

was also cut off from his lawyer and family for several weeks. Others are subjected to physical abuse, humiliation, and cruel and inhumane treatment.

Despite its clear pattern of committing human rights violations, Azerbaijan has incurred few costs from the international community for its egregious abuses against ethnic Armenians and illegal detention of political prisoners. The Aliyev regime thinks it can continue acting in flagrant violation of international and U.S. law, which is why it is incumbent upon Congress to speak out and say no to Azerbaijan; no to hostage diplomacy and Azerbaijan's taking of political prisoners; no to subjecting political prisoners to cruel and inhumane punishment; no to denying the rights of ethnic Armenians in the region; and no to Azerbaijan delaying the release of the political prisoners even 1 more day.

Azerbaijan must cease all of its abuse of political prisoners. It must release all political prisoners and prisoners of war, and that is why I sent a letter to Secretary Anthony Blinken urging the State Department to prioritize the release of Armenian prisoners held by Azerbaijan and the right of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians to return to their homes in ongoing peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan says it wants peace, but what it really wants is to act with impunity and still be rewarded by the United States and the international community, including with the privilege of hosting the next United Nations International Climate Conference COP29 later on this year. You cannot, on the one hand, be saying you want to host the world and then simultaneously say but ignore our human rights violations. Ignore the fact that we just arrest the political leaders of another nation and pretend that somehow or another we are still worthy of hosting the climate summit for the planet.

I urge both Congress and the White House to insist, in all interactions with the Governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia, that the release of political prisoners must be a prerequisite to any concessions, awards, or peace deals reached. We must say no to Azerbaijan's violations of international law and human rights and ensure those responsible are held accountable.

This is the perfect time to be having this conversation. Azerbaijan is getting ready to host the climate summit of the world. We must ensure that we take this opportunity to put the spotlight on all of those political prisoners who are being held wrongly by the Azerbaijan Government. It is strictly a violation of international human rights, and I call upon our government and I call upon the world to put a spotlight on these political prisoners so that they are released before the climate summit is held at the end of this year.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it is Tuesday afternoon. The Senate has its first vote of the week coming up in a few minutes, and I am experiencing a sense of *deja vu*—as Yogi Berra said, “*Deja vu* all over again.”

This week, the majority leader has teed up three votes on President Biden's nominees followed by another partisan show vote, this time on in vitro fertilization. It is another made-up controversy.

In vitro fertilization provides hope for couples across the United States who are struggling to grow their families and has helped millions of babies enter the world. I support IVF, which has been a solution for millions of families struggling with infertility.

But there is no nationwide threat to the availability of in vitro fertilization, and I am deeply disappointed—but not surprised—that Democrats are trying to politicize something that enjoys such widespread support. There is no controversy over access to in vitro fertilization. After all, this is the third partisan show vote we have had recently.

Last week, the Senate voted on a handful of nominees and held another show vote on a nonexistent threat to contraception access. There is no threat to access to contraception. But the majority leader who schedules votes on the floor, who runs the agenda, decided he wanted to create a controversy out of thin air where there was none.

The previous week included votes on several nominees, and this time another show vote on a partisan border bill that the majority leader knew would fail but decided to have a show vote anyway.

Considering the many challenges our country is facing, this is hardly what the Senate should be doing. Families are grappling with high prices as a result of 40-year high inflation rates exacerbated by unchecked spending—throwing trillions of dollars on the inflation fire only to see it get worse and worse. The Federal Reserve has done what it can do, which is raise interest rates to try to slow down the growth of inflation. But the fact is, as Congress continues to shovel money out the door, it just makes things worse.

And people on a fixed income and people who have a modest earning are being hurt the most. The Wall Street Journal recently ran a story saying that a cart full of groceries that cost 100 bucks before the Biden administration came into office, or when it did come into office, now costs \$136. That is a 36-percent increase in inflation. Wages haven't kept up that much.

So what are people supposed to do when the government continues to make their quality of life and standard of living worse this time because of reckless spending?

The American people are concerned by crime and public safety in their

communities, and they are terrified by the spread of fentanyl, which is now the leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 18 and 45. We know where the fentanyl comes from: The precursor chemicals come from China; the cartels then import them into Mexico where they are then transformed into a look-alike pill that is actually a counterfeit pill. But unbeknownst to the person who takes that pill, it is contaminated with fentanyl, and they lose their life.

I have been with numerous families who have lost their high school students to fentanyl poisoning. Their kids were full of potential, came from loving families, only to lose their life as a result of this deadly drug that comes across the border from Mexico.

So along with the millions of people that are flooding across the border, the drug cartels take advantage of the diversion of resources by the Border Patrol to move the drugs into the United States only to be spread throughout the country.

And, yes, Americans are concerned about the border crisis, the growing national debt, and American's weakening influence on the world stage. Given these and countless other challenges facing our country, it is indeed sad to see the Senate spending its work period—its limited resource—doing virtually nothing other than show votes for partisan political gain.

The issue isn't limited to how the Senate is spending its time but actually how little time we are actually in session. During the entire month of June, Senator SCHUMER, who sets the agenda, has the Senate working 9 days—9 days out of June.

Of course, many of those shouldn't really even count as a full day, like today, where the first vote is at 5:30 in the afternoon. Today, the Senate convened at 3 p.m. We will finish our work by dinner. We will be in session a full day tomorrow, and I imagine we will wrap up the workweek by after lunch on Thursday. That is what passes for a full workweek in the U.S. Senate under Senator SCHUMER's leadership.

We are supposed to be doing important work. That is why all of us who ran for office and have the privilege of holding office, representing our States here in the U.S. Senate, that is why we are here, but the schedule is barely enough time to be considered a part-time job. No American working out in communities across the country works half time for full-time pay, only the U.S. Senate under Senator SCHUMER's leadership.

The lack of action on the Senate floor is just part of the problem. It is really just scratching the surface. Committees, which is where most of the work gets done when the Senate is in session, clearly don't have much time to meet these days. And there are two committees that are working on absolutely critical and time-sensitive legislation right now, but when we are in session 2½ days a week, it is hard for them to get their work done.

First is the Senate Armed Services Committee, which is crafting the National Defense Authorization Act, something we have passed more than 60 years in a row here in the Senate. In times of peace, a strong Defense Authorization Act is critical, but in the current period of global turmoil, its importance cannot be overstated.

The National Defense Authorization Act was the key to modernizing our military, supporting our troops, and preserving America's military readiness in a very dangerous world. Given the threats we face from every corner of the planet, it is absolutely imperative that the Senate pass a strong Defense authorization bill this summer, but the majority leader's schedule created an impossible time crunch.

This week, members of the Armed Services Committee are effectively sprinting a marathon to complete their work on the National Defense Authorization Act. This is arduous, detailed, and time consuming, and it involves multiple hearings, markups, and hundreds of amendments.

Now, I appreciate Senator REED and Senator WICKER, the chairman and ranking member of that committee, and all of our colleagues on the committee who are giving the National Defense Authorization bill the time and attention it deserves. But the process here, under the majority leader, is making their job much harder, rather than easier.

Another committee that is working overtime this month to try to get its work done is the Senate Appropriations Committee, which is trying to mark up 12 annual funding bills. These are bills that fund our national defense, pay our servicemembers, and ensure that we can keep the lights on here in Washington and ensure that all the government operations—big and small—continue day to day.

When the Senate is only working 2½ days a week, it doesn't give the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator MURRAY, or the ranking member, Senator COLLINS, much room to maneuver. How are the members of the committee and subcommittees supposed to debate, amend, and advance 12 funding bills when the Senate is only working 9 days during a given month?

With this type of schedule, there is simply not enough hours in the day for our colleagues to complete their work. And given the Senate's schedule for the next several weeks, I am concerned about the prospects of any of these bills passing before the end of summer, much less before the end of the fiscal year, the end of September.

Simply put, the majority leader is setting the Senate up for failure. Including this week, we are scheduled to be in session for 5 weeks—5 weeks—before adjourning for the August recess.

In total, we are only scheduled to be in session 8 weeks before the November election, which is almost 5 months away. When those weeks are wasted—squandered, really—on low-level nomi-

nees and partisan show votes, it comes with a serious opportunity cost.

There are countless bipartisan bills that deserve a vote by the Senate, but the majority leader is simply disinterested. One example is drug pricing, something that affects almost every American. Senators on both sides of the aisle have offered bills to address rising prices at the pharmacy, something I think everybody can relate to.

This has been a problem for years, of course, but it has become even more important given the effects of inflation. Families are paying more for groceries, as I mentioned earlier. They are paying more for rent, for insurance. Their mortgage rates are higher because of interest costs. Every penny counts, and my constituents in Texas want Congress to prevent bad actors from gaming the system at the expense of patients.

By and large, this is a bipartisan priority. I am not talking about a partisan show vote. I am talking about a bipartisan approach to bringing down prescription drug costs.

Just one example is the bill that Senator BLUMENTHAL—the Senator from Connecticut, a Democrat—and I introduced, called the Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act, to crack down on anti-competitive practices that game the patent system and keep prices high. This legislation was approved by the Judiciary Committee in February of last year, along with four other bipartisan bills to bring down prescription drug prices.

The majority leader could bring those bills to the floor tomorrow—or today, actually. That would be doing something worth doing—not show votes, scaring people into thinking that in vitro fertilization or contraception are somehow going to be limited or whether that is actually a real, serious debate. It is not.

Each of these drug pricing bills was crafted on a bipartisan basis. Each went through the committee process, which is important. And each was approved by the majority of the Judiciary Committee. But here we are, 16 months later, without any progress being made on the Senate floor, on something the American people really, really care about. Five bipartisan bills passed the Judiciary Committee nearly a year and a half ago, and the majority leader has higher priorities in partisan show votes involving in vitro fertilization and contraception. It is really sad and shameful.

The American people deserve better. This is supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body, but, lately, we haven't had the opportunity to deliberate on anything really of substance.

Forget partisan show votes. Forget election year antics. This Chamber needs to get back to doing its job and doing its job for a full workweek, not halftime.

This is the job each of us was sent here to do. But the person that occu-

pies this desk, the majority leader of the Senate, is the only one who sets the Senate schedule and Senate agenda. No matter how much 99 of the rest of us demand it, if he says no, we are going to waste our time on show votes and work 2½ days a week. That is the way it is, and it is a shame and an opportunity lost.

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.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN SQUIRE DRENDEL

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the memories of two incredible Nevadans who tragically passed away earlier this year. One is John Squire Drendel, and the other is Tom Rodriguez. These two men were dear friends of mine and fierce advocates for our communities in Nevada, and they will be sorely missed. So I would like to talk a little bit about them to all of you and to those who are listening as well.

John Squire Drendel, whom you see right here—I want to celebrate the life of this good friend, not just to me but to so many throughout Nevada, whose 100th birthday I recognized right here in the Senate, just a few months ago.

John dedicated his life to serving his fellow Nevadans and being a voice for those who had none, and, for 70 years, he shaped Nevada's legal community.

On August 4, 1923, John was born in Carson Valley, NV, a beautiful rural community just south of Carson City. In the midst of the Great Depression, John left home to work on a nearby ranch and complete his studies at Douglas County High School.

During his first semester at the University of Notre Dame, in the fall of 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor altered the trajectory of his life. John served in the U.S. Navy as a lieutenant and as a commander of a landing craft tank in Pacific Islands.

In 1945, when John was on leave from his Navy training, he came here to Washington, DC, where he met none other than President Harry Truman, as you see right here—you see him on the left—two inspiring men who spent their lives giving back to the community.

And following the end of World War II, John took advantage of the education benefits provided in the GI bill to complete his undergraduate education, and he attended law school at the University of Colorado. After obtaining his law degree, John returned home to Nevada with his wife Marilyn to raise their four children and work as a Nevada highway patrolman.

In 1950, John passed the Nevada bar exam and later partnered with William