

EAST PALESTINE TRAIN DERAILMENT

Madam President, on another matter, the attention and prayers of the entire Nation have been fixed for the past several weeks on the town of East Palestine and the surrounding area in Northeast Ohio. The derailment of the Norfolk Southern train led to a disastrous chemical release, forcing many from their homes and leaving a community vulnerable. The people of East Palestine are understandably anxious and upset, and of course they deserve answers.

Our colleague the junior Senator from Ohio has been all over this issue. We will continue to work with him to ensure the people of Ohio are appropriately informed and supported in the months to come. We also thank Ohio Governor Mike DeWine for his leadership on the ground.

Unfortunately, this leadership has cut a sharp contrast with the Biden administration's Secretary of Transportation. Even amidst a catalog of crises on his watch, from this and other recent train derailments to the meltdown in air travel back during the holiday season, Secretary Buttigieg has seemed more interested in pursuing press coverage for woke initiatives and climate nonsense than in attending to the basic elements of his day job.

Understandably, there were some initial concerns in my home State of Kentucky about possible impacts since we are downriver, but the good news is that even after careful monitoring by local experts, there is no reason to believe that Kentuckians have anything to worry about. Local water authorities are monitoring the Ohio River's downstream water quality very closely, and thus far they have seen no cause for alarm whatsoever. Every indication is that the situation for Kentuckians is 100 percent normal. Even so, my staff and I remain in close communication with all the relevant utilities and local authorities.

INFLATION

Madam President, now on one final matter, January was the 21st month in a row with year-on-year inflation of at least 5 percent. The U.S. economy has seen prices rising at an annual rate of 5 percent or more every single month following President Biden's first 100 days. Democrats' reckless spending has made soaring costs a fixture of everyday life for families all across our country. Real-wage declines have become a tragic reality for workers in every single State.

Last week, new data proved yet again that persistent inflation has become actually embedded in our economy. One key measure of consumer behavior, the personal consumption expenditure index, grew at triple the monthly rate from December and at its fastest pace since June of last year. Inflation in the services sector in particular is 5.7 percent higher than it was a year ago.

The Democrats' inflation is not just driving up the prices for groceries and

essentials that families pay themselves at the checkout counter; it is also baked into the costs families pay indirectly through service providers, from plumbers to contractors to medical providers and beyond. In every corner of the economy, workers and businesses are still having to hunker down against the ongoing consequences of Democrats' reckless mistakes.

What an odd time, then, for the Biden administration to declare victory over a problem it helped actually create. The White House Press Secretary declared earlier this month that "the President's economic plan is indeed working." Well, today, 57 percent of Americans say they have less money in their pocket than they did a year ago. Nearly two-thirds say they are living paycheck to paycheck. The White House calls this mission accomplished. The American people call it a nightmare for 2 years and counting.

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. SCHUMER. Madam 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

EAST PALESTINE TRAIN DERAILMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first responders at the State, local, and Federal level continue working around-the-clock helping the people of East Palestine recover from one of the worst train derailments in decades.

The scene in East Palestine over the last month has been the stuff of nightmares: a 38-car derailment; an entire town forced to evacuate; the stench of industrial chemicals and soot hovering in the air; parents scared of their kids' drinking water; and kids anxious about life returning to normal. No community deserves this.

While a full investigation of the derailment has yet to be completed, the Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board said this accident was "100 percent preventable." Again, the NTSB Safety Board Chair said the accident was "100 percent preventable."

The fault of this disaster lies first and foremost with Norfolk Southern. Norfolk Southern's CEO, Alan Shaw, needs to come before the Senate, answer questions under oath, and explain to the American people exactly what went wrong and how they will prevent accidents like this from happening. He should not duck. He should be there. He should come before the Senate, and we are asking Mr. Shaw to do just that.

The American people should hear from Norfolk Southern's CEO precisely why they thought it was a good idea to spend years—years—lobbying to loosen regulations designed to prevent accidents like this. And I especially want to hear why Norfolk Southern, after

seeing a record \$3.3 billion in profits last year, prioritized billions—billions—in stock buybacks instead of putting that money toward safety and toward their workers.

Over the past few weeks, there has been no shortage of opportunists racing to blame the administration for the train derailment. Former President Trump himself showed up in East Palestine and blamed everyone but himself for the tragic accident. But President Trump, as usual, omits a crucial truth: The Trump administration spent years working to loosen safety regulations intended to make these types of accidents less likely.

They are in the behest of the big rail companies. When President Trump entered office, rail companies spent millions to push for repeals on all sorts of safety regulations, from inspection requirements, mandates for newer brakes, and rules governing the number of employees required to operate a train. In one instance, the Trump administration repealed requirements for an electronic braking system because, according to them, the safety benefits were simply not worth the costs.

Let me say that again.

In 2017, the Trump administration decided to repeal the requirements for brake upgrades because they didn't think the safety benefits were worth the cost. I think the people of East Palestine now know that that analysis was wrong and that they are suffering the consequences of rail companies putting profits over people.

Now, I want to be clear: A full investigation is still needed to determine which, if any, safety regulations might have prevented the accident in East Palestine, but you don't need to be an expert to see that, when companies prioritize profits over safety—when they loosen safety rules, lay off thousands of workers, and spend more money on stock buybacks than on preventing accidents—you are flirting with disaster.

It is so typical of Donald Trump. He does the bidding of corporate special interests and it leads to serious harm to the American people. And when he gets caught, he turns around and blames someone else. It just doesn't wash, and the American people see through it. Disasters like the one in East Palestine are precisely what can happen when safety takes a backseat to maximizing profits and when self-aggrandizing politicians like Donald Trump allow and encourage it to happen.

I particularly want to thank my colleagues from Ohio and Pennsylvania for being vigilant in responding to this disaster and working in a bipartisan way to solve it.

I also, of course, want to thank all of the first responders at every level of government for working without rest to keep people safe.

The Senate is going to look into precisely what went wrong in East Palestine. A good first step will be in hearing directly from Norfolk Southern's

CEO. I hope he will work with us in good faith and come before the Senate as soon as possible.

CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

Madam President, last week, I joined with a number of Senate colleagues in leading my first congressional delegation as majority leader. We went to Germany, India, Pakistan, and Israel. I have only been on one other codel in all of my years as a Senator—back in 2011 with Harry Reid to China.

I thank all of my colleagues for making this trip a success. There were nine of us. Now that we are back, I want to share a few takeaways from our trip that implicate America's national security and our economic future.

First, we relayed a very important message during our meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi: India and America are going to need each other to outcompete the Chinese Communist Party.

India is precisely the kind of partner that the United States needs to provide a check against the hostile tactics of the CCP. They are the world's largest democracy—still young compared to its peers—and primed for tremendous growth in the decades to come.

I told the Prime Minister that, if our democracies are to prosper in this century, we are going to have to work together not only to boost our common defense but to promote our mutual prosperity. That means working together to strengthen our economic ties, deepen trade, and make it easier to recruit talented workers from abroad to work in our country.

It also means we must collaborate to establish the norms for the technologies of the future. Right now, the world's democracies are competing with the Chinese Communist Party to dominate the technologies that will rule this century, like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, clean energy, advanced semiconductor manufacturing, and more.

India, the United States, and all of the world's democracies—we are the largest two—must make sure these technologies become vectors of prosperity, not the weapons of autocratic regimes. We have already seen how the Chinese Communist Party uses AI to eavesdrop on its people and prevent them from getting full knowledge or just propaganda. I think the Prime Minister appreciated the point we were making about the need for India and the United States—the two largest democracies—to work together against the CCP hegemony.

India is an amazing country. I was enthralled by it. Incredible. It has a thriving diaspora, many of whom live in New York, here in the United States. Our partnership has a huge potential for growth in the 21st century.

On a second point about our codel, during the codel, we also met with leaders in Pakistan, Germany, and Israel. Much of our discussion with them, as well as with Prime Minister Modi of India, stressed the importance

of standing with Ukraine in its struggle against Russia. We asked each of these leaders to do more. It has been more than a year now since Vladimir Putin began his illegal invasion, and I made it clear to leaders abroad that the worst thing we could do right now is to waver in our support of the Ukrainian people. I warned them that a Russian victory in Ukraine would not mean an end to Putin's escapades and expansionist proclivities so much as it would mean an escalation of his viciousness and desire for more territory.

Success in Ukraine will only embolden Putin if he sees the free nations of the world turn a blind eye to his aggressions. Should Putin win in Ukraine, it would endanger the security of democracies and burgeoning democracies across the world, and I think the leaders I spoke with—the leaders all nine of us spoke with—got that message.

Finally, on a more personal note, I was deeply moved to join with my colleagues to lay wreaths at both the Dachau Concentration Camp in Germany and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. As the highest ranking elected Jewish leader in U.S. history and the first Jewish majority leader, I used these visits as a chance to reaffirm the Senate's commitment to never forget this dark chapter in human history. At a time when public understanding of the Holocaust is waning, as the next generation is further removed from the horrors—the just sheer horrors—of the past, and as anti-Semitism makes its resurgence at home and around the globe, now more than ever, we must commit to that sacred obligation to never forget.

Elie Wiesel said:

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

We must never remain silent. We must never allow anti-Semitism and bigotry to fester and flourish. We must recommit to never, never again.

I want to thank my colleagues who joined with me at both Dachau and Yad Vashem, and I thank everyone—Members and staff alike—for the incredible job they did and for their excellent work in making our trip fruitful and productive.

CHIPS AND SCIENCE ACT

Madam President, finally, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo—a great leader, in my opinion—announced recently that, starting tomorrow, the Commerce Department will launch their first application for CHIPS funding, with a focus on chip fab manufacturing facilities.

I will have more to say in the morning, but I just want to reaffirm that, 6 months after CHIPS and Science was passed into law, the benefits are clear and unmistakable: Over \$200 billion in private investment has been announced across 16 States. That includes \$100 billion proposed by Micron to manufacture advanced memory chips in my home State of New York, an investment that will translate into tens of thousands of good, high-paying jobs

and transform Upstate New York, once the manufacturing powerhouse of America. Of course, so many of those jobs went overseas, but CHIPS and Science, high-tech, gives us a great chance to revive that area. This story is being replicated not only in Upstate New York but in many parts of the country that similarly lost jobs over the last decades.

I applaud Secretary Raimondo for rolling out the CHIPS funding—standing up a brandnew, major program—so quickly and efficiently. As you know, the CHIPS and Science bill was a pet of mine, and we worked for 2½ years to get it done.

I also applaud my colleagues from both sides who spent years pushing this bill over the finish line.

This is about laying a crucial foundation to make the United States a global leader in chip production once again, which is critical to our national security and competitiveness, and starting tomorrow, applications will be open to begin to make these significant investments in U.S. industry and in U.S. workers.

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. CORNYN. Madam 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.

UKRAINE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last week, Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine hit the 1-year mark—1 year of death and destruction across Ukraine, 1 year of lives and gaslighting from the Russian Government and its paid-off cronies, 1 year of atrocious war crimes committed against innocent people. It has been an unimaginable year of hardship for the Ukrainian people, and it has ushered in a period of global unity not seen in a generation.

One year ago, democracies around the world united in support of the Ukrainian people. The United States and our allies condemned President Putin's unwarranted invasion and took decisive action to help the Ukrainians shape the outcome of this war: sanctions against Russia, military aid for Ukraine, humanitarian assistance for the innocent people who are bearing the true cost of Russia's brutality. It has been a difficult year fueled by both victories and setbacks, but I remain confident and inspired by the courage and the capabilities of the Ukrainian people.

At the start of this war, no one expected Ukraine to keep up the fight as long as it has lasted. They were outmanned, outgunned; and it seemed like a matter of when Ukraine would be defeated, not if.