

harmed and put in real jeopardy, and it would send costs straight up the roof for consumers on a whole lot of agricultural-based goods.

So the House Republicans' CR is simply unserious. It is pure partisan posturing.

Democrats will do everything we can to avoid a Republican-manufactured shutdown. We are ready to work on a bipartisan bill that will keep the government open. Any extraneous provisions that hinder that goal should be set aside.

Despite all this, Speaker JOHNSON knows deep down that he needs to work with Democrats to get anything done because that has been true this entire time. And it is a good sign, Madam President, that the Johnson CR finally accepts the bipartisan top-line spending agreement I reached with him months ago, as part of the deal to prevent a default. It is clear that any final agreement will maintain that funding level.

So let's stop wasting time and put together a bipartisan funding plan that fulfills our obligations to prevent a costly and unnecessary Republican government shutdown.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, now on the work period, everyone knows that an election is just around the corner, but Senators still have a responsibility to make progress wherever possible on bipartisan issues that will help the American people. There is much we can still accomplish if Republicans give us their cooperation and keep alive the bipartisan momentum that we had in July when we passed KOSA and COPPA.

There is more work to do on the NDAA, on rail safety, on lowering the cost of insulin and prescription drugs, on artificial intelligence, and on keeping healthcare costs low. We may not be able to get all these things done before the election, but I urge my colleagues to make the most of this work period so we can set ourselves up for success for the rest of the year.

Bipartisan compromise is hard—harder these days than it has been in the past—but we have seen time and time again in these last 2 years that it can be done. Bipartisanship has prevented pointless and painful government shutdowns. Bipartisanship saved the full faith and credit of the United States. Bipartisanship has rescued Ukraine from defeat on the battlefield. Bipartisanship led to the monumental passage of the Kids Online Safety legislation, and I strongly urge the House to take up KOSA and COPPA as soon as possible. Bipartisanship has kept our airports running safely and delivered disaster relief and humanitarian aid for innocent civilians in Gaza and around the world and more.

I know many Senators on both sides still want bipartisanship to continue as much as possible for as long as possible. We will have our fierce disagreements in the weeks to come, but that

doesn't change or diminish this responsibility we all have to ensure that the American people are taken care of. So let's continue.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Madam President, now on high-speed rail, finally, I just came down from a great event in Horseheads, NY, in the southern tier of the Appalachians, on the New York-Pennsylvania border, where very soon the next chapter of American high-speed rail is going to be written. It is a historic day for Upstate New York, for the Southern Tier, and for the entire country.

High-speed rail jobs are coming to Horseheads, where Siemens Mobility has heeded my call to build a first-of-its-kind manufacturing facility in Chemung County. This facility will create up to 300 new, good-paying jobs and, more specifically, union jobs.

Not long ago, high-speed rail seemed like a dream in this country, but because of the infrastructure law I led in the Senate, it is becoming a reality.

On the west coast, work is underway to bring high-speed rail to serve commuters between Las Vegas and Southern California, thanks to the incredible work of my friend JACKY ROSEN. To make this project a reality, we need a new fleet of state-of-the-art passenger trains that can travel up to 220 miles per hour. Siemens Mobility had a number of options for where they could manufacture these trains, but I pushed and prodded and urged Siemens Mobility to choose Upstate New York to take advantage of our great workers and facilities and strong transit supply chains. After a lot of pressure, Siemens Mobility heeded my call. To the people of the Southern Tier, good-paying rail jobs are on the way.

I thank President Biden not only for helping us pass the bipartisan infrastructure bill but also for overseeing his Cabinet, including the great work of the Transportation Department and Secretary Buttigieg, to make sure all of our great plans that were passed in that legislation are now being implemented. This is one great example.

Today's announcement is the Democratic agenda in action. This project is going to receive billions from the bipartisan infrastructure law of the Senate. It is going to take a million cars off the road in the long run, and it is going to promote good-paying union jobs.

The bottom line is this: It is my dream to make New York's Southern Tier the No. 1 transit ecosystem in America. Today's announcement helps make that dream come true.

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. GRASSLEY. Madam 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.

IOWA COUNTY MEETINGS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, as Iowans have come to expect of this Senator, in August, I finished my annual 99 county meetings, holding at least one Q&A meeting in every county across my home State. I have kept up this tradition for 44 years in a row. The hallmark of my meetings is hour-long question and answer sessions. No question is off limits.

This year, a third of my meetings were open town meetings, and the rest were hosted by high schools, small businesses, service clubs, farmers, and hospitals throughout the State.

Ever since I started my meetings in 1981, the variety of meetings has been the same. I want to hear from a cross-section of the population, and the best way to do that is to go to them where they work, study, and raise their families. No matter the setting, the format is the same. Iowans set the agenda.

During the course of my travels, I have learned about businesses that I never knew existed. I have come to the conclusion that that is the case because Iowans don't brag enough about what goes on in our State, particularly in some of the businesses that I have learned about.

I have observed the hard work and ingenuity of Iowa workers on the factory floors, where they put together, for instance, trailer beds. I learned about infant formula being made in the town of Allerton, population: 430.

The heart and might of rural America are inspiring, although they don't come without hardships, especially as Iowans face low commodity prices and the absence of a new 5-year farm bill.

One purpose of my meetings is to keep my finger on the pulse of Iowans and the issues that impact them the most. This year, I was struck by the number of people who told me about the high cost of living, how it is making it hard to put food on the table and how it makes it hard to pay their utility bills. Iowans are hurting from the high cost of food at the grocery store—up 21 percent since President Biden and Vice President HARRIS took office.

Iowans ask about illegal immigrants flooding across our border. For the last 3½ years, they see migrants crossing the Rio Grande. They see it on television almost every night. That has added up to the tune of about 10 million people on the Biden-Harris watch.

Long before I came to Congress, a law was passed to make entering our country without our country's permission illegal. Iowans can't make sense of the open border policies of the Biden-Harris administration. They implore me to secure our border and to protect American citizens. Protecting the American people is the No. 1 responsibility of the Federal Government. Unfortunately, we have a President who is not upholding his oath to faithfully execute the laws.

At a town meeting, someone from the back of the room will often shout: How come you guys in Washington, DC,

can't do something about the problem at the border?

My answer: There is too much partisanship, but Republicans and Democrats work together a lot more than you would think.

I am fighting for the family farmer and the 57,000 jobs in the biofuel industry in my State by pushing to make E15 permanent year-round, alongside colleagues across the aisle from Illinois and Minnesota.

Or take my work with Senator CANTWELL to rein in pharmacy benefit managers—PBMs, we call them in this town. An attendee at my Osceola town meeting told me their medicine went up from \$300 to \$1,000. When you tack this on top of the inflation of the last 3 years, you can understand the pain in their eyes when they plead with me to lower the cost of prescription drugs. It is one of my top priorities, and I am not going to give up until the job is done.

Too often, Americans feel Congress doesn't understand the challenges facing their families. The best way to reduce this cynicism is to look your constituents in the eye and listen to them. For more than four decades, that is what I have done.

Once I have hit all 99 counties, you may think that is the end of my touring the State and listening to Iowans, but I look forward to many more Q&As between now and the end of this year.

Representative government is a two-way street. Those of us elected are one-half of that process and our constituents, the other half of that process. Dialogue is the essence of representative government. I believe my 44-year track record shows my commitment to holding up my end of the bargain.

I want to thank every Iowan who comes to my county meetings. For those who can't get to the meetings, I remind Iowans my door is always open. That most often happens by people sending me emails, calling my office, or writing a letter. I want to tell them, as I do at every meeting, you will get a response. And if you don't get a response, let me know because you are entitled to an answer. And if I promise you an answer, I want to make sure you get one.

I look forward to starting my 45th year of holding my 99 county meetings when 2025 comes around.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, this week, the Senate returns from the August State work period. That is what we call the period of time when we are not here in Washington, DC, doing our job.

But the truth is, we really haven't been in session very much here in DC for a long, long time, and September is no exception. When we are in session here typically these days, it seems like we are in session for 2½ days while the rest of America works at least 40 hours

a week and many of my constituents in Texas work much longer hours than that.

Senator SCHUMER, who sets the schedule here in the U.S. Senate, has had us working—well, generously—about half time. I won't mince words. This Democratic Senate is on a collision course with itself, and the Republicans have been ringing the alarm bell for months.

After Leader SCHUMER's summer of show votes and months spent on President Biden's controversial and often unqualified nominees, the Senate will be in session just 11 more days—11 more days—in September. And we face an impossible to-do list.

But it is by design. It is no surprise to anyone. Some of what is on this list is some of the most basic tasks of governing. That is what we are supposed to be doing here. But I am not confident we will be able to even get that done in a timely manner.

The first on my list is the National Defense Authorization Act, something we have done more than 60 years in a row. The Senate Armed Services Committee did its job in a bipartisan fashion, and they completed their work weeks before we adjourned. But what did Leader SCHUMER decide to do? He declined to bring the bill to the floor, opting, instead, to have our last vote of the work period to be an unserious effort at sweeping tax legislation that was never even marked up in the Senate Finance Committee. He knew it wouldn't pass, but that wasn't his purpose. It was just a show vote.

In contrast, this Defense authorization bill has gone through a bipartisan process that included hearings, mark-ups, and hundreds of amendments. Chairman REED, a Democrat, Ranking Member WICKER, a Republican, and our colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee have done their job. They put countless hours into this crucial legislation, which will help modernize our Nation's defense and support our volunteer servicemembers and their families. But the majority leader gave them the Heisman, hampering our military's ability to plan ahead and address the myriad threats that we face from every corner of the globe.

I join those who say we have never had a more dangerous time in this world we live since World War II. And you would think the Defense authorization bill—which would focus specifically on maintaining our military superiority and deterring aggression—you would think that would be top of the list of things to do. But not in this Senate.

The Defense authorization bill deserves to be the No. 1 priority of this Chamber, as it has been for more than six decades. And it needs to come to the floor as soon as possible. Anything less is an affront to the men and women who put their lives on the line for our safety, both here at home and abroad.

Unfortunately, that is not the only train headed down the tracks. We need

to pass a government funding bill before the end of the month. This is part of the predictable shutdown drama that seems to eat up so much time here in Washington, DC—unnecessarily, I might add. There is no reason to do this, except the cause is putting everything off to the end, not in the interest of transparency or the interest of a regular process that our constituents can watch and comment on. This is trying to jam spending—about \$1.5 trillion of spending—through without going through the normal appropriations process.

Despite the Democratic leader's light summer schedule, the Appropriations Committee again has done its work in a bipartisan fashion. Good for them. As of today, they passed all but one of the annual funding bills.

Again, congratulations to the bipartisan partnership of Chairman MURRAY and Vice Chair COLLINS. We have a great place to start voting on these bills. We had one starting back in July if we had been given an opportunity. But the majority leader, as we all know, is the only one who can schedule floor votes in the Senate, and he showed zero interest in doing so then, and he doesn't seem to be particularly interested in taking up this bipartisan committee product any time soon.

So we will see more of what we saw earlier this year when the majority leader, the Senator from New York, this Schumer-led Senate passed the fiscal year 2024 bill halfway through the fiscal year. This is no way to run a railroad or the Nation and world's greatest deliberative body.

I hope we can turn to passing these bipartisan appropriation bills as soon as possible. Keeping the lights on, paying the bills, is the most basic function of the government.

But, yes, there is even more on our to-do list. We have a looming deadline of September 30 to pass the farm bill. I was glad to have a chance to go to the Rio Grande Valley, one of the most prolific parts of the State of Texas when it comes to growing agriculture—agriculture then that is exported to the rest of the country and around the world.

Ranking Member BOOZMAN joined me in the Rio Grande Valley. Of course, we know him as a fierce champion for American agriculture. I was glad to travel with him to McAllen and Mission, TX. We listened to farmers and ranchers about the importance of passing a timely and strong farm bill.

But the majority leader's schedule—or lack thereof—can't stand in the way of making progress on something like this. We depend on our agricultural industry to put food on the table and clothes on our back. They deserve some predictability, some certainty—not just another can kicked down the road.

The Democratic-led Congress has been one of inaction. We wasted enormous amounts of time turning what