

But the President failed to heed this advice. He ignored the 80-some attacks on U.S. troops over his first 2 years in office. He failed to recognize the killing of an American in an Iran-backed drone attack in Syria last March as a wake-up call. Instead, his administration slept through glaring indications that Iran-backed terror was actually reaching a tipping point.

So, today, America and our allies face an adversary profoundly undeterred. Iran's proxies are responsible for more than 150 lethal attacks—and counting—against U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria since October 7 and for persistent strikes against U.S. warships and civilian vessels in the Red Sea, including just yesterday.

But we have yet to see signs that the administration understands how to compel Iran and its proxies to stop. Even with the world's strongest military at the ready, the Commander in Chief has failed to deter Iran and its proxies. Instead, a fear of escalation has only invited more aggression from Tehran to Moscow to Beijing.

For nearly 2 weeks, the President has hesitantly and intermittently directed strikes against low-value Houthi terrorist targets. He has played Whack-A-Mole against warehouses and launch sites but has left the terrorists' air defenses and command-and-control facilities intact. The same is true over in Iraq and Syria, where the U.S. response to Iran-backed terrorist attacks has been to impose limited damage on proxy storage and training facilities. Yet the administration has refused to impose meaningful costs on Tehran itself—on the architects of this entire regional conflict.

Tehran is happy to fight until the last Houthi, Hamas, or Hezbollah terrorist. That is literally why they use proxies—they are expendable. Until Iran feels that its own interests and its own IRGC officers across the region are threatened, attacks on U.S. forces will continue.

Now, while the President hesitates to use his constitutional authority, some of our colleagues seem to argue he shouldn't have this authority to begin with. They are profoundly mistaken. Exercising the right to defend against imminent threats to our Nation and servicemembers is a central responsibility of the Commander in Chief. His authority is enshrined in the Constitution, and its application dates back more than 200 years.

President Thomas Jefferson was hardly an enthusiastic proponent of a muscular executive, but his recognition of the threats to core national interests posed by the Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean forged consensus around the appropriate roles of the article I and article II branches in the conduct of war.

Freedom of navigation has been a core national interest of the United States from the very, very beginning. If we aren't prepared to defend the vital searoutes on which our economy

rests, there is really not much point in having a military.

If there is something our colleagues ought to be questioning, it is not our history or our Constitution; it is our President's judgment and understanding of deterrence as well as their own. If they oppose U.S. and coalition efforts to defend the freedom of navigation against Iran-backed terrorists, our colleagues simply should say so.

Just last month, the Senate voted on a resolution to compel the President to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria. That resolution failed 84 to 13. I suspect that even fewer of our colleagues would support a resolution to withdraw the Navy from the coalition we have built in the Red Sea. This is no time for 535 commanders in chief to dictate battlefield tactics from halfway around the world.

Congress can and should exercise the oversight of military operations through our own robust authorities. We can and must keep a firm grip on the power of the purse. But the President does not need additional authorities to deal with this threat.

I will oppose any effort to tie the hands of our military commanders or to limit the scope of their ability to go after terrorists who threaten our servicemembers as well as our interests. As General Mattis counseled a decade ago in the debate over modifying the 2001 AUMF, we must not "reassure our adversary in advance about what we will not do." Instead, it is time for President Biden to reassure America and our allies that he intends to lead with strength.

BIDENOMICS

Mr. President, on another matter, yesterday, President Biden offered an eerily honest assessment of the state of the Union:

We're fundamentally changing the economy in this country, and everyone's getting a little worried about it.

I don't say this very often, but the President is right about that.

The historic inflation brought on by Washington Democrats' reckless spending sent the prices of everyday essentials—from groceries to home heating—literally through the roof. As working families grapple with shrinking dollars, credit card spending and unpaid balances rose last year.

Of course, lower-income households with less of a cushion are the ones most affected by Democrats' inflation. As one analyst put it:

The further you go down in income levels or the further you go down in wealth levels, the cumulative impact of inflation has really taken a toll.

If the high prices on fuel and groceries weren't enough, cities are also facing staggering surges in violent crime. Here in Washington, homicides, carjackings, and robberies surged last year. More people were murdered in our Nation's Capital last year than in any year since 1997.

Just last Thursday, a 23-year-old was shot and killed while he was walking home from an event at a local church.

The young man had moved to Washington to spend a year volunteering with at-risk youth in the community. His friends described him as "a deeply caring guy who always worked hard to understand what people were saying." Now in a city that has lost its grip on law and order, this young man joins the growing list of victims.

Stable prices and safe streets: These are two of the most basic responsibilities of government. But from City Hall to the White House, elected Democrats are literally failing the American people.

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. DURBIN. 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.

AMTRAK

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there are a few things that are more important to a nation's economy than its infrastructure. Most Americans rely on public transport to get from point A to point B. Passenger rail plays an important role in that responsibility. That is why am pleased that Illinoisans have had a voice in one of the largest rail networks in the country, Amtrak.

Something many people don't realize is that despite being a for-profit company, Amtrak is a government entity. Because of this, with the advice and consent of the Senate, the President has the power to appoint members to Amtrak's board. Just this week, we took action in the Senate.

On Tuesday, the Senate voted to confirm the mayor of Normal, IL, Chris Koos, to serve on the Amtrak board of directors, one of only eight individuals appointed by the President at any one time to serve in such a role.

Chris will take the post when the former Macomb, IL, mayor, Tom Carper, departs. When Chris takes the baton from Tom, he will be taking it from a giant in the history of Amtrak.

Tom Carper—same name as our colleague from Delaware—is the longest serving board member in Amtrak history. That is an amazing accomplishment and shows great personal sacrifice on his part to be part of this public responsibility.

First nominated to the board of directors in 2007 under President Bush, Tom Carper joined the board in 2008 and was elected as board chairman from 2009 until his term officially expired in 2013. Tom was then reappointed in 2013 under President Obama, and he served under four different Presidents on the board of directors of Amtrak.

During his tenure on the board, Tom championed issues important to Amtrak passengers across the Nation. He prioritized ensuring service to underserved communities, benefiting local

economies, and improving safety and cyber security. While serving as chairman, Tom Carper took on the critical responsibility of coordinating the board and the CEO, making sure that Amtrak was responsive to the needs of its customers: the American public.

Throughout his life, Tom took on many positions that show the kind of leader he really is. He was a small business owner from Macomb, IL, serving as the town's mayor for over 10 years and then as director of a regional economic development plan. From these positions, Tom gleaned firsthand knowledge about economic development in the Midwest—knowledge he brought with him to Amtrak. Prior to that, Tom served our Nation in the U.S. Army in both Thailand and Vietnam.

Tom had an acute understanding of how passenger rail service could improve lives. He used that knowledge to modernize our transportation system.

Tom is a great leader and an even better person. In his role, he faithfully honored his Central Illinois roots and showed what midwestern work ethic really looks like.

I want to thank Tom Carper for his years of dedicated service to America's rail infrastructure. Every American who uses Amtrak owes Tom Carper a debt of gratitude. I wish Tom the best of luck in the next well-earned chapter of his life.

Luckily for Illinois and our Nation, our representation on Amtrak's board will continue with the mayor of Normal, IL, Chris Koos. A committed leader, Chris has the longest running term of any mayor in his city's history. It is only right that he will be replacing Tom's recordbreaking tenure on the Amtrak board.

Chris's confirmation has been long awaited. He was first nominated in 2020. Two years later, at my recommendation, President Biden renominated Chris to the Amtrak board of directors. After more than 3½ years, finally—finally—he was confirmed. Through no fault of his own, he was caught up in some—how should I say?—strategic planning in the future of the Amtrak board, but he finally got the job.

The Midwest will be well represented with Chris Koos on the Amtrak board. He has been a powerful voice in the Illinois transportation sector for years, and he has an intimate understanding of the importance of passenger rail to communities in Illinois, the Midwest, and across the country.

Similar to Tom, Chris is a small business man from a midsized community. He owns a business where he sells running shoes and bicycles. From movement on foot and bike to movement by rail, I think it is safe to say Chris has a passion for supporting people on the go. That passion will allow him to tackle the challenge of serving on Amtrak's board with grace, creativity, and intelligence. Chris will be a great asset when it comes to the future of Amtrak.

I am honored to call him a friend, and I congratulate him on this exciting new journey ahead.

Leaders like Tom Carper and Chris Koos make me feel honored to represent the great State of Illinois.

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. THUNE. 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.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is anything that keeps my Democrat colleagues up at night, I am pretty sure it is the specter of some aspect of society not being regulated by the Federal Government. How else to explain Democrats' tendency to propose heavy-handed government solutions to address nonexistent problems?

There is no better example of a heavyhanded government solution to a nonexistent problem than the Biden Federal Communications Commission's recent push to impose burdensome net neutrality regulations.

So what is net neutrality, Mr. President? Well, at its core, it is the idea that internet service providers shouldn't prioritize or block certain internet traffic at the expense of other traffic. Understood in that way, it is a concept that has strong bipartisan support, but that is not what we are talking about with the Biden FCC's proposal.

The Biden FCC wants to use the idea of net neutrality as a cover to assert broad, new government powers over the internet using rules that were designed for telephone monopolies back during the Great Depression. The net neutrality regime the Biden FCC is contemplating was actually put in place once before—during the Obama administration—and the results were predictable.

The Obama FCC's measure opened the door to a whole host of new government regulations, including price regulations, and broadband investment declined as a result. That was a problem for Americans generally, who benefit when the United States is at the forefront of internet growth and expansion. It was particularly bad news for Americans in rural States like South Dakota. Getting broadband to rural communities is already more challenging than installing broadband in cities and suburbs, and the possibility of heavier regulations acts as a further disincentive to expanding that access.

Fast-forward to 2017. The FCC, under Chairman Pai, voted to repeal the heavyhanded net neutrality regulations passed by the Obama FCC—a prospect that was greeted with absolute hysteria from Democrats. We were told that the internet as we know it

would disappear, that providers would slow speeds to a crawl, and if you can believe this, that our freedom of speech was threatened.

Well, I don't think I need to tell anyone that none of what Democrats predicted came to pass. As anyone who has been on the internet lately knows, the internet has not just survived but thrived. Innovation has flourished. Competition has increased. The internet remains a vehicle for free and open discourse. And internet speeds have not only not slowed down, they have gotten faster and faster. Despite the explosive growth and internet usage during the pandemic, American networks had no problem keeping up with demand, delivering the reliable service Americans have come to expect.

Let's contrast that with Europe, where internet regulation is much more heavyhanded and Europe struggled to deal with increased internet usage. In fact, European service providers slowed internet speeds to maintain connectivity.

The United States is now a leader in adopting next-generation telecommunications services like 5G and advanced Wi-Fi while Europe struggles to keep pace.

So, as I said, the Biden FCC's net neutrality proposal is a solution—and, I would argue, a heavyhanded government solution—in search of a problem, and it is likely to create problems where none currently exist.

Given the Biden administration's demonstrated willingness to use its regulatory power to advance its far-left economic and social agendas, it is not hard to imagine the Biden administration using its new net neutrality powers to shape Americans' internet experience for its own ends. The FCC's net neutrality proposal could hasten the demise of the free and open internet it is allegedly—allegedly—supposed to protect.

On the practical side, as FCC Commissioner Carr—a Republican appointee who opposes this proposal—has pointed out, there is also good reason to fear that this measure could drive up Americans' internet costs and open the door to new taxes and fees on Americans' internet bills.

Of course, as I said, last time heavyhanded net neutrality regulations were put in place, broadband investment declined in response, and there is good reason to believe that the same thing would happen this time. The United States could quickly lose its place as a leader in internet technology, and Americans could lose out on the benefits of living in a country that is at the forefront of internet innovation.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I have to emphasize again just how much the Biden FCC's proposal is a solution in search of a problem. There is absolutely no reason—no reason—for heavyhanded government interference in a free, open, and thriving sector of our economy. There is every reason to oppose a proposal that would