

electricity is up 25 percent, eggs are up 29 percent. They are not going down, folks. Even if inflation goes to zero, those prices aren't going down. Potato chips, up 30 percent; bread, up 28 percent; coffee, 30 percent; rice, 26 percent. Flour is up 28 percent; milk, 18 percent; half a gallon of ice cream, 21 percent; chicken, 20 percent.

When you look at larger categories, this is what is happening to the American people. Since President Biden took office—since President Biden took office—all goods and many services in the wealthiest country in all of human history are up 17 percent. Food is up 20 percent. Housing is up 17 percent. Clothing is up 12 percent. Used cars and trucks are up 25 percent. New cars and trucks are up 20 percent. Mortgage rates are up 174 percent—174 percent.

Some may be saying: Well, but wages are going up too.

Thank goodness. In some cases, wages have gone up. But the average wage of the average American has gone down after inflation. The appropriate way to look at wage increases is not to look at the raw aggregate increase; it is looking at the increase after inflation. If you take all of the average wage increases in the United States of America and you looked at the average inflation in the United States of America, workers have actually lost ground. Workers today, in November of 2023, are actually making less per hour after inflation than they were in February of 2021. So don't let anybody tell you that wages have made up for this. They haven't kept up with inflation.

Don't let anybody tell you we are winning the war on high prices. We are getting inflation down, no thanks—no thanks—to the Biden administration and, quite frankly, the U.S. Congress. That is thanks to the Federal Reserve. They have tightened interest rates, which has hurt a lot of people, but they have gotten inflation down. They had to do it with one arm tied behind their backs because the other way you attack inflation and the only way we have ever successfully gotten it down is to have Congress do its part and reduce the rate of growth and spending and debt accumulation. But we haven't done that. We haven't done that. In fact, since 2019, the population of the United States of America is up 1.9 percent. Our country has grown 2 percent since 2019. Do you know how much our budget has grown? Fifty-five percent.

This inflation is manmade, and the man's name is Joe Biden, and we need to address it.

So as we fight a hostile world which day by day is becoming less safe for the American people, I don't want us to lose sight of another problem—an equally important problem—that is stealing the American dream, and it is called President Biden's inflation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled rollcall votes: Myself for up to 15 minutes, Senator GILLIBRAND for up to 5 minutes, Senator COTTON for up to 5 minutes, and Leader SCHUMER for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISRAEL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, 1 month ago today, Hamas launched its unprovoked attack on the State of Israel, on innocent men, women, and children, civilians all. Hamas entered the country by land, air, and sea, and they brutally murdered more than 1,400 Israelis. They also took hundreds of hostages, some of whom were American citizens. They abused and assaulted innocent civilians and left a trail of devastation in their wake.

In the face of Hamas's barbaric attack, Israel has done what any country would do and defended its citizens and its sovereignty, and it has every right to do so. This basic truth has somehow become a point of confusion in some circles, but we should not be confused.

Many on the far left—including at least one Member of the House of Representatives—have pointed to Israel's defense as an example of what she calls genocide. They act as though Israel was the aggressor here, not Hamas. They called on the President to speak out against the actions of the victim, not the aggressor. It is as though they think Israel is somehow the moral equivalent of the terrorist group Hamas.

It is especially disturbing to see this rhetoric spreading on social media because many people who were not familiar with the facts, the circumstances, and the history of Hamas and Israel, Iran, and Hezbollah—they may actually believe the disinformation and propaganda they see on social media. It is also very deeply disturbing to see how it is absorbed and embraced by many college campuses, and it is downright disturbing, of course, to see it repeated here in the Halls of Congress.

There should be no confusion. Hamas is the aggressor, and Hamas bears ultimate responsibility for the pain and suffering in Israel and in Gaza. Hamas's own tactics are the very reason for the loss of life in Gaza and that it has been so high, because these terrorists, who care nothing about the individuals, have a long history of using Palestinian civilians as human shields for their own benefit.

And then Hamas operates a vast network of tunnels underneath Gaza. The tunnels shield terrorists from the dangerous fighting above ground. They also store critical supplies like water, food, and fuel, which are being kept

from the Palestinian civilians. As many of us are concerned about the humanitarian disaster caused by Hamas's attack on Israel, it is Hamas itself that is exacerbating and making the humanitarian crisis worse.

It seems likely that the tunnels are also the hiding place for more than 200 hostages taken by Hamas last month. A video recently shared online of a Hamas gunman who was captured and interrogated by the Israeli officials was particularly revealing. He said that Hamas shelters in tunnels and basements under clinics, schools, and hospitals because they know the Israelis will not target those locations out of concern for the collateral damage or damage to innocent civilians. That is why Hamas deliberately places innocent Palestinians between its terrorist foot soldiers and incoming rockets.

As a result of Hamas's human shield strategy, the number of civilian casualties in Gaza is devastating. There is no denying that. It is important, though, to remember that the pain and suffering that is occurring throughout Israel and Gaza is directly attributable to Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization serving as a proxy for the No. 1 state-sponsor of terrorism, which is Iran. The blood of this war is clearly on Hamas's hands.

As the fighting continues, I am reminded of a saying that has been around for years: If Hamas laid down its weapons today, there would be no more violence. If Israel laid down its weapons, there would be no more Israel.

Hamas is not fighting for peace. It is trying to wipe Israel off the map—again, as a proxy for its sponsor, which is the Supreme Leader in Tehran. They all share a desire to wipe the Jewish State off the map entirely.

The United States cannot equivocate between good and evil. We must stand with Israel. There is no question that words are important. We have a responsibility to voice our support, speak out against Hamas, and call out dangerous anti-Semitic slander when we see it.

But words alone are not enough. America has a responsibility to come to the aid of our ally with the resources it needs not only to fight but to actually win this war. This includes air defense systems that safeguard Israeli people from rocket attacks. It includes intelligence support to stay one step ahead of the terrorists. And it includes military aid to find and eliminate the Hamas threat.

As part of that commitment, Congress has a big job to do. We need to pass a supplemental funding bill to ensure Israel has the tools it needs to defeat Hamas terrorists, and, last week, the House of Representatives did just that. They passed an Israel aid bill with bipartisan support. Their legislation would provide up to \$14.3 billion to ensure that Israel has the resources they need to defend themselves.

Our friends across the Capitol offset the spending by reallocating a portion

of the bloated IRS funding from the Democrats' massive so-called Inflation Reduction Act. I would add that that was \$14.3 billion out of an \$80 billion appropriation to the Internal Revenue Service, hardly the majority of that funding.

But if our colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't like those pay-fors, then they are free to come up with an alternative. But the truth is, they don't believe in paying for anything. And we saw, just this last year, about \$670 billion paid by the United States to our bond holders to help finance this national debt, and that is not getting any better by the day. Certainly, if we were to pass another supplemental appropriations bill to aid Israel or Ukraine, or for any other purpose, and actually make our national debt worse, it would put us on a perilous path.

Well, President Biden, who said, "We stand with Israel; we will do anything that they need us to do," has actually threatened to veto the \$14.3 billion supplemental appropriations bill that was passed by the House. How he can reconcile his stated support for Israel and his threat to veto a supplemental appropriations bill escapes me.

Then there is the majority leader here in the Senate—the Senator from New York, Senator SCHUMER—who said that the House bill is dead on arrival in the Senate, and he took his opposition a step further, blasting this legislation as "stunningly unserious" and "a joke."

Well, I have to respectfully disagree with the majority leader. There is nothing funny about denying Israel the assistance it needs in defending itself against this terrorist threat. It is no secret that America's national debt has put us in an extremely vulnerable position.

Thirteen years ago, Admiral Michael Mullen, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned that "the most significant threat to our national security is our debt." That actually struck me as a little unusual at the time. But, at that time, the national debt was roughly \$13.5 trillion. Since then, it has more than doubled to \$33.6 trillion and counting.

So I think that what he was getting at is that the more we end up spending money that we are borrowing from subsequent generations and the more interest we have to continue to pay to people willing to buy our debt, we are going to have a whole lot less financial resources and flexibility that we need when unexpected things occur, like the Russian invasion of Ukraine or Hamas's invasion of Israel. We simply won't have the money and the flexibility to do what we expect America to do, which is to always lead and be an agent for peace and stability.

If we continue at this pace, our children and grandchildren will have no chance of digging out from under this debt. There is an old saying that "the best time to start was yesterday; the

next best time to start is now." We have a responsibility to start chipping away at the national debt now and certainly not to make it any worse. Every single spending bill is an opportunity to make tough but necessary choices to achieve that goal.

I am disappointed that the majority of our Democratic colleagues don't seem to have any interest in addressing this threat to our national security. Over the last couple of years, they have spent, on a party-line basis, \$2.6 trillion without a single Republican vote, and now they blast an attempt to address the growing debt as "unserious."

Well, that \$2.6 trillion in spending that our Democratic colleagues did on a party-line basis was partly responsible for our 40-year high inflation rate that is eating up the standard of living of hard-working Americans across the country. I think the figure I saw indicates that, if this is broken down per capita, it is roughly worth slightly under \$1,000 in additional costs for the average family.

Our Democratic colleagues, if they didn't like the pay-for provided by the House of Representatives, they could have suggested different offsets. You can't tell me, given the amount of money the Federal Government spends, that it couldn't find offsets for \$14.3 billion. Or the majority leader could have simply put the bill on the floor and left room open for an amendment process. But, instead, he resorted to name-calling and trying to belittle the serious efforts that the House has undertaken, both to deal with the emergency in Israel and the national debt.

In the next couple of weeks, the Senate and the House are going to have to work together to address the major issues that are swirling in front of Congress right now, which include Israel, Ukraine, the border, and, yes, keeping the government funded. This is hardly the way to start off on a good foot.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress overwhelmingly support Israel. We agree that the United States needs to provide support for our ally. At the same time, we need to get serious about addressing another massive national security threat, which is our growing national debt and the crowding out of our ability to spend money on other necessary priorities instead of paying China and Japan, who own that debt.

Washington has a spending problem. That is the first thing we need to acknowledge. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues are unwilling to acknowledge it. We have to get it under control.

Today marks 1 month since Hamas attacked Israel, and I am disappointed that the Senate has yet to act on support—financial support—for our closest ally in the Middle East. I have no idea what Senator SCHUMER's plans are to actually process this supplemental appropriation. I don't know how long Israel will have to sustain the onslaught of Hamas's rockets and ter-

rorist attacks on its people before the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Government will respond, as President Biden said we would.

Under the leadership of Speaker JOHNSON, the House did its job. It passed legislation to provide \$14.3 billion for Israel with bipartisan support. So I come to the floor profoundly disappointed that Senator SCHUMER refuses to take up this emergency supplemental appropriations bill to aid Israel.

The United States has a responsibility to stand with Israel. I think that is the consensus position here in Congress on a bipartisan basis. But it takes more than just words. It takes action.

One month after the war began is too long to respond to the needs that the people of Israel have to defend their country and their way of life. I hope we can see movement on this aid package for Israel sooner rather than later.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF JULIA E. KOBICK

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Julia Kobick to the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

Ms. Kobick is an accomplished litigator whose credentials and breadth of experience make her well-suited to serve on this court. After receiving her A.B. from Harvard College, her M.S. from Pace University, and her J.D. from Harvard Law School, Ms. Kobick began her legal career with prestigious clerkships for judges appointed by Presidents of both political parties: Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV on the District of Massachusetts, Judge Michael A. Chagares on the Third Circuit, and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the Supreme Court.

After her clerkships, Ms. Kobick joined the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General, serving first as an assistant attorney general and currently as the deputy State solicitor. During her tenure in that office, Ms. Kobick has practiced in Federal and State courts—handling cases defending State laws, regulations, and Agency actions, as well as affirmative cases brought by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Over the course of her career, she has argued more than 20 dispositive motions in trial courts and delivered oral arguments in 19 appeals.

Ms. Kobick has the strong support of her home state Senators, Ms. WARREN and Mr. MARKEY. In addition, she received a rating of "well qualified" from the American Bar Association. Ms. Kobick's credentials, breadth of experience, and deep ties to the Massachusetts legal community will serve the district court well. I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

Mr. CORNYN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.