

And I am talking about innovation in both a transformational sense—the kind of innovation that unlocks new cures, improves education, protects our national security, protects our food supply—and sustainable innovation so that we may find new and creative ways to protect against AI's risks and minimize the chances of this technology going off the rails, which would undermine innovation altogether.

The only way we will achieve this goal is by bringing a diverse group of perspectives together, from those who work every day on these systems to those openly critical of many parts of AI and who worry about its effects on workers, on racial and gender bias, and more. So I look forward to tomorrow's conversation, the first of many we will have this fall. I expect we will hear a wide range of views and opinions and lots of dissenting views. That is how it should be.

I want to thank every participant attending tomorrow's forum. Thank you also to Senators ROUNDS and HEINRICH and YOUNG, who helped to organize tomorrow's meeting. And, of course, I want to thank all of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle who recognize the urgency of AI.

The Senate is fully engaged on this issue and is ready to do more. Our committees and subcommittees have already held no fewer than nine hearings on AI, with more happening this week, all on issues ranging from national security to human rights, to IP, and more. We need all hands on deck if we want to maximize AI's societal benefits while minimizing its many risks. Tomorrow, we will take the next step in this great undertaking, and I urge all of my colleagues from both sides to attend.

NOMINATION OF JEFFREY IRVINE CUMMINGS

On nominations, Mr. President, today, the Senate will continue the business of confirming more judicial nominees. We will vote this afternoon to confirm Jeffrey Cummings of Illinois to serve as district judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Judge Cummings was reported out of committee with a bipartisan vote, and he would be the 104th district court judge that we confirm under President Biden.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, on another matter, after a lot of hard work and compromise by appropriators on both sides—a salute goes to PATTY MURRAY and SUSAN COLLINS—today, the Senate will take up the first procedural vote on a package of three appropriations bills: MILCON-Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, and Transportation-HUD. Each of these bills passed unanimously out of committee, so I hope they will have strong bipartisan support here on the floor.

And I mentioned both Chair MURRAY and Vice Chair COLLINS. I want to also thank all of the members of the Appropriations Committee for their great work. None of it was easy. They deserve great credit.

The Senate appropriations, thus far, has been the gold standard for good governance. All 12 appropriations bills passed through regular order, with Democratic chairs and Republican ranking members working together to move bills forward.

As the Senate continues the work of funding the government, the House gavels back in today with one very important responsibility: following the Senate's example and working in a bipartisan fashion to prevent a government shutdown. The American people don't want a shutdown. It would undo so much of our progress to lower costs, create millions and millions of jobs, and help our economy recover from the pandemic.

So I, once again, implore the House Republican leadership to reject all-or-nothing tactics, to reject unrealistic expectations, and refuse to cave to the extremist demands we are hearing from 30 or so Members way out on the fringe.

There is only one way we will avoid a costly government shutdown: bipartisanship. It is as simple as that. We have seen bipartisanship work in the Senate, and now the House must follow suit.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week, the Senate will begin consideration of the first package of full-year appropriations for the coming fiscal year. This is an important milestone and a downpayment on our goal of funding the Federal Government through regular order.

Our progress on this front has been due in large part to the leadership of Senator COLLINS and Senator MURRAY of the Appropriations Committee. For months—months—our colleagues have worked diligently to build consensus and process as many bills as possible with deadlines looming large.

The legislation before us this week is designed to address a trio of important commitments—to America's farmers, to our veterans, and to investing in transportation infrastructure.

Seven percent of American adults are veterans of the Armed Forces. Ten percent of American jobs are supported by agriculture. And our entire economy hinges on safe and efficient airports, roads, bridges, and ports. So it is difficult to overstate the importance of this legislation, but it is especially important that we get it right. To that end, I hope and expect that all Senators will receive ample opportunity to offer amendments for consideration.

Ultimately, our work will need to earn the support of a divided Congress and earn the President's signature. So I am grateful to our colleagues' commitment to regular order appropriations, and I look forward to supporting a sensible step forward in the coming days.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, now on another matter, I have spoken in recent days about the most common arguments deployed against U.S. assistance to the fight against Putin in Ukraine and how they fall short. Today, I would like to address the misconception that America's lethal aid lacks necessary accountability and protections against misuse.

The United States probably has a deeper understanding of how Ukraine is using weapons provided by the United States and our allies than we have had with any other partner nation, period. There are many reasons for this.

First, Ukraine is not Iraq or Afghanistan; it is a modern democracy, firmly committed to integration with the West.

Second, Russia's escalation last year led to a political sea change in how Ukraine treats corruption. Today, corruption and misuse of funds or weapons can mean the death of loved ones or imperil critical Western support.

I am not saying that corruption has vanished. Even in the worst conflicts or most advanced democracies, human nature remains. But the cost calculus has changed, and robust, independent anti-corruption bodies are making a difference.

Third, American diplomats, military officers, and USAID employees have finally returned to Kyiv. Their presence allows for more oversight and accountability of our assistance.

Senators who have visited the American-led headquarters in Germany and seen the professional, multinational effort supporting Ukraine firsthand have come away impressed. They have also been impressed by LTG Tony Aguto, the senior American officer who runs this effort and was confirmed by the Senate last year by a voice vote.

Through these coalition efforts, we have unprecedented insight into how nearly 30 types of Western weapons systems and vehicles are being used by Ukraine, often down to the serial number.

Take for example an American-led effort in Poland that remotely assists Ukrainian units on the frontlines to maintain and prepare various weapons and vehicles. When trouble arises, Ukrainian units have every incentive to share data, photos, and video in real time about the status of their weapons and benefit from engineering solutions we have provided to help maintain and prepare these weapons out in the field.

This is a win-win. The United States gets unprecedented insight into how our weapons are being used—often overused—in combat, which helps us improve and maintain America's own arsenal. U.S. forces also get a unique view into the situation on the battlefield and the challenges Ukrainian forces are facing.

Given his oversight role and regular contact with Ukrainian commanders, I have requested the administration make Lieutenant General Aguto available to brief Senators on these insights.

Finally, here in the Senate, Ranking Member RISCH, Ranking Member WICKER, Vice Chairman COLLINS, and Vice Chairman RUBIO have been conducting proactive oversight based on lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We have ensured that \$50 million was included in previous supplementals specifically to conduct oversight of assistance to Ukraine. We have added dozens of transparency and reporting requirements so Congress has more insight than ever.

Tomorrow, my colleagues will have an opportunity to learn even more. At my request, the inspectors general for the Pentagon, the State Department, and USAID will come to brief Republican Senators on the state of their own independent oversight of these assistance efforts. Already, as the State Department's IG put it, "Our completed work has not substantiated any allegations of diversion."

So it is my hope that each of our colleagues will take the opportunity to get the facts from these independent auditors.

ENERGY

Mr. President, now on one final matter, across the country, the end of summer gave working families gas prices near alltime highs, beyond just a seasonal swing.

Last week, Washington Democrats opened a new front in their war on affordable and abundant American energy. The Biden administration announced the withdrawal of more than 13 million acres in the National Petroleum Reserve from oil and gas leasing and canceled—canceled—seven oil and gas leases in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The President calls this move a necessary step to "meet the urgency of the climate crisis," but any serious observer would call it bad news for families trying to make ends meet.

Last fiscal year, under President Biden's stranglehold, the number of new Federal acres leased plummeted. Comparing the first 30 months of each administration, onshore leasing is down from 67 sales under the previous administration to a mere 9 sales under President Biden—67 sales down to 9 under this administration.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has let a 5-year plan for offshore energy production—required by law—to expire over a year ago with no new plan in sight. In other words, there are no new offshore energy leases in the hopper.

Now, Congress has exercised its authority and forced the President to reinstate an offshore lease it had already canceled, but in response, his administration put 6 million acres of the sale off limits to oil and gas exploration.

Senate Democrats have been more than willing to tow the party line. Last year, every single one of our Democratic colleagues voted against Senator BARRASSO's effort to require dependable onshore leasing, and every single

one voted against Senator KENNEDY's measure to restore certainty to offshore leasing.

Freezing the development of clean and reliable energy here at home does nothing more than kick production of more expensive and less reliable fuels into overdrive overseas. You can guarantee fuels won't be climate-conscious or environmentally sound when they come from hostile regimes overseas.

The cost of Washington Democrats' shortsighted obsession is measured in higher costs at the pump, higher home heating and cooling bills, and greater reliance on foreign energy.

By outsourcing our energy policy to the radical environmentalists, the Biden administration is literally outsourcing America's energy security. Our Nation really deserves better.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The 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.

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 3 weeks ago, President Biden officially launched the second part of his student loan giveaway—his dramatic overhaul of the REPAYE program, an income-driven repayment plan for Federal student loans.

The President's revamp flew under the radar a bit when it was first announced, overshadowed by his plan to forgive up to \$10,000 of student loan debt outright—or \$20,000 for Pell grant recipients. But the truth is that the President's new income-driven repayment plan, which he has dubbed the Saving on a Valuable Education plan—or the SAVE plan—is just as problematic, if not more, as the President's scheme to forgive student debt outright because the new SAVE plan will create a system in which the majority of future Federal borrowers will never fully repay their student loans.

The nonpartisan Penn Wharton Budget Model estimates that just 24.6 percent of future borrowers will repay their loans in full—in other words, less than a quarter of borrowers.

The Department of Education estimates that borrowers with only undergraduate debt enrolled in the SAVE program can, on average, expect to pay back just \$6,121 for each \$10,000 they borrow. That amount the Federal Government is taking on, on average, is almost 40 percent of the cost of these undergraduates' student loans.

Let's call this what it is: It is loan forgiveness by another name. You don't have to take my word for it.

One scholar from the left-leaning Urban Institute had this to say on NPR the other day:

I think it's going to be less obvious that it's a big loan forgiveness program to both

borrowers and onlookers as well. But, yeah, it's a big loan forgiveness program. . . . So no longer a safety net like it has been in the past for undergraduates—this looks more like a broad-based subsidy for undergraduate degrees through loan forgiveness.

That, from a scholar at the left-leaning Urban Institute. Let me repeat that: "a broad-based subsidy for undergraduate degrees through loan forgiveness."

Or, in other words, in the words of one scholar from the American Enterprise Institute, "a functional entitlement program" whose costs, he adds, "will prove difficult to control."

I don't need to tell anyone that the problems here are myriad. Just think about it. For starters, someone is going to have to bear the cost of all these unrepaid student loans. And that someone is the American taxpayers, including taxpayers who worked hard to pay off the full balance on their own student loans, without a handout from the Federal Government, and taxpayers who worked their way through school to avoid a heavy loan burden and parents who scrimped and saved to send their children to college debt-free and individuals who covered the cost of their education by enlisting in the military and risking their lives for their country. And I could go on.

I am at a loss to understand why taxpayers, as a whole, should assume a substantial part of the educational burden for individuals, who, if they graduated from college, have greater long-term earning potential than many of the Americans who will be helping to shoulder the burdens for their debts.

And, of course, this program isn't just being offered to help undergraduate debt. No. Graduate students, including those in professional degree programs like medical school and law school, will also be eligible for the so-called SAVE program.

And I don't need to tell anyone that the lifetime earning potential of a doctor or a lawyer is usually pretty good. But leaving aside questions of fairness, let's talk about the costs of this *de facto* new entitlement program. Again, the Penn Wharton Budget Model estimates the SAVE program will cost roughly half a trillion dollars over the next 10 years.

We have a national debt today of \$32 trillion and a Federal budget that has increased by 41 percent since 2019. Contrary to what President Biden seems to believe, we can't afford to be constantly expanding government programs. We simply don't have the money to be subsidizing the college—and graduate—education of a group of people whose earning potential will exceed the earning potential of a lot of the people subsidizing their schooling.

Perhaps the worst thing about the President's new program is that we will be spending all that money and doing nothing—nothing—to solve the real problem, and that is the high cost of a college education.

President Biden's student loan giveaway provides actually zero—exactly