

can secure enough votes to get through both the House and the Senate.

Partisan legislation just won't produce the result we need. I am hopeful that soon, both sides will find an agreement that keeps default completely off the table. We have made good progress this week, but the work continues. No one will get everything they want.

From the beginning, Democrats have said—I have said—that this process demands bipartisanship. It is how we avoided default under President Trump. It is how we avoided default under President Biden, and it is how we should avoid default this time too.

Brinksmanship, hiding plans, hostage-taking, none of that will move us any closer to a solution, but working together and accepting that nobody will get everything they want is the way to go.

Since the founding of our country, one thing has remained constant: When it is time to pay the bills, America has followed through. It is one of the cornerstones of our Nation's success.

If America would ever fail to pay its bills, the consequences would be horrific. Default would bring recession. Default would kill 8 million jobs. Default would send soaring costs on credit card payments, mortgages, small businesses, loans, and erode people's 401(k)s. Nobody—nobody—wants that. Americans certainly can't afford it; so we in Congress must avoid it at all costs.

I hope that negotiations continue in the right direction.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

ISSUES FACING AMERICA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Last week's inflation report reinforced what working families across America already know: Washington Democrats' inflation is still packing a punch. Prices climbed 4.9 percent from this time last year. Just in the last month, they accelerated nearly half a percentage point. The Biden administration called the news "welcome breathing room for families."

Welcome breathing room for families? According to the latest data, families have paid thousands of dollars more just to put food on the table on his watch. In Colorado, your average family has paid over \$2,000 in additional food costs since 2021. In Arizona, those same groceries have cost households \$1,800; in Montana, over \$1,700; in my home State of Kentucky, families have paid \$1,600 more, on average, since President Biden took office. It doesn't sound like breathing room to me, especially at a time when workers' wages are failing to keep pace with out-of-control prices.

Meanwhile, confidence with President Biden to do the right thing with the economy is at its lowest point since the great recession. That is hardly surprising when his top economic

advisers refuse to even admit there is a problem. The President's latest pick to lead his Council of Economic Advisers has repeatedly said this administration didn't miss a thing on inflation.

So, while the Biden administration pats itself on the back for a job well done, let's remember where we were just 2 years ago. Since the President took office, prices have climbed a staggering—listen to this—16 percent—16 percent since the President took office. Gasoline is up 54 percent, electricity is up 22 percent, groceries are up 20 percent, and higher interest rates are making it harder for working families to borrow and save for the future. Washington Democrats' reckless spending and green energy fantasies are sending our economy deep into the red.

For 2 straight years, Americans have had to tighten their belt just to get by. It is time for this administration to wake up and do more of the same.

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Mr. President, on another matter, as our Nation observes Police Week, cities across America continue to grapple with the rising tide of violent crime, and our Nation's Capital is certainly no exception. This year, Washington has already endured the deadliest first 4 months of any year in the last decade. Motor vehicle theft in the District is up 115 percent from this time last year. And now, the leftwing DC Council wants to make the tough job facing the brave men and women of the Metropolitan Police even tougher.

With violent crime spiraling out of control, the council proposed a new law that strips police officers of collective bargaining rights, makes more of their information available for public harassment, and adds new hurdles for the use of force in defending themselves and the public. Remember, Congress already had to step in when the council tried to go even softer on felony sentencing with another bill earlier this year. Even President Biden balked at such a radical measure.

The latest law, which is already in effect on an emergency basis, has had a devastating impact on local law enforcement. The local police union reports 1,200 officers have chosen to leave the force since it took effect—1,200 officers left the force since this took effect. In a city that is facing its worst bout of violent crime in at least a decade, the police chief estimates he has fewer officers to fight it than at any time since the 1970s.

To make matters worse, the Department is fighting a losing battle against the city's soft-on-crime prosecutions. Last year, Washington's U.S. Attorney's Office declined to press charges on—listen to this—on two-thirds of the arrests made by the police department. In other words, two of every three times an MPD officer risks their safety to take a suspect into custody, the suspect walks free.

No wonder, as Chief Contee reports, the average homicide suspect the department encounters already has a rap

sheet of 11 previous arrests. Leftwing officials in our Nation's Capital are taking a cue from the Democrats' approach to border security: catch-and-release—catch-and-release. It is simply unacceptable.

This Police Week, the junior Senator from Ohio brought forward a resolution to say enough is enough. After a bipartisan vote in the House, our colleagues on both sides of the aisle voted yesterday to reject—to reject—the DC Council's new law. I am grateful to Senator VANCE for his leadership, and I am proud to join colleagues in continuing to back the blue.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, on another matter, this week, some of America's closest European allies have continued preparations to equip Ukraine with new weapons ahead of a planned counter-offensive, including long-range cruise missiles and American-made fighter aircraft that would require authorization from the United States.

As President Biden meets in Japan with our strongest economic partners, I hope he will build on the West's support for Ukraine by clearing the way for the transfer of F-16s, long-range fires, and cluster munitions that will help Ukraine win.

As Ukraine prepares to liberate territory from Russian occupation, its friends must move at the speed of relevance to approve the transfer of critical weapons and munitions to help those efforts succeed.

TRIBUTE TO PAUL CASASCO

Mr. President, on one final matter, today, the Senate will bid farewell to a longtime member of our institutional staff. After 37 years of service, the senior audio operator for the Senate Chamber, Paul Casasco, is embarking on a well-deserved retirement.

Paul arrived in the Senate in the spring of 1986, just in time to help stand up the audiovisual production that would broadcast all proceedings to the American public. In the years since, I understand he has had a hand in just about every facet of the Senate's multimedia recording operation, from committee hearing rooms to the affectionately named "crow's nest" in the Gallery of this very Chamber.

Paul has had a front-row seat to decades of Senate history. He has captured consequential debates and preserved crucial records.

So I know my colleagues will join me in thanking Paul for his devoted service to our institution and in wishing him much happiness in his retirement.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it may have taken a while, but it looks like

the White House may finally be coming to the debt ceiling negotiating table in a more serious way.

The President has now appointed members of his staff to negotiate directly with Speaker MCCARTHY's team—a logical and overdue step since the passage of debt ceiling legislation depends on an agreement between the President and the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

I was also encouraged by the White House's statement after Tuesday's debt ceiling meeting, which noted that the President is "optimistic that there is a path to a responsible, bipartisan budget agreement if both sides negotiate in good faith and recognize that neither side will get everything it wants."

"[A]nd recognize that neither side will get everything it wants"—that part is very important because previously the Democrats' and the President's position was that Democrats should get everything they want and that Republicans should get nothing—an extremely unrealistic position and one that suggested Democrats did not understand the nature of divided government.

So I am grateful that the President seems to be taking a more realistic view of what is necessary for an agreement. It is unfortunate that it has taken the White House this long. Speaker MCCARTHY has been ready to negotiate for months, and the President should have engaged seriously months ago, but better late than never.

I hope that over the next few days, the two sides will be able to swiftly reach an agreement. A good place to start would be with a good, long look at the policies in the House Republicans' Limit, Save, Grow Act, which pairs a debt ceiling increase with commonsense spending reforms, things like reclaiming unspent COVID money; modestly strengthening work requirements in Federal entitlement programs for able-bodied Americans—a move, I might add, supported by more than 60 percent of the American public—in order to help individuals move from welfare to work; capping discretionary spending for next year at the fiscal year 2022 discretionary spending level—the same level we were successfully operating at mere months ago; repealing the green energy subsidies in the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, whose estimated cost has ballooned since the bill was passed; passing permitting reform—a bipartisan priority—to help get both conventional and green energy projects off the ground more quickly, which could help grow our economy; repealing the President's reckless student loan giveaway, which could otherwise end up costing American taxpayers close to \$1 trillion; and other commonsense measures.

The provisions of the Limit, Save, Grow Act have been the subject of a lot of fearmongering from Democrats, who have been set against including any spending reforms as part of a debt ceiling package, but these are responsible

ideas worthy of consideration as part of a debt ceiling agreement or, for that matter, in any other context.

Our Nation has a massive national debt—\$31 trillion and counting—and a serious spending problem, and the Limit, Save, Grow Act is a reasonable and responsible attempt to get our Nation back on a more fiscally sustainable path, saving on the order of \$4.5 trillion over the next 10 years.

While, as the President pointed out, neither side will get everything it wants in negotiations, I hope ideas from the Limit, Save, Grow Act will make it into a final debt ceiling agreement.

Despite the President's attempts to claim the mantle of fiscal responsibility, the truth is that spending under the Biden administration has reached staggering levels compared to prepandemic Federal budgets, and if we don't get spending under control, we are going to be facing some very serious economic consequences.

So, as I said, I am pleased that the President seems to be taking negotiations a little more seriously. I hope he will not allow himself to be distracted by extreme members of his own party, like the individuals who are suggesting that the President attempt to raise the debt ceiling on his own, using a dubious interpretation of the 14th Amendment, if Democrats don't like the debt ceiling agreement.

Debt ceiling increases have a long history of being paired with deficit reduction measures or other budgetary policy changes. In fact, 7 of the last 10 debt ceiling increases have been accompanied by budgetary reforms and policy changes.

It is time for all members of the Democratic Party to recognize what the President appears now to be recognizing, and that is that in divided government, both parties have to compromise to reach an agreement, so credit to the President for acknowledging this fact. I hope—I hope—that over the next few days, we will see a deal emerge that not only raises the debt ceiling but also puts us on a more sustainable fiscal path moving forward. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJAN). The Senator from Indiana.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, Boston is perhaps a surprising place to begin a tribute to Indiana's veterans on the occasion of Memorial Day, but there, on Augustus Saint-Gaudens' magnificent memorial to the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, their names are etched.

Maybe the coast of South Carolina is no less unexpected a place to continue

that tribute, but there, on the shore, they fell, the men who helped save our Union, who forever ended its greatest scourge, who fought for the Declaration of Independence, though they had been denied the unalienable rights it promised.

Seldom have American soldiers taken up arms and laid down their lives with such selflessness and yet so much at stake. Many Hoosiers were among their ranks. Their names should be known, their stories told. As Proverbs 10:7 says, "the memory of the just is blessed."

Abraham Lincoln described the Emancipation Proclamation as "an act of Justice." One of the greatest instruments of that justice was embedded at the end of the document. It read "that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States." "Such persons" were Black Americans.

Lincoln's words spread far and fast and wide. In my capital city of Indianapolis, Pastor Willis Revels petitioned Governor Oliver Morton to raise a fighting force, and when the request was denied, rebels encouraged Hoosiers to join the first all-Black regiment forming near Boston.

Unable to fulfill its recruitment goals at home, the Massachusetts 54th Infantry sought and welcomed volunteers from across the Union, and Hoosiers answered the call. There were men—men like George Broady, George Charles, Alfred Lewis, George McGowan. They came from across the great State of Indiana, from places like Newport, Richmond, Louisville, and Centerville. They were farmers, blacksmiths, barbers, laborers, and, soon enough, they were soldiers for the Republic.

There was no doubt of that when the 54th appeared on the dunes of Morris Island, before the twilight on July 18, 1863. They were in South Carolina to take Battery Wagner, a seemingly insurmountable obstacle between the Union Army and the port of Charleston.

When the 54th had marched to within 300 yards of the fort, shots streaked overhead. They were ordered to the ground until the fire had passed. Then they rose. They charged forward, through sand and marshy water, as the sun sank in the western sky.

As they reached the fort, Battery Wagner exploded with fire. The 54th was razed, "like grass before the mower's scythe," one Hoosier survivor wrote afterward.

In the end, the regiment lost nearly 300 men that night—over 40 percent of its ranks. Fort Wagner remained in Confederate hands. Among the dead were Hoosiers Thomas Ampey and John Wilson.

They didn't simply fall for a good cause. Their bravery at Battery Wagner turned a tide. You see, it shattered prejudices about the supposed inferiority of Black soldiers and debunked foolish notions about their ability or willingness to fight.