

you pass an ambitious agenda like the ones Democrats have passed under President Biden, it can take some time for the effects to take hold. But now we are starting to see these benefits gain momentum.

Americans are starting to notice. As a Washington Post headline read this week:

Falling inflation, rising growth give the United States the world's best recovery.

American citizens have noticed. The University of Michigan shows that consumer sentiment surged by nearly 30 percent over the last 2 months—the biggest 2-month increase in over 30 years.

Earlier this week, another survey by The Conference Board showed American consumers are more optimistic about the economy today than they have been in over 2 years. Let me say that again. According to a new survey by The Conference Board—very well-respected—American consumers are more optimistic about the economy today than they have been over the past 2 years.

The chief economist at The Conference Board credited the surge in consumer optimism to “slower inflation” and “favorable employment conditions.”

Look, a year and a half ago, when Democrats passed legislation investing in the American people, like the Inflation Reduction Act, the hard right predicted America would sink into recession. Instead, the opposite has happened. Jobs are up, the economy is up, wages are up, and inflation has cooled down. None of this happened on its own. It is a result of Democrats choosing to invest in infrastructure, invest in manufacturing and scientific innovation, lowering prescription drug costs, and more.

We are seeing big progress across the country. One year ago this week, I stood with President Biden to announce historic investment in one of the most important infrastructure projects in the country—the Gateway Tunnel. Just this morning, we learned that manufacturing investments—something that has plagued America for quite a while—is near an alltime high, more than double its highest point during the previous administration.

Look, Republicans know the Democratic agenda is working. It is why so many Republicans in Congress are openly taking credit for our achievements. All over the country, you see Republicans bragging about projects and jobs that they actually voted against in Congress. The hard right knows they have no real agenda to tout. As one Texas Congressman said on the House floor:

I want my Republican colleagues to give me one thing—one—that I can go campaign on and say we did.

Unfortunately, this Republican Congressman, his options are slim because they don't have much to tell the American people about that they did that was good.

Without real accomplishments on their own, the hard right is trying to take credit for the things Democrats are doing. It is laughable. And the American people, frankly, aren't falling for it.

So make no mistake. We still have a long way to go to make our economy more productive. But Americans can rest assured that under President Biden and congressional Democrats, we are on the right track.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the People's Republic of China is the single greatest strategic challenge facing the United States. It poses a potentially existential threat to our friends in the region and a growing threat to our allies in Europe as well.

The PRC is working to undermine the prevailing order that has maintained a major power piece for eight decades. It is useful to think about this challenge from our adversary's position.

President Xi aims to expand China's influence at our expense, to rewrite the rules of the road, and to dominate his neighbors. Each of these tasks becomes easier the more the West is distracted, divided, and deterred. And depending on the choices America and our allies make, our adversaries may succeed without even trying.

Are we distracted? Ask Beijing what it thinks about the Western diplomatic energy expended on unenforceable climate mandates while Chinese industry accelerates its carbon emissions. Our adversaries must scratch their heads at some of the things about which Western leaders obsess.

Are we divided? The PRC clearly hopes that the West's shared values are not as strong as our adversaries' shared disdain for them. Beijing no doubt enjoys watching the United States abandon allies in Afghanistan, second-guess allies in Israel, and initiate trade fights with its closest allies rather than China.

Are we deterred? We are self-deterred. Hesitation and hand-wringing over fears of escalation have become hallmarks of the Biden administration's foreign policy. Right now, you would be forgiven for wondering whether President Biden might take longer to respond to the Iran-backed strike that killed U.S. soldiers in Jordan than he did to finally approve long-range fires for Ukraine.

The administration's public obsession with avoiding escalation at all cost only signals to our adversaries that, indeed, authoritarians can take what they want by force.

Fortunately, Putin's aggression has clarified our allies' thinking. The West is waking up, turbocharging investments in new capabilities, and accelerating the expansion of our own defense industrial base.

Beijing and Moscow are not happy to see war in Ukraine prompt two more highly advanced European nations make historic new commitments to collective defense of the West by joining NATO. They are not happy to see America's allies direct a gusher of historic military investments into cutting-edge American weapons made by American workers. In the past 2 years, Pacific allies like Japan, South Korea, and Australia have been buying American to the tune of tens of billions of dollars. NATO allies have invested \$120 billion of their own in U.S. capabilities. Importantly, they are also investing in expanding their own defense industrial capacities.

Our allies recognize that Russia, China, and Iran are, as Secretary General Stoltenberg put it just yesterday here in Washington, “shaping [an] alternative world where U.S. power is diminished [and] NATO is divided.” In response, they are rejecting division and committing to interoperability and collective defense. In many ways, NATO is now more united than during the Cold War. But this progress is not a given. It depends on American leadership, and it is quite capable of unraveling. President Xi would like nothing more.

There is really no quicker way to make sure we will be distracted from necessary competition with China than by letting Russian aggression in Europe fester. There is no surer path to dividing America from our closest allies than by shredding our credibility and abandoning Ukraine. The PRC hopes that America and our allies will lose our will to stand up to Russian aggression. President Xi hopes for Russian victory but will benefit, too, from a frozen conflict. As they watch Russia fight in Ukraine, what Beijing and Tehran fear is a Western victory.

We must understand that the threats our adversaries pose are connected. China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are making alarming new commitments to support and underwrite one another's aggressive behavior. Our Asian allies know it. They know that leaving Russia undefeated means leaving the PRC undeterred. And their security assistance to Ukraine demonstrates how seriously they take these linked threats.

There is also growing transatlantic agreement that China is a systemic rival and a revisionist power.

When the most successful military alliance in history stands together, it represents fully half of the world's military power and half of its economic power. NATO is a formidable force that inspires confidence and collaboration among an even wider circle of allies and partners, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. But when America and our allies let aggression linger undefeated, this force is spread thin. Beijing wants nothing more than to face a West still consumed by self-deterrence in a conflict halfway around the world.

Europe has woken up. It is outpacing America in direct assistance to

Ukraine, with another €50 billion in assistance announced just today. This is good news. But even as our European allies ramp up their support, strengthen their defenses, upgrade their capabilities, and expand their defense industrial capacity, America doesn't get to opt out—opt out—of doing the same. Even as our most technologically advanced allies take historic steps forward, America doesn't have the luxury of pawning off our interests.

Deterring China means defeating Russian aggression. Degrading Russia's military means weakening Beijing's "friendship without limits" with Moscow. Equipping Ukraine to defend itself means confronting the PRC with the thing it hates the most: sovereign nations that choose their leaders and defend their interests.

Strengthening America's national security means standing with our allies and investing even more heavily in the capabilities we need to face our top strategic rival and every threat we face with formidable American strength.

ENERGY

Mr. President, on another matter, last week, the Biden administration followed through on a devastating threat to some of the most abundant and reliable energy made here in America and to those who rely on it around the world.

The administration's de facto ban on new liquefied natural gas export permits is the sort of policy so profoundly damaging that it could only have been dreamt up by the leftwing activists who are increasingly calling the shots on President Biden's energy policies.

As I have mentioned before, this de facto ban is harmful to American interests both at home and abroad. Canceled export permits mean canceled projects and canceled jobs. Bans on exploring and exporting American energy mean working families pay higher prices for gasoline, home heating, and countless other everyday expenses.

Since President Biden took office, the cost of gasoline has increased a cumulative 35 percent, fuel oil prices have increased 61 percent, natural gas has increased 27 percent, and electricity prices have increased 25 percent. But the costs of the administration's green bent aren't confined to our own borders. For the past 2 years, allies who once relied on Russian energy have started consuming more clean American LNG. As a recent editorial put it, "If new U.S. LNG projects are blocked, Europe and Asia will have to import gas from elsewhere to meet their growing demand. Most won't come from America's friends."

Iran and Russia are both increasing their LNG production capabilities, ready to meet desperate demand when American export capacity no longer can. Meanwhile, the same radical activists who drove a stake through the Keystone XL Pipeline are gleefully declaring victory in their campaign to make America and our allies more reliant on dirty energy from our adversaries.

President Biden, in keeping with his administration's practice of rewarding bad behavior with more responsibility, put one of the masterminds of his climate policy up for a promotion at the EPA. Yesterday, Senate Democrats overran bipartisan opposition to confirm Joseph Goffman's nomination as Assistant Administrator.

As I have said before, Mr. Goffman has encouraged the EPA's worst—worst—regulatory excesses and put activist whims over American workers and job creators. By some estimates, he has presided over the elimination of half the Nation's coal jobs. Unfortunately, the radical climate agenda he is helping to steer shows no signs of slowing down.

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 477, Lisa W. Wang, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Mazie Hirono, Tina Smith, Gary C. Peters, Amy Klobuchar, Raphael G. Warnock, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Mark R. Warner, Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Lisa W. Wang, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "nay."

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, and nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 31 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Baldwin	Cardin	Durbin
Bennet	Carper	Fetterman
Blumenthal	Casey	Gillibrand
Booker	Collins	Graham
Brown	Coons	Hassan
Butler	Cortez Masto	Heinrich
Cantwell	Duckworth	Hickenlooper

Hirono
Kaine
Kelly
King
Klobuchar
Lujan
Manchin
Markey
Menendez
Merkley
Murkowski

Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla
Reed
Rosen
Sanders
Schatz
Schumer
Shaheen
Sinema

Smith
Tester
Van Hollen
Vance
Warner
Warnock
Warren
Welch
Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—43

Blackburn
Boozman
Braun
Britt
Budd
Capito
Cassidy
Cornyn
Cotton
Cramer
Crapo
Cruz
Daines
Ernst
Fischer

Grassley
Hagerty
Hawley
Hyde-Smith
Johnson
Kennedy
Lankford
Lee
Lummis
Marshall
McConnell
Moran
Mullin
Paul
Ricketts

Risch
Romney
Rounds
Rubio
Schmitt
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Sullivan
Thune
Tillis
Tuberville
Wicker
Young

NOT VOTING—4

Barrasso
Hoeven

Peters
Stabenow

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 43.

The motion is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 476, Joseph Albert Laroski, Jr., of Maryland, to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Mazie K. Hirono, Tina Smith, Gary C. Peters, Amy Klobuchar, Raphael G. Warnock, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Mark R. Warner, Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Joseph Albert Laroski, Jr., of Maryland, to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: The Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows: