

against Putin, the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives is essentially telling him: You are on your own.

Nothing would make Putin happier right now than to see the United States waver in our support for the Ukrainian people. Nothing would make Putin happier. Providing aid is not just a matter of Ukrainian security but of American security, too, because a victorious Putin would be an emboldened Putin. That would make the world less safe for democracy and for America. For MAGA House Republicans to oppose Ukrainian aid is a terrible, dangerous mistake that could come back to haunt U.S. security.

Ukrainian aid could have been an opportunity for bipartisanship, but the hard right—against what, I imagine, is the majority of Republicans in the House—has prevented that from happening, too.

So let me say it again: The House package is slapdash, reckless, and cruel, and everyone knows it has no chance of passing the Senate.

The more time House Republicans waste trying to pass this MAGA wish list, while ignoring chances for real bipartisanship, the greater the odds they will push us into a costly government shutdown.

The last government shutdown lasted 35 days and began when then-President Trump said to me and Speaker PELOSI in the Oval Office: “I am proud to shut down the government.” That is what he said.

In the 2 years that Democrats held the House, the Senate, and the White House, we didn’t have a government shutdown. We didn’t have a debt limit crisis. We didn’t have the kind of chaos that we see when MAGA Republicans seem to control so much of the Republican agenda. And, this year, we have already seen both: a debt limit crisis and a looming shutdown crisis, just months apart.

Only one thing has changed since last year, when there was none of this chaos: a House controlled by MAGA Republicans. They are back to their old ways.

And, of course, former President Trump is trying to add to the crisis—it is typical of what he always does—practically commanding his MAGA House sycophants to “shut down the government if they can’t make an appropriate deal—absolutely.”

This is the problem with MAGA extremism: It is not capable of governing. It is only capable of chaos, and this year, sadly, chaos has reigned in the House.

It doesn’t have to be that way. It doesn’t have to be a MAGA Republican-only bill. It doesn’t have to be the MAGA way or a shutdown. House Republicans have a choice in the matter, between pursuing real chances for bipartisanship and catering to the hard right. Each time, they have chosen to empower the hard right. They have chosen dysfunction and chaos. They have chosen to ignore bipartisanship.

But what was true months ago remains true today: There is no scenario where we avoid a shutdown without bipartisanship. If Democrats tried to do it only our way, there would be no bill. But now Republicans are trying to do it their way; Democrats are not. And there are plenty of Members on both sides of the aisle who, despite our disagreements, would like to give bipartisanship a chance, and that is what the American people would want us to do as well.

We only have a few days left for House Republicans to come to their senses and choose the more fruitful way. I urge them to reject chaos and choose to work with Democrats.

There are real people with real lives at stake here. Hundreds of thousands of Federal workers all across the country could be furloughed. Services that millions of Americans count on could be disrupted. Our communities will be less safe and our fellow Americans suffering from disasters less provided for. Those are a few of the tragic and unnecessary outcomes if the Republicans in the House let the MAGA extreme control their agenda.

The matter is simple. If both sides embrace bipartisanship, a shutdown will be avoided. If House Republicans reject bipartisanship, if the hard right is given license to run the show, a MAGA shutdown will be almost inevitable.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, now on the minibus, while chaos seems to define everything the Republican-controlled House does, here in the Senate we have shown that bipartisanship is key to getting things done, and, tomorrow, Democrats and Republicans will get a chance to make sure that that bipartisanship continues.

Unfortunately, last Thursday, a lone Senator, representing a very small group in this Chamber, tried to undermine the bipartisan appropriations process with procedural hurdles.

Yesterday, my colleague Senator MURRAY, the chair of the Appropriations Committee, moved to get things back on track with a motion to suspend rule XVI and filed cloture on that motion. We will vote on that motion tomorrow. I believe that a clear majority of Senators want to see us continue on the appropriations process. I hope they vote to keep the appropriations process going tomorrow.

Our colleagues on the other side have asked for regular order, and we have worked with them to make sure that that happens, just as it did on the NDAA bill. Our colleagues on the other side have asked for amendments, and we have worked with them to consider amendments. In fact, Senators COLLINS and MURRAY had a list of amendments that was going to go forward with the OK, I believe, of both the minority and majority leaders, until Senator JOHNSON threw the log in the tracks.

Our Republican and Democratic leaders of the Appropriations Committee

have asked to consider appropriations bills on the floor, and it is with their cooperation that these three bills—MILCON-VA, Agriculture, and Transportation-HUD—have been brought to the floor for consideration.

Democrats want to work with our Republican colleagues whenever possible. No one pretends that we don’t have disagreements—we do—but the important part is that, so far, disagreements have not stymied the process. Tomorrow’s vote will be a chance to ensure that we keep that bipartisanship going.

I thank my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee, especially Chair MURRAY and Vice Chair COLLINS, for their excellent work and hope we can see strong support tomorrow to continue the appropriations process here on the floor.

I yield the floor.

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. McCONNELL. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

CHINA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in the past 2 months, the Chinese Government has reminded the world just how an authoritarian communist state operates.

In July, President Xi announced he had replaced the PRC’s Foreign Minister after the official hadn’t been seen in public in a month. Then, the senior official responsible for the PLA strategic missile force, who hadn’t been seen for even longer, was replaced. And then the Chinese Defense Minister went missing for weeks before Beijing announced he had been fired and detained for investigation. The purge of senior leaders, growing economic volatility, bellicose foreign policy—these are concerning developments in a country with a reputation for repression at home and belligerence abroad.

China’s neighbors and global powers alike are increasingly skeptical of official economic and budget numbers from a dictatorship that suppresses free speech, mocks the rule of law, and simply disappears its senior leaders—and rightly so.

One thing has long been certain: The PRC is arming itself at an alarming rate. Recent estimates suggest China spends close to \$700 billion per year on defense. That is concerning for a number of reasons. First, a much larger percentage of China’s defense budget than ours goes to modernization and capabilities. Further, since Chinese geostrategic ambitions—for now at least—are focused primarily on challenging the status quo in its immediate region, the PRC doesn’t face the resource constraints that the United

States does due to our global interests and power projection requirements.

Beijing's decades-long modernization campaign has paid dividends for the PRC. Just last week, the Wall Street Journal detailed the significant progress China has made in testing and fielding hypersonic weapons and how such efforts have outpaced those of our own country. America also lags in shipbuilding. The infrastructure constraints that keep us from building more ships, testing more hypersonic vehicles, and training more pilots are well known. But the cold truth is that China, which has a shipbuilding capacity more than 200 times that of the United States, is set to reach 400 ships in 2 years, while the U.S. Navy is aiming for 350 ships—listen to this—by 2045.

This is precisely why Senate Republicans, led by Senator Shelby and Senator WICKER, pushed for an amendment to the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework to create a Defense Infrastructure Fund and expand our capacity for testing, training, and production. Unfortunately, the Democratic leader did not allow this amendment to receive a vote.

For what it is worth, I appreciate the Pentagon's recent efforts to catch up. For example, the Deputy Secretary of Defense recently announced an initiative to dramatically accelerate production of autonomous systems to help level the playing field with the PLA. Her remarks were titled "The Urgency to Innovate." But closing the gap with China and outcompeting our biggest strategic adversary will require more than innovation theater or speeches about revolutions in military affairs. Real progress will require real investments in long-range strike capabilities, real expansion of our defense production capacity, and real defense technology cooperation with our closest allies that increasingly share our concerns about the PLA.

The conflict in Ukraine has finally motivated efforts in America, Europe, and Asia to invest in our defense industrial bases, but if we truly take competition with the PRC seriously, there is a lot more that needs to be done. AUKUS, our technology-sharing partnership with Australia and the United Kingdom, is a step in the right direction. In fact, it will hopefully serve as a model for expanding defense cooperation with other allies. But these efforts cannot come at the expense of properly funding America's own requirements for crucial systems like attack submarines.

The Department's interest in autonomous systems, hypersonic weapons, and long-range fire is welcome, but the Pentagon needs to move at the speed of relevance to field these capabilities as soon as possible, and the Biden administration needs to stop sending Congress defense budget requests that cut funding after inflation and start prioritizing serious investments in the weapons that we actually need.

BIDENOMICS

Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, in a speech last month, President Biden claimed that American wages were growing faster than inflation, saying, "That's Bidenomics." Unfortunately, for working families, the truth of Bidenomics is quite the opposite.

Even as nominal wages continue to rise, inflation is actually rising faster. For the third straight year, real median household income is declining. According to the Census Bureau, inflation-adjusted income declined last year alone—listen to this—by \$1,750. In other words, Washington Democrats' historic inflation has swallowed the gains of a tight labor market and stuck workers across the country with a massive pay cut.

Worst of all, this Bidenomics tax is hitting low-income workers the hardest. The wealthiest 5 percent of households are earning 4.1 percent less than they were 4 years ago, but—listen to this—the poorest 10 percent are earning 6.3 percent less, and wage gains for manufacturing workers are lagging even further behind those of other industries.

One contract worker in Michigan said of his job at a hardware store: "Every time my wage goes up, the price of everything else goes up, and it does me no good" and that the price for some construction materials are only beginning to come down by "cents when they went up dollars."

So that is Bidenomics, and working Americans have every reason to be sick of it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, there is nothing like summertime in South Dakota.

While I am in Sioux Falls almost every weekend, August gives me the opportunity to spend more time at home. It gives me a chance to travel South Dakota's wide-open spaces to meet with constituents and have important conversations that shape a lot of what I work on here in the Senate. It is a busy month. We covered a lot of ground this August, both figuratively and literally.

To begin with, August is fair season in South Dakota. So this year, I made it to the Turner County Fair, the Brown County Fair, where I got my usual Tubby burger, and the Sioux Empire Fair. Fairs showcase a lot of the best of South Dakota, but they are an especially big deal for our agricultural community. Whether I am serving lunch to producers at the Sioux Empire Fair's Agriculture Appreciation Day or giving an update on the farm bill at Dakotafest, which happens every year in Mitchell, SD, I appreciate opportunities to hear directly from farmers and ranchers. I do this every year, but it is especially important in a farm bill year like this one.

Many of my farm bill priorities come directly from these discussions. In fact,

these discussions can often get into the weeds on policy. But the bottom line from farmers and ranchers this year was really quite simple: We need to get the farm bill done. Farmers and ranchers need certainty that the programs they depend on will be there when they need them. And finishing the farm bill is one of the most important things on the agenda for the end of this year.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of South Dakota, but there is a lot more that keeps South Dakota moving. This August, I had the chance to meet with electric cooperatives that provide power in South Dakota communities. I joined Midco Communications as they announced a new broadband expansion in the Black Hills to bring faster internet to more homes. I was on hand for the new I-29 exit 130 interchange ribbon-cutting in Brookings, SD.

Throughout the month, I also visited a lot of local businesses and talked with business owners from across the State. I visited Showplace Cabinetry in Harrisburg, SD, Load King Manufacturing in Elk Point, Dimock Cheese in Dimock, Dady Drug in Mobridge, and I met with startup leaders in Sioux Falls. We had some important conversations. It was clear that business owners are facing some headwinds at the moment.

Business leaders in Yankton, for example, discussed challenges arising from the workforce shortages in South Dakota. With unemployment at 1.9 percent in South Dakota, there are workforce challenges in just about every sector. At the Midwest Agricultural Export Summit, we talked about the importance of trade and how the Biden administration has put expanding market access on the back burner, unfortunately. Business owners across the State expressed frustration with high interest rates and higher costs. Of course, we learned last week that inflation has ticked back up. Gas prices are on the rise as well.

And a majority of Americans say the Biden administration has made the economy worse. Bidenomics is making life harder for families and businesses around the country. If the President really wanted to help working families, he would abandon the tax-and-spending agenda that has been the hallmark of his administration for the last 2½ years.

As I travel around South Dakota, I know I can depend on South Dakotans to keep me informed and South Dakota restaurants to keep me fueled. Often, August becomes a bit of a tour or a bit of, I should say, "taste of South Dakota" tour. Sometimes I describe it as eating my way across South Dakota—Chislic from Waddy's in Hudson, SD; a milkshake from Mr. Bob's Drive-In in Selby; coffee from Black Hills Bagels in Rapid City. There is nothing like South Dakota hospitality and a good meal to keep you going during long days.