

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.

As much as I love summer in South Dakota, I always get particularly excited when summer turns to fall because there are few things I enjoy more than cheering on South Dakota's athletes. Kids go back to school; and high schools, college teams start competing. My grandkids' sports seasons have begun in earnest. I made it to football games in Brookings for South Dakota State University and Vermillion for the University of South Dakota to support the Jackrabbits and Coyotes in a couple of big wins as their seasons get underway.

And, of course, it is not long until pheasant season comes around next month.

Winter, spring, summer, or fall, there is always something to look forward to in South Dakota. I am lucky to be a son of our State.

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. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FARM BILL

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, this is my third year serving on the Senate Ag Committee. This is my first time getting to work on a farm bill. The farm bill comes around every 5 years. It sets national policy on agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and forestry.

In less than 2 weeks, at the end of this fiscal year, the current farm bill will expire.

In 2018, this bill had a pricetag of \$867 billion, right—\$867 billion 5 years ago, in 2018. Now, we used to think that was a lot of money, but the upcoming farm bill is almost double that amount at roughly \$1.5 trillion. This is the first trillion-dollar farm bill in our Nation's history.

The enormous pricetag of the bill is driven by an 84-percent increase in SNAP, or Federal nutrition assistance, and a 58-percent increase in conservation programs—in other words, a huge increase in welfare and climate spending. Most of this new spending does not offer support for farmers.

The \$559 billion increase in SNAP funding was done directly by the Department of Agriculture through updates to the Thrifty Food Plan. In other words, nobody in Congress voted for this. The \$35 billion in conservation funding was done through the Inflation Reduction Act of last year. Democrats are pushing through priorities that cater to climate activists and lead Americans to become dependent on welfare benefits. Approximately 82 percent of the upcoming farm bill goes to SNAP, commonly known as food stamps. Four percent goes to conservation.

Just yesterday, we hit \$33 trillion in debt for this country—yes, I said that—\$33 trillion. That will be picked up—this tab—by our grandkids and their kids.

This graph here, developed by the Farm Bureau Federation, showcases the enormous increase in nutrition spending and the steady decline of farm spending over the last 50 years. As you can see, SNAP spending has almost doubled what it was 5 years ago. How is this even possible? Has poverty doubled in our country in the last 5 years? Of course, it hasn't.

The poverty rate has been between 10 and 20 percent during my lifetime—10 to 20 percent. We spent \$20 trillion in the war on poverty, and we have not even moved the needle. What does that mean? That means we are not doing our job. All we are doing is we are paying for somebody else to do it. So it doesn't work.

Yet I never hear my Democratic colleagues consider how we fight poverty. We just give out money. If my colleagues on the left cared about poverty, then they would want better results. But nobody wants better results here. They want votes. Welfare spending—if we would ever get it in our heads—welfare spending does not lift people out of poverty. Are we ever going to realize that? It simply makes people more comfortable remaining in poverty, and that makes it wrong. It makes it wrong for this body that we continue down this path of poverty and not helping poverty.

Food stamps are supposed to help people stay afloat while they work to become self-sufficient, help them get through tough times—not a free walk in society. It should not be an incentive to stay home other than to train and want to get a job, but that is exactly what it has done. Making someone dependent on government is not helping them; it is hurting them.

The whole purpose of the farm bill is supposed to be to help farmers. What an idea. Yet \$7 out of \$8—\$7 out of \$8 in the farm bill is for something else. Our farmers depend on crop insurance; commodity programs such as the Agricultural Risk program—ARC, as we call it—and price-loss coverage, which is the PLC program; and disaster programs to help them deal with difficult crop yields, markets, and rising input costs.

Farmers can't control the weather or the price, and that is the reason they need help. We have to remember farmers put food on the table. But there is a lot of people who don't understand that.

These are some of the hardest working people in America, and they have too little to show for it. Back home in my State of Alabama, I have heard the struggles facing our row croppers and our specialty crop producers. They need help to deal with inflation and rising input costs. Farm production costs have increased—have increased 28 percent since Joe Biden took office less

than 3 years ago. That is embarrassing. How in the world can we increase prices 28 percent in this country in 2½ years and expect the people in this country to survive, the hard-working people? Farmers included.

Fuel and fertilizer are 60 percent to 130 percent higher than they were in 2021. Folks, we can't survive with that; but my colleagues on the left are not even concerned about it—not one bit. We are just going to cut back on digging oil and gas and buy it from other countries and charge the heck out of taxpayers in the United States of America for oil and gas that we can produce here.

Other farm expenses like land, cash rents, labor, and equipment are all adding up. As a result, net farm income is projected to decrease by roughly 23 percent this year. Costs are up, incomes are down, and farmers are struggling to survive.

We are on a direct collision in this country of closing our farmers out and having to completely depend on other countries for our food and other things that we eat. Think about that—completely depend on other countries.

We just found out going through this COVID crisis that we were completely dependent on other countries for our drugs. We said: We have got to overcome that. We have got to redo that. Now, we are doing the same thing to our farmers. We do away with our food, it is over, because if you think prices are high now, they will be completely a lot higher than they are now.

The only thing that is keeping our farmers afloat is called the Farm Safety Net, but the current support levels for title I commodity programs, like cotton, peanuts, and soybeans, are not high enough to sustain our farmers over the next 5 years.

In other words, this safety net is a level of pricing. If the price goes under a certain amount, we help our farmers overcome that cutback where they can survive. The problem is, that safety net price has not risen since 2012. And we don't think the prices haven't gone up? We have lost our minds.

If we don't raise those reference prices—and right now, my colleagues on the left don't want to raise our reference prices for farmers—we are going to be buying all of our food and everything we eat from other countries. It is coming. We have got to raise our reference prices.

We have got to help out our farmers. These programs and these reference prices allow farmers to continue clothing, feeding, and fueling every citizen in this country and a lot of other countries.

Now, we don't need to idly sit by while our hard-working producers work tirelessly and barely survive under this Joe Biden economy. I ask my colleagues—I beg my colleagues—on the left to wake up, open your eyes, and support our farmers and fight for this farm bill. Raise the reference prices. Help them out. Because if we don't,