

COLLINS—for their outstanding work here in the Senate. I want to thank all the appropriators for their work. I want to thank all their staffs, especially my own staff, too, because I greatly appreciate the remarkable work they do every single day.

Getting things done in divided government is hard; getting things done in this divided government is even harder.

But both sides have come up with a strong funding package that ignores extremism and puts the needs of the country first. That is a credit to leadership on both sides, and I thank them for their work.

REPUBLICAN STUDY COMMITTEE BUDGET PLAN

Mr. President, now, on the Republican Study Committee's budget. Earlier this week, House Republicans released a hard-right wish list masquerading as a budget plan. The Republican Study Committee's new budget can be summarized in two words: dangerous, disastrous. This Republican Study Committee's budget plan is dangerous because it double downs on the hard-right's war on women. It endorses a national ban on abortion with zero exceptions for rape or incest, which remains the ultimate goal of the hard right, should they come to power.

If anyone is asking what would happen if the Republicans kept the House, took the Senate and the Presidency, on abortion, just read this Republican Study Committee's budget: A national ban on abortion with zero exceptions for rape and incest. That is the goal of the Republican Party should they gain power and are able to do it.

We will do everything we can, of course, to stop them.

The RSC budget plan also rolls back access to mifepristone, a safe, reliable, and widely available medicine that millions of Americans have used for over 20 years. The RSC budget plan would critically endanger access to IVF. As much as Republicans have tried to recently sound moderate on IVF, when they have to put their pen to paper and say what their proposals are, their radical agenda is blowing up in their faces.

And all you have to do is read the RSC budget plan to see they haven't moderated one iota on women's health. Whether it is abortion, mifepristone, or IVF, the Republican Study Committee, which represents the vast majority of House Republicans—it reads like a hard-right, radical, anti-women document.

But that is not all. The RSC budget is disastrous because it proposes a stunning \$1.5 trillion in cuts to Social Security while raising the retirement age for millions of hard-working Americans. That is crazy.

Remember, the Republican Study Committee isn't some arcane offshoot of the Republican Party; it represents 80 percent of the Members in the House, including all of their leadership. For all intents and purposes, the RSC budget plan represents the Republican agenda.

And what is the Republican agenda? Aside from cutting back dramatically on women's rights, a national ban on abortion with no exceptions, it also is cutting Social Security and raising the retirement age.

What is the Republican agenda? It is also repealing \$35 insulin for seniors on Medicare and repealing its authority to negotiate cheaper drug prices.

What is the Republican agenda? It is trillions of dollars in tax breaks for the ultrawealthy and trillions of dollars in budget cuts to the Children's Health Insurance Program and the ACA.

These are just some of the terrible things in the RSC budget plan. It is awful. It is cruel. But amazingly, it is what the overwhelming majority of House Republicans endorse.

JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

Mr. President, on judge shopping, yesterday, I sent a letter to the Judicial Conference urging them to defend their new, commonsense policy reforms limiting the practice of judge shopping.

I also sent a letter to the chief judge of the Northern District of Texas, where judge shopping is running rampant, urging the district to apply the reforms of the Judicial Conference as quickly as possible.

The bottom line is this: Judge shopping jaundices the fairness of our entire legal system. When hard-right plaintiffs, often funded by hard-right groups that just hire the lawyers, when they can pick and choose which judge hears their case—which is what has happened, for instance, in the Northern District of Texas in Amarillo, where cascades of cases are being filed by rightwing groups across the country—when this happens, when hard-right plaintiffs can pick and choose which judge hears their case, it distorts the system and causes the American people to lose faith in our courts.

Judge shopping is precisely what led to the terrible case in the Northern District of Texas, where anti-choice extremists handpicked a MAGA judge—the only one sitting—to revoke FDA approval of mifepristone nationwide. This one judge, extreme right—known as extreme right before he became a judge and after—gets to choose for the whole country because of forum shopping.

It is awful. I applaud the Judicial Conference for taking the initiative to limit judge shopping. I urge the courts across the country to apply these new reforms.

And when my Republican colleagues say they support this, it shows they are not for fairness of a judicial system; they are for outcome determination ahead of time before even cases are argued.

CLEAN ENERGY

Mr. President, on clean jobs, it has not even been 2 years since President Biden and Democrats made historic investments in our infrastructure, clean jobs, and advanced manufacturing, and already we see ribbon-cuttings, factory openings, and a boom in clean energy investment.

But this week House Republicans are pushing a number of bogus and nasty bills that would undo all the hard work we have done to create more jobs in clean energy while doubling down on giveaways to Big Oil.

One bill pushed by House Republicans would force taxpayers to pay more for the mess of oil and gas companies on public lands by repealing an IRA rule requiring companies to pay a fair rate to lease America's public resources.

At a time when Big Oil is seeing record profits and Big Oil is consolidated so there is very little competition, House Republicans want to gift them even more giveaways, while making taxpayers pick up the tab.

A number of other bills Republicans are pushing would outright repeal many of the job-creating investments in the IRA. That is terrible because the law is working so, so well. Last year, we saw \$240 billion in clean energy investment, triple the level of 2019. These investments and these good-paying jobs are what Republicans are trying to take away.

America is leading the world in our transition to clean energy. We are creating lots of jobs, good-paying jobs, along the way. But the MAGA Republicans, fatally beholden to the Big Oil and Big Coal lobbies are pushing to kill clean jobs, kill these historic investments, and extinguish years of future potential prosperity to the communities they represent. Shame on them.

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. MCCONNELL. 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.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the task before Congress this week, completing annual appropriations, is important work every year. In fact, it is among our most basic, fundamental responsibilities.

But not in decades have the stakes of providing for the common defense been as high as they are right now. For the first time since the Cold War, America faces an era defined by great power competition. Of course, this is not news.

Two straight Presidential administrations have correctly recognized this fact, at least on paper, in their national security strategies. These documents have recognized that challenges from revisionist authoritarians in Russia and China pose the greatest threat to the endurance of American leadership that has defined world politics and economics for decades.

Today, we face major adversaries who wish nothing more than to bleed

American influence, sap our resolve, torch our credibility, and fill every void we leave behind with a new order built on fear and subjugation. And we face terrorists and rogue states committed to help them sow chaos. North Korea is sending thousands of train cars full of ammunition to fuel Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine; and Iran's Houthi proxies are signaling to Russian and Chinese ships that they will be permitted to traverse the Red Sea unharmed. But it is not enough to recognize these challenges or name-check them in policy papers. Both the administration and Congress have to act and invest and be willing to meet them.

President Biden's actions undercut any of his administration's apparent recognition of the grave moment we are facing. For 4 straight years, the Commander in Chief has requested defense budgets that don't even keep pace with inflation. De facto cuts to U.S. military funding do not signal seriousness about outcompeting our biggest strategic adversaries—China's defense, for example, is growing by more than 7 percent year-over-year—and neither did the President's hand-wringing and delay over equipping Ukraine with the capabilities needed to better defend itself against Russian aggression.

Frankly, President Biden seems to have a deep-seated discomfort in cultivating and exercising hard power—a necessary, foundational part of the statecraft that protects America and preserves our interests.

Of course, Congress has a say and a responsibility. Our work on fiscal year 2024 defense appropriations represents a critical down payment. But important requirements will remain unmet even after the needed investments this Defense bill will make.

Republicans recognized the constraints of the budget caps, and we worked hard to ensure that the national security supplemental we passed in the Senate will make further critical investments in our own military and defense industrial capability.

Earlier this week, the Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Aquilino, made the case for passing the supplemental to our House colleagues, saying “any win for Russia . . . is a win for China,” and so what we do “supporting the Ukraine problem set also provides a deterrent value” in the Indo-Pacific.

Together with full-year appropriations, the supplemental is a serious, urgent, and necessary investment in American hard power. And I will continue to urge the House to take it up and pass it without further delay.

But as the Senate prepares to finish our work on annual government funding, I want to once again thank our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for the diligent work required to get to this point. Senator MURRAY and Senator COLLINS made a commitment nearly a year ago to restore as much regular order to the process as

possible and to work constructively across the aisle.

I am especially grateful to my friend SUSAN COLLINS, whose leadership and skill have continued to improve this legislation on behalf of Senate Republicans at every step of the process.

I am particularly proud of how the legislation before us will deliver on the priorities of my fellow Kentuckians. In significant ways, the work of rebuilding American hard power begins right here at home. It means good-paying manufacturing jobs for hard-working Americans across the country, including in Kentucky, in communities like Sterns and Somerset, where Kentuckians develop cutting-edge tools and technologies that give our servicemembers the upper hand on the battlefield or Brandenburg, where they produce new armor systems to enhance the next generation of combat equipment; or Louisville and Lexington, where they are spurring innovation in areas critical to our warfighting capabilities through partnerships with the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky.

Of course, funding the government this week also puts more weight behind missions even closer to home, like our fight against the substance abuse epidemic which has had a staggering—staggering—impact in my home State. We are devoting more resources to the Kentucky National Guard to reinforce State and local law enforcement as they combat the flow of illegal drugs literally pouring over our border. And we are directing billions toward States like Kentucky so we can promote long-term recovery, find new ways to treat addiction, and spare more lives from this deadly crisis. Through prevention, treatment, and enforcement, we are taking direct aim at a health crisis that has hollowed out our communities and hit middle America especially hard.

Our work is far from finished, but I am proud of what my Senate colleagues have accomplished to close out the annual appropriations process. It is now time to finish the job.

NOMINATION OF ADEEL ABDULLAH MANGI

Mr. President, on another matter, I have spoken repeatedly about the nomination of Adeel Mangi to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in New Jersey. As I explained, his radical associations are truly staggering. And this fact seems to have rubbed some of our Democratic colleagues the wrong way. Yesterday, one of my esteemed Democratic colleagues objected that we were unfairly ignoring Mr. Mangi's record as a lawyer. Well, I have looked at that record and encourage Democrats to do the same.

Our colleagues may not mind Mr. Mangi's cavorting with apologists for terrorism and cop killing. That much wouldn't be surprising, considering that their party is in the process of succumbing to noxious strains of anti-Semitism and soft-on-crime radicalism.

But it is a bit odd that more of our colleagues don't seem to care that Mr. Mangi has spent his entire career in “white shoe” corporate law, working as a hired gun for causes Democrats love to hate.

For example, did you know that Mr. Mangi defended monopolists accused of fixing the prices of chocolate? Just in time for Easter.

While Democrats promote the Green New Deal, Mr. Mangi defended a foreign conglomerate as it pursued a fossil fuel contract.

It is hard to count the number of cases Mr. Mangi has litigated in defense of companies accused of fixing the price of prescription drugs. This is a practice that the senior Senator from Vermont says “rip[s] off the American people.” Mr. Mangi says it demands compelled arbitration. In at least three of these pharmaceutical suits, Mr. Mangi fought against union pension funds. Curiously, none of these cases are on Mr. Mangi's committee questionnaire.

I don't begrudge a lawyer based on their clients—and I am sure Mr. Mangi was handsomely paid. And besides, we are talking about perfectly defensible and often successful legal arguments. But do my Democratic friends feel the same way?

Fortunately, a growing number of our colleagues are saying they are unwilling to walk the plank for Mr. Mangi's radical affiliations. But his remaining supporters? They might land among the sharks themselves if they insist he be judged on his legal record.

NOMINATION OF ERNEST GONZALEZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Ernest Gonzalez to the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas.

Born in San Antonio, TX, Mr. Gonzalez received his B.B.A. from the University of Texas at San Antonio and his J.D. from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University. From 1994 to 2000, he worked at the Bexar County District Attorney's Office in San Antonio, where he prosecuted misdemeanor and felony crimes. In 2000, he joined the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas in Del Rio as an assistant U.S. attorney, where his portfolio consisted primarily of immigration and narcotics violations.

From 2003 to 2023, Mr. Gonzalez worked as an assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Texas in Plano. While there, he served as chief of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Section, and he represented the United States in a variety of domestic and international criminal cases, including drug-trafficking cases. Since 2023, he has worked as a senior attorney advisor for the U.S. Department of Justice in the Narcotics and Dangerous Drug Section of the Criminal Division in Washington, DC.

Mr. Gonzalez has an extraordinary amount of trial experience in both