

in: the ultrarich and the fringe elements of their party.

Now, make no mistake, Democrats want to work with a competent and capable Republican Party wherever possible to make life better for average Americans. Democrats are united in this commitment because we all saw firsthand how bipartisanship was the key to so many of last year's successes. Later today, in fact, I will join President Biden, Leader Jeffries, and a number of Senate and House colleagues precisely to talk about how we can turn our unity into action to help the American people.

House Republicans, meanwhile, seem trapped in a cycle of extremism so powerful that now they are even giving proposals like a national sales tax—a national sales tax—serious consideration. According to some House Republicans, House leadership has agreed to give GOP radicals a vote on a 30-percent national sales tax on all goods across the board. That means, right now, with inflation finally beginning to drop, Republicans are looking to make Americans pay 30 percent more for everything they buy.

Look, if Republicans want to have a debate with Democrats on their national sales tax bill, we will be happy to have it. We would love to hear Republicans explain to the American people why it is a good idea to send prices skyrocketing on everything from cars to groceries, to diapers, and everything in between. We would love to hear Republicans tell seniors why their expenses would go up by a third after they have spent a lifetime for retirement. And we would love to hear Republicans explain to middle-class families why their taxes would increase by thousands of dollars a year while the ultrarich see their taxes go down. If Republicans want to push this terrible proposal, they are welcome to make their case. Make our day.

I think many within the Republicans own ranks recognize that a national sales tax is an especially dimwitted idea. Even Grover Norquist, whose ideas on tax are far away from most Americans—and he is one of the most conservative voices out there—called it “a terrible idea.”

Even Steve Forbes said this would make the average new home in this country cost \$100,000 more.

Young families, do you want to buy a home? Some of our Republican friends want to add \$100,000 to the cost of buying that home, and of course it would raise bills by thousands more. And yet—yet—despite the insanity of this idea, the House Republican leadership is bent to the MAGA wing of the Republican Party and have promised a vote.

If this is how House Republicans want to spend their time—taxing middle-class families, attacking women's freedom of choice, giving cover to tax cheats—be our guest.

Once again, this is the central quandary of the new Republican majority.

By bending to the demands of the MAGA hard right, Speaker MCCARTHY has guaranteed that Republicans will have to constantly cater to the whims of the MAGA wing at the expense of the American people.

Now, we will be a firewall against all of these things, and I am sure the American people are glad that we have a Democratic majority in the Senate to stop some of these rather insane proposals because when extremists run the show, as seems to be happening in the House, it makes it nearly impossible to have serious-minded, constructive conversations on the big issues that matter.

No issue, of course, will matter more in the coming months than raising the debt ceiling. Over the next few months, we are going to hear more about the debt ceiling in Congress, maybe more than any other issue. But the matter is very simple. If the United States is allowed to default on its debt for the first time, the consequences will be severe and every single American will pay the price.

A default means interest rates will spike on everything from car loans to credit cards, to mortgages. It means that Americans will have to pay thousands of dollars more on regular expenses. Homes will lose their value. Homes, the average middle-class person's piece of the rock that they struggled and saved for so that they could own a home and so they don't have to pay rent and can pay a mortgage where they get equity—those homes will lose their value if we default, God forbid, on the debt because mortgage interest rates will soar. That means people will have less money to pay for a home and supply and demand just sits. The price goes down. The value goes down.

Meanwhile, the millions of Americans who have saved for retirement will see their retirement plans, like 401(k)s, lose their value, robbing retirees of their hard-earned livelihoods.

So the dangers of default are not abstract. Oh, no, this is not some academic argument up there in the clouds. This affects every American family, and we are going to make sure that they hear all about it. The consequences are as real as they get, and the entire world is watching what we do here in Congress.

But, rather than work with Democrats in a productive, constructive way to raise the debt ceiling, the House GOP has immediately resorted to brinksmanship and hostage-taking. They say they will not raise the debt ceiling unless we give in to their demands for draconian spending cuts that would impact just about every American—again, in a very bad way.

Well, I say to my Republican colleagues, if you want to talk about deep cuts, then you have an obligation—an obligation—to show the American people precisely what kind of cuts you are talking about.

Are Republicans going to hold Social Security hostage in exchange for the

debt ceiling or pay raises for our troops or support for veterans or funding for police and fire and first responders or Medicare funding that millions of seniors rely on?

Republicans, you owe the American people answers on what you mean by spending cuts.

Remember, the House rules that the GOP approved are clear. They need to bring a debt ceiling bill to the floor, let the entirety of the House debate it and vote on it, and let the American people see and assess the cuts for themselves.

So, once again, to my House GOP colleagues, if you are serious about spending cuts, show us the math. Show us why you think it is worth risking a global financial crisis just to pass an extremist agenda, because, inevitably, what you are saying are cuts are vital to so many Americans—so many Americans. Being in the majority means that it won't be enough to hide behind time-worn rhetoric about wasteful spending. When it comes to the debt ceiling, the substance counts; the details count; and the consequences are very, very real.

Unless the Republicans can resolve their own chaos and beat back their own extremism, I fear that every day that passes without action on the debt ceiling will increase the risk of default and risk the great harm it will do to the American people. And, should that happen, Americans will see that the fault lies entirely in the hands of the radical GOP.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Biden administration has spent 2 years turning its back on the proven tools and policies that Republicans used to strengthen our southern border—2 years of a functionally open borders policy from Washington Democrats and 2 years of chaos and suffering as a result.

Last week, Customs and Border Protection announced that an already recordbreaking year ended on a particularly catastrophic note. Illegal immigration apprehensions clocked an all-time high of more than 2.7 million during the last fiscal year—by far the highest annual total ever recorded. But then December set an astonishing

record all by itself at over 250,000 apprehensions. Last month was CBP's busiest month ever recorded.

The American people are outraged at this willful failure. They rate immigration and the border as one of the single biggest problems facing our country, second only to the economy.

Two-thirds—two-thirds—of the country disapprove of President Biden's handling of immigration and the border. That is a 67-percent supermajority of Americans who believe this administration is failing on border security.

Our Democratic friends tie themselves in knots making excuses for why they can't simply do their job, enforce Federal law, and secure our border. Their far-left base makes them pretend that we can't enforce the laws on the books unless—unless—we find new ways to be even more generous to people who come here illegally. It is nonsensical.

Even local officials who belong to the Democratic Party are rapidly losing patience with the Biden administration's border incompetence.

The Democratic mayor of New York, Eric Adams, has spent months sounding the alarm on the catastrophic effects of this administration's functionally open borders.

He said:

This is a national crisis.

He said:

There is no more room in New York.

Yet the far left attacks him, the mayor of New York, for pointing out the problem.

The Democratic Governor of Colorado is taking a cue from Governor Abbott and Governor DeSantis and arranging transportation for illegal immigrants to various liberal jurisdictions that have self-identified as so-called sanctuary cities.

There is a growing bipartisan chorus that is begging—begging—President Biden to do his job and secure our Nation. It doesn't take new laws. It doesn't take some new, grand bargain or amnesty. The administration just needs to do its job: Secure the border, and let law enforcement enforce our laws. The Biden administration has all the tools and authorities it needs to tackle this crisis—if a solution were actually what they were after.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on another matter, it has been a full year since Putin escalated Russia's brutal war against Ukraine and nearly 9 years since he began his military effort to take over the sovereign country in early 2014. Putin's nonmilitary efforts to meddle in Ukraine, undermine it, and control its population long predated even 2014. It has been 15 years since Putin invaded Georgia. A few years before that, he said publicly the breakup of the Soviet Union was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century."

The former KGB agent who has run the Kremlin for two decades has been very, very consistent: repression at home, aggression abroad, assassinations, invasions, poisonings, and political interference. And whenever the rest of the world responded with accommodation rather than with resolve, Putin drew the natural conclusion that he could do whatever he wanted.

But for the past 11 months, the brave men and women in Ukraine have defied the odds. They have endured tremendous hardship and stood their ground. They have fought bravely for their families, their freedom, and their country.

At every step of the way, investments from the United States and our allies have equipped the Ukrainian people to exact a heavy price from the Russian invaders. Western assistance has played a key role, but it has come too slowly and haltingly.

Despite my urging the Biden administration to act sooner, aid did not come early enough to help Ukraine deter Putin's escalation before it actually happened, nor to slow down Russia's brutal and rapid advance in the east and the south. It has not come quickly enough to help Ukraine sustain counteroffensives or fully defend its cities against missile and drone attacks.

The United States and our friends and our partners have done enough to prevent Ukraine from losing—from losing—but we have not yet done enough to help Ukraine actually win.

A protracted stalemate is neither in Ukraine's interest nor ours. The solution that is both the most humane and the most advantageous to America's interests is quite simple: Help Ukraine win this war.

We know what it will take to make this possible. As our colleague Senator WICKER said, "We can shift this war immediately in Ukraine's favor by providing a range of advanced weapons, including tanks, drones, and tactical missiles." And as Chairman MCCAUL from the House said this past weekend, it is not the United States that will be provocative if we send stronger assistance.

Mr. Putin is the provocative one. . . . He invaded a sovereign territory, aggressively [and] unprovoked.

Yet some of freedom's most powerful friends remain hesitant. For many months, Germany has not only resisted calls to send Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine but has actually also prevented other European nations from transferring their own German-produced Leopards to Ukraine. Time is short, and while Berlin agonizes over its own decision whether to provide Leopards to Ukraine, it should proactively and explicitly make clear that other allies are free to do so.

What about the Biden administration here at home? The administration's latest deliveries failed to include—failed to include—the longer range mis-

siles and more sophisticated munitions that Ukraine has been requesting literally for months—for months.

Ukraine's brave resistance deserves our continued praise, but more importantly, it needs our concrete and consistent materiel support. Ukraine's strengths cannot keep self-detering ourselves and letting the aggressors, the invaders, dictate the pace. So it is time—past time—for the Biden administration and our allies to get serious about helping Ukraine finish the job and retake their country.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

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

#### MARCH FOR LIFE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, on Friday, as they have done for decades, Americans from around the country—many of them young people—took to the streets of Washington, DC, to march for life. This year, of course, was a little different because for the first time since the march began nearly 50 years ago, pro-lifers marched in a post-Roe America.

On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and recognized that the Constitution does not contain a right to abortion, that our founding document does not confer a right to deprive one group of citizens of their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness simply because they are small and defenseless. The Supreme Court's decision marked the righting of a constitutional wrong, and it opened up the chance to right a great moral wrong: the legalized killing of unborn Americans.

The Dobbs decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* does not, of course, make abortion illegal, but it does allow State governments and the Federal Government to finally begin to establish meaningful protections for unborn children.

The Dobbs decision marked a major victory for the pro-life movement and for the babies whose lives are in jeopardy from abortion, but the Dobbs decision does not mark an end to the pro-life movement or the March for Life but a new beginning.

The legal fight turns from the courts to Congress and State legislatures—in other words, to the democratic process, where this issue belongs and has always belonged—and the work to change hearts and minds to support moms and babies continues.

The Dobbs decision may have opened the door to meaningful legal protections for unborn Americans, but abortion extremists, who unfortunately count the majority of the Democratic Party among their ranks, are doing everything they can to stand in the way