

some of the very things that these hard-right people want to cut.

So we held the line, and, as a result, we have successfully protected vital priorities, like housing programs, veterans' benefits, healthcare, nutrition, small business support, the NHS, and funding for Federal law enforcement.

Hard-right Republicans wanted to use the appropriations process to gut Democrats' clean energy investments that we passed in the IRA. Those too will be absolutely protected. And even though the hard right is always obsessed with starving the IRA of resources, this agreement protects important funding the IRS needs to hold ultra-rich tax evaders accountable.

This work will not be undermined. The IRS has made great progress, brought in lots of money that always should have been there, but because very wealthy people are able to hire lawyers and accountants to evade taxes, they got away with it—no more. All in all, this top-line agreement is a good outcome for the country and a strong start to the year.

Now, certainly, there is more work to do. Agreeing to a top-line number is important, but so is the next step: translating that number into 12 appropriations bills that can pass the Senate, pass the House, and reach the President's desk.

None of us want to see a government shutdown. So we will do everything possible to ensure we avoid one in the coming weeks.

If Republicans in the House follow the approach we have taken in the Senate—the bipartisan approach where Democratic and Republican appropriators have worked collaboratively, despite our disagreements—then we can minimize the risks of a shutdown. But if House Republicans bend to the insatiable whims and demands of their hard-right flank, if they corrode the appropriations process with poison pills and extremist policy proposals, then they will be responsible for moving us closer to a shutdown. I hope that does not happen, but we will not be bullied by a few hard-right radicals.

Now, on the supplemental, Mr. President, as the new year begins, Senate Democrats remain committed to working with our Republican colleagues on passing a national security supplemental package. This work has not been easy, but it is a matter of the highest national urgency that we act. At stake is the security of our country, the security of our friends, including Ukraine and Israel, and nothing less than the future of Western democracy.

We must address these issues. Negotiators have been hard at work for weeks and worked straight through the New Year's break in hopes of reaching an agreement. The keyword in these negotiations has been persistence—persistence—and I remain hopeful that we are going to get something meaningful done.

At times, progress has been slow, and, sometimes, progress has been im-

mensely encouraging, but, either way, the important part is we are making progress, and we are closer now than we have ever been to getting an agreement.

Congress has not acted on immigration in a comprehensive way in decades. So it should surprise no one that it is going to take time. Of all the difficult issues we face in this Chamber, immigration is near the top. But regardless of how difficult passing this supplemental is, so much, so much hangs on our success. The world is still watching how the United States will respond this year to the crises in Europe and the Middle East and to the growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific.

Our friends are watching closely too. Most of all, adversaries like Vladimir Putin are watching.

I recently read in the press that while Ukrainians remain determined to defend their country, they are running out of ammunition. According to one observer, they can fire only one salvo back for every five or so the Russians are firing at them. History will not look kindly on this episode if the United States fails to act.

So getting a supplemental done is important right now—as important as it has ever been. I know my friend the Republican Leader feels the same way, and negotiators are going to keep working until we get this done.

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.

ISRAEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 3 months after the massacre of October 7, Israel's Defense Minister observed that his country was fighting "an axis, not a single enemy." He was talking about Iran's terrorist proxies, arrayed to attack Israel on multiple fronts.

But the reality of facing interconnected threats isn't unique to Israel. Around the world, our adversaries are colluding in new and aggressive ways. Authoritarians who disdain the West are arming and underwriting one another's aggression. And, as the Senate continues our work on supplemental national security legislation, we would do well to keep this in mind.

Israel reports that it has succeeded in significantly degrading Hamas's military capacity in northern Gaza. But while the pace of operations may have slowed, Israel continues to face a dug-in Hamas threat in southern Gaza. And their terrorist enemies continue to exploit innocent civilians in their bid for survival. Hamas fighters brazenly steal international aid shipments, use

Gazans as human shields, and hold more than 130 hostages, including Americans.

So Israel's operations will continue because the threats to Israel remain. As I have said before, Israel needs the time, space, and support to restore its security.

Unfortunately, that is not what the Biden administration has been providing. In fact, as the left wing of the Democratic Party grows more loudly and stridently anti-Israel, its leaders are second-guessing America's closest ally in the Middle East.

Administration officials have taken to anonymously and shamefully accusing Prime Minister Netanyahu of seeking conflict with Hezbollah for domestic political reasons. Of course, reality is quite the opposite. For decades, it has been Hezbollah that seeks conflict with Israel and the West. It is the terrorists with Israeli and American blood on their hands who have chosen violence regardless of the current governments in Israel or the United States.

And Hezbollah's attacks against Israel have only grown since October 7. It is not Prime Minister Netanyahu who forced tens of thousands of Israelis to evacuate their homes in northern Israel. It was Hezbollah threats.

By now, we all know about Hamas's terror tunnels. Well, Hezbollah has built them too. I led a delegation to Israel, and we saw them with our own eyes—efforts to infiltrate northern Israel for the same purpose that Hamas struck in Israel's south. And it is not a myth conjured by the Prime Minister. It is a real and growing threat that even his leading political opponent and fellow member of Israel's war cabinet Benny Gantz also warns about.

Rather than sniping at Israel's war cabinet for taking Hezbollah seriously, the administration should tell Congress and our ally how it proposes to change the murderous calculus of Iran and its proxy.

So the best way we can help our friends is to restore our own credibility in the region and take bolder steps to respond to our common aggressor Iran.

The Biden administration has work to do to repair the damage done by 3 years of retreat. The first thing they could do is admit they have a problem. Instead, they are busy patting themselves on the back. Last week, an administration spokesperson declared with pride that the President was taking a proactive approach to threats from Iran-backed terrorists. Honestly, nothing could be further from the truth.

Instead of aggressively targeting the launch facilities and Houthi terrorists responsible for harassing global shipping and U.S. naval assets or sinking the Iranian spy vessel reportedly facilitating Houthi strikes, President Biden's passive policy means the Navy is expending million-dollar missiles to swat away thousand-dollar drones—million-dollar missiles to take out

thousand-dollar drones because, apparently, we don't have the nerve to target launch facilities. Rather than imposing costs on our enemy, we are allowing the enemy to impose costs on us.

In response to more than 100 attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, the President has authorized isolated jabs at low-consequence, peripheral targets.

No wonder. No wonder Iran isn't deterred. Tehran's strategy is actually working.

If Hamas's capacity for violence is not destroyed, Palestinians and Israelis alike—including the hostages still in captivity—are going to continue to suffer.

If the Houthis' capacity for violence is left intact, they will continue to attack civilian ships and disrupt the global economy.

If Iran does not pay a price for its insidious support of terror from Israel and across the Middle East to Ukraine, it will continue to underwrite violence and claim innocent lives.

America owes our ally Israel our continued support, and we owe Iran's web of terror the firm deterrence and swift justice it has always deserved.

ENERGY REGULATIONS

Mr. President, now on another matter, it has been 3 years since President Biden put radical activists in charge of American energy policy. And 3 years in, the American people continue to bear the burden of its devastating effects.

The Biden administration's policies have contributed to sky-high gas prices. Energy regulations are driving up the cost of natural gas and home heating. The cost of gasoline has increased a cumulative 43.5 percent since Biden took office. Fuel oil prices have increased 71 percent, and electricity prices have increased 24.3 percent.

So here is one example: The Biden administration has worked overtime to strangle domestic oil and gas drilling to a trickle. They bragged about their plan to offer "the smallest number of oil and gas lease sales in history." This year, in fact, was a zero—zero new offshore oil and gas lease sales.

From day one, Americans have been suffering under the wake of a climate agenda tailored to the preferences of coastal elites. From electric vehicles to solar panels, the Biden administration seems to take its cues from the greenest follies of the bluest states. And 3 years in, they are showing no sign of stopping.

This week, the Senate is expected to vote on the President's choice to elevate one of the masterminds of this war on affordable American energy to a senior role at EPA. You would be hard-pressed to find anyone whose record more closely reflects liberal climate orthodoxy than Joseph Goffman. That is because he wrote much of it himself.

This U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly given the EPA a slap on the wrist for acting outside its authority. Cases

such as *West Virginia v. EPA*, *Sackett v. EPA* have repeatedly ruled that the Agency is acting outside its congressional mandates. In fact, just before Christmas, the Court agreed to hear yet another case involving the EPA's mission plan, this one brought by Ohio.

Mr. Goffman has defied these warnings from the highest Court of the land. He has engineered a more active and aggressive EPA. And in the face of bipartisan criticism of the Clean Power Plan's illegal excesses, he has crusaded without shame in the Biden administration's war on affordable American energy.

By one estimate, Mr. Goffman's tenure at the EPA has coincided with the elimination of over half—over half—of the Nation's coal jobs, and he has continued to indulge the left's obsessive push for electric vehicles, despite the fact that this push is killing American jobs and enhancing our top strategic adversary.

By every measure, this nominee is the exact wrong person to deserve a promotion at EPA. So I would like to thank my colleague from West Virginia Senator CAPITO for sounding an alarm on Mr. Goffman's nomination and urge my colleagues to join me in voting no this afternoon.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened to my friend, the Senator from Kentucky, and his remarks really brought to mind a division in the United States that most of us are aware of when it comes to the issue of climate change.

You either believe that human activity is having an impact on the weather of the world or you don't. You either believe that it is not in the best interest of our country or the world for us to continue to heat this planet to levels unheard of in history. You either believe that the extreme weather situations which we are witnessing on a regular basis are just a run of bad luck or, sadly, maybe the product of a design in energy that makes a difference. You either believe that fossil fuel creates emissions which make it tougher to live in this country and this world or you don't. You either believe that our generation has a responsibility to do something different to try to preserve the planet that we live on for our kids and grandkids or we don't. You either believe that low gasoline prices are really the absolute pinnacle of success politically, or you believe that the use of fossil fuels needs to be somehow changed if we are going to save this planet.

It is just a clear difference of thinking. When a prospective candidate for Presidency of the United States for re-election talks about "drill, baby, drill" and has no concern, obviously, for the impact of those words on energy and the future, you really know that there is a difference coming in this election for voters to make a choice.

I want to err on the side of making this a safer planet for my kids and

grandkids. My wife and I have tried to make decisions—large and small—in our lifestyle that reflect this feeling. We drive a hybrid car and get 33 miles a gallon—I wish we got more. Maybe the next car we buy will reach that. We put solar panels on our home in Springfield, IL. We were the first in the area to do it. I hope others will follow.

Those things and many others can make a little difference. And if we all do them together, they can make a big difference. And I think it is our moral responsibility to do that.

We can argue on the margins about the science of what I have just said, and that, of course, is time well spent. We should discuss science in honest terms.

But we all know something is going on in this world that we live in, and it is not good. Heating up this planet is going to make life a lot more difficult and create challenges we never even dreamed of.

So when I hear the Senator from Kentucky talking about bring down those gas prices, "drill, baby, drill" from a candidate on his side running for President, I think to myself: I would rather err on the side of being a little more cautious and careful in my lifestyle and the lifestyle of my family in the hopes that the little granddaughter of mine will have a planet she can live on when she reaches that stage in life.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, on a completely different topic, we know what Vladimir Putin is up to in Ukraine. His cruelty and cynicism were on full display when he decided that he would invade Ukraine and bring it back into the Soviet army.

He launched a horrific strike on the Ukraine capital of Kyiv—news reports that he is desperately using and procuring now North Korean missiles to continue to launch those attacks on Ukraine.

Then he tried to silence anyone in Russia who might dissent from his strategy, anyone in Russia who actually had the audacity to suggest there should be democracy and freedom in that country. He sent one of his harshest critics to prison, and he moves him around within Russia from time to time. The man's name is Alexey Navalny. He is now in Siberia in prison and is going to stay in that prison indefinite. Why? Vladimir Putin cannot countenance the thought that that man would be out of prison and speak freely in Russia about his feelings about Putin and his agenda, and so he puts him in prison and silences him.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Mr. President, I would like to, as an aside, note that I have come to the floor many times to discuss political prisoners around the world. I am inspired by my staffer Chris Homan who follows this carefully. He told me years ago that my speeches on the floor of the Senate may not sound like very important issues to me at the time, but