

plan for America, should they regain control of government. I will spoil the ending right now. If there is one thing Republicans absolutely love to do in Congress, it is passing tax giveaways for the very wealthy. That is what they plan on talking about today, using reconciliation to gut as much of the Democrats' middle-class agenda as possible, while passing another round of costly tax breaks that cater to wealthy elites.

I understand that, nowadays, it is tempting to think about elections just in terms of personalities, but that is a grave mistake. Look at the agendas. Look at what Republicans say they want to do. Republicans say their biggest priority, their North Star, is undoing all the things that President Biden and we Democrats have passed these past few years, while recycling the same Trump tax cuts that proved to be a dud 7 years ago.

Remember 2018? They couldn't even run on these things because Democrats had made a strong message that these weren't tax cuts for the middle class; these were tax cuts to help benefit the very, very wealthy.

So they are not going to be able to sustain this argument, but their right-wing ideologues pushed them in a direction that many of them probably know is wrong.

It also means, if they want to repeal everything the Democrats did, it means repealing \$35-a-month insulin for people on Medicare. That is what Republicans want.

It means stopping Medicare from negotiating the price of prescription drugs. That is what Republicans want too. It is also, by the way, what Big Pharma wants.

It means cutting programs that feed kids during summer breaks; that feed seniors, like Meals on Wheels; that fight congestion on our streets and pollution in our air. To Republicans, these things are like their version of "greatest hits."

It means cutting all the clean energy investments we have passed that create good-paying jobs and protect our environments. Republicans are in the pocket of Big Oil, which will always oppose efforts to grow clean energy.

And remember what Donald Trump said to oil executives recently at Mar-a-Lago: If they back him, he will do as much as possible to repeal our climate agenda, starting on day one. So anyone who cares about the climate and sees the changing weather and the tornadoes and the hurricanes and all the bad weather—the cold waves and the heat waves—well, our Republican friends want to undo the great progress we have made in the IRA and will try to do it in reconciliation. That is a real threat.

Finally, it also means—as much as Republicans try to avoid saying it—putting vital programs like Social Security and Medicare on the chopping block and telling seniors that the Social Security retirement age is going to go up.

I know Republicans writhe in pain whenever people bring this up. But look at the platform released by the Republican Study Committee, which covers over 180 House members. And let's not forget, if they keep control of the House—which I think they won't, don't believe they won't—they are going to set the agenda, and then Senate Republicans, even those who know better, will just blindly follow. And they, in the Republican Study Committee—180 of the 220-some-odd Republicans—endorsed not only a national abortion ban but cuts for Social Security and Medicare. So that is what they are going to do.

And who here remembers the campaign platform that our colleague from Florida released back in 2022? He is now running for leader over here. He thought it was a good idea for Republicans to run on tax hikes for the middle class, while putting programs like Social Security and Medicare at risk.

What a shock that this message didn't work with the American people. I don't think they are working with the voters of Florida either.

And speaking of tax cuts, let me add this: According to the Washington Post, Republicans not only plan to do another round of Trump's tax cuts for the very rich, they want to go even further. They want even lower rates for corporations. They want even lower rates for those making over a billion dollars a year, while making it easier for tax cheats to get away without paying their fair share.

Donald Trump's message to donors has reportedly been pretty simple: Support me. I will get you a sweet tax deal in return.

Republicans love to claim that they are the party of fiscal responsibility, but that goes out the window whenever they start salivating over the thought of deep tax cuts for the high-end people in America.

The CBO has pointed out that extending the Trump tax cut alone would add a whopping \$4½ trillion to the deficit.

So you want to cut spending when it comes to feeding kids or educating kids or helping kids pay for college? You want to cut the deficit, rather, and that is your way of cutting the deficit, by cutting money to feed kids or educate kids or to avoid the high cost of college? But the deficit doesn't matter when it means tax cuts for the very, very wealthy.

It is utterly callous. When it comes to funding things like nutrition or healthcare for kids, they scream and holler that we can't add to the deficit. But when it comes to sweeping tax cuts for the ultrarich, suddenly, the deficit doesn't matter.

The old cliché says that "the more things change, the more they stay the same." Republicans today have been totally transformed by the cult personality of Donald Trump, but if they are given control of the government, they will continue to give middle-class

Americans the same raw deal Republicans have pushed for years: tax giveaways for the ultrarich and crumbs for everyone else.

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.

#### INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, since President Biden took office, consumer prices have risen more than 20 percent. The Nation hasn't seen this sort of persistent drain on our economy since the Carter administration, and the Biden administration is desperate to avoid the obvious comparison to the stagflation back in the 1970s.

The White House recently asserted that "President Biden's top priority is beating inflation, which is why he has taken historic action . . ."

Well, that begs the question: Which historic action are we talking about here? Is the administration referring to the time it invited historic inflation over the warnings of top liberal economists like Larry Summers but ignored that and went ahead with the so-called American Rescue Plan or the time they did the same thing again but called it the Inflation Reduction Act?

The Biden administration is still looking for a safe landing spot, and liberal commentators are literally tying themselves in knots. One liberal editorial board recently suggested that since employment and consumption levels are steady, "people will . . . start to notice and the 'vibes' will also return to more normal levels"; that "[i]t's possible that Americans are experiencing the economic equivalent of a hangover."

But, Mr. President, that is just utter nonsense and is not fooling anyone who actually has to balance a family budget. A recent survey reported that nearly two-thirds of middle-class Americans say they are facing economic hardship.

Numbers don't lie; neither do consumers. The high prices they are facing aren't a matter of "bad vibes." They are the predictable and avoidable consequences of Bidenomics.

#### GUANTANAMO BAY

Mr. President, on another matter, I have spoken before about the Biden administration's political obsession with closing the terrorist detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, even if it means letting terrorist butchers plead out of their just desserts and actually return to the fight.

Last month, new reports indicated just how close the President was to

shipping 11 more terrorists from Gitmo back to the Middle East to a country that is reportedly expelling former terrorist detainees into the wilds of Yemen; that is, until Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched their savage massacre of Jews on October 7. Apparently, the administration has bowed, at least temporarily, to the political inconvenience of releasing radical Islamic terrorists into the wild.

The American people don't need a barbaric attack on Israel's civilians to remind us that radical Islamic terrorists are targeting us, murdering our allies, and sowing chaos around the world. The growth of terrorist threats worldwide on President Biden's watch is an indisputable fact, and his administration's abject lack of a coherent counterterrorism strategy is a damning failure.

The President may have removed the Iran-backed Houthis from the terrorist list, but the Houthi terrorists didn't get the memo. The Shia Houthi terrorists and the al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula Sunni terrorists of Yemen are both—both of them—on the march, working to extend the chaos and violence Hamas is sowing in Israel and Gaza across the entire region.

The White House may have thought they could maintain shoestring partnerships and counter exploding terrorist threats in critical regions, but Russia's inroads to supplant U.S. influence in the Sahel and North Africa tell a different story. They may have bet the farm that over-the-horizon counterterrorism operations could replace an active coalition presence in Afghanistan, but the resurgence of groups like ISIS-K and al-Qaida suggest otherwise.

How many counterterrorism strikes has the U.S. military conducted in Afghanistan since the withdrawal? The current state of affairs benefits those who wish America and our allies harm. From the administration's paralyzing fear of escalation to its desperate pursuit of detente with the world's top terror sponsor, the status quo gives our enemies cover.

And had the Biden administration's plan to export another 11 terrorists from Gitmo actually gone ahead, it might very well have swelled their ranks. We don't have to imagine it. We saw what happened when the terrorists detained at Bagram Air Base in Kabul were sprung loose. We have seen repeated terrorist jailbreaks in Syria as well.

And in light of recent reporting, we know that 50,000 ISIS suspects and their families are detained by U.S.-funded nonstate actors in that country, at the epicenter—the epicenter—of terrorist unrest.

The Biden administration might genuinely believe that outsourcing its responsibility to hold and prosecute those who wish America harm would be more humane or that it would make America safer, but they would be dead wrong on both counts. Relying on proxies to detain tens of thousands of low-

level suspects in alarming conditions risks inviting a whole new generation of terrorists to put America in their crosshairs.

Administration officials cannot credibly signal virtue by releasing hardcore terrorists from Gitmo while quietly relying on proxies to detain low-level terrorists in such conditions. The men who await justice at Gitmo are the worst of the worst. Recidivism is a serious concern. And the Democrats working breathlessly to close America's terrorist detention facility don't have a serious plan to address it. They make it harder to strike terrorists and harder to detain them at the same time. In fact, the administration is now trying to block any constraints on their ability to empty Gitmo from the coming year's NDAA.

If any of our colleagues are tempted to indulge the administration's obsessive quest, I would encourage them to request briefings on the nature of the threat before they do.

The President's dangerous weakness in the face of hardened killers is well documented, and his plan to let some of the masterminds of terrorist violence against Americans off the hook is only the most enduring example.

#### FARM BILL

Mr. President, now, on one final matter, it is no secret that American farmers face a lot of uncertainty: unstable markets, volatile weather, and a projected record drop in farm income. All these things make a job that is inherently difficult even more precarious.

As one producer in my State put it, "Farming is risky and margins are tight."

Certainty and stability oil the engine of American agriculture, which is why farm families in Kentucky and the rest of rural America look to the farm bill to provide support and safeguard our food supply. Unfortunately, with the farm bill's September expiration fast approaching, Senate Democrats don't seem to be in any rush to address farmers' immediate needs.

The Agriculture Committee's majority has yet to introduce a bill, set a markup, or secure a single minute of floor time with the Democratic leader. The committee has a long tradition of bipartisanship. There is no reason our colleagues can't show some good faith and start working to advance serious legislation. It is time to get to the table.

Yesterday, Ranking Member BOOZMAN put forward a Republican farm bill framework that would give our colleagues a good place to start. The ranking member's plan reflects the actual reality of owning and operating a farm today, and it addresses the biggest bone of contention among American producers: less fluff and more farm in the farm bill, from bolstering the farmer safety net, to expanding our competitiveness in world markets, to providing new producers with means to get off the ground.

I have served on the Agriculture Committee my entire time in the Sen-

ate. I know drafting this legislation is certainly not easy, and I am grateful to the ranking member for his work on this important issue. I hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will look to this framework for guidance as we work to deliver certainty and stability to America's farmers.

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.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and a resident of a State whose literal lifeblood is agriculture, the farm bills that Congress takes up every few years are one of my top priorities.

I have had the chance to help craft four, now, farm bills during my time in Congress, and my No. 1 goal is always to ensure that each bill accurately reflects the needs and priorities of the men and women on the ground, the ones who are doing the hard work of feeding our country.

As I travel around my State of South Dakota, I always take special note of my conversations with agriculture producers, and many of the bills that I introduce for inclusion in the farm bill are based on these conversations.

The current farm bill will expire later this year. With deadlines approaching and updates needed to a number of farm programs, Congress needs to focus on advancing the next farm bill.

This is all the more important given the headwinds farmers and ranchers are currently facing. With net farm income projected to decline by 25 percent this year and with input costs projected to hit a record high, it is especially important that we make sure farmers and ranchers have the support they need to carry on with their vital work.

Last month, the House Agriculture Committee marked up its draft of the next farm bill, and the bill passed the committee with the support of not just Republicans but several Democrats as well. Yesterday morning, Senate Agriculture Committee Ranking Member JOHN BOOZMAN released his farm bill framework to build off the House's work and hopefully move this process forward in the Senate.

Progress in the Senate has been hamstrung by Senate Democrats' insistence on prioritizing things like climate over the needs of farmers and ranchers. I am hoping that the recent efforts by the House, along with Senator BOOZMAN's framework, will move deliberations along and refocus our efforts on farmers and ranchers instead of Democrats' climate obsessions.

In preparation for this next farm bill, I introduced a number of pieces of legislation that I hope to get included in