

Republicans and the Freedom Caucus. In a narrowly divided government, partisan bully tactics and appealing to the extreme simply does not work.

I would have thought that would have been made clear a year ago, when Speaker McCarthy kept trying and trying and trying to appease the hard right with increasingly severe funding cuts, and it ended up being all for naught anyway. We ended up passing a bipartisan CR, and radicals turned on Speaker McCarthy.

This time around, it was Donald Trump again telling the hard right to shut the government down if we didn't agree to their poison pill provisions—never mind that a shutdown would mean costs would go up, programs like Head Start would halt, and public safety here and at the border would suffer. To Donald Trump, these are all OK because they are just apparently the cost of feeding his ego. It is bewilderingly cynical to see Donald Trump push for a shutdown, knowing the pain it would cause the country. But thankfully we are still on track to avoid that kind of mess. Of course, we still have more work to do.

I earnestly hope today brings good news in the House. We here in the Senate are ready to work to get this bill done quickly.

#### ABORTION

Mr. President, now on abortion, last week, a report by ProPublica told a heart-wrenching story of Amber Thurman of Georgia, who died because abortion bans in her State prevented her from getting lifesaving emergency care.

I know you are familiar with this case, Mr. President. It is the first known case of a woman dying because of new abortion laws in the wake of the MAGA Supreme Court's disastrous repeal of Roe. Doctors said her death was preventable.

This was a prime example of the government interfering in lifesaving medical decisions—exactly what is envisioned, unfortunately, in the MAGA Project 2025. Sadly, as we all know, she will not be the last.

A person's ability to receive lifesaving care, including lifesaving reproductive care, should never, never hinge on what State they live in. It should be something to which everyone in every State has a right.

Georgia's case is particularly foul because Georgia has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the country, which disproportionately affects Black Americans.

What happened in Georgia is a direct example of how abortion bans continue to exacerbate the racial disparities in maternal death. Amber's doctors didn't perform the medical procedures they knew she needed because of Georgia's law. It was the law overruling their good medical judgment. She went into septic shock, and her heart stopped. All the while, doctors did everything except the medically sound treatment she needed.

In our country right now, doctors are calling lawyers to ask permission before they treat a patient. Can you believe that? That is so wrong. But that is what our Republican colleagues, in their extreme views on women's reproductive health, have asked for.

Today, the Senate will act on legislation to help prevent tragedies like Amber's death from happening again.

First, Democrats will bring up a resolution led by Senator MURRAY that affirms the Senate's position that every person has the basic right to emergency healthcare, including abortion care.

I implore every single Senator—Democrat, Republican, and Independent—to support this resolution. It is a simple idea that emergency care should be a right for all and that doctors should never been afraid of doing their jobs while making life-and-death decisions. How on Earth could anyone have a problem with that?

Democrats will also bring up legislation by Senator BALDWIN to create a grant program that will assist with travel-related expenses for those seeking an abortion. This fund will help people overcome financial barriers like transportation, lodging, and childcare if patients need to travel out of State to get the care they need and require.

Perhaps if Amber had access to this fund and could have left Georgia, if she had the Federal resources to move quicker to get care, perhaps she would be alive today.

I thank Senators MURRAY and BALDWIN for leading these two important bills.

If passed, they may help save lives. I am proud to support them and urge everyone on both sides of the aisle to do the same.

When it comes to abortion, Donald Trump and Senate Republicans have kept pushing the same argument again and again—that abortion is best left to the States—leaving aside the fact that their end goal is a total abortion ban.

The tragedy of Amber Thurman's death shows exactly why leaving abortion to the States is such a dangerous idea in itself. It has led to a dangerously inconsistent application of justice and rights. Many of these State legislatures are dominated, frankly, by radicals who don't know or care one iota about reproductive care.

And abortion is just the start for some of those States. Some of them will want to police a woman's travel. They will want to prosecute people who help a woman receive care. They will want to jail doctors. That is already in the legislative ideas in many of these States. These are utterly delusional ideas.

My Senate Republican colleagues say abortion should be left to the States. What do they have to say about States like Georgia, where abortion laws got someone killed? Do Republicans think this is a just outcome? Do they think this is an acceptable way to legislate on people's individual freedoms—some

States saying one thing, other States saying something different?

I certainly don't think so; Democrats don't think so; and the American people don't think so. Again, all of this is an attempt for MAGA Republicans to get a national abortion ban.

I hope today, Mr. President—I hope today we can see a tiny ray of light amidst so much darkness when it comes to reproductive freedoms. I hope my colleagues on both sides support the legislation today. To say no—to say no—would be a cruel and heartless message to send to the American people.

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.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the Pentagon announced the deployment of additional U.S. servicemembers to the Middle East. The proximate cause, of course, is the threat of war on Israel's northern border. But ongoing Iran-backed attacks against U.S. personnel from the Red Sea to Iraq and Syria offer plenty of reminders that America's enemies lack neither the resources nor motivation to target us.

Democrats and Republicans alike should recognize that America's enduring security interests in the Middle East are not served by abandoning the region to Iran, Russia, and China. But what the Biden-Harris administration is grappling with right now is a problem of its own making. It is the combination of a weak and ineffectual response to Iran-backed aggression. It is the predictable and forewarned inadequacy of a force-planning construct that rules out serious preparation for meeting multiple threats at the same time.

I have spoken repeatedly about the naivete of abandoning a multiple-war, force-planning construct, underresourcing our military, and ignoring the growing and interconnected threats our adversaries pose to our interests.

It is worth remembering how former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan reportedly responded to a question that the greatest challenge for a statesman is "events, dear boy, events." Well, events have proven particularly challenging for the Biden-Harris administration.

At the risk of repeating myself, losing resolve to meet and defeat adversaries when they threaten us only emboldens them. Retreating from difficult challenges only invites even bigger ones. And most importantly, there

is no serious accounting of the global threats to America's interests and our allies today that concludes they can be dealt with one at a time, at our leisure.

The enemy gets a vote.

The demand for a U.S. military that can meet simultaneous challenges is acute, and we ignore it at the peril of the entire American-led international order that underpins our security and our prosperity.

Today, when President Biden addresses the U.N. General Assembly, we will no doubt hear about the grave challenge these interconnected threats pose to America and the entire world. But the President's concern will carry little weight without explicit commitments to the sort of hard power necessary to address them. The President will insist that his leadership has "produced results." That is true—just not good results. For years, by its neglect of the urgent requirements of the national defense, its anemic—defense budget requests, and its ongoing preference for micromanaging allies over confronting adversaries, the Biden-Harris administration has compounded the challenges that we face.

What the Commander in Chief is reckoning with this week is the product of nearly 4 years of failing to check Iran and to prepare adequately for great power competition—4 years of appeasement, hesitation, naive and desperate nuclear diplomacy, as well as outright retreat.

It is, indeed, too late to undo this administration's record of net cuts to defense investments. Likewise, it is too late to roll back the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Here in the Senate, after weeks of partisan show votes, it is now too late for the Senate to discharge a fundamental obligation of this body—to provide for the common defense—and debate the annual Defense authorization and appropriations bills before the election.

It is not, however, too late to stop treating Israel as an escalatory regional force in need of finger-wagging micromanagement and, instead, like a sovereign democracy encircled by the forces of the world's most active sponsor of terror. It is not too late to stop responding to proxy violence with the sort of unwavering force necessary to change Iran's calculus—and, for that matter, Russia's and China's as well.

It is not too late to show our adversaries that, in their race to undermine America's global influence and threaten its global interests, they will meet determined opposition.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. President, now on another matter, about halfway through President Biden's term, he leveled some rather weighty accusations at the opposition party. He said Republicans "do not respect the Constitution" and "do not believe in the rule of law." Well, that was pretty rich coming from someone who was already exploring the possibility of resurrecting one of the most

flagrant affronts to the Constitution in American history.

After less than 100 days in office, the President had formed a faux academic Commission to revisit a plan to toss out the separation of powers and pack the Supreme Court. This idea had been dead and buried since the 1930s, when it proved so inconceivable to even the most loyal New Deal Democrats that it almost tore President Roosevelt's administration apart. And just months after convening, the President's own Commission concluded that structural changes would—listen to this—risk irreparable damage to an independent judiciary. That was the President's Commission.

The Commissioners warned that "in recent years, we have seen democratic governments 'regress' or 'backslide' with respect to judicial independence. This has come about through electoral majorities using their power to restructure previously independent institutions, including courts, to favor the political agendas of those governments."

Now, this didn't entirely chasten Washington Democrats. And even though they haven't yet gone forward with a nearly 90-year-old old plan to turn the Nation's highest Court into a fief of the Presidency, the campaign to undermine judicial independence is alive and well right here in the Senate.

Vice President HARRIS, for her part, has yet to disavow her own openness to taking truly radical steps. In 2019, then-Senator HARRIS said:

We are on the verge of a crisis of confidence in the Supreme Court. We have to take this challenge head on, and everything is on the table to do that.

"Everything is on the table"—including, as she confirmed just this summer, packing the Court. The Vice President endorsed the President's call for "imposing term limits for Justices' active service." It would be difficult to draw up a more devastating blow to public confidence in the independence of a co-equal branch of government than subordinating it to the election cycles of another.

On a laundry list of issues, Vice President HARRIS's flip-flops have left voters wondering where she stands. But this particular one is no secret. The Democratic nominee for President of the United States wants to reanimate a dangerous, long-rejected attack on traditional independence, an idea the American people would do well to send back to the ash heap where it belongs.

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.

BROADBAND

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as a Senator from a rural State and a former

chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, expanding broadband access to rural areas has long been a priority of mine. I have done a lot of work on this issue, which is precisely why I was so concerned when the infrastructure bill proposed \$42 billion for rural broadband to be funneled through the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, or NTIA.

I was doubtful whether NTIA was capable of administering \$42 billion, given its previous struggles to administer a fraction of that amount of money. And, unfortunately, those concerns have turned out to be well-founded.

The Biden-Harris administration's signature broadband initiative and Vice President HARRIS's tenure as broadband czar have been nothing short of a disaster. It has been nearly 3 years since the \$42 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment, or what we call the BEAD program, was established at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to provide broadband access to unserved communities. Three years. And in all that time, the program has not connected a single household to the internet.

Let me say that again. It has been nearly 3 years—and to be precise, 1,044 days—since the BEAD program was established. And in all of that time—over 1,000 days—the program has not connected a single household to the internet. A logical question would be: Why? Please, tell us why?

Well, it is a story—a sad story—of government inefficiency and progressivism run amok. Instead of focusing on delivering broadband services to unserved areas, the Biden-Harris administration loaded down the BEAD program with a liberal wish list of requirements that were never envisioned by Congress and have obstructed broadband deployment: climate change mandates, prioritizing government-owned networks over private investment, biased technology mandates, prioritizing the use of union labor, attempts to impose price controls in direct violation of the law, DEI hiring priorities.

What should have been a straightforward application and approval process for building networks has become a literal morass. Why, oh why, Mr. President, should rural telecoms in South Dakota be talking about climate change mandates in building out broadband networks to serve underserved people in rural areas of the country?

As if the list of woke requirements weren't enough, it has been matched by massive inefficiency from the administration.

One State official who recently testified before the Energy and Commerce Committee in the House had this to say about the program's implementation: