

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, well, tonight, President Biden will deliver the last State of the Union Address of his term. For the past 3 years, these speeches have served as mile markers but not of any meaningful progress toward a more perfect Union. Instead, each year, the American people tuned in to see just how far the President's own version of his record is from the reality of their lives.

For 3 years, the President, who campaigned as a moderate, has governed like an activist from the furthest fringe of the Democratic Party.

The Biden administration's agenda has meant pain at home and weakness abroad. It didn't have to be this way. President Biden took office amid strong tailwinds—from an economic recovery that was already restoring the record-setting prosperity we saw before the pandemic to a historic modernization of our military that was well underway. He inherited everything he needed to point our Nation toward further security and prosperity, but he chose weakness and invited danger instead.

Today, nearly two-thirds of voters say our economy is worse than it was 4 years ago. Not even one in four thinks our country is on the right track. Barely a quarter of the country expects our economy to improve in the coming year. But that hasn't stopped President Biden from trying to convince working Americans to take his word for it and ignore their own shrinking paychecks. He has literally taken a victory tour to tout his disastrous economic record. His administration has declared Bidenomics "the word of the year."

Meanwhile, American consumers are shelling out a bigger portion of their income on groceries than at any point in the last 30 years. A food pantry in Northern Kentucky is reporting "more and more demand for . . . enough food to make people's income stretch." Across the board, consumer prices are nearly 18 percent higher today than they were when President Biden took office. This is what "Bidenomics in action" really means?

At kitchen tables tonight, working families will probably wonder whether the President has any regrets, whether he wishes he hadn't ignored his party's top economists and rammed through trillions of dollars in leftwing spending, which brought on the worst inflation in 40 years, or whether he wishes

he hadn't declared total war on our most affordable sources of domestic energy, along with the jobs these American industries support. On President Biden's watch, overall energy prices are up nearly a third.

Time after time, when given the choice to lead or to outsource his work to leftwing activists, President Biden has chosen the latter. He has handed his base a blank check for a wish list of social engineering and left the American people to foot the bill.

Meanwhile, he has poured gasoline on the fire of leftwing, pro-criminal, anti-police rhetoric across the country. The Biden administration has packed its Justice Department full of leftwing activists working overtime to tear serious crimes right out of the Criminal Code.

A couple years back, a district attorney in Massachusetts declared she wouldn't prosecute crimes like breaking and entering or drug possession with intent to distribute. President Biden rewarded this behavior by making Rachael Rollins one of his first U.S. attorneys. Across the country, on this President's watch, leftwing prosecutors have turned repeated offenders into the streets—repeatedly. In President Biden's America, violent criminals have learned that they won't face serious consequences, and, of course, they are acting accordingly.

At the same time, leftwing activists bent on attacking the Federal judiciary have found an ally in the Biden White House. The President has tried to give life tenure to a judicial nominee who identified himself as a "wild-eyed leftist," another with a history of supporting terrorist sympathizers, and even one who had worked to undermine a teenage girl's claim of sexual assault. President Biden hasn't just tried putting the wrong people in our Nation's institutions, he spent 3 years undermining the institutions themselves. His Attorney General slow-walked urgent security measures to protect the Supreme Court Justices and their families from angry mobs, and his administration even stood up a commission to explore Court packing—a terrible idea that hasn't gotten any less terrible since it was killed back in the 1930s.

So the rule of law is less stable on President Biden's watch. The streets of our major cities are less safe. And, of course, our borders are less secure.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, 3 years ago, illegal immigrants arrived at our southern border in shirts wearing his campaign logo insisting, as one put it, that "Biden promised us that everything is going to change"—that everything is going to change.

Well, they were absolutely right. Since President Biden took office, nearly 10 million people crossed our southern border illegally. His administration has abandoned CBP and ICE to contend with the highest daily, monthly, and yearly totals of illegal arrivals on record.

As soon as he took office, the President tore up commonsense authorities he could have used to maintain the secure border. Instead, he spent years pretending that functionally open borders didn't amount to a crisis.

The only campaign promise President Biden appears to have kept is the one he made on the campaign trail to people hoping to cross our borders illegally: "We immediately surge to the border, all those people who are seeking asylum."

By contrast, it is difficult to think of a pledge the President abandoned more completely than his campaign promise to restore respect for America on the world stage. Today, the credibility of our commitments is in serious doubt. The West is confronting the most dangerous moment since the fall of the Berlin wall, and our Commander in Chief's first instincts appear to be hesitation and self-deterrence. President Biden's failures pose embarrassing questions for America and our allies and partners.

Are we safer after his disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan? Do allies still take our word? Did the President's self-proclaimed fear of escalation force Putin to back down from his own brutal escalation in Ukraine, or did it give the Ukrainians the critical weapons they needed when they needed it most? Does America's closest ally in the Middle East feel like they can count on America's total support in its existential fight against genocidal terrorists? Did the world's most active state-sponsor of terror think twice before targeting Americans like the Georgia guardsmen killed, the Kentucky soldiers injured in the Tower 22 attack in Jordan? Does Iran hesitate to sic its proxies on Israel or threaten commercial shipping? Did the Biden administration's climate diplomacy with Beijing close any meaningful gaps in strategic competition with our top adversary? Did it reassure our allies and partners in the region that we understood the importance of hard power?

The answer to all these questions is a resounding "no."

President Biden's 3 years in office have left American leadership a weaker brand and our resolve a less fearsome asset, and we will be dealing with the consequences of his failures for years to come.

Around the Biden administration's 100-day mark, I warned the President that it wasn't too late to change course and start governing as the moderate he promised he would be. Needless to say, he certainly didn't take my advice.

And he didn't take the American people's sterner counsel either when they demanded change at the ballot box the following year. Well, this fall, the voters have a chance to issue a further course correction, one with a bit more finality.

Tonight, we will hear from a President who has failed in the most basic responsibility of government. He will come to the Capitol with record historic inflation, surging crime, open

borders, and weakness on the world stage.

Then, of course, the American people will witness historic contrast. They will hear our colleague Senator BRITT tell her story and offer a very different assessment of this moment in American history, one that embraces what makes our Nation great. I am glad for the Nation to hear directly from the youngest Republican woman ever elected to the Senate and one of our conferences brightest stars.

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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Lujan). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Republican whip.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, tonight President Biden will come to Congress to deliver his State of the Union Address. It is a natural time to look at a President's legacy. And if one thing is certain, it is that the Biden Presidency hasn't done much for the state of our union.

Yesterday, I came down to the floor to talk about the national security crisis we are facing at our southern border. It is a crisis we have been facing almost since the day the President took office.

The President marked his inauguration by taking measures that weakened our Nation's border security, including halting construction of the border wall, rescinding the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border, and pausing deportations except under certain conditions. The effect was to declare to the world that the U.S. borders were effectively open, and the number of migrant encounters at our southern border ticked up accordingly.

And the surge has never stopped. President Biden has presided over 3 recordbreaking years of illegal immigration at our southern border. And if we continue on our current track, he will likely be presiding over a fourth. The first 4 months of fiscal year 2024 saw nearly 1 million migrant encounters at our southern border—1 million in just 4 months. These kinds of numbers not only represent a logistical and humanitarian crisis, they represent a gaping hole in our national security.

There is no question that the kind of numbers we are seeing smooth the way for dangerous individuals to enter our country. Last year, 169 individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist were apprehended attempting to cross our southern border, and we are on track to exceed that number this year.

And those numbers only reflect individuals who were actually apprehended. With around 1.8 million known "got-aways" since President Biden took office and an untold number of

unknown "got-aways," I think we can safely assume that there are plenty of dangerous people making their way into our country without being stopped.

And President Biden's border crisis is not the only way in which he has jeopardized our national security. His disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan weakened our standing with our allies, and his failure to prioritize ensuring our military is equipped to meet and defeat current and future threats sends a dangerous signal to bad actors around the world.

Then, of course, there is the fact that the President is setting us up for a future energy crisis that will jeopardize our Nation's security by jeopardizing our energy security, not to mention jeopardizing American's pocketbooks. The President's hostility to conventional energy production and his determination to push us into a Green New Deal regime that our current energy system simply cannot cope with is setting us up for long-term instability in our Nation's energy supply.

That threatens our national security, which depends on stable access to energy; and it threatens America's financial security as an unstable supply will almost unquestionably result in higher prices. The steep rise in energy prices so far under the Biden administration could look small compared to the energy prices Americans could see under the Green New Deal regime President Biden envisions for the future.

Speaking of higher prices, perhaps the defining feature of the Biden administration is the inflation crisis the President helped create when he signed the so-called American Rescue Plan Act and flooded the economy with unnecessary government spending. Three years in, inflation is still well above the Federal Reserve's target rate.

Americans continue to suffer. Today, it costs the 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.

Grocery prices are up 21 percent under President Biden, and 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.

Then there is the 31 percent increase in energy costs, as I alluded to earlier, the 19 percent increase in housing costs, the 27 percent increase in the cost of car repairs, and the list goes on.

The President likes to talk about giving American families breathing room. Well, President Biden has eliminated the breathing room for a lot of American families. Along with higher prices—much higher prices—on everything from groceries to gas, Americans are also dealing with the high interest rates the Federal Reserve has had to impose to deal with President Biden's inflation crisis.

Those interest rates have helped to drive up mortgage rates and credit card rates, compounding hardship for a lot of Americans.

It is no wonder that, in a recent poll, just one in three voters said the economy was on the right track, or that 57 percent of respondents in another recent poll rated the economy as "fairly bad" or "very bad." Sixty-six percent of respondents in that same poll said that things in America are going "somewhat" or "very" badly.

The inflation crisis, the national security crisis at our southern border, and the potential energy crisis—it is no wonder that Americans aren't feeling very optimistic about the state of our Nation. It would be nice if the President spoke to their concerns tonight, but I expect that his speech tonight will involve more blame shifting than solutions to the crises that he has helped create, along with, of course, a host of election-year handouts designed to attract voters. If Americans are looking for relief, they are not going to find it from President Biden in his speech tonight on the state of the Union.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

I-27 NUMBERING ACT OF 2023

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to pass the I-27 Numbering Act, bipartisan legislation to officially designate the route between Laredo, TX, and Raton, NM, as the future Interstate 27.

I will say I am particularly gratified that the Senator from New Mexico is presiding because this is legislation that he and I offered together. It is bipartisan legislation that is supported by the State of Texas and the State of New Mexico.

This bill is the next step to advance major highway infrastructure in Texas and New Mexico that will support trade and commerce and jobs and economic development.

What is so important about a future interstate number?

By officially designating the highways between Laredo and Raton as future Interstate 27, this bill is a clear signal to the communities and businesses across Texas and New Mexico that Congress supports their work to develop the current highways to become part of the Interstate System.

Communities across this route need better infrastructure because of the increasing demands to move goods and people. Last year, Mexico was the top U.S. trade partner, with \$798 billion of trade between our nations. That is higher than the trade with our second and third biggest trading partners, Canada and China.

Even better, the port of entry in Laredo, TX, was the top trade gateway in the United States, outperforming the Port of Los Angeles—Laredo, TX. This is fantastic news for Texas. It means more jobs and economic development in Texas to move those goods. It is also part of a broader trend of a flourishing freight business in Texas.