

In his own words, Mr. Bernstein's long record of progressive fantasies speaks for itself. For example, he said:

We should not kid ourselves into thinking . . . that we can pay for Medicare for All and a jobs guarantee solely by taxing the rich.

The nominee has called abortion "at its core an economic issue." He urged Democrats to "take the Green New Deal seriously." And last year, he praised a nearly \$80 billion plan to expand IRS enforcement as one of his favorite parts of President Biden's so-called Inflation Reduction Act. What a staggering—staggering—lack of awareness of the way his party's policies have hurt working families across our country. So the American people cannot afford Jerry Bernstein at the wheel of CEA.

#### NATO

Mr. President, now on another matter, this week, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg is in Washington at an important time for transatlantic alliance.

The Secretary General deserves tremendous credit for his tireless efforts over nearly a decade at the helm. He has helped major allies wake up to the growing threats from ISIS, Putin's Russia, and the People's Republic of China. He has skillfully managed disagreements among members who share values but sometimes have very different views. He has pressed allies to meet their pledges to spend more on collective defense, to modernize their militaries, and to contribute more to the collective security of the alliance.

I just met with him, along with some of my colleagues, this morning. I am encouraged by the progress the alliance is making to become "fit for purpose," but more work remains to be done.

At the Vilnius summit next month, I hope to see allies agree to set 2 percent as a floor for defense spending, not an aspiration. Let me say that again: 2 percent as the floor for defense spending, not an aspiration.

The threats we face will require sustained European investments in modernizing their militaries and expanding their defense industrial bases, not merely a short-term infusion of emergency funds.

We will need greater coherence among NATO allies about how to confront the real and growing threat China poses to our collective security. And after seeing Finland joining the alliance this spring, I know the Senate hopes and expects to see Sweden become a NATO ally by the Vilnius summit. I believe Sweden's leaders understand and respect Turkey's national security interests, and I know it is in NATO's interests to welcome this modern, high-tech economy into the alliance.

When Secretary General Stoltenberg spoke to a joint session of Congress in 2019, he reminded us of the way President Truman saw NATO's purpose at its founding back in 1949. Here is what President Truman had to say:

[W]e hope to create a shield against aggression and the fear of aggression—a bulwark

which will permit us to get on with the real business of government and society, the business of achieving a fuller and happier life for all of our citizens.

I think we can safely say, by and large, NATO has fulfilled that lofty objective. But we can only continue to do so if allies take seriously their obligations to invest in the hard power that has underwritten Western peace and prosperity for more than 70 years.

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.

#### BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, at the end of last week, President Biden published an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal touting his economic record. It was not exactly new material. The President is well known for attempting to put a rosy spin on his economic record. But I still have to marvel every time the President claims that he is building the economy from the bottom up and the middle out and working to give families "more breathing room" because if there is one thing that can be said about the Biden Presidency, it is that American families have lost a lot of their breathing room.

The inflation crisis the President helped make is costing American families \$880 this month. Let me just repeat that. The inflation crisis the President helped create is costing American families \$880 this month—\$880 for just 1 month. Meanwhile, real wages have declined for 26 consecutive months under President Biden—26 consecutive months; 2-plus years.

So it is no surprise that in a poll last month, 49 percent of Americans reported that their personal financial situation is getting worse or that in another poll, 61 percent said recent price increases had caused financial hardship for them or their household.

Let's be very clear. This is not a random situation that just happened to occur on the President's watch. The President bears direct responsibility for this inflation crisis, which was set off in large part thanks to the bloated, Big-Government American Rescue Plan spending spree the Democrats and President forced through shortly after the President came to office.

You don't have to take my word on that. Here is what one former Obama adviser had to say on the subject:

The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan passed in the early days of the Biden administration will go down in history as an extraordinary policy mistake.

"Will go down in history as an extraordinary policy mistake"—that from an Obama adviser.

Another former Obama adviser noted:

The original sin was an oversized American Rescue Plan.

Contrary to what he suggested in his op-ed, the President has done exactly nothing to bring down inflation since. Indeed, he has continued to pursue the same kind of Big-Government, big-spending policies that helped land us in this mess in the first place.

It is frankly staggering to me that the President continues to have the audacity to say things like "[h]ardworking families are reaping the rewards" of his policies. Hardworking families are certainly reaping something from the President's policies, but it isn't rewards.

As I said earlier, the President is well known for trying to put a rosy spin on his economic record, and he trots out some of his favorite misleading statistics in this op-ed.

Since he took office, he claims, the economy has created more than 13 million jobs. That sounds pretty good, right? Until you realize that the vast majority of those jobs weren't newly created but are, rather, just jobs that were naturally added back after the pandemic. Currently, we are just 3.7 million jobs above where we were prepandemic—hardly the historic job boom the President portrays.

The President also mentions that gasoline prices are down from their peak in June of 2022, but he neglects to mention that gas prices are currently up 50 percent from where they were when he took office.

Then, of course, the President brings up one of his favorite claims—that he reduced the deficit by \$1.7 trillion over the first 2 years of his administration.

Here is how the Washington Post Fact Checker column has described that claim: "highly misleading." Highly misleading. The President arrives at this highly misleading statistic by comparing his budget deficit in fiscal year 2022 to the fiscal year 2020 budget deficit, which was unusually large, to put it mildly, as a result of the COVID pandemic.

A much more appropriate comparison would be to compare President Biden's actual 2022 budget deficit to what the Congressional Budget Office was projecting that deficit would be before the President's American Rescue Plan spending spree was enacted. That tells a far different story.

The reality, as the Post points out, is that "the data shows the deficit picture has worsened under Biden."

The Washington Post Fact Checker column recently awarded President Biden a Bottomless Pinocchio for his deficit reduction claims—a rating the column gives for "false or misleading statements repeated so often that they [become] a form of propaganda."

I can't close without mentioning the President's staggering claim that he, again, "fought so hard to bring Democrats and Republicans in Congress together to compromise on the budget and prevent a catastrophic default." As I have already highlighted, the President is fairly well known for revisionist history, but this statement might take the cake.

Can the President possibly think that people have already forgotten that he spent months refusing to negotiate on a debt ceiling agreement and only came to the table at the last minute? Credit to the President for eventually recognizing that divided government requires compromise, but to suggest that he set out from the outset to forge a compromise between Democrats and Republicans is to skate the line between revisionist history and outright falsehood.

After 2 years of painful price hikes at the gas pump and the grocery store, I think few Americans would recognize the positive picture the President paints in his op-ed. Unfortunately, it is clear from the President's column that he plans to continue to pursue policies that will further undermine the economic well-being of the American people. So much for giving American families more breathing room.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we start the vote now.

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

#### VOTE ON ALLEN NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Allen nomination?

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 66, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 154 Ex.]

#### YEAS—66

Baldwin	Fetterman	Menendez
Bennet	Gillibrand	Merkley
Blumenthal	Graham	Moran
Booker	Grassley	Murkowski
Brown	Hassan	Murphy
Cantwell	Heinrich	Murray
Capito	Hickenlooper	Ossoff
Cardin	Hirono	Padilla
Carper	Kaine	Peters
Casey	Kelly	Reed
Collins	Kennedy	Ricketts
Coons	King	Risch
Cortez Masto	Klobuchar	Romney
Crapo	Lujan	Rosen
Duckworth	Manchin	Rounds
Durbin	Markey	Sanders
Feinstein	McConnell	Schatz

Schumer	Sullivan	Warren
Shaheen	Tester	Welch
Sinema	Van Hollen	Whitehouse
Smith	Warner	Wyden
Stabenow	Warnock	Young

#### NAYS—33

Barrasso	Daines	Marshall
Blackburn	Ernst	Mullin
Boozman	Fischer	Paul
Braun	Hagerty	Rubio
Britt	Hawley	Schmitt
Budd	Hoeven	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Johnson	Thune
Cotton	Lankford	Tuberville
Cramer	Lee	Vance
Cruz	Lummis	Wicker

#### NOT VOTING—1

Tillis

The nomination was confirmed. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 25, Hernan D. Vera, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Richard Blumenthal, Christopher A. Coons, Benjamin L. Cardin, Tina Smith, Christopher Murphy, Mazie Hirono, Tammy Baldwin, Margaret Wood Hassan, John W. Hickenlooper, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Brian Schatz, Gary C. Peters, Alex Padilla, Michael F. Bennet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Hernan D. Vera, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 155 Ex.]

#### YEAS—51

Baldwin	Coons	Hickenlooper
Bennet	Cortez Masto	Hirono
Blumenthal	Duckworth	Kaine
Booker	Durbin	Kelly
Brown	Feinstein	King
Cantwell	Fetterman	Klobuchar
Cardin	Gillibrand	Lujan
Carper	Hassan	Manchin
Casey	Heinrich	Markey

Menendez	Rosen	Tester
Merkley	Sanders	Van Hollen
Murphy	Schatz	Warner
Murray	Schumer	Warnock
Ossoff	Shaheen	Warren
Padilla	Sinema	Welch
Peters	Smith	Whitehouse
Reed	Stabenow	Wyden

#### NAYS—48

Barrasso	Fischer	Murkowski
Blackburn	Graham	Paul
Boozman	Grassley	Ricketts
Braun	Hagerty	Risch
Britt	Hawley	Romney
Budd	Hoeven	Rounds
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Vance
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	Young

#### NOT VOTING—1

Tuberville

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The yeas are 51, the nays are 48.

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Hernan D. Vera, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

#### RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:13 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. LUJÁN).

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 171, Jared Bernstein, of Virginia, to be Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

Charles E. Schumer, Sherrrod Brown, Raphael G. Warnock, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Jeff Merkley, Jack Reed, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Baldwin, Gary C. Peters, Jeanne Shaheen, Alex Padilla, Christopher A. Coons, Brian Schatz, Michael F. Bennet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination