it quickly, we are going to have a situation where, in the next few years, the post office will become insolvent. What will we do then? A huge taxpayer bailout.

We have an alternative, which is to put in place reforms now, both through congressional action—passing a law that I will talk about in a second—but also through internal reforms at the post office itself. With the current Postmaster General committed to those reforms, I am confident that those can move as well. The combination of those two things means saving the post office, and it is really important.

Think of the veterans you represent, if you are a Member here in the Senate, who get their medication prescriptions from the mail. I am sure you have heard from them, because I have. They don't like it when their drugs are a day late, much less 2 or 3 days late or a week late, because of the post office's not being able to perform.

How about the people who get their Social Security checks in the mail? I have heard from them, too, and I am sure the Presiding Officer has. They want a strong post office. They know that that universal service obligation—meaning the post office—goes to every mailbox. It is critical to them and their ability to get those lifesaving Social Security checks.

What about the voters who vote absentee? In Ohio, we have no-fault absentee. It works very well. It is a system that is fair, and it is a system that is secure, but it is a system that relies on the post office's doing its job—right?—to be sure those ballots are delivered properly both to the voter but also back to the boards of elections.

So the post office is critical. Again, no one else is going to pick up this function. That last mile is not going to be done by somebody else. The post office is absolutely critical to save because it is absolutely critical to the American people.

So what does our legislation do? Basically, it just does a few things.

First, it eliminates a burdensome prefunding requirement for retiree health benefits that the post office has to make that nobody else does.

Congress mandated this back in 2006. I am not quite sure why. They mandated it for all current employees regardless of age. This has crippled the post office financially. No other Federal Agency or Department does that, by the way. The Federal Government does not require the prefunding of retiree health benefits nor does the private sector, frankly. In the private sector, it is basically Medicare. So we take away that onerous burden, which, again, is crippling the post office financially.

Second, we require the post office retirees who are retiring and who have

been paying into Medicare their entire careers to actually enroll in Medicare Part B and Part D.

These are the hospital visits or prescription drugs. That saves the post office money, but it also saves the taxpayer a bunch of money because, right now, those employees—about 25 percent of them, of the postal employees—do not go into Medicare; they stay in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, soon to be the Postal Health Benefit Plan, which is a more generous plan that will still be there to back it up. But these employees going into Medicare will help to save the post office.

Third, we require the Postal Service to maintain its current standard of 6-day delivery.

Now, this is very important because a lot of Members in this caucus, on my side—the Republicans—feel very strongly about this, but so do Members of the Democratic side, particularly if they represent rural areas. The 6-day delivery, as I said, is so important for things like the Social Security checks, the rent checks, paying your utility bills, ensuring that you have the ability to get your prescriptions through the mail. So that is in this legislation—but also doing it through an integrated delivery network of mail and packages. Think about first-class mail and other mail and packages. To have those in this integrated service is far more efficient for the post office, obviously. That is what they are doing now. So this legislation simply says the status quo should continue there. Otherwise, it would be terribly inefficient for us to have a separate system for packages and a separate system for mail.

The combination of all of these things, by the way, means that the Congressional Budget Office estimates that this legislation will save the taxpayer \$1.5 billion. So it doesn't cost anything—this is not an appropriation—but over 10 years, it does save \$1.5 billion.

In response to legitimate concerns that I have heard from the shipping and the banking communities, let me also note what this bill does not do.

No. 1, it does not appropriate any new funds to the U.S. Postal Service—period.

No. 2, it does not change the accounting or costing structure for packages and letters. So it does not disadvantage private sector carriers. That is very important.

No. 3, it does not allow the Postal Service to enter into new commercial services like postal banking—period.

Those are important things that have sometimes been misrepresented as I have heard people talking about this legislation.

Finally and very importantly, despite the claims of some of the opponents of this legislation, this bill does not impact the solvency of the Medicare Part A trust fund—period. For the people who keep saying that, you are wrong, and you know it because the

CBO has now made that very clear. I have made it clear on the floor, and so have others. If that is the reason you are not supportive of this legislation, you ought to look twice at it because it does not affect the solvency.

This bill also, as we have found out from the CBO, does not impact or increase the Part B or the Part D premiums. Again, some people have said that. It is just not true. We know this because one of my colleagues asked the CBO these questions in a letter. Some of us were already saying this because, as an example, with regard to Part A, people have been paying in their whole lives, but they are also already eligible for Part A. So they are not going to add to Part A.

This colleague of mine wanted to be sure and get the answer from the CBO. So he asked the CBO this question:

What is the effect of the legislation on the Medicare Hospital Insurance Trust Fund?

Here was the answer from the CBO:

Most people aged 65 or older are entitled to benefits under Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) if they have worked and paid Medicare taxes for an adequate number of quarters; nearly all Medicare-eligible USPS—

That is the Postal Service—

annuitants are already covered. Because entitlement to Part A is related primarily to a person's age and employment history, CBO estimates that the legislation's Medicare requirements would not increase the number of people receiving benefits under Part A; therefore, the agency estimates that H.R. 3076 would not result in additional spending from the Hospital Insurance Trust Fund.

No impact.

My colleague also asked the CBO:

So what is the effect upon Medicare premiums in Part B and Part D?

The trust funds there, as you know, are funded by people paying premiums. But the question is, Are the premiums going to go up in Part B and Part D? The question really is, What is the effect on everybody?

Here is CBO's reply:

Our preliminary analysis suggests that the legislation is unlikely to have an effect.

CBO does not expect that Part D (Drug Coverage) premiums would change under H.R. 3076. Monthly premiums from Part B are set by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to finance one-quarter of the expected annual monthly Part B spending for all enrollees age 65 or over, rounded to the nearest multiple of 10 cents. To cause a change under H.R. 3076, the group of new enrollees would need to be large enough and their healthcare costs would need to be sufficiently different from the current averages to affect [the] average. CBO projects that under current law, Part B enrollment will increase from 64 million people in 2025—the year that 3076 would begin requiring certain UPS annuitants to enroll in Part B—to 73 million [people by] 2031. CBO estimates that under the legislation enrollment in Part B would increase by between 13,000 and 40,000 people over that period of time, or less than 0.1 percent of the program's total enrollment. It is unlikely that an increase of that magnitude would affect the monthly Part B premiums.

In other words, what they are saying is it won't affect the premiums because it is a drop in the bucket. We are talking about 60 or 70 million people, and we are talking about 13,000 to 40,000 people coming into Part B and Part D. By the way, again, these people paid their HI taxes all throughout their careers.

CBO then continued, relative to part D—this is the drug benefit:

H.R. 3076 would require PSHB—

That is the Postal Health Benefit Plan—

to deliver prescription drug benefits using an Employer Group Waiver Plan under Medicare Part D. Part D premiums are based on the national average monthly bid amount, as calculated by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services using information from applicable plan bids. Because Employer Group Waiver Plans are excluded from that calculation, CBO estimates that the legislation's requirements would not affect Part D premiums.

So let me, again, put it clearly. The bill does not impact the solvency of the hospital trust fund—the Part A trust fund—which is the trust fund we all talk about here—period. And the bill does not increase Medicare Part B and Part D premiums.

By the way, because of this and because this saves the post office, this legislation passed the House with strong bipartisan support. Just a couple of weeks ago, it passed by a vote of 342 to 92. Not much gets passed in the House with those kinds of big bipartisan numbers these days, but saving the post office is pretty popular, particularly when it is done the way this is done.

This was worked out between Members on both sides of the aisle and between both sides of the Capitol. We did it carefully. We did it in a way that, yes, will save the post office, along with the other reforms internally we talked about, but in a way that is actually a money-saver for the taxpayer.

It is also pretty popular with constituents. It is popular with postal workers because they want to have a post office that continues to survive. It is supported by the Citizens Against Government Waste, which wrote a letter acknowledging the importance of this bill for ensuring the solvency of the post office.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have that letter printed in the RECORD.

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

COUNCIL FOR CITIZENS
AGAINST GOVERNMENT WASTE,
February 7, 2022.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: You will soon be voting on H.R. 3076, the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021. On behalf of the more than one million members and supporters of the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste (CCAGW), I urge you to support this legislation.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) has been the subject of a significant amount

of justifiable criticism for many years. The agency has been on the Government Accountability Office's High-Risk List since 2009 due to its unsustainable business model and financial condition. There have been 15 consecutive years of net losses since 2007, totaling \$91.2 billion.

H.R. 3076 does not address all of the agency's problems, including closing excess facilities, high labor costs, and greater work sharing. But Section 202 of the bill codifies an integrated delivery network of packages and mail together six days a week. This provision is supported by the USPS, the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), mailers, shippers, and pro-taxpayer organizations. Requiring the USPS to create separate delivery systems for packages and mail would increase costs, slow down delivery, and raise prices for customers.

According to the PRC, separate networks would cost more than \$15 billion annually for a new fleet of vehicles and tens of thousands of new employees. That would make it highly unlikely that the USPS would ever be profitable, and very likely that taxpayers would be paying for a significant bailout, along with a large annual subsidy.

H.R. 3076 also prevents the USPS from getting into financial services and other non-postal commercial businesses. There is ample evidence that such activities are doomed to fail. In the fall of 2021, USPS began providing Visa cards of up to \$500 to customers who used business checks for the transactions. They sold six cards between September 13, 2021 and January 12, 2022, bringing in \$37.50 in fees, which is equal to the pay for about two hours of work for one USPS clerk. As the USPS said in 2014 in response to the suggestion by the USPS inspector general that the agency should provide financial services, its "core function is delivery, not banking."

The bill also increases financial transparency and strengthens inspector general oversight.

While H.R. 3076 does not solve all the issues currently facing the USPS, the legislation sets the agency on the path to a more sustainable future. For these reasons, I urge you to support H.R. 3076. Any votes related to H.R. 3076 may be among those considered for CCAGW's 2022 Congressional Ratings.

Sincerely,

TOM SCHATZ,
President.

Mr. PORTMAN. So I encourage my colleagues to join us in support of this legislation. Let's put the Postal Service in a position to succeed, and let's provide those essential services to the small businesses, veterans, the elderly, rural constituents, who rely on it so much—the prescription drugs we talked about, the Social Security checks, the rent checks, the utility checks, and the ballots.

I appreciate working with my colleague Senator GARY PETERS on this, over time, to try to find a consensus, to try to find a way forward that was bipartisan, bicameral, where we could actually do something after years and years of talking about what bad shape the post office is in financially, to do something to right the ship, to ensure it will be there for the future.

Let's pass this bill, and let's do ensure that the post office is healthy for all the folks we represent going forward.

I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 547.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Maria L. Pagan, of Puerto Rico, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative (Geneva Office), with the rank of Ambassador.

CLOTURE MOTION

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 547, Maria L. Pagan, of Puerto Rico, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative (Geneva Office), with the rank of Ambassador.

Charles E. Schumer, Alex Padilla, Christopher Murphy, Edward J. Markey, Gary C. Peters, Brian Schatz, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, John W. Hickenlooper, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tim Kaine, Richard Blumenthal, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 719.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Ed Gonzalez, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security.