

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

zero—incentive for colleges to contain costs. In fact, there is reason to fear that it could actually encourage colleges to raise their prices or, at least, make them significantly less reluctant to do so.

And, of course, the President's proposal does nothing to discourage students from borrowing substantial amounts of money to finance their education. Indeed, there is a good chance students will increase their borrowing as a result of the President's plan.

The President's ill-conceived student loan giveaway is a tremendous disservice to taxpayers—and a terrible move for our economic health.

As I said, it does nothing to address the real problem, which is the high cost of higher education, which is why last week, I joined Senator CASSIDY to introduce a resolution of disapproval to block the President's plan. And I encourage Members of both parties to support this resolution. Anyone who cares about actually addressing the cost of higher education should oppose a program that not only fails to solve the underlying problems but is actually likely to make things worse.

I yield the floor.

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.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. 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.

REMEMBERING JIMMY BUFFETT

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the remarkable life of a legendary native of Mississippi whose music is synonymous with the spirit of summertime and enjoying life: Jimmy Buffett.

Born in Pascagoula, MS, Jimmy Buffett's journey began in the heart of the South. His music touches the heart of those well beyond Mississippi or the South, but there is no denying Jimmy's music embodies the very essence of the South, with its warm hospitality, vibrant culture, and distinctive charm.

Jimmy's early years were filled with the sights and sounds of Mississippi. The Sun shining over the Gulf of Mexico and many other beautiful experiences of the South would later inspire some of his most beloved songs.

But it was Jimmy's great appetite for adventure that ultimately propelled him to worldwide fame. He embarked on a journey that would take him to the Florida Keys, the Caribbean, and beyond those changes in latitudes. Amid more than 40 musical tours throughout his career, he churned his talents into a diverse business empire and charitable works.

As we reflect on the legacy of this son of a son of a sailor, we cannot help but be inspired by Jimmy Buffett's unyielding commitment to following

his dreams and embracing life. His songs transport us to sandy beaches, where the stresses of life fade away. He reminds us that sometimes we all need to kick back, relax, and take a moment to savor the simple pleasures of life. As Jimmy would put it, "it's 5 o'clock somewhere."

In honoring Jimmy Buffett, we celebrate the man who, through his music, brought us with him on many of his adventures around the Sun, from the Pascagoula Run to the shores of paradise, and we are all better for it.

I have so much gratitude for the joy, laughter, and the inspiration that Jimmy Buffett brought into so many Americans' lives. His music is a timeless reminder that no matter where we come from, we can all find a bit of paradise within ourselves, and, come Monday, it will be all right.

Jimmy Buffett is a true southern storyteller who was generous enough to share his piece of paradise with the world. I have no doubt his legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

EGYPT

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I want to paint a picture for you just for a moment. It takes place on a tarmac in the Zambian capital of Lusaka, just a few weeks ago, in fact.

A small private jet arrives from Egypt. It lands there, hoping to go unnoticed because of what is on board that jet. But it does get noticed by Zambian authorities. They board the plane, and they find inside a cargo that sounds like something out of a James Bond movie. On board that plane is \$5.7 million in U.S. currency, 602 bars of gold, five pistols, and 126 rounds of ammunition.

To make the story even more bizarre, it turns out that the gold was not actually real. It was fake bars of gold. The currency is real, the ammunition is real, but the gold is fake.

Zambia arrests 12 people, 6 of whom are Egyptian citizens. Immediately, as you can imagine, speculation begins about what is exactly going on.

That is an interesting story, right? But the reason I tell you this story isn't because of what happened in Zambia. It is because of what happened next in Cairo. Six of these individuals were Egyptian citizens. The plane came from Egypt. So, of course, journalists in Cairo start to do some digging. A fact-checking platform named Matsadaash—I am probably butchering the pronunciation, but it is Arabic, roughly, for "don't believe it." They report on the alleged involvement of former Egyptian security officials in the incident, but this kind of truth telling is just not allowed in Egypt today.

Egypt is a closed society. It is a dictatorship in which political dissent is crushed. The free press is essentially nonexistent, and as a consequence, top

officials are allowed to enrich themselves without any accountability.

So what happened to the journalists at Matsadaash is interesting, but it is, frankly, par for the course in Egypt. Here is what happened. In response for doing this reporting, Egyptian security officials went straight to the home of the journalist. They raided his home. They forced him to log onto his computer as they were there, and they forced him to delete the Facebook posts about the issue at hand.

Egypt just wanted this story to disappear, and they were willing to do whatever it took to make this happen. We may never know the full story of what happened in that airport—what was going on with that plane—but what we do know is that the Egyptian Government's reaction is part of a completely predictable pattern to muzzle and silence the truth tellers by force.

Beyond these attacks on Matsadaash, two other journalists covering the episode were also detained immediately after without charge. One of the last remaining independent media outlets in Cairo, Mada Masr has repeatedly been refused a legal license to operate.

Websites that report on this kind of activity of Egyptian officials are shut down as soon as they appear. Activists are regularly jailed for "spreading false news" about human rights violations. Over and over again, the government's playbook is just the same: Shut down voices that are critical of the government and throw in jail people who don't comply.

Around this same time last year, I came down to the Senate floor to make a very similar speech, to talk about an annual decision that the administration has to make with regard to our aid to Egypt.

Now, Congress, in a bipartisan way, cares about this campaign of brutal repression against the press and political dissent in Egypt. That is why our annual appropriations bill limits the amount of money the administration can send to Egypt, depending on the government's human rights record.

Specifically, this year, Congress has said that \$320 million of the aid we send, which is roughly about a quarter of the aid, can't go to Egypt unless the administration certifies that Egypt has made real progress on these questions of political climate, \$85 million of which is tied to the release of specific political prisoners and the remaining \$235 million on broader improvements on questions of human rights and democracy.

Now, I just want to be honest with you. In the past, the Bush administration, the Obama administration, the Trump administration, they just routinely waived these conditions and sent the full amount without any real progress. They said it was about American national security, without any actual evaluation as to what the consequence of withholding the money would be to our national security. But