

I believe the vast majority of Americans does their level best to file an honest tax return and pay their fair share of taxes. It boils my blood and theirs, too, to think that the tax cheaters are getting off the hook because the cops are not on the beat.

Historically, Republicans have taken away those auditors; have taken away the checks of the big, wealthy individuals and corporations. And they, of course, are tempted to cheat. Why let that happen when the vast majority of American families is doing the right thing? House Republicans just voted for a bill that will add \$100 billion to the deficit to take away these auditors. That is not the way to balance a budget, and it is not fair to American taxpayers.

If that is not enough, as part of the deal, Speaker MCCARTHY also promised MAGA hard-liners that the House would vote on that jumbo-sized national sales tax, which I spoke about. As Grover Norquist, who is quite a conservative and quite a man on the issue of taxes, said: It is a political gift to Biden and the Democrats to consider a national sales tax. Well, we say: If this is a gift, no thanks.

In the last 2 years, America's economy broke records and created 11 million jobs—the strongest job creation in the history of this Nation. The Nation's unemployment rate is near a 50-year low. Gas prices are finally coming down. Inflation is just starting to ease, and the deficit is going down. We need to keep the country and economy moving in the right direction, not devastate Social Security and Medicare and certainly not impose a national 30-percent sales tax.

Speaker MCCARTHY is meeting with President Biden tomorrow for the first time since he became Speaker. He needs to show up not just with platitudes but with a plan, in writing, as to what the Republicans want to put on the table.

What is the Republican plan? Are they going to cut Social Security and Medicare? Mr. MCCARTHY said “no, no way,” on a Sunday talk show this weekend, but the math doesn't add up for his fiscal goals unless he goes after the entitlement programs.

If you are going to do that, Speaker MCCARTHY, be honest with the American people. Are the Republicans planning to slash money for education? healthcare? veterans? transportation? clean water? In the first two decades of this century, thanks in large part to the National Institutes of Health, cancer deaths went down by almost one-third in the United States—saving an estimated 3.5 million lives. Are we going to cut medical research, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker MCCARTHY and MAGA Republicans need to level with the American people.

Speaker MCCARTHY, my ask is very simple: Put your plan on the table.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

NATO

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I rise to highlight the need to strengthen our alliances as bad actors around the world continue to threaten peace and global stability.

In August, my Senate colleagues and I took a critical step to bolster our defense by ratifying Finland and Sweden as NATO members. This was the right action to take. It is time for all remaining NATO member countries to follow this example and approve expanding our Transatlantic Alliance by adding two very valuable and reliable partners.

In just a few short weeks, we will be marking a grim milestone of the 1-year anniversary of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Russia's brutal actions in Ukraine, coupled with its increasingly escalatory rhetoric and continued aggression, have shown us and our allies that we must strengthen our collective ability to maintain global stability. Given their proximity to Russia, Finland and Sweden are investing in their capabilities to prevent a similar attack.

The Finns have demonstrated their willingness to enhance NATO's military strength by significantly increasing military spending above NATO's requirements, participating in joint military training exercises, and strengthening its air power with upgrades to an F-35 fleet under the Foreign Military Sales program.

Finland has been one of NATO's most active partners and a strong contributor to NATO-led operations and missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The Finns have also delivered crucial support to Ukraine by providing hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid in addition to providing critical humanitarian assistance.

Finland's large, well-trained ground force and increasingly capable air force are interoperable with NATO. The Finns also have extensive experience in monitoring Russian activities along their 833-mile shared border, and its addition would make defending the Baltic States so much easier.

Earlier this month, I visited Finland and met with defense leaders who reaffirmed their commitment to bilateral cooperation and the value they would bring to NATO. As a member of NATO, I have no doubt Finland would be a net contributor of security, not a taker.

I strongly urge remaining members to join the U.S. and approve Finland's and Sweden's accessions to NATO to confront evolving security challenges and the ongoing threat posed by Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

TRIBUTE TO THE SAINT JAMES ACADEMY TROJANS AND JIMMY PERRY

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, today, I want to begin by recognizing a

former colleague of mine and some of Alabama's student athletes.

The Saint James Academy Trojans in Montgomery, AL, recently won the Class 3A Football State Championship for the first time in the school's history. The team, no doubt, put in many long hours on and off the field to prepare for this great, historic achievement. Winning is always fun, but the lessons learned about dedication, discipline, and perseverance will stay with these young men and coaches forever.

I also want to extend a special congrats to the Trojans' coach, Jimmy Perry, on the State championship and on his recent retirement announcement. What a way to go out.

I first met Coach Perry when I hired him in 1999 to be the director of football operations at Auburn University. It was clear then that he had a very bright future ahead of him in the world of coaching, and it is fitting that his coaching career has ended with this historic victory.

So congratulations to Coach Perry and his team at Saint James Academy. I wish them all the best and the coach all the best in future endeavors.

BIG GOVERNMENT

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, last week, I spent time on the floor urging my colleagues to prioritize freedom in the 118th Congress. By learning from the mistakes of overregulation in the past, we can focus on creating a brighter future and a more prosperous future for all Americans.

We should be doing everything we can to fix the problems created by the government and get Americans back on their feet by unleashing our economic potential and opening doors of opportunity. Unfortunately, too many here in Washington are still focused on growing the size of government and adding regulations they say will save the environment. However, very rarely does making the government larger benefit the American taxpayers and the American citizens of this country.

For decades, fans of Big Government have used climate change warnings to grow their power—for decades, for as long as I can remember. They have claimed we are near the edge of a climate cliff—a prediction they know is impossible to prove and has never come true. Of course, they claim the only solution to this cooked-up crisis is for you, the American taxpayer, to sacrifice even more of your freedoms to tackle this so-called climate dilemma. This sacrifice won't come from the elites, who flew their private jets to Switzerland just a few weeks ago—the ones who are crowing about this. They flew, just a couple of weeks ago, to lecture, while they were there, the working families of this country. No. These sacrifices are expected to be made by average, hard-working American taxpayers. That is what they want.

They want you to give up your affordable gas for imported fuel that is

triple the cost. They want you to give up your ground beef for overpriced and underwhelming meat substitutes. They want you to give up affordable, abundant clean energy we could produce right here in America for the enormous cost of green energy policies. They even want you to be banned from cooking on gas stoves because how you cook in your own kitchen is now the government's business. They want our farmers to cut back and worry about emissions while they are focused on feeding the country and the rest of the world, which is a huge priority. Most importantly, they expect you, the American taxpayer, to foot the bill for their radical climate agenda—obviously.

Well, I think I speak for most Americans when I say: No way. We should say “no way” to overpriced electric cars that are made with cobalt, processed and sold by China, and plugged into a charger that is powered by fossil fuels anyway. How do we come up with electricity? By fossil fuels.

We should say “no” to fake meats—products that taste as bad as their price and that will eventually kill our livestock producers' way of life. What are we trying to do—put our farmers out of business? Exactly. That is what the climate agenda is about, even though, as we all know, our food security is national security, and we should be promoting domestic food production by protecting our Nation's farmers in every possible way we can—in every way.

We should say “no” to unreliable energy sources and the skyrocketing utility bills we are seeing today because America cannot operate and achieve economic success without fossil fuels. It is impossible. I don't know what we are trying to prove. We will come back, but, hopefully, it is not at the sacrifice of the American taxpayers.

We should say “no” to trillions and trillions of taxpayer dollars spent on an agenda that is based only on the rantings of failed candidates like Al Gore and John Kerry, global elites at a ski resort, and a European teenager who needs to go back to school and learn to read and write and learn math and stay out of politics at her age. That agenda is based solely on fearmongering and unproven theories—unproven—but that is how the left likes it. That is how they use fear—to push policy. Their agenda ignores reliable clean energy sources, like nuclear and natural gas that should be viable, but that does not fit their narrative. That is the reason they don't talk about it.

They know nuclear energy—nuclear energy—is the answer, but the climate change group who continues to bark about this, they don't want answers. They don't want to talk about nuclear because the problem itself is too valuable for their pocketbooks and politicians' ambitions. Instead, their narrative has created a growing—growing—group of Americans and people around the world who now genuinely

believe they should live in fear every day. We are teaching it in our schools, we are teaching it in clubs, and it is wrong. These are the folks who throw soup at famous paintings while gluing themselves to the wall and shut down city streets and major highways, calling themselves climate activists.

For standing here on the Senate floor calling this out, some may call me a climate change denier, so I want to be clear. As a conservative, I believe in protecting our environment, conserving our natural resources, and doing what we can to make sure Americans live in a clean, safe environment, in clean communities that will last for generations to come. But I do not believe that we need to give up our livelihoods, our way of life, our access to affordable food and energy because of false claims that we are just a few years away from extinction. These claims are simply not true, and repeating them is dangerous. Instead, I believe we should be investing—investing heavily—in American energy production because we already produce some of the cleanest energy on the face of the Earth.

Giving up our cars, our farms, and our affordable gas prices will do nothing—will do nothing—to stop the changing climate. It has done it for millions of years, and nothing we can do is going to stop that. In fact, in recent years, the United States has only been responsible for about 11 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions—11 percent. In comparison, China, a country with zero plans to cut back, is responsible for 27 percent of global emissions. China's total emissions of greenhouse gases in 2019 were more than our country and every developed country in the world combined.

Our adversaries, like the Chinese, have no plans—they have no plans—to cut back their usage because their economies are growing thanks to affordable energy. In 2020 alone, China invested almost \$475 billion in coal projects. That was in addition to the 1,100 coal powerplants they already have in use—almost four times the number we have in the United States. Guess what. They are building 350 as we speak. They are not slowing down. Their emissions level will continue to increase rapidly.

Meanwhile, our country's emissions have fallen by about 17 percent since 2005, thanks—now, think about this—thanks in part to our turn to abundant, cleaner sources, such as natural gas, of which we have a 200-year supply already under the ground in this country as we speak. We couldn't use it in 200 years. But we refuse to dig for it, and we refuse to use it.

Not only can we produce the world's cleanest natural gas, we also have the ability to produce the cleanest nuclear power in all of the world—the cleanest. We have refused to use it. We want to import the dirtiest oil, refine it here in our country, and pollute our country because we are too stubborn to use our own.

That will eventually change. It always goes back around. We will use our energy and in just a short period of time. But the climate extremists running the current administration's energy policies would rather beg foreign countries and make deals with dictators whose countries produce all that dirtier oil. It makes no sense.

Blaming the United States for a global problem we didn't create is unfair to whom? The American taxpayers.

Importantly, the energy that we can and should produce at home is terrible for our own economy—that is what they are saying. It makes no sense.

We have to be able to do two things at once: Help our economy thrive and promote innovation that leads to cleaner energy production. We can do two things at one time, but a cult-like obsession with climate alarmism is making us weaker and poorer in the name of a problem created by politicians.

I am calling for commonsense solutions. Let American companies produce more energy. Recognize the benefits of clean energy, like natural gas and nuclear—that is the answer. Stop scaring people into depression by warning of the great climate extinction. Fear is a terrible thing to use. It is not true.

We should focus on solutions that will actually help our people. Last year, I introduced the Restoring American Energy Independence Act. This bill would have reversed President Biden's shutdown of American energy and returned American energy to full production. Of course, it went nowhere with a Democrat-controlled Senate. It didn't get to first base. I hope to see this legislation and other sensible energy solutions put forth in this Congress.

Sooner or later, we are going to use common sense, we are going to start looking after our country and the American taxpayer, and we are going to get off this high horse of thinking we have all the answers, when we do have them here, and it is our American energy.

I hope to see this legislation and other sensible energy legislation and solutions put forth in this Congress. We have to do something. We can't keep punishing the American citizen and the American taxpayer, because if we keep our energy policies woke, we are going to go broke. This country is going to go flat broke. We are going to lose our farmers, we are going to lose small businesses, our prices are going to continue to rise, and it seems like nobody cares.

We better start taking care of the American people. If we unleash domestic production, we can produce clean energy, we can make it more affordable, and we can make life a lot simpler and better for the American people and also our allies. Let's wake up and smell the roses.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:38 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. LUJÁN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

INFLATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about our economy.

The President has been doing a lot of bragging these days about the economy. Last week, it was Virginia. Later this week, it is Philadelphia. He is in New York City today. He is going to be here on Capitol Hill, down the hall, in the House, next Tuesday night, for the State of the Union.

You know, the American people that I talk to—and looking at statistics and poll numbers from around the country—the American people just don't believe the President has anything to brag about, not when you look at the economy that is facing our Nation today. Two-thirds of people in polls out this weekend say that they disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling the economy—disapprove, doing a bad job, the country heading in the wrong direction. And it is really a problem when 70 percent of the people think the country in which they live, the country they love, is heading in the wrong direction.

Why would they say it? Well, they took a look at their own personal situation, because the average American family has lost more than \$10,000 to higher prices since Joe Biden took office just 2 years ago, and, now, what we are seeing across the country is more and more signs of the economy slowing down.

Last week, we found out that the economy had slowed down at the end of last year. Last year, the economy grew at only a rate of 2.1 percent for the entire year. The White House predicted that it would be 3.8 percent, so much below what the President and the White House had predicted. Actually, they missed it by almost half. And this is just the latest in a long list of disappointments that have affected the people all across the country over the last 2 years.

We found out Friday that consumer spending has dropped again. This week, working families are now getting another punch to the gut. Economists are predicting that the Federal Reserve is likely going to raise interest rates again in just 2 days. More rate hikes are going to make it even more expensive to borrow money. It is going to slow the economy down even further.

Over the last year, we have seen the largest rate hikes in 40 years. The average rate of new mortgages doubled since Joe Biden became President.

Credit card interest are at an all-time high. Higher rates, harder to buy a home, harder to buy a house, harder to pay off credit card debt—it is no surprise that mortgage applications recently hit their lowest level in 25 years. They say they can't afford it at these rates.

This is very bitter medicine for the American people to take because they have been living through the worst inflation in 40 years. So why do we have the worst inflation in 40 years? Well, it is obvious. It is the massive spending done by the Democrats on a strictly party-line basis and the fact that the Democrats shut down American energy. You talk about a one-two punch—trying to kill the American energy industry and massive amounts of spending on top of it, inflation at a 40-year high, people suffering all around the country.

Now, economists are predicting another recession coming this year. What does that mean? Well, it means more pain for people, more punishment for families who are just trying to get by or trying to put food on the table, and food prices have skyrocketed again.

The American dream is moving further and further out of reach for many, many American families. According to the Gallup poll group, faith in the American dream recently hit an all-time low. How could that happen? Record numbers of people, surprisingly, believe that their children will have a lower standard of living than they have had. That is not the way my parents looked at me when I was growing up or your parents did, Mr. President, when you were growing up. The American dream was about a better next generation. Parents today don't see that for their kids because they see what they see going around their communities and this country.

Many young people are giving up on their hope to buy a home someday. Families trying to get ahead are having a harder time, and many are falling behind.

It didn't have to be this way. Oh, no, this is the result of the decisions that Joe Biden made and the inflation that Joe Biden and the Democrats have brought about this country.

Remember, when Joe Biden took office just 2 years ago, inflation in this country was virtually nonexistent. A typical 30-year mortgage went for less than 4 percent. The lockdowns from the pandemic were coming to an end. The economy was ready to take off. And then in March of 2021, with every Democrat voting for it and every Republican voting against it, Democrats printed \$2 trillion and added it to the national debt.

Republicans warned the Democrats: Don't do it. Don't do this. Don't put the money. Don't spend the money. Don't add it to the debt.

We said it would cause inflation, and it wasn't just Republicans who were saying it. Democrats' own economic experts warned them: Don't spend the

money. It is going to jazz up the economy to the point of more money in. Prices are going to go chasing it, and prices will go up.

Democrat advisers, like former President Obama's advisers—Larry Summers, Jason Furman, and Steve Rattner, to just to name a few—Democrats in Washington, in this body, on this side of the floor, ignored the whole thing, refused to listen. NANCY PELOSI and the Democrats in the House said we don't want to hear it. They put their fingers in their ears.

A month after President Biden signed the bill, inflation climbed. We have been suffering the consequences ever since.

President Biden said: No, no, it is transitory. No, it is not inflation.

He had a hundred excuses. It was here, and it was here to stay, and the Democrats caused it.

To add problems on top of this, Democrats also raised taxes on nearly every tax bracket. Of course, this was a direct violation of the promises Joe Biden made to the American people. Democrats raised prices anyway.

Joe Biden went and gave an inaugural address where he talked like he was going to work together. It is not what happened.

He went to the White House and killed the Keystone XL Pipeline and went far, far to the left, raising taxes on American energy, raising taxes on natural gas. Natural gas powers about half the homes in the United States. Taxes on coal went up a billion dollars. That means everybody is paying higher prices.

It is strangling our economy. It is strangling our energy production. It is wrong for the Nation.

You look at Joe Biden. He is smiling away like things are going well, completely out of touch with the families all across the country.

We are still producing a lot less oil today than we were before the pandemic, and gas prices have gone up about 40 cents already this year. They are predicted to go to over \$4 a gallon by March because of the attack on American energy by this administration and this President.

Democrats have taken a sledgehammer to our economy on each and every side: higher taxes, higher spending, higher gas, less American energy. It is a Democrat policy in a nutshell. That is the Democrat economic policy: higher taxes, higher spending, higher debt, less American energy. It is a policy for failure, a policy for pain for American families.

I guess that is why, right now, today, in the United States Joe Biden is the least popular Democrat President in the last 60 years—the least popular. So instead of bragging, instead of going to New York and pounding his chest, as he did in Virginia and he is going to do in Pennsylvania—instead of bragging, he ought to be apologizing to the American people. He does owe the American people an apology for the damage and