

What we need to do is come to an agreement that is sensible here, a bipartisan agreement, and do it quickly. The numbers approaching our border are so overwhelming, we have no choice but to do that.

I want to work on a bipartisan basis with those in good faith and good will who will recognize that immigration is not only our history but our future, but it must be in an orderly fashion. That is what I am looking for, and I think America is as well.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this past Saturday marked 3 years of the Biden administration. After 3 full years under President Biden, the question naturally arises, Is America better off? Are Americans better off? For a whole lot of Americans, the answer is no.

In a December poll, 55 percent of voters said they are worse off under President Biden. In a January poll, 46 percent of voters said their personal financial situation is getting worse compared to just 28 percent who said it is improving.

A recent ABC News article noted:

In a dispiriting sign of the times, barely more than a quarter of Americans say the American dream still holds true.

It is no wonder because perhaps the biggest legacy of the President's first 3 years in office is a massive inflation crisis that has still—still—not gone away.

Inflation may have descended from the stratospheric heights it reached earlier in the President's term, but we are still stuck with an inflation rate well above the Federal Reserve's target rate of 2 percent. And inflation actually ticked up again in December by a not insignificant margin. The practical effect has been that a whole lot of Americans have seen their breathing room disappear under President Biden.

According to a recent analysis from the members of the Joint Economic Committee here in Congress, a typical household has to spend over \$11,000 more each year to maintain the same standard of living it had at the beginning of the Biden administration—\$11,000 more each year. That is a staggering amount of money. It is money that a lot of families don't have.

So it is not surprising that 55 percent of voters say they are worse off under President Biden. It turns out that when you are spending 20 percent more on groceries, 18 percent more on shelter, 35 percent more on gasoline, and 25 per-

cent more on electricity—and on and on—over the course of just 3 years, you don't feel very prosperous. And I haven't even mentioned how difficult it has gotten for many Americans to achieve the dream of homeownership, thanks in part to rate hikes that the Federal Reserve has had to implement to deal with President Biden's inflation crisis.

Suffice it to say that the inflation crisis President Biden helped create with his so-called American Rescue Plan has resulted in economic misery for a lot of Americans.

The President will unquestionably be remembered for his massive inflation crisis, but he will also be remembered for presiding over a border crisis of staggering proportions, a crisis that, like the inflation crisis, he had a large hand in creating.

From the day he took office, when he rescinded the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border, President Biden made it clear that border security was at the bottom of his priority list. And over the 3 years since, he has turned our southern border into a magnet for illegal migration, from repealing border policies of his predecessor to misusing our asylum and parole systems, which are now providing temporary amnesty to hundreds of thousands of individuals who are here in our country illegally.

We have had 3 recordbreaking years of illegal immigration at our southern border on President Biden's watch. Fiscal year 2021 saw a recordbreaking 1,734,686 migrant encounters at our southern border. Then fiscal year 2022 broke that record. Then fiscal year 2023 broke that record. And if fiscal year 2024 continues on its current trajectory, we will end up breaking the record yet again. December reportedly saw a staggering 302,000 migrant encounters at our southern border, the highest monthly number ever recorded.

To borrow an analogy from our colleague from Pennsylvania, that is like having the entire city of Pittsburgh show up at our southern border in just 1 month. And that doesn't count the "got-aways."

Of course, the overwhelming numbers we are seeing make it easier for dangerous individuals to make their way into our country.

Between October and November alone, 30 individuals on the Terrorist Watch List were apprehended attempting to cross our southern border; in other words, roughly 1 every other day. Those are just, again, the individuals who were actually apprehended.

Since October 1, there have been more than 83,000 known "got-aways." Those are individuals the Border Patrol saw but were unable to apprehend. How many of them were criminals, terrorists, or other dangerous individuals?

The truth of the matter is, we just don't know. But what we do know is that the crisis at our southern border is leaving a gaping hole in our national security, one that the President has

spent a majority of the past 3 years essentially ignoring.

His border crisis and his inflation crisis might be the two most notable features of the President's first 3 years in office, but the President is also leaving some other troubling legacies.

His hostility to conventional energy production and his devotion to Green New Deal policies have put us on a dangerous trajectory when it comes to our Nation's energy security. We are already seeing weaknesses in our electric grid, and the President's energy policies are putting us at risk of significant disruptions to our supply.

On the trade front, the President's almost complete lack of action on meaningful trade agreements has meant declining market access for American farmers and ranchers and threatens America's competitiveness in the global market.

The weakness the President has frequently demonstrated on the national security front, from his disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan to his attempt to revive President Obama's dangerous nuclear deal with Iran, has compromised America's ability to deter hostile actors on the world stage.

I could go on, but I will end it here. Suffice it to say that it has been a rough 3 years for our country under President Biden, and it is not over yet.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Christopher Koos, of Illinois, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on an issue. I spoke about this on the floor, but the issue, once again, came to a head last week with another continuing resolution, another effort to sort of just kick this can down the road, and our inability, as a Senate, unfortunately, to spend the time necessary to pass appropriations bills.

Now, whether you want it to be minibuses or individual appropriations bills, my cup of tea is to have individual appropriations bills. But the fact of the matter is, I have been in the Senate now for almost 13 months—a year and a month—and we have spent exactly 8 hours—8 hours—that whole time dealing with appropriations bills.

The facts are damning. We have an overall debt of \$34 trillion. Before you blink an eye, it will be \$40 trillion.

This Senate, which is supposed to be the most deliberative body in the world—a unique place where 100 people come together, with unlimited debate—to debate the important issues of our time. But nothing could be more important about setting our priorities than what our annual budget is—how we spend, literally, trillions of tax dollars.

And for me, my perspective on this is that I know how hard people work back home. I know many other Senators do. My dad worked 7 days a week on the midnight shift. There are a lot of people out there who work hard, and money is taken out of their paycheck every single week—or every other week or every month—and sent here. And I think people are of the belief that we spend time here talking about priorities—how that money should be spent, how it should be saved. Can it be sent back to them? What about military spending? What about transportation?

We don't do any of that. We don't do any of it. What we do is, a couple of people get in a room and decide how we are going to do that. And then it is unveiled, with no time to read it, and you either vote on this or you are in favor of shutting down the government.

I am sorry. That is a false choice. There is a better way to do it.

And, I can tell you, I have had conversations, not just among Republicans but among Democrats—rank-and-file Senators—who are begging for reform, thirsty for reform, a process where you can come out here and say, “I have got an idea; I have got an amendment,” and have it voted on, Republican or Democrat, and let the chips fall where they may. But we have got to get away from this deadline politics. It is killing us—financially, by way of trust with voters. This is not the way.

And, by the way, we haven't debated any of those appropriations bills, really, and we are getting ready to talk about a supplemental request now, which is being negotiated in secret, that will, at some point, be foisted upon us. My guess is—I hope I am wrong—that the Democratic leader isn't going to send it to a committee.

All this language that we are told has taken months to parse out because it is complicated, for this Senate—Republican or Democrat—the message to individual Senators is: Yes, vote on it, tomorrow.

This is nuts. You know, no legislature does this. But this is where we are at. As I have talked to people, maybe it is a lack of muscle memory of voting

on hard things. Maybe it is just an unwillingness. But I think it has to do with control.

Senator SCHUMER wants to control this process and have as little public viewing of all of this as possible, whether it is normal appropriations or supplemental appropriations. And, again, I might win some votes; I might lose some votes. But something is getting lost here, and I think it is time for Senators to come together and demand something better.

This can't be the way. When you run for office and getting around Missouri—Missouri is a big State. I like to say that Kennett, MO, in the Bootheel, is closer to the Gulf of Mexico, as the crow flies, than from the northwest of Missouri. It is a big State. You work hard. You want to listen to your constituents. You want to come up here and advocate for the positions that they care about. We don't do any of that.

So we have got another test. You know, the CR thing was kicked again to March. We have a supplemental budget request now coming. Let's just try it. Let's give people time to review things, to ask questions, to offer amendments.

Maybe we get to a conference committee. I mean, with the NDAA, at least we were able to do that, and I am proud to serve on the Armed Services Committee.

But I just wanted to take this opportunity to just point out that it feels like the only time we have these conversations is when we approach a deadline, and then it goes away. And it really disempowers everyone in this Chamber, except for a few people. And I don't think that is the best way to run a railroad, and it certainly isn't the best way to run a country.

So, Mr. President, I am just hoping for something better. I have been discouraged, again, the first 13 months. We spent 8 hours on perhaps the most important thing we can do around here every year, and we are in desperate need of reform.

I yield the floor.

#### VOTE ON KOOS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Koos nomination?

Mr. SCHATZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 14 Ex.]

#### YEAS—91

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Peters
Barrasso	Graham	Reed
Bennet	Grassley	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Blumenthal	Hassan	Romney
Booker	Heinrich	Rosen
Boozman	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Britt	Hirono	Rubio
Brown	Hoeven	Sanders
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Butler	Johnson	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Capito	Kennedy	Sinema
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Lankford	Sullivan
Cassidy	Lujan	Tester
Collins	Lummis	Thune
Coons	Manchin	Tillis
Cornyn	Markey	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Marshall	Vance
Cotton	McConnell	Warner
Cramer	Menendez	Warnock
Crapo	Merkley	Warren
Cruz	Moran	Welch
Daines	Mullin	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Murkowski	Wicker
Durbin	Murphy	Wyden
Ernst	Murray	Young
Fetterman	Ossoff	
Fischer	Padilla	

#### NAYS—7

Braun	Paul	Tuberville
Hawley	Schmitt	
Lee	Scott (FL)	

#### NOT VOTING—2

Kelly	Scott (SC)
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Minnesota.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion with respect to the Szabat nomination be withdrawn and that following disposition of the Coscia nomination, the Senate immediately vote on confirmation of the Szabat nomination, with all provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

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

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, for the information of the Senate, Senators should expect two rollcall votes starting at 2:15 p.m. We do not expect additional votes this evening.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative 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. 357, Anthony Rosario Coscia, of New Jersey, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years. (Reappointment)

Charles E. Schumer, Tim Kaine, Angus S. King, Jr., Robert P. Casey, Jr.,