

on the country, with steep cuts to law enforcement, first responders, veterans, seniors, and even cancer research. Just think how radical such an ultimatum truly is. It is a dramatic break from how both parties have approached default in the past.

On one hand, a Republican default would crash the economy, increase costs, and kill American jobs. Unemployment would rise to at least 8 percent. Mortgage and car payments would all go up by a lot, while the value of pensions and 401(k)s would come crashing down. That is the future that Speaker McCarthy and the House Freedom Caucus have made more likely by passing the “Default on America Act.”

But the alternative is also a nightmare scenario. If the Republicans’ “Default on America Act” became law, 1 million seniors—1 million seniors—would lose access to Meals on Wheels. These are seniors who literally can’t get food on their own much of the time and rely on others bringing it to them. They would be on the chopping block if the GOP has its way. Deprive seniors who can’t leave their homes of food—what is that all about?—so that some very wealthy, wealthy multibillionaires don’t have to pay any taxes? It is outrageous.

Here is another one. The Republican “Default on America Act” would eliminate 30,000 law enforcement jobs across the country. Do you know what that means? Gun violence will get even worse. Our neighborhoods will become less safe. Border security would be deprived of billions in crucial resources. The war on opioids would decline, and more addictions, crimes, and others from opioid use would go up. What is that all about?

Once again, the hard right—totally enthralled by the very wealthy, wealthy few who are so greedy, they don’t want to pay any taxes—say cut things like this. Cut law enforcement. Cut Meals on Wheels.

The “Default on America Act” would shamefully attack our Nation’s veterans, purging 80,000 VA jobs, leaving our Nation’s heroes without the care they have earned throughout a lifetime of service.

These are just three of many. Eliminate Meals on Wheels; greatly hurt our efforts at law enforcement and safety by dramatically cutting, defunding police; greatly—greatly—tying the hands of the VA so that veterans would get worse healthcare and they would have to wait even longer—this is what the Republicans’ “Default on America” bill does. That is why it is dead on arrival—not for some political ideological reason, but it would do such harm.

When you wonder about the motivation of the Republicans, it ultimately is this, these rightwing Republicans. Listen to the greedy few, the powerful greedy few who don’t want to pay any taxes and want to have taxes reduced. Some of them even called for even eliminating the income tax.

Finally, the “Default on America Act” is chock-full of totally irrelevant, hard-right goodies that would deregulate fossil fuel, reward corporate greed, shower the ultrarich with tax giveaways, and impose cruel and unpopular work requirements on vulnerable families.

Whether it is kicking seniors to the curb, cutting law enforcement jobs, or abandoning our veterans, everything about the “Default on America Act” wreaks of MAGA extremism. So it is no wonder the Republicans did it in secret. It is no wonder that they didn’t want to do what they promised to do: have hearings, have witnesses, have bipartisan discussions and amendments.

But if Republicans won’t level with the American people about their terrible bill, Senate Democrats are going to do it for them. Tomorrow, the Senate Budget Committee will hold a hearing on how the “Default on America Act” would weaken the economy and slash hundreds of thousands of jobs. I want to thank Chairman WHITEHOUSE and all the members of the committee for doing the important work of bringing this bill to the public eye because the American people deserve better.

Incredibly—incredibly—tomorrow’s hearing will be the very first hearing in either House that actually looks at what the “Default on America Act” does. Amazing. This huge bill that affects almost every aspect of American life—they haven’t had one hearing on the issues they are doing. But we are going to start doing it, and that hearing will be the first, but there will be many others.

As Democrats shine a light on how unserious and extreme the Republican “Default on American Act” is, our view about the path forward remains the same: can’t choose the “Default on America Act”; must avoid the horrors of default; pass a clean bipartisan bill to avert default.

CHINA

Mr. President, later today, I will join my colleagues and committee chairs at a press conference to talk about the next steps in the Senate’s effort to outcompete the Chinese Government and preserve America’s global leadership in the 21st century.

The Democratic-led Senate has done some important bipartisan work to outcompete the Chinese Communist Party in the last few years. The infrastructure, CHIPS and Science, and the omnibus bill all did some in that regard. But we all know we can’t stop there. We have to build on this progress. This work is critical to our national security. It won’t be enough to outcompete the Xi regime in any single area. We must be ready to compete with all of them on all these fronts, and that will require comprehensive and bipartisan legislation.

We must not aid and abet the Chinese Government’s development of advanced technologies—like microchips, 5G, AI, quantum computing, and more—that will shape the course of this century.

We must limit investment capital from flowing to the Xi regime—the Chinese Government—and prevent them from taking advantage of America’s critical assets. We must continue in investing in our workforce and other key technology areas that drive American innovation. We must strengthen our economic and military alliances and partnerships around the world to constrain Chinese potential aggression.

The Chinese Government is not constraining itself in its pursuit to dominate the 21st century, and if we in America were to rest on our laurels, if we let the CCP beat us, it would have certain consequences for the world’s democratic nations.

The United States cannot afford to cede its leadership to governments opposed to democracy and individual liberty. We cannot let authoritarianism call the shots in the 21st century. So that is why this bipartisan effort in the Senate will be so important.

The Senate has already shown that both sides are capable of working together on this most important issue, and I thank my colleagues who will join me at our press conference later this afternoon.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, finally, on Senate business, it is going to be another busy day here on the Senate floor. Later this morning, the Senate will vote on the confirmation of Orelia Merchant, whom I was proud to recommend to President Biden to serve as district judge for the Eastern District of New York. We will also advance the nomination of two more terrific nominees: Wesley Hsu to serve as a district judge for California and LaShonda Hunt to serve as district judge for Illinois. By the end of this week, the Senate will have moved forward with one circuit judge, Anthony Johnstone, and as many as five new district court judges.

The Senate will continue doing the important work of ensuring the Federal bench is filled with excellent, mainstream, and highly qualified judges in the weeks and months to come.

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 Republican leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, months of inaction by President Biden have left our Nation drifting toward economic disaster. His own administration says our Nation is only weeks away from a debt crisis, but there has been a total absence of Presidential

leadership. President Biden has simply been MIA.

First, the President said he would not negotiate unless Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans passed their own bill. So they did. Our Republican colleagues in the House passed a responsible bill. It is the only legislation currently in existence that can pass even one Chamber of Congress, let alone both.

Let that sink in.

This is where we are. Senate Democrats and Leader SCHUMER can give all the angry speeches they want, but they have no bill. Leader SCHUMER has no plan that can earn 60 votes here in the Senate. He has no solution that can even pass his Chamber, let alone the House. Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans are the only people in Washington who have actually passed legislation to avoid default.

The Senate majority offers plenty of angry noises but zero plan. The only solution is Presidential leadership. President Biden has been sleepwalking toward this crisis.

It is time to wake up—time to wake up.

The President has two options. He can endorse the responsible bill the House Republicans have already passed and instruct Senate Republicans not to block it in this Chamber or he can finally sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY and reach an agreement. The Speaker of the House has been sitting at the grownup's table for months waiting for President Biden to act like a leader.

Whatever President Biden and Speaker McCarthy can both agree to will pass the Senate easily. Any bill that doesn't meet that description appears to have no chance.

So I am glad President Biden has begun backing down and finally advised the Speaker to begin negotiating. I accept his invitation to join the meeting myself, but I will continue to lend my support to the Speaker.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT VOTES

Mr. President, on another matter, today the Senate has two opportunities to roll back this administration's overreach and redtape.

The first resolution is from our colleague Senator MARSHALL. It builds on bipartisan efforts to remedy a hugely painful side effect of the Endangered Species Act that is holding American farms, ranches, and other small businesses hostage to an animal called the lesser prairie-chicken—the lesser prairie-chicken. Americans in Kansas and Oklahoma were already striking a careful balance between prosperity and conservation without Washington meddling. A voluntary partnership between local landowners and officials had already secured 15 million acres of potential habitat.

Since 2013, the population of this particular bird is actually up. But the Biden administration wants to plow ahead anyway, throw the book at these Americans, and threaten nearly \$14 billion in agricultural production.

The second resolution tackles an issue that is top of the mind for many Senators: winning the economic competition with the Chinese Communist Party.

Last June, President Biden issued an emergency proclamation to let unfairly traded Chinese solar panels enter U.S. markets without additional tariffs that should have applied. In other words, the Democrats went soft on China for the sake of their Green New Deal daydreams. At the time, President Biden's own Commerce Department was investigating Chinese producers for circumventing solar panel tariffs by rerouting products through other countries.

American workers and manufacturers were counting on the results of that investigation to reestablish a fair and level playing field. In December, a preliminary report did find the Chinese companies had cheated, but the administration threw in the towel and gave China a win.

Today, the Senate can join the House and take bipartisan action to freeze the President's so-called emergency proclamation and make his administration hold China's unfair trade practices actually to account. I hope each of my colleagues will join me in supporting both of these commonsense resolutions.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the National Institutes of Health here in the Washington, DC, area is the leading health research Agency in the world—in the world. And we are very proud of that fact.

One of the leaders of the NIH, through Presidents of both political parties, was Dr. Francis Collins, who still is part of the Biden administration. But as head of NIH, he really brought the research capacity of that Agency to a historic high.

I visited him about 6 years ago and said: What can I do as a Member of the Senate to help you when it comes to medical research?

He said: Well, the researchers that we count on to come through with the breakthroughs in medical research are never sure what Congress is going to do. Are you going to fund us this year as much money as last year or are you going to cut our budgets? Some of the researchers give up even on promising projects because they are uncertain about the future. He said: The best thing you can do, Senator, is to get 5 percent real growth in the spending at the National Institutes of Health year in and year out.

I said: Dr. Collins, I will take you up on that.

I came back here to the Senate and discovered that the person I needed to win to my point of view on this was Republican Senator Roy Blunt from Missouri. He chaired the Appropriations subcommittee, which funded that Agency. So I went to Roy, and I said:

Here is what Dr. Collins said. We all respect him. For a man who discovered the human genome, we should respect him. He thinks 5 percent real growth can make a difference.

Roy Blunt, Republican, said: I need to have Lamar Alexander and another Republican Senator on my side, and you need to make sure PATTY MURRAY is on your side. I said: I am sure she is, but I will double check.

So we put together a team of four of us—two Democrats, two Republicans—and we did it—5 percent real growth in the budget of NIH—about 6 years ago.

The response was positive across the Nation. Researchers said: If this is going to be the future, we are going to stick with our research to see what we can find to help people alleviate suffering.

So our team put together an effort that raised the annual budget of the National Institutes of Health from \$30 billion to \$40 billion. It was a bipartisan effort and a good effort. Luckily, some of the research that they had undertaken was of practical value to families across America during the coronavirus epidemic. So we felt pretty good about it.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Let me switch to another topic. One of the most insidious diagnoses that a person can get is to learn that they have brain cancer, glioblastoma. There are 40,000 Americans each year who are diagnosed with brain cancer. It usually gives them 2 years to live when they receive that diagnosis—14,000 Americans each year.

Ironically—coincidentally—it seems to have touched this body more than most. It was glioblastoma that took the life of Teddy Kennedy and John McCain and one of our great friends in the Democratic cloakroom, Tim Mitchell. I don't know why. I don't know if that is just a coincidence, but it certainly drove home to all of us what a serious diagnosis this is—glioblastoma, brain cancer.

I am going to delve into territory here where my education has not prepared me. I am a liberal arts major and have a law degree. I will be talking a little about science, but, luckily, I will be reading it to make sure I get it right.

One of the real obstacles to treating brain cancer is what is known as the blood-brain barrier. You can give—inject—a medicine into an ordinary person, and it will flow through their veins, but it won't get into the brain. So the treatment of many brain cancers is very basic—surgery—to try to remove the tumor with surgery. But the problem is, of course, surgery can't capture every errant cancer cell that might be flowing through the brain, and eventually, the brain cancer overcomes even surgical attempts. So there has always been a barrier, the blood-brain barrier.

The treatment has been dealing with and trying to find a way to get into the brain with chemotherapy. The good