

nominee to his own experience as one of only two Black judges nominated to the Federal appellate court by President George H. W. Bush. Judge Lewis noted that he was treated with respect by Republican Senators as well as Democratic Senators, who held the majority. Judge Lewis urged the Senate to treat Mr. Mangi with the same level of respect that he received.

He wrote:

If people from underrepresented communities believe they will be unfairly attacked, stereotyped, and rejected by the Senate, they are likely to think twice about being nominated, thus hindering efforts to make our courts look more like America.

Judge Lewis is right. I urge my colleagues to dismiss the smear campaign against Mr. Mangi and to support his nomination.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

BIDENOMICS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, if I were to choose a title for the remarks which I plan on making here briefly, I would call the title of these comments "The Case of the Vanishing American Paycheck."

Over the last few years, inflation has walloped family budgets. As we all know, prices have grown; they have grown again and grown some more, forcing people in Texas and all across America to scrimp and save just to try to get by. They have cut the number of trips to their favorite restaurant. They've made budget-friendly swaps at the grocery store by trading for less expensive items—maybe the store brand rather than your favorite brand. They have scrapped family vacations in favor of more affordable staycations. In many instances, they have had to make hard decisions between two competing, important expenses. For example, a couple of years ago, nearly 45 percent of Texans said they had to cut spending on basic necessities, including food and medicine, in order to pay their energy bill.

Polls continue to show that Americans believe they are even worse off today than they were 4 years ago, and it is easy to see why. Inflation is what has caused this basic shrinking of the great American paycheck. Real wages have fallen. Nominal wages seem to have gone up, but because of inflation, you actually have less purchasing power than you did 4 years ago. People who once lived comfortably are now living paycheck to paycheck.

Our Republican colleagues on the Joint Economic Committee recently analyzed economic data to determine just how much inflation is costing the average American family each month. They found that the average household in Texas is spending \$1,000 a month more today than they did in January of 2021 when President Biden was sworn into office—\$1,000 a month.

Biden economics, which, apparently, the President is so proud of that he has named his economic policies after him-

self—Biden economics is costing Texas families more than \$1,000 more each month, or \$12,000 in a year. On a monthly basis, that is up more than \$200 from a year ago—more than double the monthly inflation from 2 years ago.

Since President Biden took office, he and the leaders of his administration have tried to downplay the impact of inflation, but the American people aren't buying it. After all, the President gets to live in free government housing, otherwise known as the White House. He gets a nice fat paycheck each month. The President and the upper classes in America—the elites—are doing just fine. This kind of inflation doesn't change their lifestyles one bit; but for average Americans, it has a very real and negative impact.

For example, last week, the Wall Street Journal took a look at what \$100 could buy 4 years ago in the grocery store and compared that to what those same items would cost today. Four years ago, this grocery run would have cost you \$100. This includes many of the common items that families buy every week—bread and butter, eggs and milk, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, laundry detergent, dish soap, chicken, bread, and a whole lot more. This isn't a shopping trip for champagne and caviar; these are the basic grocery items that most people buy every single week to feed and provide for their families.

Over the past 4 years, though, the price of every single one of these items listed here has gone up. The cost of chicken, which is, frankly, a cheaper cut of meat than you might eat if you want to eat a steak on a rare occasion—well, you may have to trade down to chicken, but even chicken has gone up by 40 percent. The price of flour has gone up 43 percent, and sugar has increased 52 percent. A bottle of dish soap costs 46 percent more. Laundry detergent is 36 percent more, and a carton of eggs is up a whopping 63 percent.

Now, again, this probably doesn't affect President Biden. As I said, he gets to live in a very nice house at taxpayer expense, and he gets a big paycheck each month. He is doing just fine and so are most of the people who live in this area of the country; but where I come from and where the Presiding Officer comes from, there are a lot of people who are not part of that top 1 percent, who are experiencing the negative impact of Bidenomics and runaway inflation—the highest in 40 years.

Well, overall, this trip to the grocery store would have cost \$100 4 years ago but, today, \$136.89. In only 4 years, the price of a pretty standard grocery run has increased by 36 percent. It is a pretty startling data point, but the truth is most individuals and families in Texas and around the country don't need to see the data to know that their standard of living has decreased because of Bidenomics and 40-year-high inflation.

Folks I represent come face-to-face with higher prices every day, and it is

not just at the grocery store, as we all know. Families are dealing with higher costs for electricity, for rent, for car insurance, for home insurance, and countless other everyday expenses. These costs invariably add up, and they are having a big impact on the financial health and welfare of the people of every State, including mine.

The challenges of inflation are even more severe for those living on a tight budget or a fixed income. Think about those folks living on their Social Security benefits or maybe a pension from a job they held for 30 or more years. Keeping up with rising costs just keeps getting harder and harder and harder because of the policies of the Biden administration.

As I mentioned, people try to manage their budget. They cut down on expenses and make more budget-friendly swaps at the grocery store, and they take on additional jobs. Many Americans have simply decided that, in order to keep up, they need to get another job. So many are performing more than one.

But for many families, that still isn't enough to pay the bills and keep the lights on. Folks are exhausting their savings just to keep up with expenses, and many have been left with no choice but to take on new debt.

Where do they do that? They reach into their wallet, and they pull out their credit card. They say: I don't have the cash to pay the bills. So I will just put it on my credit card.

The average credit card debt increased by 10 percent last year—10 percent. The average credit card balance is now more than \$6,500. In Texas, the average is even higher, more than \$7,000.

So people unable to meet their rising costs of living, because of inflation, simply have no alternative other than to borrow money on their credit card.

It is easy to assume that credit card debt is caused by excessive spending on nonessential items, but that is not always the case. Experian surveyed credit card holders to understand what is driving this big increase in credit card debt. Nearly 68 percent of respondents said they had recently experienced a significant increase in their monthly bills. Among them, 75 percent said their new or increased bills have impacted their ability to pay down their credit card balances. We all know credit cards carry a much higher interest rate than you pay on your mortgage or other forms of debt.

Of course, folks aren't just taking on new debt. They are also struggling to make payments on existing debt, including student loans. When borrowers take out a loan, they know they will need to repay it. That is the deal. It is a contract. It is a legally enforceable agreement. But inflation has made that exponentially more difficult for many student loan borrowers.

I recently read a news article about how borrowers are struggling to repay their loans, given the growing cost of

living. For example, a high school teacher in Pennsylvania had two master's degrees and owes more than \$300,000 in student loans. She said: "If I pay this five, six, seven hundred dollars this month, how am I going to afford to buy food for the family for the month—[or] for the week?" That is a familiar struggle for many families.

After the "pause" on student loan payments ended, the first payment was due in October of this last year. The Education Department said that roughly 40 percent of borrowers still have not made that payment by mid-November.

Inflation is about far more than groceries or gas prices. It is a cancer that eats away at our entire economy and the standard of living of 330 million Americans. Inflation impacts the cost of living—as I said, student loan payments, credit card debt, mortgage rates, housing affordability, retirement planning, market volatility, economic growth, and so much more.

This is exactly—this is exactly—what Republicans and many leading economists predicted when our Democratic friends went on not one but two partisan spending sprees during the pandemic. First came the American Rescue Plan, which included a long list of progressive social policies.

You remember, back during the pandemic, there were bipartisan efforts to help develop a vaccine and treatments to save lives. Those were bipartisan. And then there were also programs like the Paycheck Protection Program and others, which were bipartisan efforts to throw an economic lifeline to people during the pandemic.

But after that had largely subsided, our Democratic colleagues just could not give up spending more borrowed money. As I said, it was primarily in pursuit, on a purely partisan basis, of pursuing progressive social policies—backdoor funding for Planned Parenthood, a blank check for mismanaged union pension plans, money for "climate justice"—whatever that is.

Our colleagues tried to brand this liberal utopia of a bill as "pandemic relief," but the pandemic had largely subsided. But they saw, in the immortal words of one former Member of Congress—he said an emergency is a terrible thing to waste, and our Democratic colleagues simply couldn't give up and let go to waste the emergency of the pandemic, even though it had largely subsided. And what they chose to do, then, was to add \$2 trillion of spending to the debt and to an already volatile economy. It was like pouring gasoline on a fire. What do you expect?

As Democrats pushed this bill forward, they ignored warnings from leading economists that this level of spending could trigger inflation. There is more and more money in the economy chasing the same or fewer goods and services. So, naturally, prices go up.

Harvard economist Larry Summers even predicted this package could "set off inflationary pressures of a kind we

have not seen in a generation." He was exactly right.

We could not convince our Democratic colleagues to change course. Instead, they chose to double down. After the so-called "American Rescue Act"—a partisan spending bill of almost \$2 trillion—our Democratic colleagues said: Well, we are not through yet. They went on a second partisan spending spree and gave it an embarrassingly out-of-touch title. They called it the Inflation Reduction Act. The truth is, it was not an Inflation Reduction Act. It was an "Inflation Nonreduction Act." It misleadingly suggested that, somehow, we had to spend another \$740 billion to bring down inflation, when, actually, spending that more money—pouring that gasoline on the economic fire—actually made things worse.

This bill included even more liberal priorities, including hundreds of billions of dollars for climate projects. In total, the second partisan spending bill added \$740 billion.

It is no surprise that it certainly didn't do anything to reduce inflation. As I said, it made it worse. All it did was drive up costs for folks all across the country and add to the mountain of debt—now roughly \$35 trillion—that our grandchildren will inherit.

And now President Biden and many of our Democratic colleagues want to spend even more money. They are not done yet. They want to spend more money to address the problems created by their own unchecked spending habits.

As I mentioned a moment ago, student loans are a fact of life for many, many people. But rather than try to figure out how to work through this debt to help people actually meet their legal and moral obligations to repay the money that they borrowed, the President has proposed spending roughly another half a billion dollars to "forgive" student loans.

But everybody knows there is no forgiveness of the loan. You are just transferring that obligation from the person who borrowed the money and agreed to repay it back to everybody else—the taxpayers across America, many of whom either worked at a job and paid for their college, so they didn't have to borrow money, or else they didn't go to a 4-year liberal arts college. They went to a community college so they could pay the tuition costs and not have to rack up a bunch of debt. So, once again, the Biden administration has decided to pour more gasoline on the fire by effectively transferring that obligation to the taxpayer.

The bottom line is, under Democratic leadership, Texans and the lives of 330-plus million Americans have just gotten harder.

The average Texas household is spending \$1,000 more a month compared to when President Biden took office. As I said, they are grappling with higher costs for food, for energy, for housing, for insurance, and other basic expenses.

Here is the bottom line. For your \$100 package or cart full of groceries 4 years ago, now you are paying \$136.89 for that. That is probably the most real and dramatic and tangible impact on most Texans and most Americans.

When the American people look at inflation and what misguided government policies have done to make their lives harder and to reduce their standard of living, it is no surprise that they are turning pessimistic about the state of our economy—certainly, about their own economic circumstances.

In a recent New York Times poll, more than half the respondents rated the economy as "poor." That was the worst option they were given.

A Wall Street Journal poll found that nearly three-quarters of voters say inflation is headed in the wrong direction. Maybe you could just call that a statement of the obvious.

What is also obvious is that Biden economics and Biden inflation is wreaking havoc on family budgets, and it is clear that President Biden has absolutely no plan, other than to continue to spend more and more money—to pour more and more gasoline on the fire.

He has had 3 years to address inflation, 3 years to tamp down rising costs, which are a hidden tax on most Americans' income. He has had 3 years to return to the 1.4 percent inflation rate that he inherited—1.4 percent inflation when he inherited the office.

Sadly, he has proven himself either unwilling or incapable of addressing the crisis. I suspect he is, frankly, just oblivious to the crisis because it doesn't affect him, living in 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, collecting a large paycheck each month. It doesn't affect him one bit. But it affects hundreds of millions of Americans.

For the sake of families across the country who are still being crushed by the weight of inflation, we need a change in management. We need a change in direction because, as I said, the American people are not fooled. They know we are on the wrong course, and we need to correct that course come November.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The Senator from North Dakota.

(The remarks of Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Mr. MARSHALL pertaining to the introduction of S. 4081 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. HOEVEN. I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT J. WHITE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Robert Jerome White to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Born in Royal Oak, MI, Mr. White received his B.A. from the University of Michigan and his J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law. After graduating from law school, he worked as an associate attorney at Ralph E. Meczyk and