

right, partisan agenda, and the American people overwhelmingly agree. A recent Washington Post-ABC poll found that when Americans were asked if debt limit and Federal spending should be handled separately or together, 58 percent of Americans believe they should be handled separately, just as we are saying, just as President Biden is saying. Only 26 percent of Americans say they should be linked, as Speaker MCCARTHY is proposing to do.

Even 46 percent of Republicans said it should be handled separately. A plurality of Republicans, 46 to 40, is against what MCCARTHY is doing by tying the two together. They realize—Americans realize—how dangerous this is.

So, again, avoiding default should not be contingent on passing the GOP's hard-right agenda—certainly, not one that will make drastic cuts to veterans, to healthcare services, run a buzz saw through Federal law enforcement, and abandon our seniors and working families.

What is more, the GOP's extremist bill is riddled with unrelated hard-right policies. It would gut rules for corporations, hollow out environmental law, and cut healthcare for millions of our Nation's most vulnerable.

The cherry on top—not much of a cherry, a sour cherry—MAGA Republicans want to undo Democrats' marquee legislation to invest in America, advance energy security, and reduce the deficit. That is the agenda Speaker MCCARTHY believes is worth threatening default.

Now the good news: The good news is that President Biden has asked the four leaders and our teams to sit down and begin talking about where we can agree on budget and appropriations. Our staffs will be having conversations beginning today that are part of the regular appropriations process.

Now, Speaker MCCARTHY will have plenty of say over the budget in the appropriations process. That is the proper place to have these debates, not during conversations about the full faith and credit of the United States.

When President Trump was in office and I was minority leader, I hated the Trump tax cuts on the rich and what it did to my State and my country. I could have easily said: I am holding default hostage unless we repeal the Trump tax cuts, unless we undo the Republicans' signature issue.

But, of course, I didn't do that because I knew the consequences of default would be too severe.

But Speaker MCCARTHY is doing the same thing. He is taking our signature issue—one of the leading ones, the IRA—and holding it hostage, saying he is tying it to default.

So, again, Speaker MCCARTHY must commit to taking default off the table, and we will continue to have a separate conversation with Republicans about the budget. And, as I said and as everyone knows, the Speaker has plenty of

say over the appropriations process. He won't be left out.

And if the Speaker wants to be honest, by the way, about the drivers of debt, he should take a cold, hard look at the damage caused by Republican tax cuts.

Next week, the Senate Budget Committee, led by Chairman WHITEHOUSE, will hold a hearing focused precisely on how GOP cuts have been primarily responsible for increasing the debt-to-GDP ratio. I thank Chairman WHITEHOUSE and members of the committee for their continued work on exposing the GOP's destructive policies. The committee will make it clear that much of the debt came at the insistence of a Republican President, the Republican Senators, the Republican House Members, but only now, with a Democratic President, does MCCARTHY do this awful, awful, dangerous gambit of holding default hostage.

I urge the Speaker and my Republican colleagues to come to their senses about avoiding default.

Mr. Speaker, you are standing alone in that meeting. Take the needless, reckless threat of default off the table. Time is of the essence, and there is nothing stopping us from coming together in a bipartisan way, as we regularly have, to ensure that America can continue to pay its bills.

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Mr. President, on military holds, the senior Senator from Alabama, Senator TUBERVILLE, is continuing his dangerous and reckless hold of hundreds of routine, nonpolitical promotions of senior military officers.

This morning, Senator WARREN, Senator REED, and I released a new letter from Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin detailing how the Senator from Alabama's blanket holds pose a clear risk to our military readiness and directly impact and hurt military families. And since these are general officers, they have spent decades—they and their families—serving our country.

Secretary Austin's letter confirms what Democrats have been saying for weeks: Senator TUBERVILLE's indefinite hold on the confirmation of our general and flag officers is reckless, unprecedented, and harmful to our military's readiness and sends the wrong message to our partners and allies.

In the letter, Secretary Austin warned that a prolonged blanket hold is creating unnecessary uncertainty in the chain of command that "diminishes our global standing as the strongest military in the world."

Let me say that again; it is so striking. The Senator from Alabama's blanket hold is creating unnecessary uncertainty that "diminishes our global standing as the strongest military in the world."

Secretary Austin's letter also laid out how the Senator from Alabama's hold is also harming our military families, preventing children from starting new schools, and spouses from starting

new jobs. That is shameful—hurting these generals' and admirals' families in this unique attempt to try and get his way, which will not happen.

Finally, Secretary Austin's letter highlighted that, over the next several months, there will be hundreds more promotions requiring Senate confirmation, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chief of Staff of the Army, Chief of Staff of Naval Operations, Commandant of the Marine Corps, Commander of U.S. Cyber Command, Director of the National Security Agency, and so much more. These are just some of the positions at risk of delay if the Senator from Alabama keeps his reckless holds.

Secretary Austin's letter follows a letter, last week, from seven—seven—former Secretaries of Defense, Democrat and Republican, who served under Democrat and Republican Presidents, stating that blanket holds are both "harming military readiness and risks damaging U.S. national security."

And let's be clear-eyed about why the Senator from Alabama is carrying out this reckless act. He is doing it to advance the extreme MAGA Republican agenda. He is doing it because he fundamentally doesn't believe women have the right to make their own choice.

I hope Senate Republicans read Secretary Austin's letter, as well as the letter from the seven former Secretaries of Defense, and prevail on the Senator from Alabama to end this dangerous blockade and get our military operating to its full capacity. Destroying a Senate process that has been apolitical and pro forma throughout history should not fall victim to MAGA Republican politics.

I thank Senators WARREN and REED for continuing to bring attention to this issue.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I was glad to attend yesterday's White House meeting in solidarity with Speaker MCCARTHY. Unlike the White House, the Speaker has been handling the debt limit in a responsible fashion.

Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans have passed the only legislation currently in existence that prevents default. He spent months waiting for President Biden to come to the table. But the White House has wasted 3 months—3 months wasted. The President of the United States has been MIA.

So let's hope yesterday was the start of the administration accepting the reality of our situation. Everybody knows there is only one way to defuse the looming crisis, the normal and routine thing—spending negotiations between the President and the Speaker.

The American people voted for divided government. President Biden refusing to compromise is really not an

option when you have a divided government. Unconstitutionally acting without Congress is also not an option. There is exactly one way—just one way—to prevent a pointless, avoidable crisis: the bipartisan negotiation that Speaker MCCARTHY has been calling for since way back in February.

Seven of the last 10 debt limit hikes came with a bipartisan deal on spending levels. Let me just say that again. Seven of the last 10 debt limit hikes came with a bipartisan deal on spending levels.

Just 4 years ago, we had today's situation in reverse. What happened? Secretary Mnuchin was sent to negotiate with Speaker PELOSI. They struck a caps deal, and the debt limit was addressed. It was exactly the situation we have now, in reverse.

Yesterday's meeting was an overdue first step. I hope President Biden has begun to wake up. Even rank-and-file Democrats in the House and Senate say the President's refusal to negotiate has been untenable.

The Democrats can't waste any more time. The White House has to stop sleepwalking towards default and reach a spending deal with the Speaker.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT VOTES

Mr. President, now on another matter, tomorrow, Senate Republicans will create two more opportunities to hit the brakes on runaway regulation. Thanks to the efforts of the junior Senator for Wyoming and the junior Senator for Oklahoma, we will consider two more resolutions under the Congressional Review Act.

Senator MULLIN's resolution targets a decision by the Fish and Wildlife Service to "uplist"—"uplist"—a creature called the northern long-eared bat as an endangered species. This designation would have massive repercussions for landowners, businesses, and infrastructure projects across as many as 37 of our 50 States. More than 3,000 infrastructure and development projects are currently in limbo—3,000 infrastructure and development projects currently in limbo—waiting for the extra environmental consultations that the Endangered Species Act will require if this case of uplisting is allowed to stand.

And get this: The Biden administration itself admits that the recent declines in the population of this particular bat are due mostly to fungal disease, not human development.

I don't care how long this bat's ears are—it can't get veto power over 37 State economies. Senator MULLIN's resolution will prevent this absurdity.

The second resolution, sponsored by Senator LUMMIS, targets the Biden administration's attempt to make a sweeping change to the very definition of the word "habitat" in Federal law. The last Republican administration adopted a clear and explicit legal definition which gave builders, landowners, and small businesses some certainty and peace of mind, but President Biden has let the far-left throw all of that into chaos. Now American families and

businesses could be facing decreased property values and predatory legal challenges if they wind up on the wrong side of Democrats' moving the goalpost. Senator LUMMIS's resolution will reintroduce certainty and common sense.

I would urge every Senator to support both measures later this week.

REMEMBERING DENNY CRUM

Now, Mr. President, on one entirely different matter, yesterday the University of Louisville's legendary men's basketball coach, Denny Crum, passed away at his home.

For 30 years, Coach Crum helmed my alma mater's basketball squad and led the Cardinals to unprecedented success. Denny revolutionized the program and transformed the team into a spectacle all Kentuckians were eager to tune in to. He was a true legend.

Unique among coaches at the time, Denny sought to play the toughest teams in the country early in the season, knowing that those hard-fought matchups would prepare the Cards better than anything else for post-season success. That bold playbook earned the coach nicknames like "Cool Hand Luke" and, for always keeping his eye on the big dance, "Mr. March."

Thanks largely to his smart strategizing, Coach Crum led the Cardinals to two national championships and six NCAA Final Four appearances, earning Denny an induction into the College Basketball Hall of Fame. He brought national recognition to our school and city and forged a deep connection with the UofL community through his calm leadership both on and off the court.

Even after retiring, Coach Crum continued to serve as an ambassador for the university, raising money to support scholarships, athletics, and academics.

Denny was a great coach, a great friend, and more than anything, a great man. Elaine and I send our deepest condolences to Denny's wife Susan and to his family, friends, and fans as they mourn the loss of Denny Crum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, they say that baseball is the great American sport, and I am a fan. I love watching baseball games, especially the Cubs and the Cards and the White Sox in the region where I grew up. But possibly one of the greatest moments remembered in baseball actually didn't occur during a game; it occurred in 1939 when a baseball player by the name of Lou Gehrig of the New York Yankees gave a famous farewell speech at Yankee Stadium.

Gehrig was an amazing baseball player. Naturally, he is in the Baseball Hall of Fame. He was indestructible. His nickname was the "Iron Horse"—so durable, so dependable. He was always there.

In April of that year, 1939, he had removed himself from the game, saying

he couldn't play any longer. Then, just a few weeks later, he made his famous farewell speech at Yankee Stadium. He was sick and suffering from a rare disease, known as ALS, but he stood up there in front of that microphone. We can still remember it in our mind's eye—that black and white film—when he announced he was the luckiest man on Earth. He died 2 years later from ALS.

The disease, because of his prominence and the public sentiment and profile, became known forever as Lou Gehrig's disease. It is still with us. It still is as virulent and deadly as it was in his time.

I have come to know a number of people who have suffered from that disease.

Recently, just a few months ago, my dear friend Gary LaPaille, who was the State chairman of the Illinois Democratic Party when I ran for the U.S. Senate and who was a strong supporter, passed away from ALS.

A great friend of mine, Bill Brandt, who lives in the suburbs of Chicago, is now battling it.

This morning, I had a visit in my office from Brian Wallach. Brian Wallach and his wife Sandra have been dealing with the diagnosis of more than 6 years ago, of ALS. Brian is still with us, thank goodness, because of his determination and the determination of his family.

Brian is an unusual and extraordinary person. He was working in the Obama White House with Sandra when they decided to marry. He is an exceptional, talented individual, as is his wife Sandra, who served as my communications director for many years.

When the diagnosis was handed down, it was a few days before they brought home their baby from the hospital—a little girl—6 years ago, but they were determined that Brian was going to see as much of her life as possible even though he had been diagnosed with ALS. So they created an organization known as I AM ALS and set out with an agenda to beat the disease.

Brian has been an amazing fighter in dealing with that disease and in trying to find ways to cure himself but, basically, to cure others who might be diagnosed in the years to come. Their focus is on many different areas, but primarily it is on medical research. What they have achieved when it comes to medical research—just the two of them with their organization and many supporters across the United States—is nothing short of remarkable. For example, after a 5-year period in which no new ALS drugs were approved, the FDA approved two new drugs over the past year, and there is another one that I understand was announced just a few days ago. They were pushing for research to find ways to treat ALS successfully.

The reason I tell that story—and the fact that Brian was just in my office is fresh in my mind—is I hear the debate on the floor of the U.S. Senate about