

chair of the King County Board of Health, Joe established the first producer-paid Secure Medicine Return Program in Washington State and second in the Nation, addressing the opiate crisis and ensuring the safe disposal of unused medicines throughout King County. In just 5 years before the program became statewide and thanks to Joe's drive and commitment, 198 drop boxes were provided across the county, and over 115 tons of drugs destroyed.

As a sponsor of the original and 2021 renewal of Executive Dow Constantine's Best Starts for Kids Levy, Joe has played a momentous role in serving more than half a million King County children, youth, young adults, and families in partnership with 500 community-based organizations. He understands, as I do, that our young people are the future and our early investments in their lives will have growing returns for years to come.

The host of community-based proposals and progress throughout his career reflect Joe's extraordinary skills in developing compromise and recognizing individualized needs, even in the most difficult of circumstances. As a champion of the Health through Housing initiative to house 1,600 of the most challenged people facing homelessness and leader for support on long range hotel motel tax revenue allocation for affordable housing and public infrastructure, Joe has never wavered from the deep responsibility and value he holds for King County's low-income people.

Joe's work has been all-encompassing. From the expansion of the light rail service and the guarantee of its equitable fare enforcement, to the addition of new water taxis to meet higher passenger capacities, to the review and approval of King County's public participation in an arena proposal for NBA basketball and NHL hockey, the lengths to which Joe will provide for our communities seem endless.

It has been a great privilege to learn and collaborate with Joe over the last two decades, and it is my honor to thank him for his dedicated service to the people of King County, the State of Washington, and across the entire country. I wish him the very best during his well-earned retirement.

#### FEDERAL DEBT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, if you thought the dangerous theatrics of the Trump years were behind us, I have some bad news. This week, Speaker MCCARTHY plans to gamble with the paychecks of millions of families, as well as the stability of our Nation's economy.

Instead of accepting one of the most basic duties of government—avoid default—Speaker MCCARTHY is choosing high stakes risk. He is threatening to default on America's debt for the first time in history unless Democrats agree

to slash funding for working families, veterans, law enforcement, and small businesses across the country.

Now it goes without saying: This proposal is going nowhere in the Senate. And KEVIN MCCARTHY knows that. So the fact that he is still moving forward with it shows that he does not know the damage he could inflict on the American people. He is willing to hold our entire economy—and the fate of millions of Americans—hostage because, as long as he keeps the most radical fringes of his party happy, KEVIN MCCARTHY has nothing to worry about. But for everyone else, a Federal debt default would be disastrous.

It would wipe out trillions of dollars in household savings; it would lead to millions of Americans losing their jobs and businesses grinding to a halt; and it would crater our economy, likely throwing us into a recession.

Now all this chaos and destruction could be avoided today, if we wanted. Congress could pass a clean bill to pay our debts on time and uphold the full faith and credit of the United States. But of course, with the MAGA majority in the House, it is never that simple. Instead of sitting down with lawmakers across the aisle to find a sensible path forward, Speaker MCCARTHY is manufacturing a crisis. And really, he is giving the American people two unacceptable options: Either suffer the consequences of a disastrous debt default, or face devastating cuts to the services and programs millions of people rely on every day.

Just look at the proposal House Republicans will vote on this week. It is nothing more than a MAGA wish list that leaves every American behind, except the top 1 percent. To start, Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal would decimate funding for our Nation's veterans. It would cut hundreds of millions of dollars for expanding veteran's care, right after we just passed the PACT Act. And it would threaten housing and food security for our Nation's heroes.

And they are not alone because Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal would also gut funding for police officers and first responders. It would wipe out nearly 30,000 law enforcement jobs within the Justice Department alone. And it would require the government to furlough every single Border Patrol agent.

Can you imagine that? For years, Republicans have been saying Democrats want to defund the police and open our borders. And yet, here they are, supporting a proposal to abandon law enforcement and weaken border security.

Additionally, Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal would ship thousands of manufacturing jobs overseas, to countries like China. And perhaps worst of all, it would punish working families who are already struggling to get by. This Republican proposal would jeopardize healthcare coverage for 10 million Americans. And it could eliminate food assistance for more than 1 million families—including children—who are at risk of going hungry.

Now, this MAGA wish list is not bad news for everyone. In fact, there is one group of people in particular who would benefit from it. Can you guess who it is? I will tell you: the ultrawealthy. Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal would actually increase our deficit by allowing billionaires to avoid paying their fair share in taxes.

And it is not like they need any help. Today, there are a thousand billionaires in America who pay an average tax rate of 8 percent. Think about that. That is a lower tax rate than most school teachers and firefighters. Then again, it shouldn't be any surprise that Speaker MCCARTHY is siding with billionaires over working families.

After all, where was he just over a week ago? Was he meeting with working families and small business owners on Main Street who are worried about keeping their doors open? No. He was on Wall Street, meeting with wealthy traders and executives of big banks. And he personally assured them that Republicans will do everything they can to cut funding for hard-working families trying to make ends meet.

Now, here is the bottom line: We can—and should—have a debate on America's tax policy and Federal budget priorities. It is a debate Democrats win because we believe in investing in working families and ensuring the wealthy pay their fair share. Plain and simple. But now is not the time nor place for this debate because in the next several weeks, we have one responsibility: avoiding debt default—and the economic calamity that would follow. That is our obligation to the American people. And it is an obligation we have never once failed to meet in 230 years.

But today, sadly, many Americans are concerned that Speaker MCCARTHY is in over his head. Frankly, I share those concerns. He is leading a caucus that traffics in chaos and brinksmanship. And it is not clear that he can control the chaos.

So here is our promise, on behalf of congressional Democrats: We are ready to get to work. Let's avoid a disastrous debt default—as we always do. And then, let's engage in a fulsome debate on Federal spending priorities. The sooner we prevent a debt default, the sooner we can come together in good faith to work on behalf of the American people.

#### U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we do a lot to protect our identity and financial security from scammers and thieves. We guard our PIN numbers and passwords. We shred bills and financial documents. We are on guard for phishing attacks and cyber scams.

But there is another, growing threat to our financial safety that many Americans are unaware of. Across the country, we are seeing a surge in armed robberies of letter carriers. In many of the attacks, the robbers steal

an “arrow key.” That is a master key that unlocks the blue collection boxes you drop your mail into, as well as cluster mailboxes in subdivisions and other multi-unit mailboxes. With an arrow key, a robber can open mailboxes and steal whatever is in there, including packages and prescription medications. And often, they steal checks. This can lead to identity theft, financial fraud, and other serious crimes.

Here is how it works: The robbers use the dark web and messaging apps to sell the stolen checks. The cyber criminals who buy the stolen checks then use nail polish remover to wash and rewrite the checks for any amount they choose. A \$15 check to your doctor can become a \$15,000 check to someone you have never heard of.

Listen to these figures from the U.S. Postal Inspection Service: Between 2018 and 2021, robberies of letter carriers more than tripled, and robberies involving a gun more than quadrupled.

And between March 2020 and February 2021, the Postal Inspection Service received 299,000 reports of mail theft, a 161-percent increase in mail thefts in just 1 year. And the problem is getting worse. In Chicago, at least a dozen postal carriers were robbed at gunpoint between early March and early April this year. Police say the robbers were armed with semi-automatic handguns. I have met with letter carriers in Chicago. They tell me they are fearful about what is happening. They worry that they could be next. And the looming threat of armed robbery is making it even harder to fill letter carrier vacancies.

And this is not just a Chicago problem. Last year in Orlando, FL, two men were caught on video approaching a letter carrier at a condo complex. The postal worker was found robbed and beaten with a severe head injury. In January of this year, a 66-year-old letter carrier was kidnapped and robbed in Charlotte, NC. The list goes on and includes nearly every State in the country. These are not simply random attacks. Police say organized crime groups and gangs appear to be driving the increase in letter carrier robberies.

We have seen something like this before. In 2011, after a similarly disturbing trend, I urged the former Postmaster General to implement a rapid alert system to inform letter carriers of any crimes committed in their vicinity. The alerts were a warning to letter carriers to be vigilant, and they helped. But now, the alerts have stopped. Now, I have serious concerns about many decisions by the current Postmaster General, but this decision seems especially wrong-headed.

Yesterday, I met in Chicago with members of the National Association of Letter Carriers' Illinois chapter. I told them that I was sending a letter to both Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and Attorney General Merrick Garland. I am asking the U.S. Postal Service and the Department of Justice to

work together to prevent robberies of letter carriers—and punish those who commit the robberies. They also need to crack down on the cyber thieves who buy and sell checks, arrow keys, and other property stolen from the Postal Service.

And the Postal Service can act right now to reduce this surge in robberies by making some simple changes on its own. They should restart crime alerts to letter carriers. USPS also can reduce the financial motivation driving many of these robberies by investing in new technology that would enable two-factor authentication for dropboxes and cluster mailboxes.

Letter carriers are proud of their long tradition of braving rain, snow, and sleet to deliver the mail. But they cannot brave this threat on their own. USPS and DOJ must step up to better protect letter carriers and the tens of millions of American families and businesses that depend on the U.S. Postal Service.

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#### NATIONAL INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate National Infertility Awareness Week, which since 1989 has honored the people, doctors, researchers, and others for their work in destigmatizing infertility and raising awareness of the challenges many people face when trying to start a family.

Creating life and starting and nurturing a family are, of course, foundational experiences that bring challenges, rewards, and great joy. For millions of people, however, infertility is a barrier to having children, affecting approximately one in five Americans. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of doctors, scientists, and researchers though, our country has made great strides in helping better understand infertility and provide treatments and support for people who are struggling to start a family. Tens of thousands of children were born last year alone thanks to IVF. And organizations like Resolve: The National Infertility Association have been instrumental in supporting people who struggle with infertility, as well as raising awareness about this critical issue. Unfortunately, many couples still face financial and other barriers to using this procedure, and I urge my colleagues to consider ways that we can make it easier and more affordable for people to start a family in this way.

If we believe that everyone in our country counts and should be free to reach their full potential, then we need to do more to ensure that more Americans are able and free to start a family, so they too can partake in one of life's most rewarding journeys.

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#### NATIONAL EDUCATION AND SHARING DAY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I rise today, along with Senator MURKOWSKI,

to bring awareness to National Education and Sharing Day U.S.A., which we recognized on April 2, 2023. On this day, we acknowledged the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson's global campaign to educate youth about our responsibility to be a moral and compassionate society.

Education and Sharing Day is observed each year on the Rebbe's birthday in recognition of his outstanding and lasting contributions toward the improvement of education, morality, and acts of charity around the world. It is a day to pause and reflect on our responsibility to ensure our youth have the foundation necessary to lead lives rich in purpose and fulfillment through service and good works.

This year's National Education and Sharing Day coincided with the 121st birthday of the Rebbe, one of the most significant Jewish leaders of the 20th century. The Rebbe was a global spiritual leader and leading advocate for the advancement of education. He stressed that a moral and ethical education empowers every individual to develop their full potential in making the world a better place. This year's Education and Sharing Day has even greater significance as this year is also a year of “Hakhel,” a biblical event of unity, education, and spiritual growth emphasizing how every person is crucial to perfecting the world.

The basis for the continuity of any society is education, and in the great State of Alaska, the education of our youth is a priority. We recognize that in order to achieve its highest goals, education must not only impart knowledge but also help our youth learn how to live meaningful lives by strengthening their moral character to make a better life for themselves as individuals and for society as a whole. Such education can nurture the unity of diverse peoples by encouraging increased acts of goodness and kindness, imbued with the awareness that even a single positive act of an individual can change the world.

We strongly affirm the purposes of National Education and Sharing Day U.S.A. and encourage educational institutions, businesses, community and civic associations, and all people of the United States to celebrate and promote National Education and Sharing Day U.S.A.

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#### RECOGNIZING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 30th anniversary of the U.S. Green Building Council—USGBC—founded in April 1993. This member-led, nonprofit organization has helped schools, businesses, cities, and even countries build and operate better buildings that transform lives. USGBC's LEED certification program, short for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, has grown to become the world's most acclaimed and