

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Ravi Chaudhary, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL), and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) would have voted "yea."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 64, nays 29, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 57 Ex.]

#### YEAS—64

|              |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Baldwin      | Hirono     | Rounds     |
| Bennet       | Hyde-Smith | Sanders    |
| Blumenthal   | Kaine      | Schatz     |
| Boozman      | Kelly      | Schumer    |
| Brown        | Kennedy    | Shaheen    |
| Cantwell     | King       | Sinema     |
| Capito       | Klobuchar  | Smith      |
| Cardin       | Lujan      | Stabenow   |
| Carper       | Manchin    | Sullivan   |
| Casey        | Markey     | Tester     |
| Collins      | Menendez   | Thune      |
| Coons        | Merkley    | Tillis     |
| Cornyn       | Moran      | Van Hollen |
| Cortez Masto | Murkowski  | Warner     |
| Duckworth    | Murphy     | Warnock    |
| Durbin       | Murray     | Warren     |
| Gillibrand   | Ossoff     | Welch      |
| Graham       | Padilla    | Whitehouse |
| Grassley     | Peters     | Wicker     |
| Hassan       | Reed       | Wyden      |
| Heinrich     | Romney     |            |
| Hickenlooper | Rosen      |            |

#### NAYS—29

|           |          |            |
|-----------|----------|------------|
| Blackburn | Fischer  | Paul       |
| Braun     | Hagerty  | Ricketts   |
| Britt     | Hawley   | Risch      |
| Budd      | Hoeven   | Rubio      |
| Cassidy   | Johnson  | Schmitt    |
| Cotton    | Lankford | Scott (FL) |
| Cramer    | Lee      | Scott (SC) |
| Crapo     | Lummis   | Tuberville |
| Daines    | Marshall | Vance      |
| Ernst     | Mullin   |            |

#### NOT VOTING—7

|          |           |       |
|----------|-----------|-------|
| Barrasso | Feinstein | Young |
| Booker   | Fetterman |       |
| Cruz     | McConnell |       |

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 64, the nays are 29.

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Ravi Chaudhary, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise today with great concern to talk about the bloated budget that President Biden has put forward and, really, what it says about his vision for the future of our country, because a budget is a vision.

As my Republican colleagues and I will highlight today, this budget is the latest edition in his tax-and-spend agenda. It also fits the standards my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have set by passing inflation-causing, deficit-raising legislation, like the Inflation Reduction Act and the American Rescue Plan.

Let me make one thing perfectly clear. This budget has no chance of becoming law. And that is the good news here and great news for our constituents back home because this misguided proposal would saddle American families with more taxes, more waste, more debt, and more government intrusion that our constituents just do not deserve. The bad news is—at least for this administration—that the unveiling of this budget shines a spotlight on the priorities of the President, his administration, and his party.

This should alarm all of us. Case in point, this \$6.8 trillion proposal has been released at a time when so many Americans are struggling to afford basic necessities, interest rates are soaring, our national debt is climbing at an alarming rate, and small businesses are struggling to make ends meet.

While the Biden administration and our Democrats on the other side of the aisle expect families to make concessions in their everyday lives—like spending less at the grocery store, putting off buying your first home, or purchasing an electric vehicle to avoid rising gas prices—they are attempting to spend nearly \$7 trillion, with a "t", of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars, pile on to our national debt, and massively expand the scope and authority of Federal Agencies, like the IRS, which they massively expanded just several months ago.

What exactly is President Biden's tax-and-spend proposal? Let's dig in just a little bit. President Biden makes his priorities clear with his proposed changes to base discretionary funding for Federal Agencies. That is the baseline.

The Environmental Protection Agency—I have a lot to do with this Agency because it comes right into my Committee on Environment and Public Works—gets a staggering—the most of any other Agency—19-percent increase in funding year to year. But the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Transportation—remember, Homeland Security is the one that deals with immigration and the crisis at the southern border and the flow of drugs and other things—and the Small Business Administration—where in my State, if you don't grow as a small business, you are not growing—they are all facing budget cuts.

The White House priorities could not be clearer. And when it comes to taxes under this budget proposed by the President, Main Street mom and pop businesses would feel strained like never before.

We just lowered the taxes in our State. It is the biggest tax cut ever in the State of West Virginia. Yet we are looking at taxes on small businesses and capital gains taxes. The corporate tax rate goes up. Taxes on American energy would increase. Retirement taxes go up. The Medicare tax would increase, and the personal income tax would go up to the highest level in decades.

What President Biden fails to realize is that the brunt of his tax hikes would be felt by those who own, invest in, or operate small- and medium-sized businesses. Maybe, that is why he doesn't put any extra money in the Small Business Administration.

This is a direct violation of his pledge to not raise taxes on small businesses.

The National Federation of Small Businesses issued a statement last week warning that the tax increase—and it is called the National Federation of Small Businesses. They are small businesses. They say that this "would further harm Main Street." It would "crush Main Street's ability to grow and create jobs."

The National Federation of Small Businesses believes that the Biden administration should increase focus on policies that will "provide certainty and promote economic growth to allow our small businesses to create jobs and raise wages."

My Republican colleagues and I could not agree more. It is my hope that the President and congressional Democrats will continue working on previously bipartisan tax issues that spur innovation and are pro-growth.

Just last week, as I said, our State passed historic tax cuts that signed into law by our Governor, Governor Justice, in the Mountain State. I wish our Federal Government was following this example. Instead, President Biden has chosen a different path that an analysis from the Tax Foundation found would create negative effects on savings, investments, and have economy-wide repercussions. The analysis continues that this brazen increase in taxes would ultimately harm our workers, international competitiveness, and domestic investment.

We talk about international competitiveness all the time. Why are we trying to move in a direction where our competitiveness would be less effective? In short, moving top tax rates in the United States beyond international norms reduces our economic growth.

You might ask yourself: Does the spending ever stop under President Biden and this budget?

Well, ironically, it does when you look at our own Department of Homeland Security, which secures the interior of our Nation. It is facing a budget cut under this proposal.

The President has consistently said that his budget is a reflection of his priorities. You see millions of people coming across our southern board with no deterrence. But nothing runs more true than that this is his priority—to continue that practice. And the refusal and inability to secure our border and stop the scourge of illicit drugs from entering our communities is not the priority of this administration.

The President's budget requests 350 new border agents, less than a 2-percent increase in our agents, while our border runs rampant with illegal crossings, and policies like title 42 move closer to sunset.

This budget proposes a contingency slush fund—there is nothing taxpayers like better than a slush fund—a slush fund for surge capacity at the border. In other words, give me the money now because I know we are going to have more people coming over, and I want to have the money to pay for it in advance because I don't want to come back to Congress to pay for it because Congress knows we have a problem and they won't give me the money to pay for it in an emergency. So I am going to get it up front.

It would be impossible for DHS to use this funding to mitigate our crisis at the border because, by the time they receive these dollars, these illegal crossings would have occurred.

We all have priorities, and President Biden made his clear. Securing our southern border is just not one of his priorities.

We see, clearly, President Biden's priorities yet again when it comes to military spending. We just had a drone shot down yesterday, I believe, by the Russians in the Black Sea. The President's budget shortchanges defense for more reckless spending. It is just a 3-percent increase—a 3.2-percent increase—in our military and national security. This comes at a time when inflation in the President's economy is high and our dollars are stretched thinner and thinner.

We hear about the supply chain. We hear about different materials we can't get, how much more expensive they are, and how much longer the wait is. So adversaries overseas increase their defense budgets. Now is not the time for us to delay that much needed modernization and reinforcement that we have put ourselves on a pathway for the last several years. Now is the time to invest in the advanced capabilities and the industrial base capacity that we expect and need for future generations and make our national security a priority.

According to the President's budget proposal, our addiction epidemic doesn't seem to be a top priority either. The President's proposed budget summary lacks a sense of urgency around this epidemic and the fentanyl crisis. This is a crisis in my State and in the Presiding Officer's State, as well, and in all States. My State has been disproportionately impacted by this. In the budget summary, fentanyl is only mentioned twice, opioids are

mentioned 4 times, and climate change is mentioned 42 times—42.

In 2022, West Virginia lost 1,135 West Virginians to fentanyl overdoses. What we lost to overdoses, many of those were fentanyl overdoses—a large majority.

President Biden, I implore you to put more emphasis on the communities facing our streets every day that deserve to be our national priorities.

This budget proposal from the Biden administration makes obvious the motivations and priorities of the White House and the Agencies. In Washington, clarity comes at a premium price. So I will give them credit for that.

But by touting this budget proposal and claiming that it cuts the deficit by raising taxes shows that, no matter what, the Democrats aren't interested in cutting spending.

I mean, put yourself in the country's shoes, as a family. What do you do when you see your credit cards maxing out and times are getting tough? What do you do? You pull back. You stop spending however you can do that in your own home.

My Republican colleagues and I stand in direct opposition to what the President is doing with his budget. So through my remarks on the floor today and the subsequent speeches by my fellow Republicans, we will continue to highlight the errors in the President's budget. We will also stress the need to strike balance, restraint, and regular order.

What does regular order mean to people who are watching this? That means we go through committees and we compromise, and we talk to Republicans and Democrats and get together.

The Presiding Officer and I are on the Appropriations Committee. She is a chair, and I am a ranking member. We do a lot of talking during this process. That is what we need to do.

I intend to fulfill my obligations on the Appropriations Committee and, hopefully, we can get this to regular order. Right now, we need to set priorities in a budget and spending plan that reflect the real needs we see every day on every street in this country.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I so agree with my colleague from West Virginia and her comments about this budget.

Here it is. I would encourage our citizens to pick it up and give it a read and look at some of the things that they are going to find in here. I think they are going to be aghast at what they find in here—\$477,000 to the IRS for equity training so that they can put an emphasis on equity. These are just some of the porked-up things that you are going to find in this left-leaning, radical, unrealistic wish list of a budget that this administration has brought forward. It really is a blueprint to socialism. Let's put the government in charge of everything, your life from daylight to dark every time you are out and about. Let's have control over your gas stove, over your

washing machine, over your showerhead, over your toilet flusher. That is what my colleagues on the left see. That is their goal—control over the people, governing by the elite for the elite. That is what they are all about. But I am going to drill down a little bit on this funding request for the Internal Revenue Service.

Now, President Biden is expecting the IRS to go to work, getting not just a few dollars but getting \$4.7 trillion in new taxes. Imagine that. Tennesseans do not want to pay the government more of their hard-earned paycheck. They don't want to give it up to a government that is wasting that money because they realize it is our children and our grandchildren, our precious ones, who are going to have to pay the cost for this. It is compromising their futures on programs they don't want, with money we don't have.

Why are you seeing all these tax increases? You are seeing them because the spending is out of control—a \$6.9 trillion budget; \$4.7 trillion in new taxes; a budget that in year 1—year 1—the deficit for year 1 is \$1.8 trillion. That is how far out of balance this budget is. That is why this thing is a wish list. It is a wish list of programs.

If you want to see how the left views the world, pick it up and give it a read. If you want to read in those words how little respect they have for the American people, for hard-working taxpayers, pick it up. They want your money.

Now, on the IRS, the IRS—in this fiscal year, 2024, they will increase their appropriations to \$14.1 billion. That is a \$1.8 billion increase from the 2023 enacted level. And we know that in the Inflation Reduction Act—what did the IRS get? Oh, \$80 billion. How about that? So the IRS now is going to have \$94.1 billion to spend.

Well, let's just ask the question: What do we think the IRS is going to use this money for? Do we think they are going to use it to make the Agency more user-friendly? Do we think they are going to use it to have people pick up the phone and say: Hi, I am your friendly IRS agent. How may I help you today?

We know that is pipe-dreaming. That is not what they are going to do.

Eighty billion dollars, plus a record \$14.1 billion in an appropriation. They are going to use this money for what? More audits. Because why? President Biden wants \$4.7 trillion—with a “t,” trillion—in new taxes.

Where do we think he is going to get this money? Oh, they like to say, it is going to come from corporations. It is going to come from extremely wealthy individuals and billionaires. But you know what, there is a problem with the math on that. The numbers just don't work. It doesn't add up.

Where are they going to get it? They are going to get it from small business manufacturers, from Main Street merchants, from the restaurants in your community. They are going to go get it

from the manufacturing plant in your community. How about the HVAC contractor? How about the plumbing company? This is where they are going. Sound familiar? Of course it does because it is the middle-income earner who gets hit every single time. Every single time without fail, they are the ones who get hit by the tax increases the Democrats are wanting to push forward.

Now, we know the IRS is not going to make that Agency more friendly. We know it is not going to be there to protect you, the hard-working taxpayer. But we do know that what they will do is wallop you upside the head and say: You owe this money. We are going to audit you.

It is going to happen time and again.

On top of all of this, inflation is soaring. Grocery prices are up about 20 percent; gasoline prices, 45 percent; natural gas prices, 43 percent. Electricity prices have increased 24 percent, and clothing prices are up 12 percent. But in this budget, there is nothing addressing inflation. There is nothing that is going to bring inflation down.

There is not a lot of attention paid to crime in the streets or gangs who are coming across the border or the fact that the chief of the Border Patrol said today that they do not have—the United States does not have operational control of the border. There is not a cent there to build that wall, but there is money in there to pay for attorney fees for illegal immigrants.

It is the wrong set of priorities, not what the American people are wanting, certainly not what Tennesseans are wanting to see, and not the accountability and transparency the American people expect from their government.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, there is a sales tactic known as throwing spaghetti at the wall, where the salesperson suggests an outrageously high price to see if it sticks. More often than not, the price is dead on arrival. It is intended to be; that is part of the trick.

See, the element of shock allows the salesperson to create an illusion of a spectacular discount by slashing the initially artificially high price. The customer then leaves feeling like they stumbled onto an incredible deal, too good to pass up, even though they left with a product they either didn't want or couldn't afford or, at a minimum, a product for which they paid too high a price.

When I read President Biden's budget request, it felt more like I was trapped at a kiosk in the middle of the mall or being sold a used car by a predatory, unscrupulous salesman, not reading a serious budget proposal from the President of the United States. So I would suggest the President try again because the spaghetti didn't stick. We are not buying what the President is selling, and his budget is dead on arrival.

When the President reached the end of his sales pitch, he told us the price: a whopping \$6.9 trillion. It would create a \$1.8 trillion deficit in the first year alone. Then by 2027, we would break the record for the most debt held by the public as a percentage of U.S. GDP since World War II.

Utahns are already pinching pennies as a result of this approach to budget.

In August, I stood where I stand now, as this body was on the cusp of passing the \$1.7 trillion omnibus package, and read letters I received from Utah constituents. They explained how difficult life has become under Biden's record-breaking inflation. They described the daily choices they were forced to make because of how expensive life had become under this administration.

Jennie from Salt Lake City wrote:

My annual income is about \$30,000 a year. I'm panicking. The price of groceries and other goods has increased so much, I'm struggling financially. I understand my utility bills could double or even triple. I don't know how I can afford to live.

Since Democrats started their reckless spending 2 years ago, prices have risen more than 15 percent. Groceries are up nearly 20 percent.

Kevin from Murray, UT, wrote:

This morning, I filled up my work . . . truck. It cost \$149. I'm a small business [owner], and the price of fuel is a major challenge for our company of 5 vehicles traveling to our various projects.

President Biden's energy policies caused gas prices to reach \$5 and energy costs to skyrocket. Gas is up 45 percent, and Biden's budget will crush American energy with \$31 billion in new taxes.

I said during that speech that if the definition of "insanity" is doing the same thing and expecting different results, then spending more money and increasing taxes to reduce inflation certainly meets that definition.

This approach is insane, and the President is doubling and then tripling down. Rather than address the spending driving inflation, the Biden administration continues to blame inflation on everything from the pandemic to Putin. We know why. The President won't address inflation because he wants to spend even more. He wants to create the biggest government we have ever had and make it more and more expensive.

We have to get this monkey off our back, but that can't be done in darkness. That has to be done while acknowledging the problem that we have and addressing it head-on, not obscuring it.

I want to be clear that the Constitution tasks Congress with determining annual spending and revenue levels, not the President's annual budget proposal, and clearly this is for good reason. We have a constitutional duty here to protect our constituents from the snake oil salesman hell-bent on taking the American people for all they are worth, who will leave the American people with junk they don't need and a payment they can't afford.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I am here to join some of my colleagues to talk about President Biden's budget proposal. I have heard a lot of the floor speeches today, and I hear a lot of facts and figures that are all very important, but sometimes it is kind of hard to translate that down to what it means around a kitchen table.

I am actually speaking with a very vivid memory of the life I lived as a teenager back in the seventies when my mother and father, with six kids, were always on the economic bubble based on what happens in Washington.

The challenges of working families are significant, and the challenges this budget presents make them even more so.

I will start off with a couple of facts and figures because I think it is important. We have had inflation go up at about 15 percent since President Biden was in office. I am going to talk a little bit about that in a minute.

If you go on Bloomberg or you read the Wall Street Journal, they use words like "CPI" and "PCE" and all these things. That won't necessarily make a lot of sense to folks who haven't studied it, but it does matter that grocery prices are up by 20 percent since President Biden took office.

That is a 40-year high. And it also matters that rent prices—something that my family in the seventies, depending upon what Congress did to us, very seldom for us, we would either be in a house that my parents owned or a house or a trailer that my parents rented. And when rents go up like that, the choices get fewer and fewer.

These interest rates—these numbers are hurting the American people, but I want to go back to the interest rate discussion.

The fact of the matter is, we found ourselves in a once-in-a-century challenge with the global pandemic in COVID. And in this body, I joined the vast majority of Democrats and Republicans to do everything we had to do to make things meet. That is why we did the Paycheck Protection Plan, which saved hundreds, if not millions, of jobs. We did a number of things on a bipartisan basis.

So I think that we have to look at that overall inflation number and see how much of that was just necessary so that, in our judgment, we could weather a storm that could have created a global economic disaster. There are some of my Members who say we shouldn't focus on that, but I think we need to be honest with the American people.

However, what we have seen since President Biden came into office was something that really disappointed me, as somebody who has worked across the aisle a number of different times, and that was two partisan bills: one that was \$1.9 trillion shortly after President Biden took office; another

one, the so-called—I call it the “Inflation Production Act” because it has very little to do with reduction. Its official title is the Inflation Reduction Act.

So we are talking about \$3 trillion in spending, after we had all decided that the money that we put out there to weather the storm for the global pandemic needed to be spent. We even raised questions about whether or not that money should be spent for what we originally intended. The point to that is the government had spent enough, and then these partisan bills took place, and these partisan bills are absolutely one of the root causes and primary reasons why we are seeing inflation today.

As a matter of fact, the rising inflation is one of the root causes behind what we are seeing, and with that interest rates, because when inflation goes up and the Federal Reserve wants to get inflation back down to 2 percent—we are at 6 percent now. There are some people high-fiving over that. I don’t know why. Yes, it is down from 7 percent or so, but we are nowhere near where we need to be.

And inflation happens when government spends too much. That is what we are seeing happen, and, in fact, because of inflation and the need to raise interest rates, now we have banks that have failed, largely based on the inflation rate exposure and what they are having to do when their debts come due.

So we have a budget that even the additional spending—I think the top-line number is \$6.8 trillion. Now, to be fair, in the COVID timeframe, it was a little over 4 trillion—I think maybe even a little bit north of that but certainly not at this level. We are spending too much. And the American families, and working families, in particular, people on that economic bubble, are the ones who are going to suffer the most if we don’t figure out how to get it right.

So we have got a deficit, a deficit in this budget. We have got new debt in this budget. We have got new taxes in this budget. And we have invalid assumptions about where we are today.

How on Earth can we be making an optimistic assumption about inflation that is somewhere near 2 percent? Does anybody here honestly believe that we are going to be high-fiving and being at 2 percent inflation over the next year and a half or 2 years? I don’t believe that that is true. But how can you make that an underlying assumption in the budget—because the President is smart, his advisers are smart; they know that that is a false premise for a budget.

So it is even worse than it may seem. And what makes me sad about this is it is really worse for the people who are already getting 80 cents on the dollar for groceries, for the people who are only getting 90 cents on the dollar for rent today. It all comes back to the people who are struggling the most.

We should talk about some of the other taxes that are in this legislation.

Energy. Generally speaking, most people have to buy gas; they have got to heat their homes. Energy taxes are going up. I think the estimate that we have right now is about \$20 billion in additional energy taxes.

I don’t know about you all, but virtually every time I see a tax increase, if you wait long enough, you will see how that translates into a tax burden on working families. It is inevitable. Corporations ultimately don’t pay taxes.

When you are going to increase a corporate tax by 30 percent, who ultimately pays for that? Yes, they may be able to work around the edges and absorb some of that, but what they are going to do is find a way to get the consumer—working families—to pay for that. That is how this works.

That, incidentally, is how the bailout of Silicon Valley Bank is going to work. It is fair, and it would pass a fact check, that the plan that was agreed to over the weekend to resolve Silicon Valley Bank isn’t a tax in the way that we describe a tax. It is that tax you get from the IRS, for example. It is that tax you get—sales tax at a register.

Why is this also a hidden tax? Because do you honestly believe that some community bank that is struggling to keep a branch open in an underserved area in rural North Carolina—they are going to make one of two choices. They are either going to make that banking service more expensive or they are simply going to leave that bank. And now we get to unbanked and underbanked areas that are most hard hit, the ones that actually have working families who need banks to serve them.

The other thing—I am not going to get into details, but I am also very concerned with the signal that President Biden has sent on defense.

There is a plus-up in defense spending, but the President’s proposed budget—in the worst possible time with all the conflicts that we are dealing with—the Ukraine conflict, the threat from China, the continuing threat in the Middle East. Is this really a time to send the signal that we are going to spend less on national defense?

We have been trying to get to a 355-ship Navy for almost a decade—at least 8 years, as many years as I have been here. I have been on the Senate Armed Services Committee for those 8 years, and we were always talking about how are we going to get to 355? We are just under 300 now.

This budget is suggesting that we may even have a smaller Navy than we have today, when China has one of the largest navies that has ever existed—actually, probably the largest navy that has ever existed in the history of the world.

So we are prioritizing domestic spending; we are turning our back on national security; and all the net increase in spending is based on assumptions that they are making that will ultimately—if they don’t believe it,

they need to believe it—it is going to hurt working families the most.

Well, the good news about President Biden’s budget is that it gives us a real, I think, understanding of what his priorities are.

The better news is that that budget is not going to pass through Congress because we are going to have to work on something that is more responsible, that is not inflationary, that tries to get taxes in line so that people can afford the bill that you will ultimately have to pay.

And I hope that over the next—in the coming months that we can have a discussion about let’s start with the people who are hurt most. Let’s look at the policies that channel directly into making that burden greater, and let’s do something good for the United States and the hard-working families across this country.

And for that reason, I will do everything I can, Mr. President. You are somebody I have worked with on a bipartisan basis. I hope that we can get the Senate and the House to recognize that it is time for us to stand up and produce something that puts working families at the forefront.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I would like to join the good Senator from North Carolina as well as my colleagues in bringing Senate attention to the President’s fiscal year 2024 budget.

At the outset, I want to say I support a balanced budget amendment and have done so since I first came to the Senate. I think that is something that we need to pass. We need a balanced budget amendment.

But with that, I do want to comment on the Biden administration’s budget released last week, which goes in the wrong direction.

President Biden’s \$6.9 trillion proposal is full of the same tax-and-spend policies that do not balance a budget, do not help reduce inflation, and instead they levy taxes on hard-working Americans and spend money that we don’t have.

In total, the budget proposes \$4.7 trillion—let me repeat that, \$4.7 trillion—in new taxes on the American people.

We need to get our fiscal house in order, and we do that by controlling spending, not again raising taxes on hard-working Americans. It is time that we come together to reduce our debt and deficit and enact responsible policies that will reduce inflation and lift the burden that our American taxpayers currently face.

The President’s budget calls for increasing the corporate tax rate to 28 percent. This is higher than the average corporate tax rate in Europe, which is currently 21.7 percent, and it is even higher than the tax rate in China, if you can believe that, which is 25 percent.

This policy neglects the fact that tax increases like these are ultimately passed through to consumers in terms

of higher prices for goods and services. That is just the reality.

We know this because in 2021, the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation scored a similar corporate tax increase proposal and very clearly came back and demonstrated that that tax increase would be borne by hard-working taxpayers and certainly taxpayers making less than the \$400,000 per year that President Biden has talked about.

Because of this administration's past tax-and-spend policies, just yesterday, the updated CPI—Consumer Price Index—indicated that prices for goods and services in this country continue to rise.

We have seen historic levels of inflation, and a big part of controlling and reducing that inflation is controlling and reducing overall spending.

With the latest numbers, unless you have gotten at least a 15-percent raise since the Biden administration took office, you have effectively suffered a pay cut because the rate of inflation has gone up faster than your rate of pay.

During the previous administration, we took a different approach, cutting the top corporate rate from 35 percent to 21 percent. This approach led to economic growth and businesses coming back to America, and it also led to higher wages for American workers.

Of particular concern in my State of North Dakota are the proposed tax increases on energy production, including oil, gas, and coal. In fact, the Biden budget proposes to increase taxes by \$31 billion on fossil fuel companies.

What the budget fails to recognize is that these taxes are borne by consumers in higher prices at the pump—when they pull up to the gas station, higher prices at the pump, higher electric bills, and higher costs when they go to the grocery stores. That is where they are ultimately paid.

We need to produce more energy. We need to create incentives to produce more energy in this country to bring down the cost of energy. There is an energy component in almost every product that you can think of, and we need to find ways to produce more energy to help increase supply and reduce the cost of energy. That will help with inflation across the board.

Furthermore, taxes like these only help oil-producing countries like Russia, Iran, and Venezuela—countries that have far inferior environmental standards to those here in the United States. That makes no sense—no sense at all.

My colleagues and I worked with the last administration to put in place policies that made our country not only energy independent but energy dominant—energy dominant. More energy, more supply helped reduce the cost of energy. That benefited consumers in their pocketbook. It also created more jobs and increased the wages in the jobs we have. That benefited the American worker.

Energy security is also a national security issue, making us less dependent

on our adversaries and helping our allies—helping our allies so that they don't have to depend on energy from our adversaries. Look at what is going on in Europe right now, with our support and Western Europe's support for Ukraine at the same time Europe is looking to get energy from Russia, a country which has invaded Ukraine. Yeah, that makes no sense.

We need to return to policies that incentivize energy production in this country, not tax the very energy producers that produce more energy in this country with better environmental stewardship than anywhere else in the world.

Also, on defense, the budget falls short on defense. While on paper the budget proposes increased defense spending in 2024, it fails to take into account the incredible inflation costs which have been generated by this administration's tax-and-spend policies.

Our current threat, obviously, not only with what we see in Europe but globally, we can only respond to with a position of strength—strength. This budget would result in just the opposite—a smaller Army, fewer Navy ships, fewer Air Force aircraft. We need to support our men and women in uniform by providing them with the resources they need to address the global threats posed by our adversaries.

In conclusion, the President's budget is the wrong proposal at the wrong time. Congress must work to find savings, reduce our debt and deficit, and responsibly fund our priorities without increasing taxes on hard-working American taxpayers.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the ranking member of the Ag Appropriations Subcommittee, I look forward to working on the fiscal year 2024 appropriations bills and enacting commonsense legislation that meets our country's needs while facing our fiscal realities and working to get our debt and deficit under control.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to also express my disappointment in the fiscal year 2024 budget submitted to Congress by President Biden. As a fiscal conservative, I have serious concerns about the direction this budget proposes to take our country. It fails to address the real needs of our Nation and instead doubles down on failed policies.

Americans continue to suffer from the worst inflation since the Carter administration—inflation set off by President Biden's reckless tax-and-spend agenda. Consumer prices have risen 15 percent since Biden took office. These are real numbers. People in my home State of Mississippi and across this country continue to see their hard-earned savings dwindle and their paychecks stretched thin by higher prices for everything from groceries to gasoline and basic utilities.

After 2 years of trudging through this economy, Americans truly need help. However, President Biden's budget will do anything but help. The President's \$7 trillion budget for 2024 will result in massive spending increases that will further exacerbate our already significant debt and deficit problems. Remember, reckless spending is the major reason prices took off in the first place.

We simply cannot afford to spend at this level and continue passing on the burden of our current and growing debt to future generations.

What is more, this proposal includes \$4.7 trillion in new or increased taxes—the largest tax hike since the 1960s. These tax hikes would stifle economic growth, discourage investment, and ultimately harm the very people the President's budget is supposed to help.

The President is asking Congress to hike the individual Federal income tax rate up from 37 percent to 39.6 percent, not including the surtaxes with that. This proposal would push tax increases on even more hard-working Americans. Make no mistake, this proposal does not “tax the rich,” as my colleagues across the aisle love to say; it raises taxes on middle-class Americans.

The President's proposed tax increases may raise revenue in the short term to support his big spending, Big Government schemes, but they amount to distraction and to only gimmicks.

There is little chance these massive tax increases will see the light of day, but even if they did, the Biden tax hikes would not address the underlying issues of our ballooning national debt.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projects that the Federal Government will spend over \$10 trillion on interest alone in the next 10 years. Think about that for a moment—\$10 trillion on interest payments alone. Unbelievable. As we pay more and more on debt interest payments, there will be less available to use on critical and important priorities like Senator HOEVEN mentioned: national defense, infrastructure, healthcare, or education.

I recently reintroduced a constitutional balanced-budget amendment because I am very concerned about the future of this great Nation. In contrast, President Biden's 2024 budget plan sends a clear signal that he and his administration are not serious about controlling the national debt or even reducing annual deficit spending. He may talk about it, but this budget says otherwise.

It is our responsibility as elected officials of the American people to strengthen our Nation, not to leave it saddled with unsustainable debt that puts everything at risk, including entitlement programs that hard-working Americans have paid into their entire lives.

President Biden's budget is a disappointment and falls short in addressing serious challenges, such as getting our fiscal house in order, securing the border, unleashing American energy, and so much more.

We all know the President's budget was received dead on arrival, but it signals the starting point to the annual budget process. It is my hope that wiser minds on both sides of the aisle will prevail as Congress embarks on the 2024 budget and appropriations process.

Americans are already pinching pennies, taking on debt, and struggling to pay their bills, and they deserve much, much more. They deserve relief, and our Nation needs relief in the form of tried-and-true just pure fiscal responsibility.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

REMEMBERING JUDITH HEUMANN

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I come to the floor today with a heavy yet full heart to pay tribute to someone I owe so much to, someone who millions of Americans living with disabilities owe so much to, Judy Heumann.

To honor her, I want to start by describing the environment we are in for those who may be listening in who may be visually impaired. We are in the United States Senate Chambers. I am sitting in the top row of chairs. I am sitting in my wheelchair. I am an Asian-American woman with brown hair, and I am wearing my signature red lipstick, just as Judy used to wear.

Judy was more than a friend; she was a personal hero to me. She was a person who devoted her life to expanding disability rights, to making sure that accessibility in this country is not an afterthought but, in fact, is the norm.

She worked so hard because she recognized a simple truth: that everyone, whether they know it or not, is just 1 day, 1 split-second away from acquiring a disability and needing the protections and rights that too many take for granted, rights that every American deserves.

You know, when I earned my disability in 2004, I actually considered myself pretty lucky. I say "lucky" because when I got home from Iraq, the Rehabilitation Act had been the law of the land for more than 30 years, and the Americans with Disabilities Act had been in place for more than a decade, both of which Judy had fought tirelessly to implement and, in fact, was the author of, and both of which empowered people like me to lead full lives. So, yes, pretty darn lucky because I wouldn't be able to roll my wheelchair through the maze of the Capitol Building and onto the Senate floor today to give this speech without those laws or without the unwavering advocacy and leadership of Judy Heumann.

You see, Judy passed her exams to earn a teaching license before people with disabilities had equal protections under the law, but she was denied that license by the school board even though she passed the exams—denied it just because of so-called concerns about legal liability in the workplace because she had a disability.

They said that because Judy used a wheelchair, she represented a fire hazard and couldn't safely teach in a classroom. Judy, rightfully so, wasn't going to take that for an answer, so she got to work. She worked and she worked and she worked. She fought and she fought some more. She made a fuss. She caused what civil rights giant John Lewis called "good trouble."

It is in large part because of her never giving up that the Rehabilitation Act exists, that the ADA exists, and that my full, wonderful, beautifully chaotic life is possible. For that and for so much more, I will be forever grateful for Judy Heumann.

Judy passed away earlier this month, but what she lived for will live on forever. I will never forget the hard-earned lessons she taught me about what it means to truly fight for our civil rights, to keep up that work day after day after day, and to make sure we empower those who come next to continue reaching toward a more just and more accessible future.

In her name, I will forever keep striving to bring about that better tomorrow when people with disabilities won't have to work so hard just to live our daily lives.

Rest in power, Judy. We miss you already.

190TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. PARTNERSHIP WITH THAILAND

Mr. President, "sawadee ka." I come to the floor today to commemorate a special moment, the 190th anniversary of the U.S. partnership with the Kingdom of Thailand.

I am an American, but my Thai heritage makes me a living example of the unshakeable bond between our two nations.

Our nations have a long, long history of friendship. For centuries, our countries have learned from and leaned on each other militarily, diplomatically, economically, culturally—you name it. From the environment to our economies, national security to cyber security, we have helped one another grow and evolve, adapting to a world that is evermore connected, adapting to an era in which technology allows allies half a world away to be there for each other in half an instant.

There is a reason Thailand is often called Washington's oldest ally in Asia. Ever since an American ship landed on Thailand's shores more than 200 years ago, ever since President Andrew Jackson and Thai King Rama III signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation formalizing peaceful relations between our countries, ever since King Mongkut offered to send elephants to President Abraham Lincoln an ocean away, our nations have proven that there is no greater asset than a partner you can count on in times of both peace and conflict. Time after time, we have worked side by side to catch the bad actors running international criminal networks, to give humanitarian relief to those who need it, to keep the peace far beyond our own borders.

We have seen our shared interests and values manifest time after time over the past 190 years. To name just a few examples, more than 300,000 people of Thai descent—myself included—live in the United States today, and thousands more come to study every semester.

The jointly run Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences has been at the forefront of research on infectious diseases since the 1960s, developing treatment for a host of diseases that have saved millions of lives in both our countries and around the world.

Under a 2002 framework, hundreds of U.S. companies have invested in Thailand, fueling bilateral trade of over \$74 billion in 2020 alone.

And, during World War II, the United States worked with Thai students in the United States and dissidents inside Thailand to create the Free Thai Movement. Then, our security alliance was eventually formalized under the Manila Pact of 1954 and the Thanat-Rusk communique in 1962. And, now, the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group in Thailand helps organize more than 400 joint exercises per year, including Cobra Gold, the largest multilateral exercise in the Indo-Pacific region.

In 2023, with more and more geopolitical threats rising by the day, the strength of our bond is as important as ever. Our alliance provides some sense of stability amidst that chaos and some sense of security amidst the unpredictability. It helps to make a tenuous situation a little bit more tenable.

In just a few months, Thailand will hold national elections for the second time since the military coup of 2014. As in other countries, Thailand's path to democracy has had its challenges. There have been setbacks as well as advances. But in this moment, I know I speak for my colleagues in this Chamber when I say we look forward to an election that is free and fair, an election that cements Thailand on the road to a stable democratic system based on the rule of law, civilian authority, and respect for internationally recognized human rights.

Let me just close by saying: For the progress that Thailand has made toward that more democratic future, for the friendship our two nations have shared, as well as for all the years that I was lucky enough to call Thailand my home as a child, I am endlessly grateful, and I am forever proud to call myself an American of Thai descent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF ATLANTA SPA SHOOTINGS

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I rise today to reflect on a dark day in Georgia. It was 2 years ago today that a hateful act of violence shook metropolitan Atlanta and reverberated across our State, our Nation, and the world.