

the DC Public Schools should not throw out of school every student who hasn't received the COVID vaccine—and, mind you, that is 20 percent of the students in DC Public Schools, and, in the African-American community, it is 40 percent of the African-American students in the DC Public Schools. I am sorry to say, but when we voted on that on the Senate floor, every single Democrat—all of them—voted to throw out of public schools 40 percent of the Black kids in DC. You are talking about a 13-, 14-, 15-year-old kid who Senate Democrats were willing to make a high-school dropout involuntarily because that child or that child's parents made the decision not to receive the vaccine.

In ordinary sane times, that should be a 100-to-nothing vote. You would think it was almost satirical that someone would stand up and say: We are debating whether or not to throw out of DC Public Schools 40 percent of the African-American children.

If you and I go home and talk to our citizens at home, to a person, they would think that was nuts, unless they happened to work in this building.

On the question of service men and women, we saw, in the preceding year, that President Biden called to congratulate a coastguardsman who showed incredible heroism rescuing people at a time of natural disaster. That coastguardsman, within the week, was notified that he was being terminated because he hadn't gotten the COVID vaccine. This shouldn't be divisive.

We want our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines and coastguardsmen to be ready, to be trained, to be serving, and, if the administration agrees the mandate makes no sense today, why would we sit by and let thousands upon thousands of them remain fired, terminated, and denied the benefits they have earned?

So I call upon this body: Let's have a return to sanity. Let's fight for the men and women we are elected to represent. And I give you my word that I am going to continue to fight against these mandates that are wrong, that are unjust, that are harmful, and I hope and pray this body can come together and embrace sanity once again.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this evening, President Biden will deliver his second State of the Union Address.

Presidents, of course, typically use the speech as an opportunity to claim credit for all the ways Americans' lives

have improved under their leadership. Former Presidents have touted everything from economic growth to progress battling the opioid epidemic.

In this case, President Biden hasn't given his speech writers much material to work with. Families in Texas and across the country are still being battered by inflation. I know there are hopes for inflation to abate, but yet the Federal Reserve has shown no indication that they will fail to increase the discount rate—in other words, interest rate—meaning that, more and more, they are concerned still about the impact of inflation.

Inflation, as we have seen, means that people's standard of living is decreased because their earned income does not go as far as it used to, and we know high prices have wiped out wage gains, giving most workers a pay cut.

We also know that public safety remains a matter of serious public concern, and starting from the impact of the "defund the police" movement to now the difficulty law enforcement has actually recruiting and retaining an adequate number of officers, we know crime continues to be a matter of widespread public concern.

Then there are the failed policies at the border, which have led to a humanitarian and public health crisis.

The humanitarian part is evidenced, obviously, by the millions of people who show up at the border with every expectation they will be admitted to the United States.

The public health crisis comes from the 108,000 Americans who died from drug overdoses, where those drugs almost exclusively transited the U.S.-Mexican border into the United States. We know the chaos of mass migration has helped make the drug runners' job easier, and we know of the devastating impact it is having across the country.

I don't know how much of this the President will actually talk about, whether it is inflation, whether it is crime, or whether it is the border, but these are the kitchen-table issues most American families care deeply about—the cost of groceries, the ability to put gas in your tank, and living in a safe neighborhood and raising your family.

I don't know whether the President will dwell on any of those topics at all, but just to recapitulate, inflation now is the highest it has been in 40 years. We know that many cities have broken their alltime homicide records, and we are still in the midst of a completely unprecedented crisis on the southern border.

We have seen some pretty big missteps on the world stage too. For example, the Biden administration led a deadly and disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan that resulted in the loss of 13 servicemembers and countless Americans stranded in Taliban territory.

The administration continues to try to revive the failed Iran nuclear deal and to give Tehran even more resources to pursue its nuclear ambitions.

Just last week, the administration hit an embarrassing new low when the People's Republic of China flew a surveillance balloon across the United States, spying on the U.S. military and on all civilians. It took 7 days before the administration finally gave the green light to shoot it down off the coast of South Carolina. To be specific, it wasn't just the administration; it was the President of the United States who gave that instruction 7 days after it began its transit across U.S. territory.

During his first 2 years in office, President Biden had a pretty big advantage: His party held the majority in both Houses of Congress. He had the golden opportunity to enact his agenda and address the biggest problems facing American families. Unfortunately, there wasn't a lot of overlap between the Biden agenda and the American agenda.

While people were struggling to keep up with high gas prices, the administration waged war on American energy. While parents questioned what was being taught in their kids' classrooms, the administration threatened to unleash the FBI on concerned parents who spoke out at the school board meetings. While inflation raged, Democrats poured even more fuel on the fire by spending an additional \$2½-plus trillion on purely partisan spending bills; namely, the American Recovery Act and the so-called Inflation Reduction Act—all passed without a single Republican vote but which added easily \$2.5 trillion to our national debt. So it doesn't come as a surprise, I guess, that voters decided to change the direction of the country in the last election by electing a Republican majority in the House.

Tonight, for the first time, President Biden will deliver his State of the Union Address before a divided Congress—a Democrat-controlled Senate, a Republican-controlled House, and a President who ran on the promise of governing from the middle and bringing us together but who hasn't shown a willingness to do that so far.

I think we are all eager to know how President Biden will broach all of these topics this evening. Will he simply try to gloss over his claimed successes and ignore his failures? Will he try to blame Republicans for the current state of our country even though Democrats controlled all the levers of government for the last 2 years? Or will he finally acknowledge the many problems that proliferated under his leadership and get serious about solutions?

One of the most critical areas where we need to see real leadership is the current border crisis, which has been raging since President Biden took office 2 years ago. Day after day, month after month, migrants have crossed our border in unprecedented numbers. Over the years, we have seen plenty of migration surges but nothing like this.

Last fiscal year, U.S. Customs and Border Protection logged nearly 2.4

million border crossings, shattering the previous record. In December, Customs and Border Protection encountered more than a quarter of a million migrants at the southern border—a quarter of a million people in a single month, which is a new record.

The President has not offered a single serious plan to address this crisis. Secretary Mayorkas keeps saying: Well, this is something Congress needs to weigh in on. But they have engaged in zero outreach or any visible indication that they actually do want a congressionally passed solution to this problem, one that the President would have to sign into law.

The only policy changes that the President has offered will do nothing to stop people from coming because they just parole them faster. In other words, they show up at the border, and they are given a piece of paper and told: Go to the closest Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in wherever it is you are locating in the interior of the United States—with no followup and no real assurance that they will actually go to an ICE office and ultimately end up in front of an immigration judge.

We know that is part of the game, too, because if the human smugglers flood the zone with people, they can overwhelm the capacity of our immigration court system to actually deal with these asylum cases. Those who ultimately end up before an immigration judge are only successful in roughly 10 to 15 percent of the cases, but if you flood the zone with enough people, you can overwhelm the capacity of the court system, and you can basically succeed in living permanently in the United States even though you have not complied with our immigration laws to do so.

We know that for 2 years, the men and women on the frontline of the border have been pleading with the administration to do something. Law enforcement are understaffed and overwhelmed by the workload they are expected to shoulder.

Nonprofit organizations and local governments are trying to mitigate the humanitarian crisis that has landed on their doorstep, and legitimate trade and travel have taken a big hit. Mexico was our single largest trading partner. Yet legitimate trade and travel are hampered by this flood of humanity coming across the border as well.

So I hope the President will be candid with the American people tonight and acknowledge not only what he views as his successes but where more work needs to be done. Now that he no longer enjoys a majority in the House and the Senate but now has a divided Congress, I hope he is candid enough to acknowledge that the only way we are going to be able to solve some of these problems is to finally work together to do so.

We know that what the President shouldn't say is that he will somehow use his Executive powers to create new

categories of immigrants or microscopic pilot programs. It needs to center on the basic idea of enforcing our immigration laws and reforming our asylum system. That is the only way to restore order and get this crisis under control.

Legal immigration has, to my mind, been one of the greatest successes America has to show to the rest of the world—legal immigration, orderly, humane, and legal—but what we are seeing now is the antithesis of orderly, humane, or legal. It is just the opposite.

We know our country is facing a diverse set of challenges in our homes, schools, workplaces, and along the border, and on the world stage, democracy itself continues to be under attack by hostile autocrats and dictators. The American people deserve to hear the President explain his plan to address each of these looming challenges, and I hope he does so tonight.

Once the State of the Union concludes, Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders will deliver the Republican address. She is a champion for workers and families who have been left behind. I look forward to hearing her response to President Biden's speech, and I expect to see a stark contrast between the cloistered unrealities of the Biden administration and the reality that American families are facing.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

DEBT CEILING

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, as my colleague from Texas said, people are looking forward to hearing what the President will say and what he will not say tonight.

As I have been home over the weekend, one of the things I have heard from Tennesseans about is the out-of-control Federal spending.

Now, we know what the Democrats have done in plussing up the budget for the last couple of years, but one number kind of stuck with me, and it is about \$3.6 trillion—that is taxpayer dollars—that has been spent on Democratic wish-list items. A lot of this is the Green New Deal. A lot of this is the reckless spending agenda they are pushing.

Now, they forced through, in 2021, \$1.85 trillion in spending. Then they came back around, and they wanted to talk about inflation. Joe Biden had 1.4 percent inflation when he took office, and because of this out-of-control spending and spending more and more and more and hundreds of billions of dollars, we saw inflation in June of 2022 hit 9.1 percent. People are frustrated about this.

But one of the things that got Tennesseans was the fact that this President didn't say: Well, it is because we put all this money—Federal spending—your dollars—we are putting these back out there. No, he blamed Vladimir Putin. It was Putin's fault. To Tennesseans, this was outrageous. It was the "go blame somebody else" game.

The Biden administration's neglect of the economy and their complete disregard for the destructive effects of their spending is something that has caught the attention of Tennesseans. This term for this President wasn't even halfway over, and already his policies are making everyday life too expensive to afford.

To be clear, Tennesseans talk to me about being worried about the basics of life: food security, food for the table, clothes for the kids, gas for the car. They feel like this agenda, this set of priorities that this administration has, is just peeling away a lot of their life, their living, their enjoyment, because there is no extra money left over. It is all going into necessities.

They are struggling to manage 6.5 percent inflation. They are looking at the cost of food that is up 13 percent from where it was a year ago. Keeping the heat on in this cold winter is 15 percent more. And it is the same story when you talk about school supplies and when you talk about clothes for the kids.

It is the same story here in Washington, where it seems that Joe Biden and this administration and the Democrats are once again poised and ready to spend more money. They are wanting to raise the debt ceiling without even a conversation about spending cuts. To Tennesseans, that is outrageous.

Now, my Democratic colleagues have spent a lot of time talking about what will happen if Congress fails to raise the debt ceiling, and I don't think anyone here denies that the country has some serious discussions that need to be had. But I would ask my colleagues to remember that raising the debt ceiling is not a green light to keep spending money until we crash into another debt ceiling.

Tennesseans understand this. They spent 2 years cutting costs because common sense told them that you just can't keep spending with reckless abandon, and they want to know why the Democrats in Washington don't get this. Yes, indeed, everybody spends too much up here; but why are my Democratic colleagues unwilling to talk about making any cuts?

Now there are some things that we could do to start this process. There are three bills that I file every single year. When the Presiding Officer and I were across the dome in the House, I would file these bills every single year, because it is common sense. They would make a 1-percent or a 2-percent or a 5-percent across-the-board spending cut. Every Federal Agency ought to be able to do that. The American people do that. Making that one penny out of a dollar reduction in spending would save us money.

There again, you do this in the discretionary spending to get things rolling. Start it there—a penny in a dollar. How about two pennies in a dollar? If you take a penny out of a dollar, that would save you \$5.2 billion. If you did