

but everyone has to go through the long and difficult and painful process of rebuilding—rebuilding their lives, rebuilding their homes, rebuilding their stores, rebuilding their communities—which is why every time a disaster has devastated our fellow Americans, Congress has recognized the need for help and stepped up to fulfill our responsibility to provide that help. We don't first check to see if it is a blue or a red or a purple State or county.

And, today, disaster survivors in almost 40 States, including my own, are counting on us to do exactly that. They have had their lives turned upside down, and in the wake of awful death and destruction, they are trying to find some semblance of stability and peace in their lives. But, to recover quickly and fully, they need our help. It has been more than 15 months since Lahaina burned down to the ground—in a matter of hours—by ferocious fires. More than 4,000 homes were destroyed, and yet, as of today, just one home has been rebuilt—one home. There are 4,000 homes gone, 12,000 people without a house, 2,200 structures incinerated—1 home rebuilt.

Even before the fires, Lahaina was a working-class town where people were mostly renters, and while a disaster of this scale is catastrophic for any community, the financial burden inflicted on these survivors is especially, especially acute. Everyone is doing the best that they can to recover. They are working so hard. They have pulled together so much. They have so much courage and compassion and persistence. They have plowed through every barrier put in front of them. They have saved each other's lives. They are trying to rebuild this beautiful, historic, pluralistic, joyful, multicultural town, but they need our help.

This is a core responsibility of the United States Federal Government. There are certain things that we should be arguing about; there are lots of things that we should be arguing about. Among those things is, What does the Federal Government do, exactly? What is the Federal Government's role, exactly, in education? in healthcare? in transportation?

One thing we cannot argue with each other about is this: when your fellow Americans are in a situation where their counties, their churches, their communities, their States are just simply overwhelmed and cannot recover without the resources of the Federal Government, that the Federal Government steps up and does their job.

So we are about to wrap this week up before the Thanksgiving break, and then we have a tight, little work period to get a hell of a lot done. The one thing we cannot leave undone in December—the one thing we cannot leave undone in December—is disaster aid not just for the people of Maui but for people all across the country. If the Federal Government is for anything, it has to be for this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

REPUBLICAN OBJECTIVES

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, a few weeks ago, the American people spoke loud and clear. They rejected the policies that we have been seeing through this current administration. But, today, I rise to talk about the vision my Republican colleagues and I have for this future and the many solutions that we are eager to get back to work on that I believe will help get this country back on track.

First things first, this newly formed Republican Senate majority is ready to close the previous chapter. It is a chapter I think that none of us really want to go through again. Soon, the Resolute Desk will change hands, and the Senate, under the guidance of my friend and colleague and soon-to-be majority leader JOHN THUNE, will get to work. And we have the full support of the incoming President, President-elect Trump.

The American public wants to see real action. Back home in my State of West Virginia, people have conveyed to me that they are ready for real representation—a government of, by, and for the people. Senate Republicans will deliver responsive and responsible solutions for the American people.

The task ahead is this: unshackling the American economy, securing the border, unleashing our American energy, reducing crime and lawlessness, and restoring American strength and deterrence on the world stage. These are the issues on which the voters placed their faith in us.

I also believe that central to this mandate for this new American leadership is the idea that people really did feel better and preferred their lives under the Presidency of President Trump. I know for sure I did.

So as the Senate fulfills its responsibility to pass legislation to get this country back on track, let's look no further than the previous Trump administration for the roadmap.

President Trump unleashed American energy production, rolling back burdensome permitting rules and red-tape. Republicans slashed regulations that canceled pipelines. We erased barriers to our new ones. America sits on the greatest treasure trove of natural resources in the world, and a Republican-led energy policy will not squander that.

West Virginia knows the difference between good and bad energy policy all too well. We are an energy State. We have been blessed with a lot of natural resources, and we know that our economy and people's jobs and people's lives and people's families depend on us unleashing that energy. The jobs that President Trump saved—a lot of those jobs—were West Virginia energy jobs. So we can get back to a cheaper, more secure, and more reliable world by unleashing American energy once again.

The Republican solution is “America First” energy policies that can result

in energy dominance and our own self-reliance—no more depending on fuels from dictators who hate America or no more reliance on green energy from Chinese Communist Party-backed supply chains.

It is going to take an “all of the above” approach, including opening up projects like our recently just opened Mountain Valley Pipeline so that we can deliver energy in markets, promoting carbon capture and sequestration to use our vast coal resources, nuclear energy, and renewables, as the market sees fit—and they are growing.

In a few months, I will be chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. I am really excited about this opportunity, and I cannot stress enough how important these items are to the agenda.

My Senate Republican colleagues and I are prepared to bring forward legislative solutions to help fuel American growth, and I hope our Democratic colleagues will join us in moving these solutions forward in the next Congress.

On the economy, residents from my State—and the entire country—are still reeling from the elevated costs on all things, from housing, energy, food, and almost every other everyday essential.

Personal finances are stretched so thin right now. For instance, in my State of West Virginia, West Virginians are spending, on average, an additional \$930 a month, or more than \$25,000 a year, due to inflation, since 2021. Actually, that is a total of \$25,000 since 2021.

The plan to get the American economy back on track is a tried-and-true formula of energy dominance—repealing burdensome regulations—and lowering taxes. It is pretty simple. You should keep more of your own paycheck, and the government should stay out of the way.

I am looking forward to taking up legislation proposed by me and my other Senate colleagues toward these ends, including an extension and reauthorization of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that we passed in 2017—including some of the most pro-growth tax reform policies that we have seen—as well as other potential budget solutions.

Crime and the border go hand in hand. Under President Trump's first administration, both were managed. But now they are not. Look no further than the example of the addiction crisis, a direct product of lawlessness and the free rein of Mexican cartels.

Just a few days ago, last Friday, I convened State and community leaders in West Virginia for a summit focused on combating the addiction crisis. The correlation between wide-open borders and the raging drug crisis was mentioned repeatedly at this summit, especially during the presentation and discussion with our law enforcement panel.

Here is the fentanyl crisis by the numbers: CBP seized 27,000 pounds of

fentanyl in the fiscal year 2023. That is only a fraction of the real amount that crosses our border. Keep in mind that a minuscule amount of fentanyl can have a deadly effect.

Of the over 107,000 drug overdoses that occurred in the United States in 2023—I will repeat that number: 107,000; that is almost double the size of the capital city of Charleston in West Virginia, where I live—almost 75,000 of those involved fentanyl.

This out-of-control drug trafficking must end. It is a lawless scourge that takes more West Virginians per capita than in any other State in the Union. In sheer numbers, the death toll and calamity eclipse any other modern drug epidemic.

We know what works because the rise in fentanyl overdose deaths stalled under President Trump. The bottom line, we have got to close the border and end the lawlessness.

Yet again, Republicans have the roadmap. We did it once, and we can do it again. A heightened sense and appreciation for law and order from the border to the inner cities, to everywhere back home will feature prominently in this next Republican administration.

President Trump presided over a relatively peaceful period of history unmatched in our national history. After crushing ISIS, the Trump-led world order went largely untested by the world's dictators and demagogues. The same cannot be said about the world today.

China manipulates the Biden administration every day, while burrowing deep into our critical infrastructure and growing its military. Iran and its terrorist proxies wage war against our ally Israel. And, of course, there is the ongoing war in Ukraine. This is the world under the Biden-Harris administration's watch.

In what seems like the most trying confluence of geopolitical struggles in a generation, America must lead through strength. Indecision and weakness have emboldened our adversaries.

Republicans can start the next Congress by restoring deterrence against Iran and reinstating Trump's maximum-pressure campaign. We should cut off Iran's funding sources so that they can't continue to support these attacks against our U.S. servicemembers.

Just last week, the Houthis fired at least eight drones, five ballistic missiles, and three anti-ship cruise missiles against our U.S. Navy ships. It was barely even news because this is now just a regular occurrence under this current administration.

This administration apparently has no clue that our troops are under constant attack on land and sea, since our current Vice President, in her campaign, said that she didn't think any U.S. forces were in combat.

America must protect our servicemembers and put Iran on notice that their weapons-dealing business is over.

More broadly, a unified Republican government will be prepared to restore

our military strength, refocus our DOD on lethality, and restock our critical munitions.

I have detailed but a few of the ideas and solutions to this dangerous, costly, and disordered world that we are inheriting. It is a challenge fit for a strong government and even stronger leadership, and it is good that we have a change for who is in charge.

Until then, I suggest the best course of action this body can take is to work diligently on the outstanding priorities that we have in front of us. I am talking about the NDAA—the National Defense Authorization bill—the government funding bills, and the farm bill. That way, the next Congress can stand at full attention, ready to advance policies to make our country safer, stronger, and a more resilient place.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, 2 weeks ago, President Trump was re-elected, and the Senate Republicans reclaimed the Senate majority. As we prepare for the 119th Congress, I join my colleagues today to discuss Republican solutions to the challenges our Nation faces.

Among these important efforts, we will work with President Trump to unleash more American energy and not only make our country energy independent once again but actually make the United States energy dominant. We will do that by cutting the redtape that has handcuffed our energy industry. And instead of strangling regulations, we are going to boost innovation. That is the right kind of approach for energy policy in our Nation.

Energy security directly impacts our economic and national security. That is why we must act on day one to reverse the Biden administration's regulatory onslaught. From the very beginning of his tenure, President Biden has sought to curtail American energy. I would like to take a moment to recap some of these harmful regulatory policies.

Just last week, the Biden administration finished implementing a new natural gas tax. Think about that: a tax on natural gas at a time when the country has been fighting inflation. That natural gas tax was authorized as part of the Democrat partisan tax-and-spend bill.

Importantly, I intend to introduce a Congressional Review Act resolution of disapproval to block the Biden administration's new natural gas tax rule, and we will work with President Trump to repeal it. Again, this is part of reducing an inflation that affects every single American.

This costly tax comes in addition to new burdensome rules and higher fees on Federal energy production imposed by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management.

But the Biden administration isn't just increasing costs for producers. They are working to outright prevent

the development of vast amounts of taxpayer-owned energy resources on public lands.

This year, BLM issued a new public lands rule enabling radical environmental groups to lock away more of our energy reserves under a so-called conservation leasing approach. In my State of North Dakota, the Biden administration is proposing to close off leasing to 45 percent—45 percent—of Federal oil and gas acreage and 95 percent of Federal coal acreage.

Let me repeat that. In my State of North Dakota—we are one of the largest energy producing States in the country. We are an energy powerhouse for this country. In my State, the Biden administration is proposing to close off leasing to 45 percent of Federal oil and gas acreage and 95 percent of Federal coal acreage. At the same time, the Biden administration's regulatory agenda is making electricity more expensive and less reliable. Think about that. We need more electricity, not less. These policies not only increase the price of the electricity that we get, but it prevents us from producing more electricity.

Under President Biden, the EPA has issued overreaching power sector regulations that inflict utilities with billions of dollars in compliance costs. Worse still, these burdensome regulations could force the premature retirement of reliable coal-fired baseload powerplants, and we need that baseload to maintain the integrity of the nationwide electric grid.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation, or NERC, and multiple independent grid operators are sounding the alarm of a coming reliability crisis.

Each of these actions by the Biden administration was specifically designed to make traditional energy more expensive and to produce less of it. That is why, in partnership with the incoming Trump administration, we will take off the handcuffs of our energy producers and empower them to increase supply and bring down prices for American families and businesses.

I would also like to thank President Trump and offer my congratulations to Governor Doug Burgum of North Dakota on his nomination to serve as Secretary of the Interior and the head of the newly formed National Energy Council. The Department of the Interior is incredibly important in North Dakota and Western States, overseeing more than 247 million acres of Federal land and approximately 30 percent of the Nation's minerals.

As Governor of my home State of North Dakota, Doug has the right background and experience to lead the Department of the Interior and all of the new administration's energy efforts. He has been a great partner as we have worked together to make North Dakota an energy powerhouse for our country, and I know he will bring that experience to bear in a positive way for our country. He understands the importance of productive multiple use of

our vast Federal estate for energy development, grazing, recreation, tourism, and all of the multiple uses we enjoy.

I look forward to continuing our efforts together, and he will be in a tremendous position to help us roll back the harmful policies of the last 4 years and unlock our country's energy potential. That means making the best use of our Nation's abundant energy resources—including our vast oil, gas, and coal reserves—while advancing new innovations to produce more energy with better environmental stewardship. That is the right way to do it.

Like I said at the beginning, we are not just going to make our Nation energy independent; we are going to make our Nation energy dominant.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, after 4 years of Biden-Harris failures, our country is set to make an incredible comeback with Republican control of Congress and the White House starting next year. At the top of our agenda will be securing the southern border. Until then, though, the Biden-Harris open border remains a threat to our families, our communities, and our country. Congress should waste no time in taking action to protect this Nation.

Since taking office, the Biden-Harris administration has apprehended—get this number—nearly 400 suspected terrorists at the southern border. Now, that is a 3,000-percent increase compared with all 4 years of the Trump administration. They also released nearly 100 individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist into the country.

Unfortunately, these are just the terror suspects that we know about. Under this administration, there have been more than 2 million known “got-aways,” illegal aliens who have entered this country. They evaded apprehension by law enforcement. We do not know who they are, we do not know where they have gone, but we know that they are here from the Border Patrol accounts.

Now, on top of all of this—400 suspected terrorists, a 3,000-percent increase over the Trump years, nearly 100 that are on the Terrorist Watchlist, and the 2 million “got-aways”—there are more than 1.7 million what are called special-interest aliens who have come from countries that pose a national security threat to our Nation, including Iran.

Of course, this is the same regime that helped plan the horrific October 7 terrorist attack on Israel that claimed the lives of more than 1,200 people, including 46 American citizens. Iran-backed Hamas terrorists also took more than 250 people hostage, including a dozen American citizens, 4 of whom remain in captivity. No one connected to these barbaric attacks should be allowed in this country. Yet, under

President Biden and Vice President HARRIS, that risk remains sky high.

Earlier this year, Canada began issuing visas to Gazans with little to no vetting, meaning aliens with potential ties to Hamas could enter our country not only from the southern border but also the northern border. Instead of addressing the threat, however, President Biden issued an Executive order earlier this year that prevents many illegal aliens from Hamas-controlled Gaza from being deported.

A growing terror threat would be bad enough, but under this administration, we have also seen tens of thousands of criminal illegal aliens reach our border. These are people who have committed crimes, some of the worst imaginable—homicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking, and more.

As a result of this influx, we are seeing a surge in violent gang activity across America, including in my State of Tennessee. Just last week, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation warned that the violent Venezuelan gang we are all hearing about, Tren de Aragua, is ramping up its human trafficking operations in Tennessee's largest cities. This is the same gang that has taken over entire apartment complexes from San Antonio to Colorado for drug dealing, sex trafficking, and other violent crimes.

Make no mistake, our country cannot afford 2 more months of this administration's broken immigration policy. By the way, that is why you are seeing all this influx, all the numbers we have talked about: the 400 suspected terrorists, the nearly 100 that have been released into this country, 55,000 criminal illegal aliens, people that are convicted of these crimes, 2,200 gang members. Why does it happen? Because this administration's border policy is an open border. That is their policy.

Last week, reports emerged that human traffickers and these human trafficking cartels in Mexico are telling everybody: You better be running to that border right now and get in before Biden leaves office.

(Ms. ROSEN assumed the Chair.)

Thankfully, the Senate can pass legislation today that would secure our border and protect our country from terrorists and criminals. Here are some pieces of legislation I have:

The PRINTS Act, which I introduced last year, would combat trafficking by giving Border Patrol the authority to fingerprint noncitizens under the age of 14 so we can protect them from being trafficked.

The CONTAINER Act, which I introduced in January, would empower border States like Texas to place temporary barriers on Federal land in order to protect their communities.

The CLEAR Act, which I introduced in March, would ensure that State and local law enforcement officials have the tools they need to help the Federal Government deport criminal illegal aliens.

The bipartisan No Immigration Benefits for Hamas Terrorists Act, which I recently introduced alongside Senator ROSEN, who is currently serving as the Presiding Officer, would ensure that no migrant tied to Hamas and the horrific terrorist attack on October 7 is ever allowed to set foot in this country.

The bipartisan Border Smuggling Crackdown Act, which I introduced last week alongside Senator OSSOFF, would ensure human smugglers are held accountable for every life they endanger.

With the growing threat of an illegal immigration surge ahead of Inauguration Day, the Senate should pass these bills immediately and send them to President Biden's desk.

FCC COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR

Madam President, over the last 2 weeks, President Trump has started to assemble an incredible team to help get our country back on track starting January 20. To be sure, President Trump's recent pick to lead the Federal Communications Commission, Brendan Carr, will be essential to that effort.

As the senior Republican on the Commission, Carr has led the FCC's work to ensure that every Tennessean and American has access to high-speed internet regardless of their ZIP code.

In fact, on just about every issue the FCC handles, Commissioner Carr has been a crucial advocate for freedom, internet access, and national security. His track record speaks for itself. Across his 7 years on the Commission, he has fought to stamp out internet censorship and to protect free speech, to end the disastrous net neutrality rules that give government bureaucrats needless control over internet carriers, reining in Big Tech, addressing communist China's threats to our digital infrastructure, and many more issues have been on his get-it-done list.

In the year ahead, I look forward to working with Commissioner Carr on each of these issues, especially on expanding rural broadband, building out a clear spectrum pipeline, and keeping children safe online.

On that last issue, I especially appreciate Commissioner Carr's efforts. With 32 State attorneys general urging—begging—Congress this week to pass the Kids Online Safety Act, we know there is strong momentum to finally establish safeguards for children online. On this issue and so many more, one thing is clear: Commissioner Brendan Carr is the right person for the job to lead the Federal Communications Commission.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, over the past few months, we heard from both sides of the aisle about how American families need more support. We have heard discussions about the child tax credit, childcare costs, and dozens more issues that affect parents and their children.