

Just a couple of days later, a horrifying new study was released in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, showing the devastating effects of the Roe reversal for women in America. According to this study, the State of Texas alone saw over 26,000 rape-related pregnancies in the year and a half since Texas outlawed all abortions, with zero exceptions for rape.

Let me say that again because the results are staggering, confounding, frightening: According to a new study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the State of Texas alone saw over 26,000 rape-related pregnancies in the year and a half since Texas outlawed all abortions, and they have zero exceptions for rape.

There are over 58,000 total rape-related pregnancies in States with total abortion bans and zero exceptions for rape.

The numbers from this study are shocking. They are heartbreaking. And it is all the more maddening because the hard-right abortion restrictions in Texas are as cruel as they come: forced pregnancies, no exception for rape, no exception for incest.

Not long ago, the abortion restrictions in Texas would have been considered on the fringe of the fringe. Today, sadly, it is a reality for women in post-Roe America.

Make no mistake about it—an America where abortion is outlawed with zero exceptions is precisely—precisely—what the hard right wants. The hard right doesn't care about exceptions, even for rape or incest. They want the freedom of choice to be extinct, period—no ands, ifs, or buts. Democrats will never let that stand. We will never stop fighting to protect a woman's right to choose. And Republicans won't be able to run from this horror they created later this year when the American people go to the polls.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. President, now on the economy, the outlook for the American economy continues to get brighter and brighter under the leadership of President Biden and Democrats here in Congress.

Last week, a report showed that consumer sentiment surged by nearly 30 percent over the last 2 months. And Americans received even more good news this week. The American economy far exceeded expectations in the last quarter of 2023, growing at a rate of 3.3 percent and avoiding even a hint of a recession.

The hard right predicted that Democrats' investments would drive our country to a recession, but today, American families are seeing more money in their pockets, low unemployment, and inflation cooling down.

The bottom line is that the American economy is headed in the right direction thanks to Democrats investing in our infrastructure, increasing manufacturing through CHIPS and Science, and lifting our country from crisis

through the American Rescue Plan. I am proud to say that in all three, Senate Democrats, whether in the minority or majority, played a leading role.

The economy is now on an upswing, so much so that Republicans and even the former President are trying to take credit. After the Dow Jones and S&P hit record highs last week, Donald Trump deployed a spin job for the ages, calling it the "Trump stock market." You can't make that up. Four years ago, Donald Trump predicted the stock market would crash if he lost the election. Well, Donald Trump did lose the election, but today, the stock market is setting record highs.

It is both laughable and very telling that Donald Trump is trying to take credit for the successes of President Biden and the congressional Democrats. Donald Trump knows his disastrous and chaotic record can't stand scrutiny against the jobs, increased wages, and investments secured by Democrats.

Of course, Donald Trump is hardly the only Republican taking credit for Democrats' successes. Around the country, scores of congressional Republicans are attending groundbreakings, and they are going to ribbon-cutting ceremonies and factory openings for projects they voted against in Congress, but the Democrats in the House and Senate prevailed.

Last week, a Minnesota GOP Congressman cheered the announcement of \$1 billion for a new bridge in his district, saying he was "proud to have worked with my Minnesota and Wisconsin congressional colleagues to secure this critical investment." There is only one problem: 2 years ago, this very GOP Member voted against the infrastructure bill that provided these funds, stating at the time:

I will not be complicit in paving a destructive and irreversible path towards socialism.

Well, there he was at the bridge. There he was at the bridge.

A few days later, another GOP Congresswoman from Florida tried to take credit on air for \$40 million in funding that came from bills she voted against in Congress, including the CHIPS and Science bill, which I was proud to have authored. I hope she will give me a pat on the back. When pressed on her voting record, her excuse was she didn't remember her vote.

This is going to be a pattern we are going to see all year long. Without any accomplishments of their own to talk about, Republicans in the House and Senate will try to take credit for jobs and investments they opposed in Congress.

Well, that is the difference between the Democratic and Republican agenda. Democrats are working hard to lower costs, increase wages, and fuel economic growth, while Republicans are creating chaos and then taking credit for our work.

If Republicans want to keep claiming credit, I encourage them: Work with us. Pass bipartisan legislation, and

then you can proudly go to these events without contradiction.

We still have a long way to go to make our economy work better for families, so there will be plenty of opportunities for Republicans to work with us.

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. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

IRAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, after nearly 150 Iran-backed attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, a reporter asked President Biden if he had a message for Iran. The President confidently replied:

I've already delivered the message to Iran. They know not to do anything.

The Commander in Chief had the temerity to suggest that the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism was effectively deterred. Repeated attacks since then, including a deadly attack in Jordan that killed three American soldiers and injured dozens more, suggest otherwise.

SGT William Rivers, SPC Kennedy Sanders, and SPC Breonna Moffett now rest with generations of brave Americans before them who have given their lives in service to our country. I know my colleagues join me in grieving with the families and comrades they leave behind.

For 3 years, the threat of Iran-backed terror against American personnel and interests in the Middle East has been growing. Iran is emboldened and believes it can use its proxies to attack America with impunity.

The Biden administration has hastened this erosion of deterrence. Their public hand-wringing and fear of escalation send exactly the wrong message to Tehran and other enemies of America. To paraphrase Henry Kissinger, when our primary objective becomes avoiding war or escalation, we are at the mercy of our most ruthless adversaries.

The United States' objective is not to avoid escalation at all costs. If it was, the quickest way to achieve it would be to retreat and cede the whole Middle East to Iran. Instead, our objective is to compel Iran and its proxies to stop attacking American forces and our interests in the region and to preserve American influence in a critical part of the world. But to achieve this objective, we have to convince our adversaries that we are prepared to escalate and to threaten the interests that they hold dear. If the Iranian regime thinks America is most afraid of escalation, it

will use that fear because it believes it will drive us from the Middle East, just as we were driven from Afghanistan.

It was reasonable to hope that the eruption of proxy violence against American forces in the wake of the October 7 massacre in Israel would convince the Biden administration to start seriously exercising American strength. It was reasonable to hope that a global superpower might finally begin to act like one. That hasn't happened yet, but perhaps the gut-wrenching tragedy of American casualties will finally wake this administration from its delusional approach to Iran.

Yesterday, the Secretary of Defense echoed President Biden's hollow assurance from earlier this month, insisting that the administration "will not tolerate attacks on U.S. forces, and we will take all necessary action to defend the U.S. and our troops." Unfortunately, this sentiment isn't yet backed by any action. The fact that Iran's proxies have targeted Americans 166 times in the past 3 months demonstrates that the Biden administration is willing to tolerate attacks on U.S. forces. The question for the Commander in Chief is whether his actions in the coming days will convince Iran and its proxies that America's tolerance has been exhausted.

It is time for the administration to provide Senators with a briefing on the current situation in the Middle East.

As I have said before, the President has the necessary authorities to strike those responsible for killing and wounding Americans, targeting our interests, and threatening our allies in the region. He has the capacity to go after the Iranians who sponsor and direct this campaign. But his administration has an obligation to inform Congress of its objectives and strategy and to explain why their attempts to deter Iran and its proxies have as yet been unsuccessful.

Of course, the failures of their own approach to the region haven't stopped Washington Democrats from trying to police the internal politics of a close ally fighting for its security or from trying to tie Israel's hands as it works to eradicate Hamas terrorists.

Some of our colleagues have apparently mistaken themselves for members of the Knesset. They have started using the press to cast bizarre, unsolicited votes of no confidence in a sovereign democracy's duly elected Prime Minister. Talk about foreign political interference. And their Bibi derangement syndrome isn't just unseemly behavior for an ally; they want to compel Israel to pursue policies that even prominent leaders of the Israeli left have insisted they have no time for.

It is increasingly, glaringly clear that a headlong charge forward to a two-state solution puts the cart before the horse. Israel needs a partner in peace before it can be expected to make peace. Palestinians need leaders and a government worthy of the name before they can expect a state.

As I have said before, responsibility for the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, for the weaponization of hospitals and schools, and for the corruption of aid agencies charged with helping the Palestinian people—all of that belongs to Hamas.

Each time Hamas has faced a choice between improving Palestinian lives and taking Israeli lives, it has chosen the latter. And last week we learned the horrific degree to which international humanitarian agencies have been corrupted—corrupted—by Hamas's hate. No fewer than a dozen credentialed staff members of the U.N.'s Relief and Works Agency are linked directly—directly—to the slaughter of Israelis on October 7. So let me say that again. At least 12 paid staff of the U.N. agency that purports to lead humanitarian efforts in Gaza moonlit—moonlit—as Hamas terrorists on the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

According to news reports, Israeli intelligence indicates that a full 10 percent of UNRWA's staff have ties to the Iran-backed terrorist group that steals aid shipments to build terror tunnels. Yet, instead of reckoning with UNRWA's complicity, the head of the agency responded with a whining statement that emphasized just how few of the supposed relief workers under his authority had been caught killing Israelis on company time.

In fairness, UNRWA comes from the same anti-Israel family of organizations as the self-proclaimed "global champion" for the empowerment of women, a U.N. entity that took 57 days—57 days—to condemn Hamas's rape and brutalization of Israeli women and girls.

The United States and our allies need not search for moral authority in such a fallow field as the United Nations. Unfortunately, even the Biden administration's announced pause on additional funding to UNRWA may fail to carry sufficient weight. As one outside analysis points out, \$51 million already allocated by the State Department for use this year will be delivered as scheduled to an organization that clearly lacks the means to fulfill its most basic purpose.

So as I have said before, there is no room for the tired cast of corruption and terrorism in the future of the Palestinian people. As such, Senate Republicans will not accept any legislation that allows taxpayer dollars to fund UNRWA.

And America's ally Israel deserves the time, space, and support it needs to remove Hamas from the equation—root, stem, and branch.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, tomorrow, our Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a landmark hearing. For the first time, the CEOs of five Big Tech companies will testify about the crisis of online child sexual exploitation.

This continues our committee's bipartisan work to combat the dangers children face online. This has been one of my top priorities as chair of the committee.

Last February, we held a hearing on kids' online safety. Six witnesses testified about online child sexual exploitation, cyber bullying, addictive online platforms, and the collection and sale of children's sensitive personal data. At the hearing, I noted there were no witnesses from the tech companies present. I promised they would have their chance.

Tomorrow, the CEOs of Discord, Meta, Snap, TikTok, and X will testify. I thank my friend and fellow colleague Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee, for his bipartisan cooperation in establishing this hearing. The CEOs of Discord, Snap, and X will testify pursuant to subpoenas issued by the committee. This follows their repeated refusal to testify voluntarily. I look forward to hearing from these companies about what they are doing to make their platforms inaccessible to child sex offenders.

As recently as last week, some have launched new child safety measures that are long overdue. If you were watching the playoff football games over the weekend, you heard some of these same companies advertising they have now discovered a new way to protect children. Could it have something to do with their appearance at the hearing? We will see.

But it shouldn't take a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee to finally get these companies to prioritize child safety. Because these changes are half measures at best, I welcome the opportunity to question them about what more needs to be done.

There have been recent troubling reports about how each of these platforms is being used by offenders to target children or trade child sexual abuse material. Some reports even detail how the platforms promote exploitive behavior. Let's be really honest about this. Some of these algorithms are more powerful than any parent—that is for sure—and some of the techniques that are used by these platforms to encourage and lure children into situations where they are in danger are well-documented and researched.

There have been recent troubling reports about these platforms being used to target kids in the most heinous ways. Some details about this show that the companies are actually promoting this kind of behavior. The National Center on Sexual Exploitation has named each of these companies to their annual "Dirty Dozen List" for facilitating child sexual exploitation.

I am sure every Member of the Senate has heard from constituents, friends, and family members about the harm Big Tech is inflicting on our kids. Tomorrow, the Senate Judiciary Committee will demand answers.