

for the failures that have hurt families, cost his party the House, and left only 16 percent of Americans better off financially now than they were on Inauguration Day.

And the President's thin and paltry discussion of his failing foreign policy was downright alarming. Europe is in the grip of the continent's worst violent conflict since World War II. China is gaining as the largest strategic threat to American security since the Soviet Union. The Taliban has reinstated their oppressive regime and safe terrorist haven that America and our allies chased out more than two decades ago.

North Korea continues to modernize its nuclear and missile programs, making steady progress toward the leader's goal of being able to deliver Armageddon to our doorstep.

The Iranian regime continues to advance its own WMD programs while sponsoring terror campaigns all across the Middle East. Make no mistake, this radical regime is willing and eager to kill Americans if it is not deterred. And while the Iranian people protest nationwide against a brutal theocracy, President Biden couldn't even muster one mention of their struggle.

This is the state of the world on President Biden's watch. This is the state of America's interests under his leadership. But President Biden did not even mention the grave and growing challenges we face from abroad until the tail end of his lengthy remarks.

The President downplayed the threat posed by the People's Republic of China and claimed without any evidence that the United States was in its strongest position to compete with China in decades. I am not sure in what universe those remarks apply. Here in the real world, China's intelligence services just got a closeup look of the entire U.S. mainland. Reports indicate Chinese hypersonic weapons and land-based ICBM launchers exceed our own. And President Biden's last budget proposal tried to cut our national defense funding after inflation. The Commander in Chief seems more preoccupied with hidden "resort fees" than hidden Chinese malware in our phones, computers, and high-tech infrastructure.

Then there is Ukraine. President Biden said Putin's invasion of Ukraine has been a test of America's and our allies' resolve. That is certainly true, but, like the Chinese balloon, the Ukraine crisis was also a test of the Biden administration's response time, and they fell quite short.

Republicans tried to push the administration to better equip Ukraine to defend itself before the tanks rolled and to act more quickly and decisively in the early weeks to try to prevent a protracted stalemate. The indecision, hand-wringing, and sluggishness have carried a heavy price indeed. The President can't even get the bully pulpit right.

There is an overwhelmingly persuasive case that aiding Ukraine strongly

and directly serves our core American national interests, but President Biden seems incapable of articulating any of it. It is top Republicans who are filling the leadership vacuum, connecting the dots, and making the case. Yet again, Presidential leadership is missing in action, and it is Republicans filling the void. So let's hope President Biden's upcoming defense budget request will treat our national security challenges more seriously than his speech did on Tuesday night.

With fewer than one in five Americans calling the state of our Union strong, President Biden needed to pivot, but he failed to. He spent the wordiest State of the Union in American history making excuses, doubling down, and spinning alternate realities. But if Washington Democrats will not pivot, the American people will pivot away from them. It is already starting.

Seated behind the President Tuesday night was the new Republican Speaker of the House, KEVIN MCCARTHY, and following him on the airwaves was the youngest Governor in America, Sarah Huckabee Sanders of Arkansas—part of a whole wave of Republican Governors who are laser-focused on fighting crime, improving education, and lifting more working families into prosperity.

The American people know which principles and solutions will bring our country back, and they are seeing which party actually provides them.

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. REED. 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.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the 11 a.m. vote today, the Senate recess until 1 p.m.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, 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. 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.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, on Tuesday, President Biden delivered his State of the Union Address to Congress, and in this time of divided government, I was glad to see the President making more than one nod to bipartisanship. I do think this moment, with power split between Democrats and Republicans, provides a real oppor-

tunity to work together, to move away from the extreme partisanship of the past couple of years and make some real progress on some of the issues facing us.

But the President's speech also left me concerned because the President demonstrated almost no awareness of what actually happened as a result of his policies. Indeed, at times, it seemed as if the President had lived through a different reality from the one most Americans have been experiencing over the past 2 years.

The President rattled off a list of his supposed economic achievements, and I say "supposed" because he left out some vitally important context. He claimed credit for the historic job creation while leaving out the essential detail that a lot of that job creation was simply a result of the economy naturally adding back jobs temporarily lost during the pandemic. He talked about wage growth while leaving out the fact that real wages have declined—have declined—because of inflation over his Presidency. And he appeared to take credit for the fact that inflation has declined somewhat in recent months while neglecting to mention that it was his administration and congressional Democrats who helped create our inflation crisis with their American Rescue Plan spending spree.

Nor did the President spend any time discussing just how bad inflation still is and how much Americans are still suffering. Inflation in December was 6.5 percent. The last time inflation was that bad was in 1982—1982—40 years ago. I am glad inflation has declined somewhat, but I don't think the President has a lot to be congratulating himself about. Even if prices stopped increasing tomorrow, Americans would still be paying thousands of dollars more over the next year to achieve the same standard of living that they had when the President took office.

Again, the President and congressional Democrats and their American Rescue Plan spending spree bear a huge part of the responsibility for this situation. Or to quote former Obama economic adviser, Jason Furman:

The original sin was an oversized American Rescue Plan.

Another of the supposed economic achievements the President talked about Tuesday night was cutting the deficit. Yes, cutting the deficit. Well, let me just quote CNN on that claim. This is a quote:

Independent analysts say Biden's own actions, including his laws and executive orders, have had the overall effect of adding to current and projected future deficits, not reducing those deficits.

Let me just repeat that:

Independent analysts say Biden's own actions, including his laws and executive orders, have had the overall effect of adding to current and projected future deficits, not reducing those deficits.

The President failed to meaningfully address the economic crisis that his policies have helped to create. Instead,

he spent considerable time calling for spending proposals that would cost taxpayers trillions of more dollars.

He also failed to meaningfully address another crisis that has been raging over the past 2 years, and that is the security and humanitarian crisis at our southern border. It is a crisis that the President has spent 2 years ignoring. On Tuesday night, he essentially ignored it again. In a speech that was notable for being the most wordy State of the Union speech in the past 6 decades—clocking in at 9,191 words—the President devoted just 120 words, approximately 1 minute, to immigration. He spent a good chunk of that minute attempting to suggest that it is Congress and not he himself that needs to act. In fact, the President's brief 120 words on immigration managed to convey the impression the President had been trying to secure the border all along, instead of reflecting the reality that the President ignored this crisis—a crisis, I might add, that he, himself, triggered—for 2 years and only began to somewhat acknowledge it a mere month ago.

The President's speech was also strikingly light on a vision for our national security in spite of a war of aggression from Russia, which has made its imperial ambitions very clear, and continued troubling activity from China. There wasn't even a mention of Iran, which continues to be the leading state sponsor of terrorism, or North Korea, which just unveiled an alarming quantity of ICBMs.

The President devoted just nine words to the importance of modernizing our military, even though the past year and, indeed, the past week, has underscored the necessity of making sure our military is the top fighting force in the world so that we can deter and, if necessary, confront any threat.

While the President's speech was light on immigration and national security solutions and on any recognition of the economic crisis the President's policies helped create, the one thing his speech was not light on was the Democratic playbook on taxes and spending. The President kept bringing up and encouraging Congress to "finish the job." It quickly became clear that was code for "spend more taxpayer dollars" or maybe "expand government," even though it was excessive government spending that helped get us into this inflation crisis in the first place.

But if there was one thing that became clear Tuesday night, it was that the President wants to have it both ways. He wants to cut the deficit but simultaneously expand and grow government. He celebrates "Made in America," but in nearly the same breath, demonizes businesses. He wants to boost American innovation, but he also wants to raise taxes and impose price controls.

Perhaps no example of this wanting to have it both ways was more telling than the President's clear belief that

oil companies should increase domestic oil production, despite the fact that the President campaigned on eliminating fossil fuels. The President recounted an exchange with oil industry representatives who told him that they were reluctant to invest because they were concerned the President would shut down oil wells and refineries. The President clearly intended the anecdote to illustrate the selfishness of Big Oil or Big Business, but the anecdote did a much better job of illustrating just how outrageous it is that the President assumes he should be able to get as much oil production as he wants while simultaneously working to sunset—to get rid of—oil companies.

The President might like to have it both ways, but he can't because policies have consequences; spending has consequences; taxation has consequences.

And the result of the Big Government tax-and-spend policies the President laid out Tuesday night would not be the prosperous future he imagines, but more economic pain for American families and businesses. And any bipartisan work that we do over the next 2 years needs to move away from the failed policies of the past 2 years and toward a more fiscally responsible future.

The upcoming debt limit debate represents an outstanding opportunity to take a good, hard look at government spending and see how we can handle taxpayer dollars more responsibly.

I was disappointed that despite his calls for bipartisanship, the President decided to call for a "clean" debt limit increase Tuesday night. In other words, an increase in the Nation's credit card limit unaccompanied by any effort to stop adding to our bill. The President's attitude was all too reminiscent of Democrats' partisan "my way or the highway" approach over the past 2 years. I sincerely hope he will rethink that position.

I was also disturbed by the President's attempt to suggest falsely that Republicans are interested in paying for the debt limit increase by cutting Medicare and Social Security. I suspect the President is well aware that is not the position of the Republican Party. And his scaremongering was not reflective of the kind of bipartisanship I hope we can achieve over the next 2 years.

What Democrats and Republicans should be doing is working together to put Medicare and Social Security on a more secure financial footing going forward, and that would be greatly helped by addressing excessive government spending and working to rein in our national debt.

I appreciated, as I said earlier, the fact that despite trotting out far too many of the tax-and-spend policies Tuesday night, the President did make a real nod toward bipartisanship. I truly believe that we can do a lot together over the next 2 years from passing a farm bill to reauthorizing the

Federal Aviation Administration and improving our Nation's air traffic control system to creating new market access for American producers and securing more transparency and accountability from Big Tech. I hope that the President's words in support of bipartisanship will be borne out by his actions in the coming months and that working together, we can build a record of achievement that will help make life better for the American people.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON BENJAMIN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Benjamin nomination?

Mr. HEINRICH. 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 7 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Sanders
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schatz
Booker	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Brown	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cardin	Luján	Smith
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Collins	Menendez	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Graham	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NAYS—44

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

NOT VOTING—3

Coons	Fetterman	Schumer
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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.