

U.S. border at Brownsville, TX, where he will meet with local leaders and border enforcement agents. Three hundred miles up the Rio Grande, Donald Trump is expected to visit the border at Eagle Pass, TX.

When President Biden and Donald Trump visit the border today, Americans will see a glaring contrast between the sitting President who negotiated the strongest border bill we have seen in years and a former President exploiting the border for political gain and making sure nothing gets done.

President Biden knows the border is a serious problem. So look at what he has done: He sat down with Republicans to draft the strongest, most comprehensive border security bill America has seen in decades. And we worked with him here in the Senate to make that happen.

Let me say that again: President Biden knows the border is a serious problem, and that is why he sat down with Republicans to draft the strongest, most comprehensive border bill America has seen in decades.

But what did Donald Trump do? Donald Trump deliberately sabotaged the very same border reforms he spent years calling for because he wants to exploit the border for the campaign trail. He explicitly took credit for the bill going down. "Please, blame it on me"—those were his words.

It was Donald Trump who sabotaged the bill with dramatic updates to asylum. It was Donald Trump who sabotaged a bill that reformed parole authority. It was Donald Trump who sabotaged the bill that provided new resources to Border Patrol agents. And it was Donald Trump who sabotaged the bill endorsed by the Border Patrol union, the Wall Street Journal editorial page, and the Chamber of Commerce—hardly liberal groups.

So when Donald Trump goes in front of the cameras to lament the mess at the border, he should look in the mirror—he should look in the mirror—because he is the one who tanked the best chance we have seen in ages to fix it. Until Donald Trump said "oppose it," it would have passed here in the Senate and even in the House. And when Republicans in Congress say they will shut the government down or bring this legislative process to a halt unless we fund the border, that is bull, because they are the ones who blocked the deal.

Republicans are the ones exacerbating the border by pushing things like H.R. 2, which not only did not get a single Democratic vote, it wouldn't even solve the problem—it wouldn't even solve the problem.

And, again, as I have reminded Speaker JOHNSON over and over again, he can't do anything without bipartisanship when we have divided government. So to simply write what you want and put it for a vote when it gets no Democratic votes is a path to not solving the problem but, in a sense, doing the same thing Donald Trump

did: use it for political purposes, say the problem isn't solved for political purposes when you are the ones who prevented the problem from being solved.

Republicans cannot—cannot—claim to be serious about fixing the border while voting against the very same border policies they have spent years calling for. Republicans can't be serious about fixing the border when they say it is an emergency, and then when they have a chance to stop it, they refuse for crass political purposes.

That is what happened in the last few weeks, and Democrats will make sure the American people know it.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. President, now, on Ukraine, in the meeting with President Biden and congressional leaders earlier this week, I relayed what President Zelenskyy told me when I visited Ukraine: If Ukraine gets the aid they need, they will win the war. If they don't get those armaments, they will almost certainly lose.

Russia's recent advancements haven't been because of a lack of a Ukrainian plan or lack of a will to fight or a lack of courage or strength or dedication on behalf of the Ukrainian President and the Ukrainian people. I can assure you that after meeting with President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people, their resolve to win the war is stronger than ever. Russia's advancements have come simply because the Ukrainians are running out of ammunition.

If we don't provide this aid ASAP, not only will Ukraine lose the war but the United States will lose out to the Putins, the Xis, and the other autocratic heads of state. We will lose out. The American people will lose out over the next decades economically, militarily, diplomatically, and politically.

So I say to Speaker JOHNSON, this is a true turning point for America—for our strength, for our credibility on the world stage, for our national security. Speaker JOHNSON, please don't shrink from this moment. Let the supplemental bill, which passed with 70 votes here in the Senate, move forward. History—history—is watching you.

(The remarks of Mr. SCHUMER pertaining to the introduction of S. 4 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

#### REMEMBERING JIM KETCHUM

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, to the Senate Curator, last week, I was saddened to hear about the passing of the first permanent Senate Curator, Jim Ketchum.

Very few in the history of the U.S. Senate have been tasked with the immense responsibility of preserving the history of this storied institution. Jim was one of them, and the very best.

A proud son of New York, Jim's career took him on a tour through some of America's greatest national landmarks, including the Arlington National Cemetery, the White House, and, of course, the U.S. Capitol.

At the White House, Jim served as Curator for not one, not two, but three administrations: Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon. When President Kennedy first appointed him at the ripe age of 24, he was concerned he was "too young" to hold the post, to which Jackie Kennedy responded: "That's what they told Jack." So Jim was truly special, and everyone saw it.

Here in the Senate, Jim led a long list of initiatives to preserve the Capitol Building, not just as a museum of American history but as a bustling beacon of democracy.

It is thanks to Jim that the Old Senate and Supreme Court Chambers were restored and now welcome millions of visitors every year. It is thanks to Jim that countless paintings, artifacts, and pieces of furniture documenting our history were recovered and preserved. And it is thanks to Jim that we all have a better understanding today of this building, this institution, and our place in history.

So Jim will be deeply missed. But I think it is safe to say that Jim will live on in this institution he worked so doggedly to preserve.

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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as I said earlier this week, government shutdowns never produce positive outcomes. That is why Congress is going to avoid one this week. Leaders in both parties and both Houses have agreed to a plan that would keep the lights on while appropriators complete their work and put annual appropriations bills on a glide path to becoming law.

I appreciate our colleagues' commitment to see this process through and make good on this essential governing responsibility, and I expect the Senate to act swiftly on a first step this week.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. President, on another matter, the serious challenges facing America's national security today illustrate some pretty timeless lessons about how the world works—basic realities about geopolitics that were true before I got a front row seat to President Reagan's foreign policy 40 years ago and which are just as true today.

The first lesson is the value of alliances. America is the world's preeminent superpower—economically and militarily. But our influence and prosperity are facilitated by a network of partnerships. I don't mean this so-called international community of

multinational debating societies; I mean the hard power of America's military alliances and partnerships. The strength of these alliances rests on the credibility of the commitments we make to our friends.

The second lesson is peace through strength. Those who wish us harm speak the language of power, and we have to be able to speak it as well. In other words, our deterrent capabilities here have to be as credible to our adversaries as our commitments are to our allies.

Congress's most fundamental constitutional obligation is to provide for the common defense. That is why I urged the Senate so forcefully to pass a national security supplemental and why I believe passing full-year defense appropriations is absolutely critical.

When America is strongest, Congress provides sufficient funding to preserve America's military primacy. And our adversaries and allies alike actually trust that the Commander in Chief is prepared to use force decisively.

The last lesson is the importance of clear strategy. Even the most capable force—the most formidable hard power—is only as effective as the strategy it serves. Understanding our interests is a prerequisite to actually advancing our interests.

The challenges we face today test whether and how well America understands these lessons. The threats to our personnel, our interests, and our allies in the Middle East are particularly illustrative.

Since October 7, America's closest ally in that region has been engaged in a serious fight to rescue its people and restore its security against Iran-backed terror. As I said repeatedly since that day, we owe it to Israel—a fellow democracy under assault by savage terrorists—to provide the time, the space, and the support necessary for them to destroy the threat posed by Hamas.

To prioritize a cease-fire at all costs is to actually ignore that the terrorists exploited precisely such a cease-fire to slaughter innocent Israelis on October 7. To blame Israel for conducting operations to free hostages and kill terrorists in hospitals and schools is to excuse Hamas for violating laws of war and exploiting civilians by militarizing such civilian infrastructure in the first place.

As negotiators work on further hostage releases, it is critical that Israel operates from a position of strength backed by a rock-solid ally whose policies are driven by our Nation's interests, not influenced by one party's perceived political interest.

I hope that President Biden will demonstrate enough political courage to stand up to those in his party who want him to tie Israel's hands or put his own hands on the scales of Israel's domestic politics.

Meanwhile, the chief architect of chaos in the Middle East—the world's most active state sponsor of ter-

rorism—speaks the language of power. Plain and simple, America has to invest in rebuilding our arsenal, but we also have to show Iran that we are not afraid to actually use it. Flattening a few warehouses in response to hundreds of Iran-backed attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, frankly, is not a meaningful exercise of strength. Nor is wasting expensive precision weapons to intercept expendable drones launched by Iran's expendable proxies.

The commander of the U.S. task force contending with Houthi terrorism in the Red Sea acknowledged recently that even though his forces were succeeding tactically, the Houthis and their Iranian patrons were simply not deterred. Frankly, tactical proficiency and hitting Houthi targets with F-35s and Tomahawk missiles should be a low bar of the world's most advanced military. It is also beside the point.

In reality, unless these tactics are nestled in an effective strategy to change an adversary's calculus to sufficiently degrade his ability to threaten our interest, it doesn't matter how tactically proficient our efforts are.

So this isn't a matter of dense, academic theories of international relations. The questions we need to ask ourselves are really quite basic: Are we being reliable allies to our friends? Do we credibly strike fear into the hearts of our enemies? Are our tactics aligned with a coherent strategy? If not, what are we doing here?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The Republican whip.

TRIBUTE TO MITCH MCCONNELL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday, we learned that Leader MCCONNELL, the longest serving party leader in Senate history, will be stepping down from his leadership role next January. There will be time later for a fuller discussion of all his contributions to our party and to this institution, but for today, I just want to express my gratitude for his service.

Had he done nothing else, his successful efforts to build up the judiciary with judges who are committed to the rule of law and to the Constitution would secure his place in the history books.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve with him.

ECONOMY

Mr. President, 3 years ago around this time, the Senate was considering Democrats' so-called American Rescue Plan Act. With a \$1.9 trillion pricetag, this reckless spending bill was packed with liberal priorities and progressive giveaways.

Before it even passed, Democrats were warned that it was too big. They were warned even by liberal economists that that kind of spending risked setting off an inflation crisis, but they chose to go ahead anyway. Inflation almost immediately—immediately—began accelerating, and 3 years later, we are still dealing with the crisis the Democrats helped create.

In the last 3 years, inflation reached levels not seen since the early 1980s.

While inflation may have descended from those stratospheric heights, we are still—and I say “still”—stuck with an inflation rate well above the Federal Reserve's target rate of 2 percent.

Three years of persistent price hikes have taken a serious toll on Americans' budgets. Working families have had to scrimp and save to stretch their dollars. Many Americans have had to turn to their credit cards to cope with higher and higher costs. Families have had to cut back on saving and investing for the future.

Today, it costs a typical family \$1,000 more per month to maintain the standard of living it had when President Biden took office—\$1,000 more per month just to tread water. And it is no wonder. Energy costs are up 31.7 percent. Housing costs are up 19.4 percent. Car repairs are up 27.5 percent. And the list goes on.

Where inflation has really hit many Americans is at the grocery store. Grocery prices are up 21 percent under President Biden. The cost of food now takes up a larger share of Americans' disposable income than it has at any point in more than 30 years.

Faced with higher prices, shoppers have had to adjust. Families are opting for cheaper alternatives. They are putting items back on the shelves, and they are hunting for deals at multiple stores. Tighter budgets have become a fact of life in the Biden economy.

As I said, many Americans have had to turn to credit cards to cope with higher prices, and with the Federal Reserve having to keep interest rates elevated to fight inflation, paying off that debt has gotten harder.

High interest rates have also put the American dream of owning your own home increasingly out of reach. The average mortgage rate has more than doubled since the President took office.

The Biden inflation crisis has made life harder for a lot of people. It is harder to save. It is harder to get ahead, harder to make ends meet. Yet President Biden still tries to claim his economic policies are working, that the economy somehow is doing well.

Well, Americans disagree. A January poll found that 63 percent of Americans believe economic conditions are getting worse. Another poll found that 54 percent of voters rate their personal economic situation as fair or poor, and 7 out of 10 voters in the same poll also said they expect that higher prices are here to stay.

For the last 3 years, the White House has attempted to disclaim responsibility for the inflation crisis that has done so much to harm family budgets. Despite economists agreeing that the President's reckless spending led to higher inflation, the White House has taken every opportunity to pin the blame somewhere else.

The latest strategy? Complaining about “shrinkflation,” which refers to instances where goods have gotten smaller but the price has stayed the same.