

DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on implementation, as President Biden pointed out last week during his State of the Union Address, the Democratic agenda is already bearing fruit across this country. There will be tens of thousands of projects funded. Last week, for instance, I joined with President Biden to talk about Gateway in New York, which is something New Yorkers have waited for for decades and is vital to continuing the health of our bistate—New York-New Jersey—economy as well as the economy of the Northeast.

When the President came and we actually started working on the project, you could feel exaltation and excitement in the city. That is going to start happening again and again everywhere—in urban, suburban, and rural areas—as Democrats make it a priority to get the word out about all the good things that are coming the American people's way. It is one thing for Americans to read about things that Congress has passed, but when they can actually feel and see these accomplishments play out in their communities, it makes a world of difference. We have a responsibility to make the connection between what happens in this Chamber and what is going on in people's backyards.

This morning, I sent out a Dear Colleague with Senator STABENOW about how Democrats are going to get the word out on implementing our agenda in the coming weeks. We have a great story to tell the American people and no shortage of examples of how our agenda is making the country stronger and making Americans' lives better.

Let me give a few examples: Seniors on Medicare, for instance, can now, already, take advantage of Democrats' historic \$35-a-month cap on insulin. After years of hard work, this is no longer an aspiration; a \$35 insulin cap is now the law of the land. Seniors, who were up nights worrying how they were going to pay \$400, \$500, \$600, \$700 a month for this vital drug when you have diabetes can now breathe easy. Millions of people—the seniors and their families and friends—can breathe easier because of what we have done.

Now—let's not forget—we should be expanding the cap to all Americans, not just to those over 65. And in this Congress, Democrats are going to work hard, try to work with our Republican colleagues—we hope they will join us—to make that happen.

Here is another one: Very few people know of this, but we are spreading the word. Seniors on Medicaid can take advantage of free shingles vaccines. These two benefits alone—the insulin cap and free shingles vaccines—could mean hundreds in savings every year for seniors on Medicaid. And so many seniors are.

On the infrastructure fund: Communities across the country can now apply for new grant funding to fix their roads, their bridges, their highways.

These are perhaps the most obvious examples of our agenda at work. People are going to start seeing more orange vests, more hardhats, and good-paying union jobs in their communities as the communities get the updates they sorely need.

And the Inflation Reduction Act is already doing exactly what its name suggests: saving people money. The tax credits alone can give families as much as \$14,000 for making their homes energy efficient. People can put in heat pumps, get help to get those heat pumps, and their heating bills go down. It is a great thing.

The examples go on. Democrats are going to make implementation a top priority in this Congress. After everything we have been through over the past 3 years, Americans deserve to hear some good news about how their leaders are working hard for them. That is precisely what we will focus on in the coming years.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, chaos over there in the House on the Republican side. Each day that passes in Washington, two things hold true: We keep getting closer to default but no closer to a Republican plan to lift the debt ceiling. I repeat once again: House Republicans, Speaker MCCARTHY, show us your plan. It has been more than a month since Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans began threatening the entire U.S. economy in order to secure drastic spending cuts that, in all likelihood, will hurt the American people badly. But in all this time, nobody can seem to get an answer to the \$64,000 question: What cuts exactly are the Republicans proposing? Show us your plan.

Some of the things we are hearing from the MAGA wing is the stuff of nightmares. Later this afternoon, I will join with a number of Senate colleagues to shine a light on how devastating the radical MAGA cuts would be for American families if the MAGA Republicans got their way.

But where is the House Republican plan? How are they going to lift the debt ceiling? After months of no answers, now Speaker MCCARTHY has recently claimed Republican leadership is trying to come up with a plan right now. I am glad he is at least saying he wants to answer our question.

Frankly, it is a lot easier said than done, and I don't think Speaker MCCARTHY will be able to unify his conference. It takes 218 votes, as we know, to pass anything in the House, and with the razor-thin GOP majority paralyzed by internal division and with the stronghold the MAGA Republicans have on the Speaker, Speaker MCCARTHY will have a very difficult time getting everyone on the same page, if he can do it at all.

To quote from Punchbowl this morning, "House Republicans . . . face an intractable political math challenge as

they seek to reduce the \$1.4 trillion deficit." For one, Speaker MCCARTHY has insisted Republicans will only preserve the full faith and credit of the United States if they secure drastic spending cuts first.

MAGA Republican hardliners have demanded Speaker MCCARTHY release a proposal to balance the budget over the next 10 years, one of the conditions for having supported his leadership. At the same time, Speaker MCCARTHY has also claimed Republicans won't touch Social Security and Medicare. Now, I will believe that when I see it because so many Republicans, not just a handful—so many—have spent years going on record calling for cuts and changes and privatization of these programs.

All this leads to a terrible conclusion. If Speaker MCCARTHY is going to meet these goals, Republicans would need to cut 85 percent of all discretionary spending in order to balance the budget in 10 years. Let me say that again. If Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans are serious about balancing the budget in their 10-year plan without touching Medicare and Social Security, they will need to cut 85 percent of all discretionary spending. That would be Republican austerity at an apocalyptic level.

Teachers, nurses, firefighters, student loan borrowers, police officers would all kiss Federal funding goodbye. Funding for scientific research, so vital in our competition with China, would likely disappear. Child hunger would spike without Federal nutrition programs. Housing programs would be starved of resources. We would be thrust into a greater housing crisis than we now have.

So my point is this: Speaker MCCARTHY is not going to be able to keep his promise to balance the budget in 10 years while, at the same time, leaving Social Security and Medicare untouched. The math doesn't add up. Very soon, the MAGA brigade will see that the Speaker made a bunch of promises that he won't be able to keep, and I worry greatly that the dangers of slipping into default will only increase as the toxic dynamic within the House GOP gets worse day by day.

That is why it is so important that now, early on, the House Republicans show us their plan.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, on ESG and China—two more items, Mr. President. First, reports are out that Republicans will reintroduce a measure targeting a new rule from the Department of Labor that allows—repeat, allows but not requires—fiduciaries to consider the impacts of climate change and other ESG issues when making investment decisions.

Across the country, hard-right State legislatures are up in arms and trying to stop State investment funds from working with money managers who dare commit the, oh-so heinous offense

of looking at the big picture, looking at the future when making investments, including how climate change and other issues can present financial risks.

I just want to point out the obvious. Nothing in this DOL rule imposes any requirement on anyone. It is not a requirement. In fact, it goes out of the way to make sure decision making remains solely in the hand of the fiduciary.

Republicans like to talk about small government. They like to talk about letting the private sector do its work. But their obsession with eliminating ESG, their sort of ostrichlike view about climate change and the damage that carbon presents when going into the atmosphere, would do just the opposite.

CHINA

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, on the China surveillance balloon and what happened over the weekend, after yesterday's briefing, it is clear our defense and intelligence Agencies remain laser-focused on gathering every piece of information about what happened over U.S. and Canadian airspace.

John Kirby said these most recent objects did not pose any direct threat to people on the ground. That is very important. People should not worry about that. Of course, we have much more to learn. Today, we are going to have another all-Senators briefing on the State of U.S. defense readiness with respect to China. I am sure that will include a discussion of the military but also of our surveillance abilities.

Republicans eager to score political points right at this moment are doing nothing more than engaging in premature attacks. It is precipitous. It is no time for premature partisanship. We need to work together in Congress to get to the bottom of what happened, which Senator TESTER is taking the lead on here in the Senate. I thank him and all of my colleagues of good faith for working together.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 424

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 424) to protect the seniors of the United States, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bill on the calendar, under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO DIANNE FEINSTEIN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the longest serving female Senator in American history announced she plans to retire at the end of her record fifth full term.

My good friend DIANNE FEINSTEIN made major history in 1992 when she became the first woman to represent California in the Senate. But, of course, both her knack for notching historic firsts and her commitment to her fellow Golden Staters were very well established by the time she arrived here in Washington.

DIANNE's career in politics began where many do: at the local level. But for DIANNE, that happened to mean shattering glass ceilings in a major metropolis. She was the first woman to serve as president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. While in office, she endured a failed attempt to bomb her home. Then her predecessor as mayor was assassinated. That is when DIANNE became the city's first female mayor. And then she handily beat an attempted recall.

By the time this trailblazer became Senator FEINSTEIN, there was practically nothing that could faze her. DIANNE has been the top Democrat on the Rules Committee, the Intelligence Committee, and the Judiciary Committee.

For decades, she has been one of our country's most formidable legislators across numerous subjects. And, somehow, amid it all, this battle-tested veteran stateswoman has maintained a genuine warmth and collegiality that cuts through even the tensest debates.

Elaine and I have been fortunate to count DIANNE a friend for many years. Elaine and Dick served on a board together in the private sector years ago. Frequently, when Dick was in town, the four of us would go out to dinner. We had a genuine friendship.

So as you can imagine, we hated to lose Dick recently. But the good news is DIANNE will be here for 2 more years as our colleague. And that is very, very good news for Elaine and for me.

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, last week, President Biden spent part of his State of the Union Address celebrating what he seemed to think was a victory over inflation. Yesterday, however, another wave of official figures confirmed what working families already knew: The President was simply wrong. The Democrats' football spiking was premature. The American people are hurting badly. The CPI rose another half a point last month, even faster than pre-

dicted, for an overall price hike of 6.4 percent year on year.

Now, mind you, that is not 6.4 percent inflation since President Biden was sworn in. That is an additional 6.4 percent just since February of last year—since February of last year—a baseline that already had an entire previous year of historic and unacceptable inflation already baked into it.

The overall Biden inflation rate is 14.4 percent. The overall Biden inflation rate is 14.4 percent from January 2021 to today. Rents are up 12.7 percent since President Biden took office. Grocery prices are up 19.6 percent. Energy prices are up 38 percent after 2 years of total Democratic control here in Washington.

Prices are still rising out of control. And, even worse, the rate of increase is speeding back up again. This past month was the hottest for inflation since last October.

We have now had 21 straight months above 5 percent annual inflation—a mind-boggling policy failure.

And what does the White House have to say about it? Well, yesterday, the President's press secretary claimed:

The President's economic plan is indeed working.

So I guess the official White House position is that Democrats caused all of this crushing inflation on purpose. This is the kind of insanity that has left just 16 percent of Americans saying they are in a better financial position than they were 2 years ago. That has nearly two-thirds of Americans saying they are living literally paycheck to paycheck. So much preventable pain, because Democrats gambled away families' security on their radical plans and their reckless spending.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on one final matter, yesterday, President Biden and the Senate Democratic leader took time to boast about their judicial confirmations. There was something interesting, strange, and telling about their statements. Both the President and the Democratic leader focused their comments overwhelmingly on identity politics and demographic box-checking.

The President's statement spent literally one part of one sentence paying lip service to the question of legal qualifications. The remaining five paragraphs were devoted solely to these new judges' demographic characteristics. It was really quite bizarre.

President Biden informed the American people that a particular District Court in Puerto Rico will now have its first judge who is not heterosexual. He pointed out that men have been a small minority of his judicial nominees; that certain percentages of his nominees fit into certain demographic categories. He went on and on and on like this.

Most Americans want our country to keep moving forward in a direction where people's physical characteristics