

Madam President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 61.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Daniel I. Werfel, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2027.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 61, Daniel I. Werfel, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the term expiring November 12, 2027.

Charles E. Schumer, Ron Wyden, Catherine Cortez Masto, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Margaret Wood Hassan, Raphael G. Warnock, Gary C. Peters, Jack Reed, Brian Schatz, Tina Smith, Ben Ray Lujan, Elizabeth Warren, Christopher A. Coons, Martin Heinrich, Christopher Murphy, Tammy Baldwin.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, March 6, be waived.

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, so, this Thursday, President Biden will release the third budget proposal of his Presidency, one of the most important chances all year to emphasize the contrast between Democrats' and Republicans' vision for the country.

When Americans see President Biden's budget proposal and compare it to the nasty plans coming from Republicans, the contrast will be glaring and unmistakable.

First, President Biden's budget will focus on creating opportunity for aver-

age Americans. He will keep his promise not to raise taxes for anyone making less than \$400,000 a year. He will show how Democrats will keep Medicare solvent for another two decades. And he will lay out a plan—a realistic, serious plan—for lowering the deficit by \$2 trillion over the next 10 years.

Republicans love to talk about cutting the deficit, but Democrats have actually done it. The Inflation Reduction Act lowered the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars, and we cut the deficit while also cutting prescription drug costs and expanding tax credits for millions of middle-class families.

Now, compare President Biden's budget to the nasty vision laid out by our Republican friends. While the President's budget will keep taxes and costs low for the vast majority of families, Republicans went on record wanting to raise taxes by 30 percent for millions of Americans through their recent national sales tax proposal.

While the President promised no new taxes for people making under \$400,000, the very first bill House Republicans passed helped rich tax cheats get away with paying little or nothing in taxes. And while President Biden and Democrats have been clear that Social Security and Medicare are not on the table, Republicans have proposed raising the retirement age and privatizing certain elements of Medicare. The result: fewer benefits for retirees, higher premiums for Medicare beneficiaries.

We cannot overlook the threat Republicans also pose to Medicaid, which tens of millions of middle-class Americans rely on to ease the burden of paying for nursing homes and assisted living. Democrats want to preserve and strengthen Medicaid, but Republican proposals would cut Medicaid by \$2.2 trillion and end coverage for millions of Americans. That average middle-class family—let's say they are 40, 50 years old, and they are worried about paying for the kids' college, but they also have a parent in a nursing home. Right now, Medicaid would pay for it if the parent doesn't have the resources. With these cuts, that burden will fall on tens of millions of American families in the prime of life.

Finally, the President will make clear that in order to strengthen Social Security and Medicare and to lower the deficit responsibly, the ultrarich must pay their fair share. There is no—no—conceivable scenario where wealthy CEOs should ever pay a lower rate than nurses and teachers and firefighters, but that is precisely how Republicans preferred it when they cut taxes for the ultrarich under Donald Trump.

It is as if Republicans care more about making sure the rich stay rich than they do about building ladders to the middle class, than they do about keeping middle-class people in that position.

Now, when President Biden called out Republicans for targeting Social Security and Medicare, they erupted

with feigned outrage during his State of the Union. But, to this day, Speaker McCARTHY and House Republican leadership have failed to present their own plan to the American people.

Speaker McCARTHY, it is now March 6. Where is your plan? Speaker McCarthy, where is your plan? The President is about to release his budget. Are you going to release yours anytime soon? Enough with the dodging. Enough with the excuses. Show us your plan, and then show us how it is going to get 218 votes on your side of the aisle.

Americans deserve to see for themselves what Democrats and Republicans propose for the future of the country. Republicans should come clean with the American people about what cuts they are pushing and explain how those cuts will cause unnecessary pain for millions of Americans across the country.

RAIL SAFETY

Madam President, now on rail safety, it is a busy time for the Senate, as we get to the bottom of what went wrong last month in East Palestine.

Last week, my colleagues Senator BROWN, a Democrat, and Senator VANCE, a Republican, introduced the bipartisan Railway Safety Act of 2023. I promise to work with them and with colleagues on both sides to push this bill forward.

This Thursday, the Environment and Public Works Committee, under the able leadership of Chairman CARPER, will also hear from Norfolk Southern's CEO Alan Shaw. I expect a candid, honest, clear-eyed discussion about how we can prevent another East Palestine in the future. And while I am glad that Norfolk Southern's CEO is testifying, we cannot have an open debate, an honest debate, in Congress about rail safety unless Republicans acknowledge how they spent years opposing safety rules intended to prevent accidents similar to the one in Ohio.

The story of rail safety deregulation over the last decade has been a disturbing tale of Republicans placing profits over people and currying favor with the rail lobby, all at the expense of workers' and families' safety.

As far back as the Obama administration, Republicans pushed numerous bills to weaken environmental standards, delay safety upgrades, and even prohibit—prohibit—Federal funding for Amtrak.

Under President Trump's watch, it became easier to transport flammable liquids and hazardous materials without proper oversight. Under President Trump's watch, it also became easier to cut back on staffing requirements while operating a train. And it was the Trump administration that killed proposals to expand electronic brake requirements across the industry. The reason for that delay? The Trump administration thought it was "not economically justified."

You can't come up with a better slogan for Republicans' attitude toward rail safety than this: not economically

justified. Imagine the message that sends to small towns across America like East Palestine, with rail lines running right through them.

I want to be clear. A full investigation into the cause of the East Palestine derailment must be complete before we know the specifics behind the accident, but it doesn't take an expert to see that, if you spend years trying to cut back safety regulations, if you spend years doing the bidding of the rail lobby, then, in the long run, communities like East Palestine are at greater risk of accidents—and so are so many of my communities in upstate New York, where two of the major national rail lines run through the State, one across the center of the State near where the Erie Canal ran, going through Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Albany, and down the Hudson River; and the other across the southern tier.

In fact, now, this weekend, we saw yet another Norfolk Southern derailment in Ohio, near Springfield. Thank God, nobody was hurt.

So I look forward to hearing from Norfolk Southern's CEO this week. I look forward to working with both sides to increase rail safety through legislation. But Republicans need to acknowledge that accidents like the one in East Palestine don't happen out of the blue. They become more likely when maximizing profits is crowned king above everything else, even above people's safety.

NOMINATION OF DANIEL I. WERFEL

Madam President, on the IRS Commissioner, today I filed cloture on the nomination of Daniel Werfel to serve as Commissioner for the IRS.

For the information of all Senators, this will set up the first procedural vote on this nominee as early as Wednesday.

Mr. Werfel was reported out of the committee with bipartisan support, and it should be no different on the Senate floor. Confirming someone as qualified as Mr. Werfel as IRS Commissioner is crucial to making sure Americans take full advantage of all the tax credits we approved last year through legislation like the CHIPS and Science bill. It is also crucial for deploying resources we approved to go after rich cheats and ensure middle-class families are not needlessly audited while those at the top get by scot-free.

The Senate has a responsibility to make sure the IRS is fully staffed to handle its enormous workload—all the more important this year because of the new tax credits we approved through bills like CHIPS and Science last Congress.

SPECTRUM AUCTION AUTHORITY

Madam President, finally, on spectrum, Senators from both sides of the aisle are working to approve a 60-day extension of the FCC's spectrum auction authority by the March 9 deadline. The House recently passed a 60-day extension by voice vote. We are working right now to get the Senate to act

quickly in order to give both sides more time to arrive at a larger comprehensive agreement.

Congress has never before allowed the FCC spectrum auction authority to lapse, and to let it happen for the first time would be disastrous. Spectrum is essential for building out 5G capabilities. Its application impacts everything from families' internet access to satellite communications, all the way down to baby monitors.

I expect both sides will come to an agreement very soon to approve a 60-day extension before the March 9 deadline.

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

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

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last Thursday and Friday, I hosted several of our Senate colleagues for a visit to Texas's southern border. As you can see, Senators THUNE, WICKER, FISCHER, BRITT, and RICKETTS joined me for a series of tours and meetings in the Rio Grande Valley. This followed a bipartisan visit that we made to El Paso and Yuma just a few weeks ago.

So far, I have been happy to host, along with Senator CRUZ, about 10 separate delegations to the border. Each of those Senators saw a beautiful and vibrant region overwhelmed by the burden it has been handed by the Federal Government.

Since President Biden took office, border communities and our entire State, for that matter, has been forced to carry the massive weight of a humanitarian and security crisis. Border communities are left with no choice but to provide food, clothing and shelter, medical care, and transportation for tens of thousands of migrants each week. And they are forced to use their local tax dollars toward costs that really should be borne by the Federal Government. And, of course, they are left to wonder how this crisis is impacting the safety of their communities.

During our conversations last week, law enforcement officers shared their concerns about the security breakdowns along the border. Given the overwhelming number of people entering our country every day, Border Patrol has to respond and reposition with its limited personnel. As a result, highly trained law enforcement officers are shifted from the frontlines to pushing paper. Agents who should be arresting cartel members who attempt to traffic drugs in our country are now spending their days on administrative duties.

And 108,000 Americans died just last year alone from drugs coming across the border. Of course, this isn't a coin-

cidence; this is a plan. The cartels are smart. They are shrewd. They are scheming, and they are in pursuit of the almighty dollar. They orchestrate migration surges in specific areas to flood the zone and overwhelm law enforcement so they can take advantage of unpatrolled areas nearby.

When we arrived Thursday night, we saw firsthand the sheer volume and diversity of migrants whom agents were apprehending, from a 6-month-old baby to single adult males. And previously, we had seen sections of the border, like Yuma, AZ, where migrants from more than 150 countries show up and claim asylum.

Of course, this is part of the overwhelming strategy of the cartels. Their strategy is to distract and overwhelm. While professional law enforcement agents are busy processing and transporting migrants, cartels can smuggle heroin, fentanyl, and Heaven knows what else across the border. It is all part of a game plan by the cartels, and the Biden administration is getting played.

But this isn't news to the people who live and work along the border. They have seen this happening for the last 2 years, but without the support of President Biden, they are powerless to stop it on their own.

On Friday, we spoke with local, State, and Federal law enforcement about the far-reaching security impact of this broken border. The fentanyl that comes across the border doesn't stay in border communities. It moves to cities and towns across the country, mainly distributed by criminal street gangs that then battle each other for market share, for territory, and, of course, engage in a whole host of other crimes, too, but selling drugs is how they pay for much of it.

These local and State and Federal officials weren't just concerned about this poison slipping across the border but dangerous criminals who come across too. Last year, Customs and Border Protection arrested more than 750 criminal gang members and 98 people who were on the terrorist watch list. We all remember what happened not that long ago—20 years ago now, I guess—on 9/11, when fewer terrorists than that hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing 3,000 Americans. But the Biden administration seems to be completely oblivious to the potential threat of people on the terrorist watch list making their way into the United States undetected. You can't help but wonder how many people are able to sneak into our country undetected while law enforcement is distracted caring for migrants—hundreds of thousands of migrants or what Border Patrol calls "got-aways," people who are running away from law enforcement, and it doesn't take any imagination to wonder why.

The current state of affairs is unsustainable, but President Biden continues to promote the false narrative that only Congress can fix this