

serve in this Chamber. One of the most critical tasks we have is to avoid a debt crisis. Back in January, the United States hit its debt limit, and the U.S. Treasury Department has begun using what they call extraordinary measures to prevent the government from defaulting on its debt.

Since then, we have been operating, literally, on borrowed time. We don't know exactly when those measures will be exhausted. It depends, in part, upon tax returns or tax revenue being generated, and that can be a little bit unpredictable. But experts have said that it could occur as soon as June, which is a little less than 2 months away.

As we know, nothing happens very quickly here in the Senate. It takes time to negotiate, to write, debate, and pass legislation; meaning, it is time to get serious about preventing a fiscal crisis. From the get-go, President Biden drew outrageous red lines and ruled out any negotiations over spending reforms.

Clearly, that was not a realistic nor a responsible position to take. President Biden has signed partisan spending bills totaling \$2.7 trillion just in the last year or so alone, and now he says it is up to the Republicans in the House to deal with the debt ceiling, and he is not going to negotiate. That is not a responsible position for the President of the United States to take.

Moreover, the national debt is now \$31.6 trillion and counting. Congress cannot just raise the debt limit and continue to borrow and spend like there is no tomorrow.

Yes, this is like your child maxing out their credit limit and then asking you or the bank, perhaps, to raise the credit limit without regard to repaying the debt or at least some of the debt that they owe. No responsible actor acts that way, and the President knows it.

So President Biden needs to get off his high horse. He needs to come to the negotiating table, and I am sure Speaker MCCARTHY will more than meet him halfway.

Yes, we all agree, we need to avoid a debt crisis. No one wants the United States to default on its debts, but we also need to enact broader reforms to rein in spending, and that has traditionally been what happens when the debt ceiling is increased.

We can't just slap a bandaid on the problem and call it a day. We can't just continue to indefinitely raise the debt limit and burden more and more of future generations with the responsibility that we ourselves should embrace because it is our responsibility and not those future generations.

It is time for Congress to buckle down and get government spending in check, and this is a prime opportunity to have that debate and those votes. Of course, this is just one piece of the Senate's work to promote financial responsibility. We also need to pass regular appropriations bills on time and through the regular order. Move them

out of committee, across the floor, give Senators a chance to offer amendments, and then vote. That is what we call regular order around here.

Instead, what we have gotten, at least last year, was a \$1.7 trillion bill, I think that was the final pricetag, an omnibus bill, which denied the opportunity for any Member of Congress or the Senate to offer amendments or debate different portions of it, to either add to or reprioritize some of the spending or—Heaven forbid—to cut some of the wasteful spending.

Instead, we were given the choice of an up-or-down vote, and that, of course, is the way the leadership likes it. That is the way Speaker PELOSI and Senator SCHUMER, the Senate majority leader, likes it because it maximizes their authority, while it casts the rest of us who have been independently elected to this body on the sidelines as spectators, only to be called into action once the final vote is called.

Well, unfortunately, Congress hasn't had much of a success record when it comes to regular order for appropriations bills. The Senate and House Appropriations Committees, as we know, are charged with writing 12 separate bills to fund different components of the Federal Government.

They are supposed to pass, as I indicated, both Chambers, the House and the Senate, and then those differences are reconciled and then signed into law before September 30 of every year. But that didn't happen last year, as I said. The Democratic-led Senate did not pass a single regular appropriations bill. And, again, that is not by accident; that is by design.

But it doesn't serve the interest of our constituents; it doesn't serve the interests of rank-and-file Members of the Senate to be relegated to the sidelines like a potted plant; and it doesn't give the American people what they are entitled to, which is the kind of robust debate, prioritization, and, yes, some spending restraint and cuts, particularly in areas where we can all agree that that spending is not a high priority or is, indeed, wasteful.

Instead of that regular order, we saw a temporary continuing resolution, which doesn't help the Pentagon or any other element of the Federal Government actually make plans for a year-long spending appropriation, but rather has to deal with stopgap spending bills, pending this big Omnibus appropriations bill at the end of the year.

And, of course, all of this happens in a rushed fashion, completely out of the public's view. We simply cannot accept this as the new normal. We need to abandon this habit of continuing resolutions and last-minute omnibuses and return to regular ontime appropriations bills.

In order to plan and prepare for the future, Federal Agencies and certainly our military are looking at daunting challenges all across the globe. Whether it is in Europe or in Asia, in North Korea or in the Middle East, we have

daunting national security challenges facing us. And this kind of inappropriate power play, frankly, by the leadership of the House and the Senate we saw demonstrated last December does not serve the interest of our military, our national security, or the public interest.

And it results in big, bloated, spending bills that Congress simply doesn't have the opportunity to parse. Well, we know that it takes time to do that so it shouldn't be put on the back burner until we are approaching the end of the fiscal year, which is coming at the end of September. We need to get that process moving now.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. President, it is not just financial problems that need to be addressed, there are also big security issues on our plate. In the coming months, we need to pass an annual defense authorization bill to strengthen our military and our security around the world and, hopefully, to maintain the peace.

But we also have big security issues here at home that need to be addressed. As the Presiding Officer has heard me say many times from this position, the border crisis is still raging. Thousands of migrants are crossing the border every single day and completely overwhelming our capacity to respond. It is honestly not a question of capacity, it is really a matter of will, and so far the Biden administration has demonstrated no will to deal with this border crisis of its own making.

Law enforcement, border communities, nonprofits, and local businesses along the border region are feeling the strain. Our immigration system is now so backlogged that some migrants have to wait as long as 10 years before they can even begin immigration court proceedings.

And then we know from the track record of successful claims for asylum that only—let's say generously—85 percent of those cases will not be acknowledged. Only 15 percent will be granted because only 15 percent of that huge backlog of cases that ultimately end up in front of an immigration judge qualify for the very high legal standard for asylum.

Well, over the last couple of years, the administration has shattered every record when it comes to border crossings because there is a welcome mat out and a green light on for anybody and everybody who wants to come to the United States from literally anywhere around the world.

But as bad as the crisis has been the last 2 years, I am afraid the administration is about to break their own very bad record. Title 42, which is a public health law which says we can limit immigration to the United States in the interest of protecting our population against a public health crisis like COVID-19—that title is going to end in less than a month, and the Border Patrol will lose its authority to quickly expel migrants who simply have no legal basis to remain in the United States.

In February alone, more than 72,000 migrants were removed under title 42. Admittedly, it is a small number, but it is a significant number when you consider what happens when title 42 goes away because once it disappears, we will have to process, house, and care for every single one of those individuals.

When we inevitably run out of space, which will happen quickly, I expect the administration will start releasing migrants into the interior of the country at an unprecedented pace, and once that happens, even more migration will follow. This is simply one of the pull factors or the message that is sent; that if you violate our immigration laws, as long as you make it to the border—because the cartels, the transnational criminal organizations, have figured out if they can overwhelm our border patrols, they can make more money, and more and more people will be able to illegally migrate into the United States.

The transnational criminal organizations that continue to get rich because of the Biden border policies know that frontline officers and agents are busy processing and caring for migrants and in many cases unaccompanied children, which creates a golden opportunity for the cartels to move dangerous drugs into the country. They are moving drugs like fentanyl, synthetic opioids, heroin, and other dangerous drugs across the border and into communities all across the country, from Maine to Texas, to California, to New York—all across the country.

We lost about 70,000 Americans last year alone to fentanyl, and the U.S.-Mexico border is the primary gateway for fentanyl and these other illicit drugs. Securing the border is the key to stopping this overdose epidemic, and restoring some sense of order when it comes to migration. This needs to be a top priority here in the Senate, and, as I said a moment ago, with the expiration of title 42, a bad situation is getting ready to get worse.

These are just a few of the major tasks on the Senate's to-do list, and unfortunately this Chamber has wasted a lot of time. But since the beginning of this year, the majority leader hasn't allowed the Senate to actually spend much time legislating. We have confirmed a number of nominees and passed a few resolutions to nullify outlandish rules that were rolled out by the Biden administration. We unanimously passed a resolution designating January as "National Trafficking and Modern Slavery Prevention Month." The Senate passed a bill to repeal the Iraq war authorization, as if President Biden can be expected to use that authorization to declare some sort of military conflict or war someplace in the Middle East or elsewhere—something I doubt he would do.

Given Congress's long to-do list and the fact that we are 3½ months into the year, what I just recounted is a very slim list of accomplishments. I

hoped this work period would prompt a change and we could start working on important, time-sensitive tasks that need to be completed. Unfortunately, here again, we are not off to a great start.

Rather than bringing up legislation to address the debt ceiling or the border crisis or any one of a number of other problems facing American families, Senator SCHUMER has announced that this week, we will vote on a partisan resolution. The majority leader tried to frame this resolution as a way to defend the rule of law, but it is a nonbinding resolution. It fails to do anything other than send a political message.

The majority leader has been a fierce critic of similar resolutions in the past. During the summer of 2020, our colleague from Arkansas, Senator COTTON, authored a straightforward resolution to clarify that the Senate called for justice for George Floyd and opposed efforts to defund the police—both simple and straightforward points of, I would think, nearly unanimous agreement. But unfortunately the resolution didn't pass because it was—guess what—blocked by Senator SCHUMER. At the time, he said:

The resolution by my friend will do nothing. Nothing. It is rhetoric.

Well, that was Senator SCHUMER less than 3 years ago when he blocked a nonbinding resolution that denounced efforts to defund the police. Now that he has the power to set the schedule in the Senate, Senator SCHUMER could bring any bill to the floor that he wanted. That is the prerogative of the majority leader. He could schedule votes on actual bills. We could actually have votes on amendments to those bills and a fulsome debate, and we could take real action to support our law enforcement officers and defend the rule of law. But he refuses to bring that sort of bill to the floor—instead, just an empty statement or political message.

If the majority leader wants to issue statements on his own time, that is his prerogative, but he shouldn't continue to waste valuable floor time on purely partisan messaging that does absolutely nothing. The American people sent us here to work on their behalf, and it is high time the majority leader decided to take that responsibility seriously and bring important legislation that will solve real problems to the floor of the United States Senate.

As our friend Lamar Alexander, the former Senator from Tennessee, liked to say: It is not easy to get here, and it is not easy to stay here—because we have elections every 6 years—but while you are here, you might as well do something important. You might as well make a difference.

I fear we are not doing that by the sort of agenda setting and political messaging that the majority leader is endorsing, but it is something I dare say the vast majority of Senators would relish—doing exactly that kind

of work and solving real problems for the American people.

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.

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

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

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, just before Easter, the Biden administration released a report that they claim vindicates their role in our disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, but rather than laying out the facts and embracing accountability, the Biden administration returned to its default setting of blaming Donald Trump for their problems. They claim that because Trump did not provide them with a plan for every contingency, the Biden White House should be allowed to wash its hands of the mess they have made.

Now, you would think that anyone who witnessed mothers throwing their children over barbed wire fences and into the arms of our soldiers would at least hesitate before making excuses for the terrible decision making that led to those images. Biden and his team are kidding themselves if they think we have forgotten what happened. But the American people are not fooled. They remember that it was Joe Biden who chose to close Bagram Airfield; that it was Joe Biden who set an arbitrary evacuation deadline even though his military generals begged him not to do this; and that it was Joe Biden who surrendered control of Karzai International Airport and handed over the names of American citizens, green card holders, and our Afghan partners—handed this information over to the Taliban.

We saw the catastrophe unfold at the airfields and in the cities, and we see what the Biden administration has done. They have ignored it ever since. Afghanistan fell back into the Dark Ages. Twenty-three million people are going hungry. Twenty million Afghan women are subjugated under the Taliban's medieval boot.

On the day the evacuation officially ended, there were at least 4,000 Americans left behind—that is right, left behind—in Afghanistan. Today, our best guess is that there are around 175 still stranded there. Some of them are being held captive by the Taliban. Seventy-eight thousand of our Afghan partners remain in hiding, many being hunted by the Taliban. Yes, that is the mess that this administration and Joe Biden made.

And on his way out the door, Biden also left behind at least \$7.2 billion of American weaponry, including aircraft, vehicles, and guns, some of which have cropped up in the hands of militants in other countries. That is \$7.2 billion of