

transportation, veterans programs, and more will be thrown into chaos this Friday if we fail to extend funding.

As I have said throughout the 118th Congress, there is no justification—none—for provoking a government shutdown. Democrats strongly oppose shutdowns, and I know many of my Republican Senate colleagues, including the Republican leader, want to avoid one as well. And we Democrats want to work with them to ensure that a government shutdown does not happen.

And look, we realize the Speaker of the House is in a difficult position. But he must reject the MAGA hard right, which wants a shutdown, wants to hurt America, and which does not represent a majority of Republicans in the House, a majority of Republicans in the Senate, and a majority of Republicans in America—let alone, all Americans.

So if both sides work together, if we reject poison pills that can never become law, and if we tune out the extreme radical voices of the hard right, then the task before us becomes much, much easier.

Again, these hard-right chaos agents in the House do not represent a majority of Republicans in the country. They do not represent a majority of Republicans in the Senate. They do not even represent a majority of Republicans in the House, and yet they are trying to bully everyone else into submission to get what they want. And what they want—make no mistake about it; they say it openly—is a government shutdown, with the harm it will do to millions of people.

The chaos we have seen over and over again in the House just goes to show you that the hard right is not serious about governing. The only tactic in the hard-right playbook is to try to bully the rest of Congress to bend to their views.

By now, I expect many House Republicans are beyond exhausted by their colleagues' bullying tactics. It is one of the biggest reasons why the Republican majority in the House can't get anything done.

But for all their bullying, all their bluster, all their attempts at intimidation, the hard right's efforts have consistently—consistently—ended in failure. I hope this time will be no different. I hope that, in the coming days, serious-minded House Republicans can work with Democrats to find a path out of the shutdown threat. There is every reason in the world for both sides to work together this week and in the weeks to come. So I look forward to making that case to congressional leaders at the White House.

Speaker JOHNSON, we are looking forward to working with you to avoid a government shutdown.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, on Ukraine, today at the White House, I will also make a strong case to congressional leaders—especially to Speaker JOHNSON—about the immediate need to pass the national security supplemental.

I just got back from Ukraine a couple of days ago. What I saw there, what I learned there will stay with me for the rest of my life.

The people of Ukraine, for all their courage, for all their spirit, for all their ability to defend their homeland, are dangerously close to running out of supplies. Ukraine is low on ammo, on anti-air defense systems, on munitions, on long-range artillery. This shortage is creating asymmetry on the battlefield: Russia can fire and take out Ukrainian targets but Ukraine, increasingly, can't fire back. They don't have the weaponry that has the length of the Russian weaponry.

As President Zelenskyy has said to us, if Ukraine gets the package of aid they need, they will win the war. But if they don't get those armaments, they will lose.

The Senate has stepped up to the plate. We have passed a strong, bipartisan supplemental—70 votes. The Speaker must likewise put the supplemental on the floor for a vote. I believe that if the supplemental were voted on in the House right now, it would pass with similar bipartisan support that we saw here in the Senate.

I hope, I pray—for the sake of values, for the sake of our country, for the sake of the brave people in Ukraine and those who have died in the war—I hope Speaker JOHNSON recognizes that history is watching us and watching him. Failure would be the best thing Vladimir Putin could hope for.

ALABAMA IVF COURT DECISION

Mr. President, now, on the IVF presser, following the Alabama Supreme Court's stunningly radical opinion jeopardizing in vitro fertilization, Democrats are taking action to protect every American's right to IVF.

I just returned from a press conference with Senators DUCKWORTH, MURRAY, and several other of my Democratic colleagues—Senators KLOBUCHAR and BALDWIN—expressing our support for protecting the right to reproductive technology like IVF. I commend Senators DUCKWORTH and MURRAY for their leadership on this issue, and I strongly support their efforts to safeguard and strengthen IVF access for all Americans.

But make no mistake about it, what happened in Alabama is a direct—a direct—consequence of the hard-right MAGA Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. And make no mistake about it, there will be other awful restrictive decisions emanating from the Dobbs decision.

And just like the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe*, there is only one word to describe last week's Alabama Supreme Court decision: "shameful." It is shameful that families who are trying to get pregnant now have to worry that access to in vitro fertilization will be taken away. It is shameful that, in the 21st century, women have to travel hundreds of miles for basic healthcare and that doctors fear criminal prosecution just for doing their

jobs. It is shameful that the United States has become an embarrassment to the world when it comes to reproductive freedom. And it is especially shameful that hard-right Republicans—who have spent decades packing our courts with hard-right judges who have called for national abortion bans—are now trying to backpedal and sound reasonable and supportive of IVF.

But that backpedaling won't last. It is as if they lit a match, the House is now on fire, and they say: "Why is that house on fire?" They did everything that would lead up to this. We know that.

So make no mistake, the shameful state of a woman's healthcare and reproductive freedoms is a product of the hard-right Republican agenda. The minority—the small minority—in this country, the far right, are very happy today with this decision, but no one else in America is.

The American people watched for decades as the hard right led a relentless campaign against the fundamental right to choose. Republicans aren't fooling anyone by now trying to run away from their record.

Republicans own the disasters of *Roe v. Wade*. Republicans own what happened in Alabama. And Republicans will own the consequences.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

UKRAINE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, nearly 20 years ago, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the [20th] century," and, for decades, he has worked incessantly to revive the repressive empire built by Stalin, including by redrawing European borders by force.

Back in 2008, he sent the Russian military to bring Georgia, a sovereign democracy, to heel. His forces occupy parts of that country right up to today.

Precisely 10 years ago today, Putin launched a military invasion into Ukraine to seize Crimea and the Donbas region.

Of course, today isn't an anniversary of a settled event in the past; it is a mile marker in a campaign of subjugation, brutality, and conquest that remains very much alive.

Over the past 10 years, Putin's invasion has grown from an initial incursion by "little green men" to a massive ground campaign to seize all of Ukraine. But as Russian aggression escalated, two things remained the same: first, the incredible resolve of the Ukrainian people to defend their sovereignty, and second, the tendency of Western partners capable of supporting Ukraine's defense to hesitate instead.

Think about America's own behavior back in 2014. President Obama was 6 years removed from a promise to "reset" relations with Russia and a little more than a year removed from

mocking his opponent on the Presidential debate stage for warning of the threat posed by Putin. As he put it smugly to our now colleague, Senator ROMNEY, “The 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back.” That same year, then-Vice President Biden said our colleague from Utah was “mired in a Cold War mindset.”

Well, of course, the Obama-Biden administration didn’t just scoff at realism on Russia; they assiduously avoided it. When Ukraine’s pro-Western democratic leaders faced an incursion by highly trained Russian troops, they begged for lethal weapons to defend their sovereign territory, but the Obama-Biden administration worried about escalation and sent nonlethal supplies like blankets and MREs instead. The next year, the West’s collective failure to support Ukraine militarily or impose meaningful costs on Russia resulted in cease-fire agreements that at best would have frozen the conflict in place had Putin actually respected them.

Even as the next administration moved to provide lethal assistance and training for Ukraine and began the process of rebuilding our own military strength, too few European allies were taking Russian aggression or their own pledges to increase defense spending after Putin’s 2014 invasion seriously enough.

Unfortunately, President Biden compounded the problems he had helped sow back when he was Vice President—from a disastrous, credibility-shredding withdrawal from Afghanistan to his constant refusal to steer European allies away from reliance on Russia, especially Russian energy. It is not a mystery why Putin was not deterred.

The weakness and indecision that defined the Obama-Biden administration’s response to Putin’s 2014 invasion have actually echoed in the Biden-Harris administration’s response to his 2022 escalation. For months, as Russian forces amassed on Ukraine’s borders, and for months, as their brutal campaign got underway, the Biden White House mostly managed to deter itself from equipping Ukraine at the speed of relevance.

This is not to say that Western allies and partners aren’t making historic investments in deterring common threats. The free world is indeed finally waking up. In the last 2 years, NATO allies have spent more than \$120 billion on cutting-edge U.S. weapons and capabilities, while also making historic investments in their own defense and industrial capacity.

Just think of the lessons Russian aggression is teaching about the interconnected nature of the threats we face. Consider how unwaveringly our allies in the Indo-Pacific have supported Ukraine’s fight, both in word and in deed. As Taiwan’s Foreign Minister put it over the weekend, on the 2-year anniversary of the 2022 escalation—here is what he said: Ukraine’s resistance was “showing us what fight-

ing spirit is, and passing it on to Taiwan.”

Take the encouraging news just yesterday that Sweden is now finally poised to become the newest member of the transatlantic alliance. I visited Stockholm and Helsinki in a show of solidarity last March when their Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of joining NATO. There is no question that Sweden and Finland joining the most successful military alliance in human history will further contribute advanced capabilities to our collective security and make the West and America safer.

Across the world, Americans, allies, and partners have drawn sobering lessons from the latest chapter of Russian aggression in Ukraine, but we have yet to learn some of the same lessons ourselves. It is time to recognize how passivity, half-measures, and delay brought the West to this particular moment and where they will take us if we don’t reject them and chart a new course. We should reflect on the mistakes of the Obama-Biden administration, its failure to respond forcefully to aggression, and we should resolve not to make the same mistakes ourselves.

For 10 years, our adversary has shown us by his actions that Russia’s appetite for conquest grows with the eating. We can no longer afford to pretend otherwise.

NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

Mr. President, on another matter, last week, the Biden administration leftwing majority on the National Labor Relations Board issued a ruling in a case with far-reaching consequences for free speech. The decision had its roots in a quest by the Board’s activist General Counsel to appease the core democratic alliance of Big Labor and progressive activists. This comes after President Biden fired her predecessor just moments after his inauguration.

The facts of the case are simple. An employer terminated an employee for violating a content-neutral company dress code that prohibited employees from displaying causes or political messages unrelated to workplace matters. The employee refused to comply and was fired. Breaking decades of precedent, the NLRB now says that the employer was wrong to do so and must rehire the employee and provide back-pay.

For decades, American labor law maintained important and fairly straightforward speech protections. At work, employees have the right to speak about work; that is, employees have the right to “concerted” activities in the workplace when they relate to wages, hours, and working conditions. They can also work together to form or join a union. But these protections included a clear distinction between labor advocacy and political agitation. People have the right to say what they want on their own time, but our labor law only protects political activity or slogans that are a “logical

outgrowth” of speech related to wages, hours, and working conditions.

Well, this particular NLRB apparently sees no daylight between activism for leftwing political causes and advocacy connected to working conditions. In a fit of wokeness, the Biden administration’s regulators managed to throw out decades of careful distinctions designed to protect employees, employers, and customers alike.

So progressive political messages may now be protected by Federal labor law, but does the road go both ways? The next time someone gets fired for donating to a conservative cause, will those same progressives leap to his defense? I wouldn’t hold my breath.

The decision will have even more consequences for employers. Employers will have to associate themselves with the politics of their employees or else face rebuke from Federal labor regulators.

This is government-mandated speech, and it is antithetical to our free speech jurisprudence and principles. It continues an alarming trend on the left: empowering the government to choose which speech is acceptable and which is not.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it was over 10 years ago, and there was a State of the Union Address about to take place. As Members of the Senate were given a ticket for a guest to attend, my staff came to me and said: Who would you like to invite?

I said: Why don’t we call out to Walter Reed Hospital and see if there is an Illinois soldier there who is physically up to coming up to Capitol Hill for the occasion?

They said: We will check it out.

They came back to me an hour or two later and said: We found a veteran. She is a member of the Illinois National Guard. She is recuperating at Walter Reed, and she can attend.

I said: Fine. I look forward to meeting her.

The night of the State of the Union Address, they told me that the officer from the Guard was in my office, and we opened the doors, and in came TAMMY DUCKWORTH. TAMMY was in a wheelchair and full dress uniform, being pushed by her husband Bryan, also a member of the Illinois National Guard.

This was in the month of January, toward the end of the month. With a big smile on her face, she told me the story of how, as a pilot of a helicopter with the Illinois Guard, she was shot down over Iraq in the first week of November—this was January—the first week of November, and she had gone through a series of surgeries. The result of that was she had lost both of her legs. At the time, her right arm was still in a sling, and there was a question about whether or not she would lose that as well. So she was in serious medical condition, but you