

The “Default on America Act” would tear at the fabric of American society, imposing dramatic cuts to our public security, cutting law enforcement dramatically at a time when we need help from them; the cruel abandonment of veterans when we should be defending our veterans; terrible job losses at a time when this last Congress, under Democratic control, started bringing jobs back from overseas to America, on chip fab, on manufacturing, on batteries, and so many other things; blocking access to affordable healthcare—over 21 million Americans could lose the healthcare gains that we have made over the last while—and brutal attacks on working families across the board.

In fact, nothing about the “Default on America Act” has been on the level.

Let me quote something that Speaker MCCARTHY said right after becoming Speaker. This is a quote from KEVIN MCCARTHY:

I want to give all Americans a personal invitation, you are welcome to see this body at work. No longer will the doors be closed, but the debates will be open . . . from the committee rooms to this floor, we commit to pursue the truth passionately and embrace debate.

Well, let’s go over that one. No more closed doors? Give me a break. The “Default on America” bill was written entirely behind closed doors, without a shred of transparency. This bill, which so dramatically and deeply and harmfully hurts America, was done entirely behind closed doors.

Debates will be in the open? How many committee debates did the House GOP hold on their “Default on America Act”? How many expert witnesses were invited? How many amendments from the Democratic side were allowed to be presented?

Again, the truth is, “Default on America” is an extremist bill that would never have a shot at passing muster with the American public on its own. As such, everything about this bill was rushed, was secret, was the antithesis of open and transparent. McCarthy’s words ring hollow. The American people deserve better.

Now, if Republicans refuse to level with the American people about their bill, Senate Democrats are more than happy to do it. We will show the American people how the “Default on America Act” will decimate Federal law enforcement in this country, erasing nearly 30,000 law enforcement jobs and leaving border security hanging out to dry. We will show how the “Default on America Act” is a direct assault on families. It slashes childcare, cuts Pell Grant funding, and even takes aim at programs as popular and beneficial as Meals on Wheels.

I mean, do Republicans seriously think that is the way to avoid default, by depriving our country from the critical resources to feed hungry Americans?

And we will show the American people how the “Default on America” is

chock-full of totally irrelevant, hard-right goodies that would deregulate fossil fuels, empower the biggest corporations, give tax giveaways to the ultrarich, and impose cruel and unpopular attacks on working families.

We will take the first step to expose these atrocities on Thursday, when the Senate Budget Committee holds hearings on how the “Default on America Act” will weaken our economy and slash hundreds of thousands of jobs. It will be the very first legislative hearing in either House that looks at what “Default on America” does, and there will be more hearings to follow.

If Republicans want to sell their awful agenda to the American people, they are welcome to do so in debates about the budget and the appropriations process. That is where these debates have always happened, not in the middle of a default crisis that now stares us in the face.

As Democrats expose the “Default on America” bill for what it is, our position remains the same, both parties should do what we have done in the past, the last three times default faced us: Both parties should pass a clean, bipartisan bill to avoid default together, before—before—we hit the critical June 1 deadline.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on Senate business, today will be another busy day on the Senate floor, as we continue confirming more highly qualified judicial nominees to serve on the Federal bench.

Yesterday, we confirmed an outstanding circuit judge to a lifetime appointment for the Ninth Circuit. Today, we will continue to build on our efforts to restore balance to the Federal bench by holding votes on three more outstanding nominees.

The Senate will hold two votes this morning to advance two district court judges, and, later this afternoon, we will have three votes on President Biden’s highly qualified judicial nominees.

And members should be aware that I filed cloture last night on two additional judges, and that moving their nominations forward will be a top priority for the Senate this week.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today, Democrats on the Judiciary Committee are holding a hearing that is ostensibly about Supreme Court ethics reform. Really, it is just another chapter in Washington Democrats’ three-decade-long campaign to undermine the Federal Judiciary at any cost.

There were the absurd smear campaigns aimed at jurists like Robert Bork and Janice Rogers Brown. There were the uncorroborated accusations held back with last-minute surprises against the nominations of Justice Thomas and Justice Kavanaugh. There was the silly attempt at a boycott by Democrats on the committee who didn’t want to engage with Justice Barrett.

Washington Democrats apparently find a textualist Court that upholds our written Constitution to be a mighty unappealing proposition. They made that clear for 30-plus years.

And in the last few years, the hostility has reached reckless new highs: a sitting Senator stirring up crowds from the steps of the Court, naming Justices who would pay the price; unhinged activists marching on Justices’ family homes; publishing the locations of their children’s schools; and fueling a frenzy that had one unstable person literally—literally—plotting to assassinate a member of the Court; and Attorney General Garland simply refusing to enforce clear Federal law and stop illegal mob protests at judges’ homes.

Now we have the next raft of silly personal attacks. This time, the left and some of their media allies want the American people to gasp in horror—in horror—that one Supreme Court Justice vacations with his friends, that another one sold his house when he moved, and that Chief Justice Roberts’ wife has a career outside the home.

The Democrats even tried to pressure Chief Justice Roberts to trade the Supreme Court for their kangaroo court and show up in person today to hear them grandstand, a totally inappropriate request, as the Chief’s polite and fact-based reply made clear.

For goodness’ sake, we now have Senate Democrats openly threatening to defund the Court’s budget by the exact amount they need for security to protect the Justices and their families if the Justices don’t reorganize internal affairs the way some Democrats want.

Every 5 minutes, the Democratic Party wants to give lectures about upholding our institutions and protecting democracy. But just as often, they find a way to undertake a reckless attack against the courts and the rule of law.

So look, I am proud of how our Nation’s highest Court has weathered these latest baseless attempts to attack its authority. I believe in the integrity and honesty of all nine Justices—all nine of them. They should pay the partisan grandstanding no mind at all.

UKRAINE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on entirely different matter, there was a remarkable exchange yesterday when a Russian reporter tried to put false words in Speaker MCCARTHY's mouth about alleged Republican opposition to helping Ukraine defeat Russian aggression.

Well, the Speaker put him in his place and shut him down. He reminded everyone of his ongoing support of aid to Ukraine and of Republicans' commitment to help our friends win. Republicans are the party of American strength, at home and abroad. And that includes standing up to would-be tyrants who are invading sovereign countries, killing innocent people, and putting the core national interests of the United States at risk.

Equipping Ukraine to defend itself is a direct investment in America's own national security—our national security. As brave Ukrainians degrade the Russian military on the frontlines, a major threat to Western security and economic prosperity gets weaker.

In the meantime, our own defense capabilities are actually getting stronger. A large part of the security assistance appropriated for Ukraine actually funds the production of new cutting-edge capabilities for the U.S. military and supports good-paying jobs for skilled American workers right here at home.

Unfortunately, it is the administration whose policies have been slow and halting. Since the beginning of Russia's escalation, the Biden administration had lagged several steps behind the pace of relevance in delivering decisive aid to Ukraine. Every approval of new assistance has required agonizing deliberations and prodding from congressional Republicans and Democrats alike. This was the case with the Stinger and Javelin systems the Ukrainians needed to drive back Russian convoys and Polish fighter jets that stood waiting on the tarmac, with the HIMARS and Harpoons and PATRIOT systems they needed to put the invaders on the back foot and the Abrams tanks they needed to support a counteroffensive and now with the cluster munitions, longer range fires, and fourth-generation fighter jets our friends need to actually turn the tide. At every single mile marker—every one—the Biden administration has dithered—dithered—unnecessarily.

It is time for the President to get serious about victory and invest in American strength.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael Farbiarz, of New Jersey, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Jersey.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it is about time. Ninety days after his last meeting with Speaker MCCARTHY and after weeks of pointblank refusal to engage in discussion, President Biden finally agreed to meet with the Speaker about debt ceiling legislation.

I will say it again. It is about time. If the administration's estimate is correct, the United States is mere weeks away from reaching the limit of its borrowing capacity—which means, of course, that the President has to reach an agreement with the Republican-led House of Representatives on a debt ceiling bill, but the President has been completely AWOL on this issue.

While I am very pleased that the President's Treasury Secretary has apparently managed to convey the urgency of the situation to the President and that the President is actually going to sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY, it remains to be seen how seriously the President will take negotiations.

He certainly hasn't been taking this issue seriously so far.

House Republicans, on the other hand, have been taking this issue seriously. They have offered legislation to raise the debt ceiling, paired with spending reforms to slow the rate at which we are accumulating debt. But up until 18 hours ago, the President was refusing to engage on the issue at all.

The day Republicans passed their debt ceiling legislation last week, the President was asked if he would sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY to negotiate on the debt limit. His reply: I am happy to meet with the Speaker but not on the debt limit. The debt limit isn't negotiable.

In other words, it is my way or the highway. You either accept my position on the debt limit—a debt ceiling increase with no spending reforms—or I will let our Nation default.

If that is not an unserious position, I don't know what is.

The fact is, in recent history, increases in the debt limit have almost

always been the result of negotiations, and 7 of the last 10—7 of the last 10—debt limit increases have included some mix of policy or budgetary changes rather than simply a straight increase. No matter how much President Biden would like his word on the debt ceiling to be law, the fact of the matter is that in our system of government the President does not have absolute power. And when the American people have sent divided government to Washington, as they did in the last election, then if you can't persuade the other side to see things your way, you have to negotiate. You have to compromise.

President Biden understood this at one time. Back in 2011, here is what then-Vice President Biden had to say about lawmakers who didn't want to negotiate on a debt ceiling increase:

How can you explain the fact that grown men and women are unwilling to budge up till now, and still some of them are still unwilling to budge, by taking an absolute position: "My way or no way." That's not governing. That's no way to govern. You can't govern that way.

That from President, then-Vice President, Biden back in 2011.

Then-Vice President Biden was right, and I am very much hoping that he will remember those words now and not only sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY but actually commit to reaching a compromise.

I was not encouraged by a reference from the Senate Democratic leader's office to sitting down with congressional leaders to discuss a "clean" debt limit bill. That hardly displays an understanding of the fact that any debt ceiling legislation will require compromise between the White House and House Republicans.

It is also the height of hypocrisy for the Democrat leader to talk about a "clean" debt limit bill when just a few years ago he was using the debt ceiling as leverage to negotiate with President Trump. But, apparently, "one rule for me, another for thee" are the Democrats' watchwords.

Our Nation's debt situation is very serious. Our current national debt is over \$31 trillion—yes, \$31 trillion—and it is projected to grow to more than \$50 trillion over the next decade, at least if the President's budget were to be adopted. That is an unfathomable amount of money, and more to the point, it is an entirely dangerous amount of money.

Our national debt has already exceeded the size of our economy, which is a very dangerous marker to hit. Under our current trajectory, by 2033, debt held by the public will be at the highest level relative to GDP—relative to the size of our economy—literally, in history, exceeding even post-World War II levels.

In fact, according to the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, 50 cents of every dollar our country borrows in the next 10 years will go just toward paying interest on our national debt.