

What was he trying to say? Does he still think that China is not a threat?

Communist China is our No. 1 geopolitical threat. They are our rival. They have the second largest economy in the world. They have over 2 million active military personnel. They have the largest navy in the world, and China plans to build more than 100 new ships, 300 new missile silos, and hundreds of nuclear missiles by the end of this decade.

China is working day and night to get stronger. China is working to challenge the United States as the world's superpower.

And Joe Biden seems to be doing the opposite. He is making our own country weaker and poorer and less prepared.

China isn't the one opening the border to the whole world to come in. China isn't the one spending themselves into bankruptcy. China isn't the one shutting down their energy production. It is Joe Biden who is doing those things—a President who is soft on China.

Now, he has been soft on China his entire career. When he was in the Senate, he helped China join the World Trade Organization. He helped China pay low tariffs under Bill Clinton. This helped China flood our country with cheap, poorly made consumer goods.

By the time Joe Biden was Vice President, the threat from China was obvious, but he was still soft on China.

When he was Vice President, Joe Biden said "The growth of China is overwhelmingly in our interest." That was Joe Biden as Vice President.

He should tell that to the factory workers who lost their jobs all across America. He should tell that to the families who have buried their children because of Chinese fentanyl.

When he was running for President, Joe Biden repeatedly downplayed any threat from China. He said of China, in his announcement to run for President, he said China is "not bad, folks."

Now, he should tell that to the 1 million Uighurs who are living as slaves and forced to work in the west of China.

As a candidate, Joe Biden said China is "not competition for us."

Well, I have got news for Joe Biden. China's economy has grown 12-fold in the last 20 years. China now has more missile launchers than we do. It is painfully obvious that China is trying to compete with us. Joe Biden is the only one who doesn't get it.

On Friday, former Senator Max Baucus, who I served with, from Montana, revealed that China wanted Joe Biden to be President.

Now, Senator Baucus was a Member of this body, and then he was tapped to be President Obama's Ambassador to China. So Senator Baucus knows a lot about China, knows a number of Chinese officials. And on Friday, he admitted Chinese officials told him that China wanted Joe Biden to be elected President.

Of course they did. In recent weeks, we found out that Joe Biden kept classified information at his home and in his private office.

So where was this private office? Well, the office was at something called the Penn Biden Center at the University of Pennsylvania. The university paid Joe Biden nearly \$1 million to do virtually nothing. Joe Biden says he was a professor yet never taught a single class. And he left classified documents at the Penn Biden Center.

Now, reportedly, these documents were related to Iran and Ukraine. I haven't seen the documents, but those are the reports.

And what is the relationship with China and this center? Well, Chinese donors gave \$61 million to the university between 2017 and 2020.

Both the House and the Senate need to investigate whether these donations were legal, and we need to know if Chinese money is influencing the Biden administration's policies.

On Thursday, I came to the floor and spoke about how Joe Biden's energy policies are helping China. Later that day, we found out yet another connection between Joe Biden's energy policies and China. We found out that the White House and the Secretary of Energy met with an environmental group with ties to China.

The group is, interestingly, called the Rocky Mountain Institute, and the group was paid by the Chinese Government to study green energy.

Now Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm wants their advice too.

Enough is enough. It is time to act with strength against China. The sanctions that the administration announced are just a slap on the wrist.

The House passed a resolution condemning China for violating our airspace. The vote was unanimous. Every Republican voted for it and every Democrat voted for it. Why aren't we taking it up here in the Senate?

There is a whole host of legislation we need to pass here in the Senate to stand up to China.

I have introduced legislation to ban administration officials from going to work for China.

The top lawyer today—the top lawyer today in our intelligence community used to work for China. Before that, he worked in the Obama White House. Revolving door—Democrat administration, China, Democrat administration.

He worked for the Obama White House. He worked for Huawei—of course, we know Huawei is a telecommunications company controlled by the Chinese Government. Now he is one of the top lawyers on the payroll of Joe Biden.

There is much more that needs to be done in relation to China. China is going to try to spy on us again. China is going to keep challenging us. It is time for us to stand up to the challenge.

Now, what happened with this spy balloon can never be allowed to happen again. America cannot afford Joe Biden's policies of weakness.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 4 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 3:21, recessed until 4 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. MURPHY).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

MEDICARE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, a leading philosopher of the last century—his name was Jean-Paul Sartre—famously once said that "existence precedes essence." In other words, Sartre's words, not mine: To be is to act.

In other words, my words, not Mr. Sartre's. In other words: What you do is what you believe. What you do is what you believe, not what you say. What you do is what you believe, and everything else is just cottage cheese.

I think that is particularly relevant to our government in Washington, DC, and indeed to probably all forms of government in America. We are what we do, not what we say.

As the Presiding Officer knows, we are in negotiations with respect to the debt limit. I, for one—and I think almost all, if not all, of my colleagues in the Senate will agree with me on this. We will not default on America's debt. We will not. But in conjunction with addressing that issue of the debt limit, many of our colleagues in the House and many of our colleagues here in the Senate would like to talk to President Biden about what we can do as a Congress and as a President to keep us from getting in this situation again, where we have to so radically raise the debt limit.

In other words, the request to the President is: Mr. President, let's sit down and talk about how we can slow the rate of growth in our spending and slow the rate of growth in our debt accumulation, for a variety of reasons, not only pertaining to the debt limit but also pertaining to trying to get control of the budget. And I hope the President will accept that invitation.

In those negotiations, the President has said—incorrectly, in my judgment—but he has said repeatedly, as have some of my Democratic friends, that, well, all the Republicans want to do—all the Republicans want to do in these negotiations is hurt Medicare and hurt Social Security.

Now, I understand politics. We both do. We have been doing this for a long time, and politically I understand why the President and some of my colleagues are saying that. It is not true,

of course. And I don't think it is beneficial to these negotiations. But the fact that the President is saying this and saying, well, you Republicans want to hurt Medicare, for example, I find to be quite ironic—extraordinarily ironic—maybe even a tad hypocritical.

In Washington, DC, you have to watch what people do, not what they say.

In the waning days of the last Congress—once again, watching what people do, not what they say—President Biden, who has accused Members of my party of wanting to hurt Medicare, tried to cut Medicare himself.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services—CMS, as we call it, as you know—every year proposes what is called a physician's fee schedule for doctors who treat Medicare patients. If you are a doctor and you have a Medicare patient, you don't get to send the Federal Government a bill for whatever you think your services are worth. That is not the way it works.

Medicare, every year, through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services—CMS—every year proposes a physician fee schedule. They tell the physicians that this is what you can charge and not a penny more.

President Biden's CMS, last year, proposed to cut all physician payments, all provider payments by 4.5 percent. He didn't want to lift up Medicare; he wanted to cut it—not Republicans, the President.

Now, why is that important?

Well, a lot of physicians won't take Medicare anymore because they say—and they won't take Medicaid either, for that matter. They say: We just can't. We can't turn a profit. We are not looking to make, say the physicians, obscene profits, but we are in the middle of inflation. Healthcare inflation is as real as anything else. We are paying more in rent. We are paying more for our nurses. We are paying more for supplies. And the Medicare fees that we are paying to treat folks on Medicaid and Medicare, they are not keeping up. They are just not.

And so here comes President Biden, through his Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS—here comes President Biden, the champion of Medicare, he proposed a 4.5-percent across-the-board cut for every physician treating Medicare in America. That is 900,000 people in my State.

So I am sitting there listening to this, hearing the President say: All the Republicans want to do is hurt Medicare, on the left hand, but on the right hand he is trying to cut all the physicians and other providers in the program—we have 900,000 people in my State in the program—by 4.5 percent in the middle of rising inflation. I just found that extraordinary. Watch what people do, not what they say.

So I introduced a bill. The name of my bill was Protecting Medicare Patients and Physicians Act. It would have eliminated—it would have eliminated that 4- to 4.5-percent cut that

President Biden wanted to impose on Medicare doctors. I came to the body of this Senate to present that bill. And I didn't come to my colleagues with a problem; I came with a solution. I wasn't going to say: Well, let's just don't cut Medicare doctors and eliminate the cut. I said let's do eliminate the cut, but I have a way to pay for it. I am not suggesting that we reject President Biden's attempt to cut Medicare and fill the hole by borrowing the money. I said, I have got a solution.

I found \$9.8 billion sitting in a fund at the Department of Health and Human Services. It was \$9.8 billion when I was able to get the data. I suspect at one point it got as high as \$15 billion. It was called the Provider Relief Fund. As the President knows, this Congress appropriated lots of money to our healthcare providers to help them deal with COVID, and not all of the money, thankfully, was needed. Many of the healthcare providers returned some of the money. And at the time I presented the bill, there was \$9.8 billion that had been returned and was sitting in an account at the Department of Health and Human Services—way more than enough—way more than enough to prevent a 4-percent and, in some cases, a 4-percent-plus cut to Medicare that President Biden proposed.

I went to every one of my Republican colleagues in the Senate. They all said: We are with you, Kennedy. Let's do it.

So I came to this floor. I came to this floor to ask for unanimous consent, and that, as you know, is where you present a bill, and if nobody objects, it is passed.

But there was an objection, and it came from a good friend and a good man, Senator RON WYDEN, who is chairman of our Finance Committee.

There aren't words in English to express how much I respect RON WYDEN. But Senator WYDEN came to the floor and said: Kennedy, I am going to object to your bill. He said: I don't want you to worry about this. We are aware that President Biden has proposed to cut every Medicare physician in America, but we are not going to let him do that. We are putting together a budget bill right now. We call it the omnibus. We are putting together a budget bill right now that is going to address that problem, and that is why I am objecting to your bill. Your bill, Kennedy, is unnecessary.

Now, I am not blaming this on Chairman WYDEN. I am not. The omnibus passed with a vote of, I think, virtually all, if not all, of my Democratic colleagues and with some Republican colleagues. So I am not saying it is Senator WYDEN's fault. But, after the omnibus passed—I didn't vote for it, in part, because I didn't know what was in it. But, after the omnibus passed, I went back and looked, and lo and behold, the omnibus bill, which passed at the encouragement of President Biden and with a lot more votes from my Democratic friends than my Republican colleagues, had a 2-percent cut

for every provider, every physician, who treats a Medicare patient in America—a 2-percent cut. That is better than a 4-percent cut, but it is still a cut at a time of raging inflation.

Now, I don't know yet what that impact is going to be on healthcare and the healthcare delivery system in my State. I don't know how many more physicians—after President Biden has cut their fees, I don't know how many more physicians are going to stand up and say: I can't take Medicare patients anymore.

I hope none, but I suspect some.

Oh, and let me mention this. I talked about that pool of money, the provider relief fund, that had \$9.8 billion in it—maybe \$15 billion—sitting there in an account, unspent, unappropriated. What happened to it? I don't know. It got spent on something, but it didn't get spent on helping Medicare doctors and patients. They got cut 2 percent.

So I am going to end like I began. In this town, you have to watch what people do, not what they say. The President can try to blame the Republicans and say: Well, they don't want to seriously negotiate about controlling spending and controlling debt. All they want to do is cut Medicare.

He already did it. He did it in December.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business and that Senator BENNET be allowed to conclude his remarks before the vote today.

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

ABORTION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to continue to raise the alarm about how Republicans' extreme, ongoing attacks on reproductive rights are putting women's lives at risk, are trampling the will of the American people, who supported the right to abortion, by the way, everywhere it was on the ballot last November, and are even undermining care for patients in States like mine, which have strong abortion protections.

In fact, right now, a truly extreme lawsuit, which some far-right Republicans in Congress just filed a brief supporting, is seeking to overturn the FDA's longstanding approval of a safe and effective medication used in abortion care. This suit could cause chaos nationwide and rip abortion medication away from patients in every single State, potentially even from my constituents in Washington State.

I have been clear that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* last year was not the end of the fight to protect reproductive rights. Unfortunately, it was just the starting gun for even more extreme attacks from far-right Republicans. We have already seen 14 extreme State abortion bans go into effect—from bans that set bounties for information about anyone who gets an