

is falling. We have created a record 15 million new jobs since President Biden took office. President Biden's budget will help ensure we continue to make good on the investments from our agenda and build an economy that works for everyone.

Here is the bottom line: President Biden's budget shows there are two clear choices for America's future and highlights Democrats' vision for a better America.

Democrats want to keep taxes low for middle-class families and make the ultrawealthy pay their fair share, while Republicans fight to make it easier for wealthy tax cheats to pay less than middle-class families. Democrats will protect Medicare and Social Security, while Republicans look to cut these hard-earned benefits. Democrats want to make investments so every American family can do better, while Republicans want those who have already done very well to do even better.

So I thank President Biden for releasing a bold, optimistic, responsible budget for the Nation.

#### HEALTHCARE CYBER ATTACK

Madam President, now on the healthcare cyber attack, after last month's devastating, unprecedented cyber attack on tens of thousands of hospitals, pharmacies, and doctors' offices in New York and across America, I am proud that last week HHS and CMS heeded my call to provide healthcare providers immediate relief to help get their systems back up to speed.

This weekend, we received more good news: CMS expanded its response to the cyber attack to include Medicare Part B providers. This new action by CMS will directly help our doctors on the frontline of this crisis continue to stay open and provide care for their patients. Because of the cyber attack, people weren't getting the dollars they had to expend to do their jobs. I commend CMS for continuing to heed my call for an all-hands-on-deck approach to this crisis.

For over 3 weeks now, providers—including hospitals, doctors, and pharmacies big and small—have all been unable to submit medical claims as a result of this cyber attack, leaving many facing imminent insolvency. I met with Rome Health in Rome, NY, and Cayuga Health in Ithaca, who told me they are losing hundreds of thousands of dollars a day and have stacks of claims nearly 2 feet high that they are unable to file.

The American people are feeling the pain of this cyber attack too. Many are struggling to refill prescriptions, some are having their care delayed or denied, and others are unable to use patient assistance programs they rely on.

Had CMS not stepped up to the plate, hospitals and pharmacies—especially the smaller ones that don't have large cash reserves—faced the risk of laying people off or even shutting down entirely because they were not being reimbursed.

So this new action by CMS to expand its response and include Medicare Part B providers in relief efforts is an encouraging step, but this crisis is far from over. I will continue working with the administration, my colleagues in Congress, CMS—I talked to the Administrator just a few hours ago—and others in the healthcare industry to get providers the relief they need and to protect our healthcare system from future attacks.

#### ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

Madam President, now on the American Rescue Plan anniversary, today is the 3-year anniversary of President Biden signing the American Rescue Plan into law, which I was proud to lead here in the Senate.

After Congress passed the ARP plan, I said, "Help is on the way." That was the promise of the American Rescue Plan—to put shots in arms, to put money in people's pockets, and to propel our country out of the COVID crisis. Three years later, it is safe to say these investments have paid off and that the American Rescue Plan put America and our economy on a path toward the historic recovery we are witnessing today. Before the American Rescue Plan, job growth was unsteady, and millions were at risk of losing their jobs. Three years later, we have seen the strongest 3-year job growth in American history—in American history—over 15 million new jobs since President Biden took office.

Before the American Rescue Plan, the United States was losing manufacturing jobs by the day. Three years later, manufacturing investment—something that plagued America even before the pandemic—is near an all-time high, more than double its highest point during the previous administration.

Critics argued that the American Rescue Plan would cause excessive inflation. Well, 3 years later, inflation has cooled down to the lowest levels since the start of the pandemic, from 9 percent to just below 3 percent, meaning the prices of things like groceries, appliances, car rentals, and airfares have all come down.

In the American Rescue Plan, we secured significant pension reform through the passage of the Butch Lewis Act, which has helped millions and millions of American workers receive the financial security they earned through their labors.

I was proud to bring Deborah Hartman from Buffalo, NY, as my guest to President Biden's State of the Union last week. She called this critical plan "the best thing that has happened to labor in I don't know how many years." It means the world to working people.

We also included a dramatic expansion of the child tax credit, which helped millions and millions of families afford the cost of childcare and other needs. We provided billions in rental relief to help people keep a roof over their heads; billions in fiscal relief for

States, cities, and localities to help them stay afloat; billions for education and broadband access to help kids get back in the classroom; and much more.

The bottom line is this: Three years after President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan, it is proving to be a historic win for American families, workers, and the economy. And it is thanks to the American Rescue Plan and other landmark legislation we passed—like the infrastructure law, Chips and Science, and the Inflation Reduction Act—that today the U.S. economy is the envy of the world. Of course, our work is far from over, but we can look back and be very proud of what we accomplished in the ARP.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam 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.

#### SUNSHINE WEEK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, every year, at this time of the year, Sunshine Week is held around the birthday of James Madison—not only a former President but one of our greatest Founding Fathers and the acclaimed "Father of the Constitution."

Sunshine Week is a critical reminder of the need for transparency and open government. And our government is not as open as it should be.

President Madison famously said that a great difficulty in forming a government operated by imperfect people was that you must oblige it—meaning the government—to control itself. Well, amen to what Madison said.

As a conservative, I have worked especially hard on Madison's challenge, making sure that the government controls itself. One way to do that is to limit the size and scope of the government. It is hard to control a government that does everything but make your bed and tuck you in to sleep.

Another check on out-of-control government is separation of powers—the same separation of powers when you study the essentials of American government. Congress doesn't execute laws. The President and the executive agencies shouldn't try to make laws. And neither should our courts.

To control a government as big as ours, it takes a lot of very bright light shining on every Agency and Office. And instead of 1 week called Sunshine Week, we ought to have 365 days a year in which we have sunshine on our government's operation.

I have long supported the Freedom of Information Act. And that act urges Agencies to be more responsive to record requests. That is essential to open government because it gives citizens access to information. As the old saying goes, knowledge is power.

Congress also has a solemn constitutional duty to conduct strong oversight to ensure that the executive branch executes the laws as Congress has intended. You learn that in eighth grade civics class, called checks and balances of government. I call it oversight. But it is a constitutional responsibility.

We can't legislate effectively unless we in Congress know what is going on behind the scenes, and most of that behind-the-scenes is in the executive branch of government. That is why whistleblowers are so very important and why I rely on whistleblowers to give me a lot of information I would not have other access to. So I consider them a very important part of doing my role, my constitutional responsibility of oversight to see that a President does what the Constitution says, and his oath says to faithfully execute the laws.

These whistleblowers are patriots and our most powerful tool in rooting out waste, fraud, abuse, and misconduct. Despite their vital contribution to good government, they are often targeted for retaliation and harassment. That should stop. In so many speeches, I have come to the floor of the U.S. Senate to point out specific examples of where these patriotic people we call whistleblowers are retaliated against and retaliated in a way that—the law says that retaliation is not lawful.

There is a growing trend among Federal Agencies to place a blanket of silence over whistleblowers. The Agencies do this by violating whistleblower disclosure laws, including withholding notice of what we call anti-gag provisions. In other words, if you are the head of an Agency and you have a whistleblower, you can't tell them they can't talk to Congress.

The law requires all Federal Agencies to include an anti-gag provision in their nondisclosure policies and forms. This provision notifies employees of their rights to report misconduct to Congress, to inspectors general, and to the Office of Special Counsel.

Without knowing of the anti-gag provision's protections, employees who see government wrongdoing often stay in the shadows. If people are notified that they can talk to Congress and the law protects them, we are more apt to get information on wrongdoing, the misexpenditure of money, or laws not being carried out as we intended that Congress wouldn't even know about.

The reason they don't speak is they fear the retaliation if they do speak out, and this is what I have spoken about so many times on the floor of the U.S. Senate. The fact that they are retaliated against is something that I say over and over again is unacceptable. That is why this week I wrote to all of our inspectors general of the executive branch of government, requesting they ensure this provision is included, as required by law, which will make it harder for Federal Agencies to conceal their wrongdoing.

This year, whistleblowers have helped to let the sunshine in where it matters most. They are helping me track down vulnerable migrant children the Biden Department of Health and Human Services has failed to protect against potential trafficking. As we speak, law enforcement is working through information I provided to hopefully bring their own special kind of sunshine to the criminals taking advantage of these young kids.

I have also sought information from government contractors who receive billions of taxpayer dollars to care for unaccompanied children but whose practices and failures are largely shielded from public knowledge and scrutiny. We need a full accounting of how contractors spend the taxpayers' hard-earned money.

That is why last year I also launched an investigation into one of the Environmental Protection Agency's grant programs. That exposed significant waste. It turns out that the EPA doesn't even require the program's grantees to submit financial documents during the grant that show how taxpayer money is being spent by those various organizations.

You would think Agencies would be very grateful when these failures are exposed. Instead, you know what—I was met with delay and obstruction by this administration's EPA. Accountability can be uncomfortable, and bureaucrats don't like it. After I reported that obstruction to the EPA Office of Inspector General, it agreed to audit the program and look into how EPA influenced grantees to obstruct my oversight.

Then we get to the Justice Department and the FBI. Recently, the Justice Department indicted an FBI confidential human source who served as the basis for what is commonly known as the document 1023. That is the FBI-generated document that Chairman COMER in the House and I made public alleging criminal bribery schemes between the Biden family and a foreign national. Embarrassingly, for 3 years, the 1023 collected dust—until Congress and Justice Department whistleblowers forced the FBI and U.S. Attorney Weiss to interview that FBI source.

The Federal indictment doesn't explain the full set of facts and leaves many questions unanswered. Those questions include how the Justice Department and the FBI could use this confidential human source for approximately 13 years, pay him hundreds of thousands of dollars, use his information in investigations and prosecutions, and then ultimately determine after 13 or 14 years that this guy is a liar. According to government documents in the court case, the FBI source was reporting information to the FBI as late as December 2023.

This is a matter that requires extensive sunlight.

If not for whistleblowers, my securing the document 1023 and releasing that document, do you know what? The

FBI would still be believing the lies of their confidential human source, and they would still be paying taxpayer dollars to this confidential source for the lies he was giving to the FBI. Now, they have arrested him because of my oversight work. So what is the government doing to get all the money back that they paid him?

In addition to my investigative efforts, I have worked with a bipartisan set of colleagues to strengthen attorney misconduct oversight at the Justice Department. For example, I co-sponsored bipartisan legislation to close a loophole that prevents the inspector general at the Department of Justice from investigating alleged Justice Department attorney misconduct. Now, understand, in the Department of Justice, the inspector general, who is supposed to sort out wrongdoing, can't even investigate the lawyers of that Department when they do misconduct.

My consistent efforts to let in sunshine continue across our government, whether it is asking the FBI to explain a memo targeting Catholics based on biased sources, ensuring our immigration officials follow the law and collect DNA from illegal migrants they encounter at the border, or even exposing flaws at the Veterans' Administration that endangered the privacy of our veterans.

So we all ought to be thankful for Sunshine Week, which is an opportunity for us doing our constitutional duty of oversight to highlight these efforts and to remind us that shining a consistent light is essential to make government accountable to "we the people."

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Louisiana.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I am here to talk about flood insurance, an issue facing Louisiana, and, I am sorry to say, an issue now facing the Presiding Officer's State.

Floods can occur anywhere—for example, on the top of a mountaintop. People don't realize that, but you have this gully going down from the top to the bottom, and if it gets a big rain—boom—going down from the top of that mountain, you will have a flood.

And that has occurred, unfortunately, in California. I spent several years in Southern California, and I can relate to that.

But it happens regularly in my State. Now, why in my State? Well, folks think of hurricanes as wind, rain, and lightning, but one of the greatest threats is actually the risk of flooding.