

And, of course, there has been no accountability for the repeated Israeli settler attacks, enabled by security forces, on Palestinian towns and villages; no meaningful response to the burning of Palestinian homes and businesses—nothing but silence in the face of a concerted rightwing Israeli effort to illegally annex the West Bank.

Yet those are the Netanyahu extremist government policies that these sales would reward. I say that to my colleagues. All of this is going on; and should our response to Mr. Netanyahu say: Keep it up, here are more arms; here are more money?

A government that has caused mass civilian deaths, flouted U.S. and international law, and that is actively undermining key U.S. policy goals in the region should not be receiving more financial aid from America and should not be receiving military weaponry from the United States.

Passing a joint resolution to block these sales will make clear to the Netanyahu government that they cannot continue to ignore the U.S. Government's demands for an immediate cease-fire and the release of the hostages. It will put pressure on its extremist government to change Israel's military approach and avert a regional war. And it may—just may—begin to restore a shred of U.S. credibility abroad.

Passing a joint resolution of disapproval is not only the right thing to do, it is not only the legal and appropriate thing to do, it is also what the American people want us to do. According to a June 5 poll from CBS News, 61 percent of Americans oppose sending weapons and supplies to Israel, including 77 percent of Democrats, 62 percent of Independents, and many Republicans as well. And that poll is consistent with earlier polls.

This is not a new or radical idea. The United States routinely conditions military aid, arms sales, and security cooperation with every other country. This ain't new. We have done it over and over again. And we have done it many times before with Israel. It is not a new idea. It is only in recent years that the idea of leveraging aid to Israel to secure policy changes has become controversial.

President Ronald Reagan, I say to my Republican colleagues, suspended the delivery of F-16 fighter jets to Israel over its raid on the Osirak reactor in Iraq; threatened to suspend military aid to end Israel's bombardment of Beirut; and again threatened to stop military aid to force an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 1982. That was President Ronald Reagan. President Jimmy Carter similarly leveraged aid to change Israeli policies in Lebanon. In 1991, then-Secretary of State James Baker threatened to withhold \$10 billion in loan guarantees unless Israel stopped settlement expansion.

In other words, using arms sales and military aid as leverage is not a new idea. It has been done under Repub-

lican Presidents and Democratic Presidents.

There is also recent precedent of Congress's acting to stop the indiscriminate bombing of civilians. In 2019, Congress passed a series of JRDs to block arms sales to Saudi Arabia over its bombing campaign in Yemen. At that point, the Saudi coalition was directly responsible for, roughly, 8,000 civilian deaths over 4 years, mostly from airstrikes. Israel has killed 41,000 in less than a year.

Blocking these sales would also be in keeping with actions taken by the international community and some of our closest allies. So what I am suggesting here is not unique in the world. It has taken place all over the world, including with some of our closest allies. There has been widespread condemnation of Israel's conduct during this war from governments around the world, international institutions, and humanitarian organizations.

The United Kingdom recently suspended 30 export licenses for a range of armaments after concluding there was an unacceptable risk they could be used in violation of international humanitarian law. Germany has not approved an offensive weapons transfer since March. Italy, Spain, Canada, Belgium, and the Netherlands have taken similar steps. United Nations bodies have called for an end to the arms shipments fueling the conflict.

We cannot continue to ignore what the extremist Netanyahu government is doing in Gaza. We cannot continue to be complicit in this humanitarian disaster. The time is long overdue for the U.S. Senate to act, and we must act. I hope my colleagues will support this effort on the floor, and my office is ready to answer any questions that Senators may have.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO HENSON WEBRE

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, with me today is one of my colleagues from my office, Mr. Henson Webre, whom I thank for giving so much to our State and our country.

HURRICANE FRANCINE

Madam President, the first topic that I want to touch briefly on today provokes both sorrow and pride.

I am sorry to report that, last week, my people in Louisiana were hit by yet another hurricane, Hurricane Francine. It was a category 2. It was right on the line between a category 1 and a category 2. We had winds of 100 miles an hour. We had 9 to 10 inches of rain. We had a vicious storm surge.

My people did what they always do: They got ready for it. They reacted to the storm with grace and with pressure. My people filled sandbags, and we checked on our neighbors, and we listened to our local officials. We said prayers for our first responders. My people are as tough as a pine knot. They are also compassionate. And we made it through.

Some have said: Well, compared to past hurricanes, Francine was not as bad as some in the past.

And that is true. It could always be worse. But that is cold comfort—cold comfort—for the thousands of Louisianians who sustained damage from that storm surge and those ferocious winds and that rain. And I want to assure my people that, as we have in the past, we will persevere, and we will make it through.

I have never, in my years in the Senate, voted against providing relief for any of our sister States and my fellow Senators who have asked for it and who have been the victims of a natural disaster, and I never will. That is the first role of government. It is to protect people and property. And I will never vote against aid for one of our sister States that, through no fault of its own, is struck by nature.

I say that because I will be asking the American people to help Louisiana one more time. We won't ask for a penny more than we need. The help that I will seek will be in the form of personal assistance in housing, for example; infrastructure assistance; and mitigation grants.

I want to thank President Biden and Governor Landry, with whom I toured by helicopter the damage last week. Governor Landry asked for a disaster declaration from the President, and President Biden was quick to agree. I want to thank him for that. I want to thank our FEMA Administrator, Ms. Deanne Criswell. She came to Louisiana immediately after the storm passed through, and I want to thank our Administrator for being on the ground and her personal touch.

One of the things I talked to the Administrator about is, as you know, FEMA has implemented a new flood insurance premium program called Risk Rating 2.0, which is breaking the backs of every insured in the Flood Insurance Program. Premiums have gone through the roof. I can assure you that the damages would have been much worse with respect to Francine had it not been for the investment that the American taxpayer and the taxpayers of Louisiana have made in new flood protection systems and new levees. And with that money that we have spent—including but not limited to the money by Louisiana citizens, who taxed themselves to build these levees—our people should be given credit on their flood insurance premiums for that investment they have made.

All you have to do is take Terrebonne Parish as an example. In Louisiana, we call our counties "parishes." Terrebonne Parish, at the southern part of my State, has spent over \$1 billion of their money—and we are not a wealthy State. My people in Terrebonne taxed themselves to help build a levee system called the Morganza to the Gulf levee system, which will mitigate the damages from this last storm.

Had it not been for the levee that my people taxed themselves to build—and,

look, I don't want to be unfair. The Corps of Engineers and the American taxpayer helped us, too, but we did our fair share. Had it not been for those levees that my people contributed to, the damages would have been billions and billions and billions of dollars just from the storm surge in South Louisiana, for a category 2 storm that moved through quickly. And that investment by taxpayers should be reflected in the flood insurance premiums, and they should go down.

INFLATION

Madam President, topic No. 2: This is not a news flash. Americans are struggling to pay their bills. The reason, of course, is inflation. The inflation that the American people—and let me strike that. I don't want to call it inflation. Let me call it what it is—those high prices. Those high prices were made in Washington, and they are a cancer on the American dream. As a result of the high prices, people are struggling to pay their bills.

I was looking at a report this week—and I know the Presiding Officer feels this in her State. People are having to borrow money to pay their bills, and they are having to borrow money on their credit cards. I don't need to tell the Presiding Officer that the interest on credit cards has gone up dramatically as a result of inflation. The interest on the credit card is not like going to your bank where credit is tight. Because of inflation, the interest rates on those credit cards has gone through the roof. The credit card interest rate in March was 21.51 percent. Back in 2019, it was 15 percent. Delinquent payments on credit cards are also through the roof—9.1 percent—the highest in a decade. Credit card balances are higher too.

Auto loans: The average interest rate on a 60-month new car loan was 8.2 percent last May. That is up from 5.3 percent in 2019. And delinquency rates on auto loans are the highest they have been in 10 years.

If you look at consumer debt, last year, it hit \$17 trillion—not billion, not trillion—\$17 trillion. It hit that number last year for the first time. Inflation-adjusted debt is at its highest level since 2009.

Now, I know some folks who are thinking, yes, but inflation has come down. Yes, it has, and I want to thank the Federal Reserve for that because they had to do it alone. They sure didn't get help from Congress.

But what does that mean? When inflation comes down, that is called disinflation. What does that mean? When inflation comes down, that just means prices are not rising as quickly as they were. That is all a reduction in inflation means. Prices are still going up, but they are not going up as quickly as they were. That is called disinflation. But prices are not going down. If prices were to go down, that would be called deflation. That would be called deflation.

As Federal Reserve Chair Powell and Treasury Secretary Yellen have both

testified in front of the Banking Committee—and I hate to say this—unless we do something, these high prices are permanent. They are permanent.

Now, there are only two ways to reduce these prices. One is to go into a recession. China is in a recession. Prices in China are going down. It is too big of a price to pay. I don't want us to go into a recession. People would lose their jobs in order to get prices down.

The only other alternative is to grow out of the inflation—to lift people up; to increase wages at the low end of the wage scale, at the middle, and at the upper end of the wage scale—to help everybody. Five thousand years of human history has taught us that you cannot increase wealth, you cannot increase individuals' incomes—it can't be done—without increasing output.

So we in the Senate are going to have to put our heads together and figure out how to grow this economy, not at 1½ percent, not at 2 percent, which has become the norm. We break 2 percent GDP growth now, and we want to have a toga party. We shouldn't settle for 2 percent. We need 3 percent growth to lift everybody up.

TRIBUTE TO KATHERINE FOSTER

Madam President, the final point: We are losing—not America; we in the Senate are losing—one of our best and brightest. She is sitting right down here. Her name is Katherine Foster.

Katherine grew up in Missouri. She went to the University of Mississippi 2008 to 2012. You will notice Katherine finished in 4 years. She didn't hang around for 6 or 7 years and string it out. She got busy. She graduated.

She started as a Senate page. She has worked as a staffer for a number of Missouri Members of Congress, including Senator Kit Bond. Her first full-time job was with Senator Roy Blunt. Then, in 2015, Katherine moved to the cloakroom.

A lot of members of the public can't see the work that our cloakroom staff does, on both sides. Democrats and Republicans have a cloakroom staff. They make this place run. They keep us on time. They help us interpret the rules.

How can I put this, the Senate rules are written like somebody who has lived in outer space most of their lives. OK? They make no sense. We should fix them, but that is a topic for another day. The point is, the rules are the rules, and we depend on our cloakroom staff to interpret them for us. We depend on people like Katherine Foster.

Katherine is smart. She is a good mama. She is a good spouse. She is steady. She never panics. She is very pleasant. She puts up with a lot. She is headed into the private sector, and we wish her well. I hope she makes bucketloads, truckloads, full of money. And I hope she has better hours than she has in the U.S. Senate.

This is her last week, folks. And when I count my blessings, I count the members of our cloakroom staff, on both sides—Democrat and Republican—

and I especially count Katherine Foster twice.

So thank you, Katherine, for your extraordinary work and for giving so much to the U.S. Senate and for giving so much to your country.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I have come here periodically to speak about issues with the National Flood Insurance Program. I will today, but first I am going to talk about resiliency, environmental resiliency in particular. I am going to talk about acts of heroism; I am going to talk about North Carolina and South Carolina; and then I am going to end up with the National Flood Insurance Program.

Let's talk about resiliency. Hurricane Francine just hit my State, and where the Federal Government, State and local governments have invested and completed that investment in building resiliency, we did well. Our country did well.

From the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act by itself, \$367 million has come to build flood control structures, and where those structures have been completed, they did not flood.

It reminded me of a couple of years ago when Hurricane Ida made a direct hit on New Orleans. I was with a mayor and a local elected official. We looked at each other, and one of them said: The ground is dry. Contrasting with Katrina when the levees failed and the whole city flooded, the mayor was making the point the ground is dry.

We can build resiliency. That is important for my State. It is important for your State, Madam President. It is important for our country. Wherever there is a threat of environmental disaster, with wise planning and public investment, we can build resiliency. That is the good news, and we saw that from Hurricane Francine.

But every now and then, there is still a need for heroism. So I would like to give just some recognition to some folks in my State who did some really positive things.

Folks from Louisiana have seen the story, heard the story of a guy named Miles Crawford, a nurse in New Orleans. In the middle of the storm, he gets a text from his brother. Someone had driven into the water and was sinking beneath the bridge. So the truck goes in, and then the truck begins to sink. Miles goes out there. It is on the TV. Somebody videoed it. He walks out there. I don't know how he broke the window, but he breaks the window, and the front is going down, but the person trapped inside comes out the back.

I say that because whenever we invest, there is always going to be something that slips through. And I want to give a shout-out to a fellow American who, in an act of heroism—by the way, there were firefighters down in what we call the bayou section. There were the utility linemen who went out after