

abortion. We have been told it stomps all over religious liberties. We have heard that this issue is much ado about nothing. At best, these retorts are feeble and predictable, and at worst, they are dangerous. So let's set the record straight.

To those who claim the Right to Contraception Act undermines religious liberties, if anything, the opposite is true. This bill absolutely protects religious liberties. There is nothing in the text forcing anyone to provide contraception if it contradicts their own beliefs. Should this bill pass, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act would remain the law of the land.

To those who say outlandishly that this bill expands abortion access, that is false, full stop. I invite Americans to read this bill for themselves. There is nothing—nothing—in this bill about abortion. To suggest this bill expands abortion is vulgar fearmongering, plain and simple.

The reason we hear these claims is because Republican colleagues don't want to say the quiet part out loud: The GOP, the Republican Party here in the Senate, has been totally captured by the radical MAGA right, which is totally opposed to protecting reproductive rights, even birth control, which, of course, 90 percent of Americans support.

Make no mistake, if Republicans get into power, the MAGA right will push for a national abortion ban and the total elimination of reproductive care.

Finally, of course, there is the more devious claim that the Right to Contraception Act is much ado about nothing, that it is unnecessary, that birth control could never possibly fall under risk. Well, remember, people said the same thing about Roe—that it could never be overturned—and then tragically, unfortunately, it was because Donald Trump and the Republican Senate filled the Supreme Court with MAGA radicals who followed through with the hard right's goal of eliminating freedom of choice.

And who knows how far the hard right will go. A few years ago, it was Roe. A few years from now, it could be something else. Justice Thomas himself opened the door to undoing protections for birth control in his dissenting opinion in *Dobbs*. We are kidding ourselves if we think the hard right is done with their attacks on reproductive rights.

Let's be perfectly clear: Attacks against birth control aren't theoretical bugaboos; it is already happening at the State level.

To those who argue Federal protections for birth controls are unnecessary, go ask the people of Virginia what they think after their Republican Governor vetoed—vetoed—a bill that would have protected contraceptives at the State level. Go ask the people of Nevada what they think after their Republican Governor also vetoed a bill to protect access to birth control.

To those who say birth control will never fall at risk, go ask the people of

Arizona or Florida or Idaho or Iowa or Missouri. In each of these States, Republican Governors or Republican State legislators are on record blocking protections for birth control access in one form or another.

So let there be no mistake: In the aftermath after Roe's demise, the threat to birth control is very, very real, and that is why it is so important for the Senate to act.

This is a simple bill and a simple vote. If you believe all women deserve to have contraception, then you should vote for this bill. That is all there is to it.

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. 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.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the Supreme Court term is about to end, which means it is time for Democrats and their media allies to bully and harass the Justices. The most recent example of this is the risible attack leveled against Justice Alito for his wife's flags.

I have nothing to say about those attacks themselves because they are so profoundly unserious, but I do have an observation about how some of the attacks have been leveled.

Three of our colleagues have taken it upon themselves to write to the Chief Justice and demand Justice Alito's recusal in cases. One went so far as to tell the Chief that he should strip Justices Alito and Thomas of their ability to write majority opinions unless they recuse from the cases liberals don't want them hearing.

This goes beyond the standard disgraceful bullying my Democratic colleagues have perfected. Recusal is a judicial act.

These Senators are telling the Chief Justice, privately, to change the course of pending litigation. This is known as *ex parte* communication, and it is frowned upon by the ABA's Model Rules of Professional Conduct.

This matters because at least two of these colleagues of ours—the junior Senator from Rhode Island and the senior Senator from Connecticut—seem to be members of the Supreme Court Bar. If so, they are, therefore, potentially engaging in unethical professional conduct before the Court.

They may be under the mistaken impression that their persistent attempts to threaten the Federal courts are a permissible use of their legislative office, but they are officers of the Court and bound by a different set of rules than a mere Senator. These rules pro-

vide for discipline against those who engage in "conduct unbecoming" an officer of the Court.

I might suggest to our colleagues that unethical *ex parte* communications seeking to change the course of pending litigation is such conduct and that the Court should take any remedial action it feels to be appropriate.

The legal profession is in distress. Unethical behavior by attorneys serving political causes, unfortunately, knows no party or faction. It is up to the legal profession to police itself, and in the end, this means that courts, including the Supreme Court, must police their officers. We don't need to appeal to heaven to fix this problem, just to the Supreme Court's power to police the ethical practice of law among the members of its bar.

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA

Mr. President, on another matter, unaccountable international judicial juntas have made headlines in recent weeks.

First, it was the self-aggrandizing International Criminal Court, whose rogue prosecutor sought preposterous arrest warrants for Israeli leaders in a grotesque attempt to draw moral equivalence with Hamas terrorists.

Not to be outdone, the unelected and unaccountable International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea has issued an advisory opinion that seeks to establish an international law requirement to regulate greenhouse gases, including a right of action against wealthy, industrialized nations.

The New York Times reports that such an opinion is unsurprisingly expected to lead to "wide-ranging claims for damages against polluting nations." The paper of record also tells us the U.N.'s International Court of Justice is also seized of the matter.

Climate justice warriors are swooning as they contemplate the largesse they might receive from this redistributive lawfare. This is a money grab and a power grab, pure and simple.

All of this unaccountable globalist socialism is just another reason President Reagan refused to sign the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea and why the Senate has rightly refused to ratify it. At this point, it should be called the "ICC of the Sea."

I know some of my colleagues believe we should ratify this treaty, and they mean well, but I would urge my friends on both sides of the aisle to ask themselves if they are willing to put U.S. sovereignty into the hands of the "ICC of the Sea."

No country or entity has done more to protect the freedom of navigation than the United States. The U.S. and allied navies are the ones who protect commercial shipping lanes the global economy relies on, and self-important jurists of the "ICC of the Sea" would do well to remember this fact the next time they consider biting the hand that feeds.

ENERGY

Now, Mr. President, on one final matter, since President Biden took office, the cost of energy has risen 41.65 percent. Fuel oil prices are up 56.8 percent. Gasoline is up 55.5 percent, and natural gas is up 22 percent.

This, of course, is not news to working families who have been struggling to keep up for the past 3½ years, but Washington Democrats are just now waking up.

Suddenly, right before an election, Democrats are concerned about the high prices Americans are paying to fill up their gas tanks, but they still can't seem to correctly assign the blame. Just last month, the Democratic leader berated "big oil companies" for "continuing to rake in the cash at the expense of the American people."

But I thought high energy prices were a primary feature of the leftwing climate agenda. As a report from Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy put it, "a price on carbon makes those responsible for the damages caused by greenhouse gas emissions pay for those damages. . . . A carbon price makes carbon-intensive goods and services more expensive."

Well, there you have it. High prices for hard-working Americans are a feature, not a bug.

If Washington Democrats are looking for a scapegoat for soaring energy prices, it is about time they looked in the mirror.

And, as our colleague from West Virginia, Senator CAPITO, reminded us recently, the very law Washington Democrats claimed was designed to lower prices is, instead, sending taxpayer dollars to support inflationary climate programs and other radical causes. The EPA sent \$50 million from the so-called Inflation Reduction Act to support the Climate Justice Alliance.

Now, we already know that "climate justice" means higher gas prices for working Americans and electric vehicle subsidies for high-earning elites.

But what about the organization's plan to "break the rules that need to be broken" and "shut down extractive facilities and extractive economic structures" and place "race, gender and class at the center" of the economy?

What about its contention that "the path to climate justice travels through a free Palestine"?

Once again, this is a beneficiary of the so-called Inflation Reduction Act.

Suffice it to say, the so-called Climate Justice Alliance is not comprised of America's allies, and, while they claim to advocate for justice, they are burying working families in higher costs.

I can assure our colleagues that the American people won't take kindly to being treated like suckers.

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.

RIGHT TO CONTRACEPTION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Well, Mr. President, it is about time for Democrats' weekly exercise in election-year politics.

Later today, we will take up another bill intended to provide a talking point for Democrat candidates, and the Democrat leader hopes to put Republicans in a tight spot. But if he thinks to see Republicans quaking in their boots over being asked to take these votes, he should think again, because we welcome the chance to talk about the Democrat agenda.

Take this afternoon's exercise. Under the guise of protecting access to contraception—something that is not under threat—the Democrat leader is bringing up legislation that would not only funnel money to Democrats' allies at Planned Parenthood but would wipe out—wipe out—conscience protections for healthcare providers. The bill specifically targets the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which was bipartisan legislation passed in 1993—back, I might add, when Democrats actually believed in protecting our First Amendment freedoms.

And this is not the first time Democrats have attempted to carve out sweeping exceptions to this once widely supported legislation. Apparently, Americans are free to live out their deeply held moral and religious beliefs when they don't conflict with Democrats' policy positions.

It is deeply disturbing that the Democrat leader has gone from sponsoring—sponsoring—the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to attempting to decide when and how Americans can exercise one of their fundamental First Amendment rights. If the Democrat leader thinks that Republicans are intimidated to cast a vote against legislation that would seriously imperil Americans' ability to live according to their consciences, well, as I said, he should think again.

I suspect there are few Americans who don't recognize the Democrat leader's politicking for exactly what it is, just as I suspect there are few Americans who bought Democrats' border legislation ploy 2 weeks ago.

The Democrat leader apparently thought that he could erase Americans' memories of 3-plus years of chaos at the southern border under President Biden by bringing up a vote on a border bill that he knew would not be able to pass the Senate, but I think he will find that Americans' memories are more retentive than that.

Three years of national security crisis were not wiped out by a show vote intended to provide electoral cover for Democrats, just as they won't be wiped out by President Biden's latest election-year ploy—an Executive order to implement border restrictions the likes

of which he should have implemented years ago. If anything, any improvements at the border stemming from the President's latest measure will only serve to highlight the President's failure to address this crisis earlier and the needless danger to which he has subjected Americans.

I mentioned that the Democrat leader knew his border show vote would fail, just as he knows his Planned Parenthood subsidy, anti-religious freedom legislation will fail this afternoon. That, of course, points to the fundamental unseriousness of what the Democrat leader is doing.

If the Democrat leader had any real interest in legislating on these issues, he would be working with Republicans to bring up legislation that actually has a chance of receiving the support from both Democrats and Republicans.

Senator JONI ERNST, for example, has legislation to promote access to contraception, but that is not the legislation Senator SCHUMER is bringing up because these votes have nothing to do with legislating and everything to do with boosting Democrats' electoral chances—he hopes—in this fall's elections.

I suspect the exercises in election politics will continue. Look for this to be the summer of show votes here in the U.S. Senate.

As I said, Republicans are ready for it. We are happy to talk about the Democrat agenda, whether that is the President's disastrous border policies—or lack thereof—or Democrats' never-ending inflation crisis, or another attempt by the Democrat leader to force through legislation to legalize abortion up until the moment of birth.

All the show votes in the world won't erase Democrats' record, as Democrats may discover, to their cost.

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. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, the President of the United States is, today, using clips of my speech on the floor of the Senate in his campaign ads talking about border security and immigration. Well, I would encourage him to use clips of this speech today instead, because President Biden created the problem at the border right now.

That is not some theory. That is not some political statement. That is fact. And I can compare that to the two previous Presidents, who operated under the exact same law as President Biden is operating under now. We have 2½ million people—plus—illegally crossing our southern border this year. Under