

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 reelection 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

they are important to people around the world, particularly to political prisoners who learn secondhand and thirdhand that some Senator in the United States of America mentioned their name or showed their photograph on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

It is hard to believe that this has any impact on history, but it does. Chris Homan on my staff has shown me over and over again that if I stand up and speak up and reach out to the embassies in these countries that are jailing their political prisoners, it can make a difference. And it does. Some of these prisoners, after years in prison, are finally, finally released. Many of them make it to the United States and come to my office in tears to thank me for a speech on the floor of the Senate.

It is hard to imagine in my station in life that anybody cares, but it does make a difference—certainly to them and their families, but often to the countries that are jailing them.

I would like to speak for a few minutes this morning about a few of these prisoners. Navalny, I have already mentioned. His fellow patriot Vladimir Kara-Murza remains jailed by Putin on nonsense charges and public fears of what they represent.

He came by my office. He had been poisoned by Russia and decided to go back and protest publicly. He knew what he was getting into, but his passion for principle is so overwhelming that he did it anyway. He sits in prison today as a symbol of freedom in a country where there is little or no freedom of expression—Vladimir Kara-Murza. I display these photographs just to make sure that you know they are real people and their families know that we are doing our best to keep their causes alive. Navalny has gone through living hell by Vladimir Putin and Russia.

Vladimir Kara-Murza was in my office—this man was—and told me he was headed back to Russia to get arrested again. Think about that as your life's mission: trying to change a country, change a leader, and fighting a dictatorship—and a bloodthirsty one at that.

We must not let Putin to prevail in Ukraine. I am saddened and angered that some of my colleagues in the U.S. Congress have grown tired of the cause of the Ukrainians in defeating Vladimir Putin and have decided they want to move on to other things. We cannot give up on our own values. The Ukrainians are fighting for our values today and dying in the process. To provide military assistance for them and encouragement is the least we can do for a country that is fighting for the same thing that we say inspired the United States' creation.

The next poster I will put up here is Belarus. In Belarus, we have the last dictator in Europe. His name is Lukashenko. He sold out his nation to Putin. There are more than 1,000 political prisoners, four of whom I want to mention.

This man, Ales Bialiatki, is the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. He was jailed from 2011 to 2014. He came and visited me here at the Senate after he was released. Then he went back to Belarus and protested Lukashenko's dictatorial efforts and was jailed again. He has been in jail since 2021. He is not a young man. He has clearly devoted his life to freedom and is prepared to live in prison.

Opposition leader Sergei Tikhanovsky was jailed in 2020 for having the temerity to actually run an election against the dictator Lukashenko. I know his wife Svetlana Tikhanovsky. She ran in his place when he was arrested and probably won that election, but we will never know because of Lukashenko's distortion of the actual vote. Tikhanovsky's wife is living in Lithuania and traveling across Europe and the world to plead his cause and to plead the cause of the Belarusian people.

The two jailed Radio Free Europe journalists, Andrey Kuznechik and Ihar Losik, they, too, are paying the price for Lukashenko's dictatorial race. In 2020, millions of Belarusian voters turned out to vote for a better future, not the Soviet-era dystopia Lukashenko and Putin are trying to impose on their Ukrainian neighbors.

That is what this larger debate on the supplemental funding is all about. Will the United States stand on the side of these people who are risking their lives and giving their lives every day in prison to fight for democracy; or are we tired and want to move on to another subject?

I am not tired of democracy. I am here because of it.

It isn't just Vladimir Putin's orbit where we see this fight for democracy. In Cambodia, there is a glimmer of hope that new leadership can bring some change to the country's repressive history. An early move that new President Hun Manet can take in the direction of justice would be to release jailed human rights activist Theary Seng in Cambodia, who is serving a bogus 6-year sentence.

Last year, the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously passed an amendment which I offered barring any Cambodian official involved in her jailing from receiving or keeping a U.S. visa. The easiest way to lift that restriction is to release Theary Seng without any further delay.

And in Algeria, journalist and independent media owner Ihsane El Kadi, is serving a dubious 7-year sentence as part of a larger crackdown on free media and democracy. Such repression is a tragic setback to the country's vibrant free press that emerged after Algeria's terrible civil war. Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the European Union are among those whom I join in calling for his immediate release.

Just a few weeks ago, we traveled with a congressional delegation led by Senator TIM KAINE of Virginia to Gua-

temala. And, finally, these cases I mention here came up during our visit—the troubling jailing of anti-corruption prosecutor Virginia Laparra and journalist Jose Ruben Zamora, Guatemala. Their incarceration occurred amid multiple efforts to derail the peaceful transition of power of the new President-elect Bernardo Arevalo.

January 14 may be just another day on the calendar here in Washington—a few days ahead—but it will be a major historic opportunity in Guatemala to finally bring to office a man who was duly elected President of that country.

We met with him. There was resistance to the transition, but we believe that he will prevail. He was the clear winner in that contest and should be given a chance to serve.

I am pleased to share that Ms. Laparra was just released from prison to house arrest. That is a movement in the right direction. It is a welcomed step. But we call for her full release and dropping of charges, as well as the immediate release of journalist Mr. Zamora.

What we do here matters around the world for the large and small battles occurring for freedom and democracy. I can only hope in the days ahead that someone, somehow, will get the message to the individuals that I have highlighted today, that they are not forgotten, that they do not languish in prison, unknown to the rest of the world.

We have to speak up for these people, for justice not only in the United States but justice around the world. And it makes a difference.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to look at the issue yourself, find those people who are unjustly imprisoned for political reasons in these autocratic regimes and give them a word of encouragement yourself on the floor of the Senate. Amazingly, it does make a difference. I have seen many released, and I hope to see more in the future. The time from us making these speeches, highlighting what they are going through, may seem like a waste of time to some, but it is not. It is a valuable investment in the values which we share with these amazing people around the world.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 302,000—302,000—that is how many migrants U.S. Customs and Border Protection is reported to have encountered at our southern border in the month of December. One month—302,000.

To put that number in perspective, 302,000 is equivalent to roughly a third of the population of my home State of South Dakota or almost half of the population of Vermont or more than half—more than half, I should say, of the population of Wyoming. And that is just 1 month of encounters—1 month. Just when you think the Biden border crisis can't get any worse, it gets worse.