

President Biden evidently doesn't understand that order is a prerequisite for law. Indeed, it is a prerequisite for nationhood. Without order and the state's monopoly on force, you don't have a country, and you certainly can't have a democracy.

Perhaps President Bukele's tactics are harsh. I don't think so, but I will grant you that. But they were also absolutely necessary to establish order. And I would remind the Biden administration that El Salvador's gang members aren't victims; they are murderers, rapists, and many of them have American blood on their hands.

I saw up close thousands of these savages—or devils, as President Bukele puts it—when I toured the Terrorism Confinement Center, the massive new prison housing tens of thousands of gang members. The inmates live together by the dozens in group cells. They don't go outside. They don't take classes. They don't get visitors. Most will never leave.

Armed guards are everywhere you turn inside the triple-walled prison, including on the steel-grate ceilings so guards can monitor the inmates from above. Some so-called human rights groups whine about this prison. I guess they think it is too harsh. And it is not Club Med, I will concede, but the inmates receive food and water, they conduct personal hygiene daily, and doctors and nurses work at an aid station next to the cells.

Those same groups also complain about a supposed lack of due process. I don't know. Call me crazy, but if it is illegal to belong to a gang and you have got MS-13 tattoos all over your face and body, I am not sure what more process you are due. Maybe that is just me.

No, the victims aren't the devils I encountered at the Terrorism Confinement Center. The people of El Salvador are the victims. After years of abuse, law-abiding Salvadorans, particularly those from poor and working classes, overwhelmingly support President Bukele's efforts to restore order and a meaningful rule of law.

I am hopeful that El Salvador's leaders will help bring stability and prosperity to a nation that deserves better than gangland terrorism, and I urge the administration that if it is unwilling to help, at least stay out of the way.

Finally, the example of El Salvador not only exposes the failures of President Biden's approach to foreign policy but also his approach to crime. If nothing else, President Bukele has proven once again that incarceration works, obviously. If you lock up murderers, amazingly enough, there will be fewer murders—a truth so obvious that only liberal ideologues could miss it.

Sadly, that is what we have in many places in today's criminal justice system: progressive lawyers who refuse to prosecute criminals; progressive judges who refuse to sentence them appropriately; and progressive politicians

who pass jailbreak bills to release them. So long as we continue to pursue these progressive policies, our communities will, sadly, continue to look more and more like El Salvador—not the El Salvador of today but of just a few years ago.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this week, we celebrate National Agriculture Week. It is a time to celebrate America's farmers and ranchers, the hard-working men and women who fill America's supermarkets and Americans' dinner plates. Much of daily life here in the United States depends on the food, fuel, and fiber that America's farms and ranches produce. And this week in particular, we thank those who do the hard work of feeding America—and the world.

There are a lot of factors that go into a farm's or ranch's success. Today, I want to talk about just one of those factors that affects a lot of farms and ranches, and that is trade. Trade is critical to the continued success of American agriculture. One in four acres on U.S. farms is planted to be exported to a foreign market, and exports are responsible for a fifth of U.S. farm revenue.

For the 2023 marketing year, American farmers planted nearly 70 million acres of major crops to supply international markets. But we have a problem. Thanks in large part to the Biden administration's almost complete inaction on trade, U.S. agriculture exports are declining. In fact, last year, the United States posted a \$16.6 billion agricultural trade deficit—16.6 billion. And that trade deficit, believe it or not, is projected to be nearly twice as large this year, in an area of our economy where typically we have run, historically, trade surpluses.

This would be bad enough on its own, but it is particularly distressing at a time of economic uncertainty for a lot of farmers and ranchers. Like so many other Americans, farmers and ranchers have suffered under President Biden's inflation crisis. Net farm income is expected to see its largest 2-year drop in 40 years.

We should be doing whatever we can to reverse this trend and help farmers and ranchers succeed, and a good place to start would be opening new markets for American agricultural products.

The sorry state of agriculture trade is emblematic of the Biden administration's generally unambitious trade agenda. The President made it clear early on that trade would not be high on his agenda, and unfortunately, he has lived up to that.

Increased market access—long a priority of the United States—has almost completely dropped off the radar under President Biden. The U.S. Trade Representative has openly said that the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, which contains one of the few trade ini-

tiatives that the administration has actually undertaken, was, in fact, designed not—not—to include tariff reduction. In other words, the Biden administration deliberately chose not to pursue a key market-opening measure, and now, the Biden administration has put even this halfhearted trade initiative on hold, declining to move forward with the trade portion of the Indo-Pacific agreement.

A year ago, I came to the floor to discuss my bipartisan bill to kick-start negotiations on a comprehensive free-trade agreement with the United Kingdom. Now, you would think that a free-trade agreement with one of our oldest allies and largest trading partners would be a no-brainer, but the administration has punted on that one, too.

On digital trade—an area where the United States has historically been a leader and in which we should continue to lead—the Biden administration is pulling back. Last fall, the U.S. Trade Representative abandoned long-standing U.S. policy on digital trade at the World Trade Organization—a move that risks letting China take our place in writing rules for a major sector of the global economy.

The United States is currently negotiating zero—zero—free-trade agreements. But while the Biden administration keeps America on the sidelines, other countries are building up their trading portfolios. The European Union is negotiating new free-trade agreements. So is the United Kingdom. China is aggressively working to expand its trading network.

The Biden administration's failure on trade is putting our country at a competitive disadvantage. The administration is not only forfeiting opportunities for American leadership, it is harming American businesses, farms, and ranches that look to trade as a way to grow.

Earlier this week, I joined Senator BLACKBURN and other Senators in a letter to the President urging the administration to uphold America's long-standing leadership on digital trade. Last week, I led a group of Republican Senators urging the administration to work on expanding export opportunities for American agriculture.

If we want American farmers, ranchers, and business owners to succeed in the global economy, trade has to be a priority, and I will continue to do everything I can to urge the Biden administration to get off the sidelines on trade and start opening up new opportunities for American producers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and Senator MANCHIN for up to 5 minutes prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 4364

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, yesterday at about this same time, I came to the

floor, and I made three predictions. Even though not a single Member of this body had seen the full text of the thousand-page spending bill that we received just after 2:30 a.m. this morning, I predicted three things about that bill. I predicted that it would, No. 1, be full of corrupting earmarks—well, the bill has nearly 1,400 earmarks, and 138 pages of the more than thousand pages in this bill are dedicated to earmarks alone; two, that it wouldn't force Biden to secure the border—well, it doesn't; and three, that it would perpetuate massive deficits—it does. I really hate to say, “I told you so.”

It is now Thursday, a little less than 48 hours before the funding deadline, and we received the 1,012-page bill at 2:30 in the morning. We are told that the only way we can avoid a shutdown is to vote for a thousand-page bill negotiated in secret and put forward at the last minute by the law firm of SCHUMER, MCCONNELL, JOHNSON, and JEFFRIES.

With a little less than 48 hours on the clock, we can be sure that there will be no time to read the text, to vet it with our staffs and our constituents, to debate the bill and offer amendments to improve the bill. Regardless of what State we come from or what party we are a part of, this is not what our constituents, our voters, sent us to Washington to do.

These bills—massive legislative undertakings that bundle most of the Federal Government's funding into a single package—have become synonymous with legislative manipulation because that is precisely what they are.

The firm's *modus operandi* involves crafting these omnibus bills behind closed doors, with only a select group of appropriators contributing to their formulation.

Now, by design, the bills are unveiled to the public and to most of Congress with barely any time to spare before a potential government shutdown. This strategic timing, arranged by the firm and often arranged right before a long-scheduled recess or holiday, ensures the bill passes with minimal scrutiny and little or no meaningful opportunity for amendment or debate. It is a charade, occasionally softened by allowing a few votes here and there on a few token amendments. But make no mistake, the firm wields its enormous influence to ensure that no substantial changes are made that would threaten, as they perceive it, the sanctity of their original drafts.

Members are cornered into a false dichotomy, arranged and contrived entirely by the firm: Pass the bill—unread, undebated, unamended—or face the chaos and public ire of a government shutdown. Thus, the individual voices of the people's elected lawmakers in Washington and, by extension, the will of the American people—those who elected us to come here—are diluted in a process dominated by the few at the expense of the many.

This is exactly the type of dichotomy we tried to avoid when we passed a CR

in November of last year. We extended the deadline into the new year. We established two separate funding deadlines into January and February specifically to avoid the dreaded Christmas omnibus, when the firm historically drops a bill just as we are planning to all leave and spend the holidays with our families.

By avoiding the Christmas crunch for the first time in a very long time, that CR was intended to give us the time to properly debate, amend, and ensure that all of the people's elected lawmakers in Washington engaged in a fair and transparent process. But now, we are in the very scenario we tried so hard to avoid, with a massive bill just before a recess, just before the Easter holiday. So what happened? What happened? How are we in the exact same spot we found ourselves in just a few months ago that we worked so hard to avoid and we promised we would avoid?

Today, with just over 48 hours before the government runs out of funding, this body once again throws American taxpayers and our voters under the bus, forsaking fiscal sanity. In so doing, they oppose measures that the vast majority of Americans support—measures that Republicans fought to include in this legislation, which were overwhelmingly rejected by just a handful of Members, so overwhelmingly supported by voters and overwhelmingly rejected by a narrow sliver of Members of this and the other body.

Those measures would have, among other things, banned the use of funds to implement Green New Deal-related policies that have been overfunded over the last few years; blocked funds for racist DEI programs across the Department of Defense and the intelligence community Agencies; prohibited the use of funds for bureaucrats to label free speech that they happen to disagree with as “misinformation”; measures to ensure that only the American flag may be flown at all government buildings.

It contains no new funding for a border wall or any of the other core border security elements in H.R. 2, which are so badly needed at this time. Our country is under invasion with the acquiescence of the President of the United States. It contains nothing to stop Biden's invited invasion from happening right now at our southern border.

Instead of securing our border, we are spending millions of taxpayer dollars on radical pet projects that exist to weaken and divide our country culturally and economically—pet projects like \$1.8 million for a hospital in Rhode Island that performs abortions, including late-term abortions; \$475,000 for an activist organization that has designed curriculum and materials for children ages 2 through 5 to “introduce the kids in our classroom to a wide variety of gender expressions”; \$400,000 for the largest LGBTQ advocacy organization in New Jersey—their efforts include focusing on what they call transgender

student rights, which include letting boys use girls locker rooms and play in girls athletics in high school; \$676,000 for an organization that has been actively supportive of Black Lives Matter and painted a BLM mural in front of Cincinnati's city hall in 2020; \$2.8 million for an institution that released what they call an “Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility” charter in 2020, which stated that “diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility are critical components within the fabric of the institute to excel in basic and applied research, solve complex environmental issues, and advance DRI's mission”; \$500,000 for a radical activist organization that hosts training workshops on implicit bias, social inclusion and equity, decolonization, and land acknowledgement; \$450,000 for a childcare initiative that is being established to provide childcare for immigrant families.

So instead of securing our border, it appears we are using taxpayer money to create welfare programs for illegal immigrants who have invaded our country. That is because this whole system of government funding is designed to not benefit the vast majority of Americans. It benefits the very architects of these bills—the appropriators, the earmarks, the lobbyists, and the special interests. These entities thrive in the shadows in this process, influencing legislation in ways that serve the architects themselves, often—indeed, always—at the expense of the general public.

Americans are bearing the cost of decisions made without their knowledge or their consent, manifesting in skyrocketing costs of living and a staggering national debt now exceeding \$34 trillion. Not only do they not have a say in this process, those they elected to have a say in this very same process are excluded, and that is wrong.

We must dismantle this corrupt process and restore once again transparency and accountability to the way we fund our government. The process behind what we expect from this insulting spending bill is a disgrace, and let history show that a few of us stood up and said no.

This is not the way. What we need is a short-term CR—a continuing resolution—through April 12 to give lawmakers time to review, debate, and amend the bill. Even if by some twist of fate, even if by some gift by God, you are able to discern every single word in this bill and you digested it over the last few hours and you still love the bill, you should acknowledge that most Members—I would say all—lack that capacity and therefore deserve the opportunity, whether you love the bill or hate the bill at the end of the day, to fully review it, vet it with constituents, debate it, and, yes, offer amendments at a meaningful window of opportunity.

Voting for this bill is voting in favor of massive, bloated deficits that are crippling America and making life

unaffordable, corrupting earmarks, and funding Biden's border invasion. So I invite my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join in fighting for fiscal responsibility and the best interests of the American families we are supposed to represent in Washington—after all, they elected us—because we are certainly not doing that now.

To that end, I offered up a solution. Again, whether you love this bill or hate it after reviewing it, which will take some time, you should still want it to be adequately vetted first.

And to that end, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 235, H.R. 4364; I further ask that the Lee amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to, the bill as amended be considered read a third time and passed, and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Reserving the right to object, as I mentioned yesterday, we really have to get a move on and close the book on fiscal year 2024. We are 6 months into this fiscal year already. It is time to take the government off autopilot.

We have a carefully negotiated package. It is bipartisan. It is bicameral. It reflects the input of nearly every Senator and the priorities of every State in America and it is ready to go. We need to focus on the deadline in front of us and get this passed in a swift, bipartisan way so we can avoid a shutdown.

I would remind all of my colleagues so we can turn to fiscal year 2025. My focus remains on working with all of my colleagues to get that package over the finish line in a timely way. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. I will sit down in a moment to let my friend and colleague JOE MANCHIN speak.

I want to point out for a moment a couple of things. My friend and colleague from the State of Washington is objecting to this measure that would allow all Members adequate time to review the bill and to vet it with constituents and debate it and discuss it and amend it on the floor. She said that we have to get a move on; the government has been on autopilot, meaning under a continuing resolution for too long. True. Absolutely true.

But I find it stunning the suggestion that she is saying now that time is of the essence. Now, we didn't have the bill yesterday or the day before or the day before or the day before that when we were promised the bill. We didn't have it. We have it now.

She identified the precise moment in history—the precise moment in 2024—when we can no longer move forward for another day. We have to get a move

on right, right now. They are the only ones who know this.

She also says it is bipartisan, bicameral; that it is a carefully negotiated agreement. That is great. That small handful of people who actually saw this bill and were involved in its final formulation, I am sure, will find that very comforting. For the rest of us who didn't see it until 2:30 a.m. this morning and the 330 million Americans out there who will have to pay for this stuff, that is not adequate notice. That is not a carefully negotiated agreement. That is collusion among the few affecting the many adversely.

I find this very, very disturbing that we couldn't get the American people and their elected representatives a few more days so that they can understand what is in there. It begs the question, What are they hiding?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

NATIONAL INLAND WATERWAYS WORKERS SAFETY AWARENESS DAY

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of National Inland Waterways Workers Safety Awareness Day and to honor the life of Gabe White, a young West Virginian who lost his life far too soon.

Gabe was a deckhand, a Boy Scout, a graduate of Gilmer County High School, and, most importantly, he was a son, a brother, a nephew, a cousin, and a friend.

I want to thank Gabe's family for being with us here today and allowing me to share Gabe's story with the rest of the country, which underscores just how incredibly important barge safety is and must be.

Gabe was a Wheeling, WV, resident who loved music, art, video games, and sports. He was always curious and interested in learning more about the world and those around him. He appreciated history and was always starting interesting discussions with his friends and family. He engaged.

Gabe also loved the outdoors. As a Scout, he fell in love with hiking and camping, even during the winter. Gabe and his troops hiked and camped much of the Greenbrier River Trail. He had the honor of being an Order of the Eagle recipient, in addition to his rank as Life Scout. Gabe was always a leader while he was a Scout, which he typically tried to avoid because he always focused on being a team player, working with others.

Everyone around Gabe knew him as someone who was always ready to jump in and step up to the plate to lend a helping hand when needed. During his senior year of high school, Gabe decided to join the high school baseball team after only ever playing 1 year of Little League.

Later, Gabe's friends and teammates and family finally found out that Gabe only joined the team because he was worried they wouldn't have enough players to form a team and play that last season. Gabe knew it was his friends' last chance to play baseball, as

they were graduating that year. So he was adamant in helping out.

Gabe showed up with a positive attitude to every practice and game and was always prepared to do whatever his coach and teammates needed him to do. Again, Gabe was always there to show up and step up to the plate when he knew his teammates and friends needed him most.

Gabe was a true West Virginia Mountaineer through and through.

Gabe often talked about his desire to become a father and was looking forward to becoming an uncle when his brothers had children.

After he graduated high school, Gabe got a job working as a deckhand. He was proud of his job and having this new opportunity. He was excited to learn all the new things about working on a barge on the river with his team of deckhands.

However, on the morning of March 22, 2023, Gabe arrived at work as usual when an accident occurred that tragically resulted in his death at just the age of 20. Following an investigation, it was determined that not only was no safety equipment issued, but Gabe was out of line of sight of the crane operator, and no spotter was present. Gabe's death never, never should have happened. It was preventable, and we must acknowledge this.

This is why I am proud to introduce the National Inland Waterways Workers Safety Day resolution with my colleague from West Virginia, SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO. Our resolution designates March 22, 2024, as National Inland Waterways Workers Safety Day in recognition of the 1-year anniversary of Gabe's passing.

Workers in the national inland waterways play a crucial role navigating ships, barges, and tugboats that deliver the goods that we need and use. They work hard, loading and unloading barges and transport vessels, and cleaning and caring for vessels and shipyards to move the goods for America.

Our resolution recognizes the need to continue to improve the safe transportation of domestic cargo and, above all else, to reduce transportation vessel and shipyard-related incidents, fatalities, and injuries so another family like Gabe's does not have to endure such a tragic loss. And I have said, Gabe's life was not in vain. He will save many others.

The safety of deckhands, engineers, masters, mates, and shoreside workers are of the utmost importance. It is critical to equip them with the necessary knowledge and resources to perform their duties safely and effectively and return home every evening safe.

I want to applaud the efforts of the Coast Guard, American Waterways Operators, Maritime Trades Department, and other groups that are working to reduce the incidents of workplace injuries and fatalities in and around towing vessels.

I encourage industry and worker groups to observe March 22 to not only