

This past Christmas-New Year's recess, however, was a busy, consequential, and most of all a productive time for the U.S. Senate. Senators and staff worked straight through Christmas and straight through the new year on avoiding a government shutdown, on protecting America's security, even protecting the future of Western democracy, and we made some real progress.

First, I have excellent news on government funding. Yesterday, I announced with Speaker JOHNSON that congressional leaders have reached a top-line agreement for government funding for the 2024 fiscal year. When we began our negotiations, our goal was to preserve a nondefense funding level of \$772 billion—the same level agreed to in our debt ceiling deal last June. That \$772 billion was precisely the number we reached. Not a nickel was cut. Again, our goal was \$772 billion, and that is precisely the number we reached in this bipartisan agreement.

The agreement now clears the way for Congress to act in the coming weeks to avoid a government shutdown, while also preserving key domestic programs that benefit millions of Americans. The framework agreement will enable the appropriators to address many of the major challenges Americans face at home and abroad. It also allows us to keep the investments for hard-working American families that congressional Democrats and President Biden secured through our legislative agenda.

Both parties reached this agreement without resorting to the painful and draconian cuts that the hard right—particularly those in the Freedom Caucus—clamored for. The hard right wanted to put a chopping block on programs that help millions of Americans. So I am happy to say that Democrats protected vital priorities like housing programs, veterans' benefits, healthcare, nutrition programs, small business support, the National Health Service—the NHS—and funding for Federal law enforcement.

I am particularly pleased that we will protect the historic climate investment Democrats passed in the Inflation Reduction Act. The hard right wanted to use the appropriations process to undo our climate investments. Democrats said no, and we held the line.

The hard right also wanted to make cuts to the IRS so that the ultrarich tax cheats could weasel their way out of paying their fair share. By keeping the cuts at \$20 billion, I am happy to say this agreement will not affect the IRS's ability to keep holding the richest tax cheats accountable. Remember, when Democrats passed the Inflation Reduction Act, we gave the IRS new tools to audit the richest of the rich who don't pay their fair share. All these tools will remain in place.

So this top-line agreement is an excellent start to the year because it is a

huge step towards avoiding a government shutdown. Of course, our work must continue. Producing 12 appropriations bills will not be easy. It is going to require agreement from the four corners and a lot more compromise between the parties.

And make no mistake—Democrats have made clear to Speaker JOHNSON that we will not support the inclusion of any poison pills in any of the 12 appropriations bills before the Congress. In a statement that Leader JEFFRIES and I put out yesterday, we made it clear that we will not accept poison pills. If the hard right chooses to spoil this agreement with poison pills, they will be to blame if we start careening towards a shutdown. I know Speaker JOHNSON has said that nobody wants to see a shutdown happen.

Finally, thank you to my colleagues on both sides in both Chambers who made this agreement possible. I want to particularly thank my staff, who worked morning, noon, and night over the past few weeks. I must have spoken to them 10, 12 times a day every day and even several times on Christmas Day because getting this done was so important.

The next few weeks are not going to be easy, but the Democrats—we Democrats—are committed to working as hard as we can to avoid a government shutdown.

I hope our Republican colleagues, particularly in the House—we have good cooperation here in the Senate—are ready to do the same.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Madam President, on the supplemental, in addition to fully funding the Federal Government, Senators have also been hard at work over the winter break on finalizing an emergency national security supplemental. The supplemental package is a national necessity, with critical aid to help Ukraine defeat Putin, help Israel combat Hamas, provide needed assistance to innocent civilians in Gaza, and fix our broken immigration system.

At the end of last year, I said Democrats would remain committed to finding a bipartisan agreement on the supplemental. The only way to get something done on an issue as hard as the border is through bipartisan cooperation, and we have kept our promise to work in good faith.

Now, on the supplemental, it has been a very promising few days. We have made more progress in the past couple of days on the border than we have in the past few weeks. The work is not yet finished, but I am more hopeful right now—even more than I was a few days ago—that we can get something meaningful done on the border and pass the supplemental.

Getting over the finish line is still not going to be easy. It will take continued compromise, good faith, and recognition from both sides that nobody is going to get everything they want.

Immigration reform has always been one of the hardest issues facing the

Senate. But our broken border and our national security are at stake in this supplemental, and we must do everything we can to reach an agreement.

I urge my colleagues to continue their negotiations, and I want to thank them all for their good work to bring us to this point. Their example is an affirmation that the only way to get things done is through bipartisanship. So I urge them to stay the course until the work is done.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6, 2021

Madam President, now, on the January 6 anniversary, 3 years ago—on January 6, 2021—America experienced one of the darkest, most infamous days in our Nation's history. The Capitol we stand in right now became the target of mob violence. Our democracy fell under attack, orchestrated and encouraged by Donald Trump and fueled by the Big Lie.

Three years can pass, 5 years can pass, a decade can pass, but January 6 will always seem like yesterday to me. At one point, I was within 30 feet of the rioters, who I was told were shouting, "Let's get him," pointing at me, before my detail pulled me away to safety.

Our Capitol was desecrated. Walls were scaled, windows smashed, and offices vandalized.

The mob's goal on January 6 was clear: to overturn the will of the American people and block the peaceful transition of power. But, on that day, in an act of patriotism that history will forever remember, the four leaders decided we would not let Donald Trump and his mob stop us from counting the ballots. We came back later that night, finished the count, certified the election, and preserved our democracy. And, of course, we couldn't have finished our work without the heroics and quick thinking of the Capitol Police and MPD officers who defended the Capitol on January 6.

Though vastly outnumbered and underequipped, these public servants held the line, saving countless lives and preventing a violent riot from becoming something worse. These brave men and women, many of whom still bear the scars from the attack on January 6, still come to work every day. We say to them now and always: Thank you. Thank God for you. We are here for you.

Three years after the attack, much has changed, but one thing remains true: Our democracy, despite those who seek to derail it, marches on. Let this anniversary be a reminder that the work to protect democracy is never over, that it is a precious gift, and we all must do our part to make sure our democracy endures today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I would like to begin by wishing our colleagues a very happy new year and welcoming everyone back to begin a new session.

There is a tremendous amount on the Senate's plate, beginning with the unfinished business of the year that just ended.

Yesterday, negotiators announced they had agreed on a path to completing full year appropriations for the fiscal year that began 3 months ago. Delivering on this basic governing responsibility in a timely manner has proven a tough row to hoe, and building broad recognition of the most urgent priorities facing our Nation remains difficult.

Here is the truth. Threats to U.S. national security are growing, and the Biden administration's habit of proposing real-dollar cuts to defense funding is a streak that must end at three. With its forthcoming budget request for fiscal year 2025, the administration needs to finally start taking the long-term needs of America's national security seriously.

But Congress's most immediate opportunity to address urgent national security priorities will be supplemental legislation in the coming weeks. I was encouraged to see that Senator LANKFORD and our Democratic colleagues made progress toward an agreement to put meaningful border security policy at the heart of this supplemental.

As negotiations continued over the holiday break, Customs and Border Protection reported that December set a new, alltime monthly tally for southern border apprehensions. The Biden administration's border crisis is not going to fix itself, and the status quo is unacceptable. The answer, as Republicans have been saying, literally for years, is to restore meaningful border enforcement and fix the broken policies that the cartels are exploiting to devastating effect. And I am grateful to Senator LANKFORD for continuing to insist on such commonsense steps at the negotiating table.

The stakes here are quite high. We have an opportunity to make the most comprehensive headway on border security in a generation.

But our national security challenges don't end at our own borders. The threats we face are intertwined, and the coming days will show the world whether America is willing to treat them accordingly. Allies and adversaries alike will be curious what we do with news that Russia is now attacking targets in Ukraine with ballistic missiles supplied by the rogue Kim regime in North Korea, following the suicide drones provided by Iran. Yet again, it is abundantly clear that authoritarians

support authoritarians—as if our clear-eyed Pacific partners like Japan, South Korea, and Australia needed more evidence that what happens in Ukraine matters in their own neighborhood; as if we needed yet another reminder that facing down an expanded industrial base in Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea will require America and our allies and partners to invest more seriously in our own defense production capacity.

Meanwhile, terrorists in Yemen are spelling out in painful detail just how wide the ripples of Iran's war machine extend. The world's most active state sponsor of terror isn't just a destabilizing force in the Middle East. Tehran isn't just sowing chaos for American-minded partners in the region. Tehran's bloody influence isn't even limited to helping to train the Hamas and PIJ terrorists who conducted the horrific massacre of Israeli Jews on October 7, or to building Hezbollah into a top-tier international terrorist organization, or to the repeated attacks its proxies have carried out against U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria.

The Houthis' campaign against civilian ships in the Red Sea is an assault on the global economy that the world has no choice but to address. Once more, an adversary's initiative has forced a reluctant administration to act.

With fawning conciliation and half measures, the Biden administration has squandered deterrence against Iran. Russia is openly mocking the fickleness of Western support for Ukraine. And China, our single greatest strategic adversary, is watching closely to see if America can still manage to lead or sustain credible resistance to authoritarian violence.

So these are the stakes after 3 years of the administration's foreign policy. The world is asking not when or how but whether the world's greatest superpower will start acting like one, which makes our work on the supplemental national security legislation even more urgent. Beginning at the southern border, we must demonstrate that America is up for the challenges we face. The Senate cannot afford to get this wrong.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, you know as well as I do what is happening in our home State of Illinois when it comes to the migrants that are being bussed from Texas, primarily, into our State—the impact it has had in the State and in the city of Chicago, in

particular. These migrants are arriving in the city without any consultation or warning and are being dumped in places near the city, totally unprepared to face the cruelty of the winter that we are facing in Chicago.

I am amazed at the number of people who have shown extraordinary caring and have stepped forward to try to help. I thank Catholic Charities, Salvation Army—there are so many groups. There is a New Life Center, Matthew DeMateo—extraordinary, just a miracle worker. He manages to find a way to put a roof over the heads of those migrants that come to our city and give them a fighting chance to have a decent life. So many more just like him prepare to step up and provide shelter, provide basic clothing, food, accessibility to schools, and more.

I really want to commend the mayor as well. Brandon Johnson has taken an approach toward this which I think is humane and consistent with the traditions of America. He shows a caring heart time and again, and I respect him so much for it.

Recently, the city of Chicago tried to put some order into this disorderly process, identifying times and places where the buses could stop so that people could be received properly, cared for, and go about their lives as best they could.

But, unfortunately, there has only been one example of cooperation by the State of Texas. There are plenty of examples the other way—people who are sent to airports in Rockford where they are dumped out of airplanes on the tarmac with no place to turn; people who are put in suburban towns and rural areas, which even if they wanted to help, would be so limited to what they could do.

We understand the politics of the situation better than most. We do politics for a living. But there are a lot of people who are helpless and victims of this situation who need to be taken into consideration.

The city of Chicago gave the Texas Governor a safe, convenient, accessible option to drop the migrants off at a warm shelter for orderly processing, but only one bus from Texas has attempted to register with the city. The Texas Governor has chosen cruelty and chaos over orderly and humane processing.

I don't understand the politics of that moment. These people are as vulnerable as any people on earth. They are doing the best they can for themselves, and they are in a situation where they need a helping hand in many instances.

Last week, my colleagues in the Senate were working on a negotiated border compromise to deal with the policy and law on the border. I support that completely. I don't know what the final product will be, and I am hoping to support the bill. This process is long, long overdue.

I made immigration one of the issues of concern for my services. I am the