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## Senate

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of John Thomas Shepherd, of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Arkansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### INFLATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as I traveled Iowa during this Easter recess, holding Q&A's in 25 counties, I ran into what I think all my colleagues do: concern about inflation.

We have to remember that inflation let loose by the reckless spending policies of the Biden administration has been proven to be anything but transitory. And that word "transitory" we heard so much during the previous administration.

Remember, it shot up to 9 percent. It is still not low enough. Inflation endures to this day, acting as a hidden tax on working-class Americans.

While inflation is well down from the 40-year high that we knew throughout history, that is of little comfort to working families struggling to make ends meet. In the first 6 months of this new administration, the Republican-led Congress acted early to shield Americans battling rising prices from the additional burden of a record tax hike that would have happened if we had not intervened.

The Working Families Tax Cut Act prevented the largest tax increase in our Nation's history. It also included additional working-class tax cuts. As a result, for working men and women, the average tax refund is up 11 percent over last year. Moreover, thanks to no tax on tips and overtime, workers keep

more of their hard-earned dollars with each paycheck as the taxman takes less. This means Americans have more money in their pockets to provide for their families.

Still, much work remains to be done, and with other colleagues, we are addressing the rising cost of living. We are all working to lower costs on healthcare, food, gasoline, and housing, to name a few.

Congress recently passed reforms to rein in powerful drug middlemen called pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs for short. This will lower drug costs. Now, more needs to be done in the area of getting prescription drug costs down, but what we did about a month ago with PBMs, through more transparency, should lead to lower drug costs. But out of the bills I have introduced, there are still several more provisions dealing with pharmacy benefit managers that we need to pass.

I am also working to increase access to more affordable health insurance plans, increase competition and access to cheaper drugs, and establish healthcare price transparency, which works very well for consumers that want to look to the marketplace. There is a wide variety of prices for a lot of operations and a lot of other healthcare costs. If people would compare prices, it would save a lot of money.

Another area of focus for me is the cost of groceries. We can lower food costs by supporting American agriculture and passing a farm bill. Farmers have been hit by a sharp rise in costs to their inputs, which eventually the consumer pays for. Reducing these costs through transparency and competition on inputs, such as fertilizer, would also help ease food prices. In this area, I was happy to read that, finally, the Department of Justice is looking at anti-competition in agriculture, particularly in fertilizer and seed companies generally, not just seed corn.

A top priority of mine is enacting year-round E15 legislation. This policy

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the fountain of our hope, we thank You that, although we plan our course, You determine the success of our journey. In a world of turbulence, trials, and turmoil, guide our feet; hold our hands.

Lord, inspire our lawmakers to commit their plans to You, trusting the unfolding of Your loving providence. May they not depend only on persistent self-reliance but draw upon the supernatural strength and wisdom You desire to give them. We praise You for the many amazing gifts You provide for their pilgrimage.

Today, fill this Chamber with Your presence and power.

We pray in Your awesome Name. Amen.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUDD). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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would deliver lower prices at the gas pump and boost the farm economy. Anybody who believes that E15 won't reduce prices ought to check prices at the pumps in the eight States of the Midwest that have already received permission from the EPA for E15 year-round in those eight States. What we need to do is make sure it is, by law, year-round—E15 year-round—and nationwide.

At the top of the list of expenses for most families is housing. It used to be that the average first-time homeowner was 30 years old. Today, he or she is 41 years old. We have to get housing costs down for first-time homeowners.

The Senate has passed the 21st Century ROAD to Housing legislation. This should increase the supply of affordable housing by cutting redtape and unlocking private capital.

Last but not least, affordability requires fiscal sanity. Fiscal recklessness by the Biden administration caused inflation, and fiscal restraint is the ultimate antidote. Last year's reconciliation bill took a step in the right direction by trimming \$1 trillion in mandatory spending. Yet uncommonly high deficits and mounting debt continue to fuel inflation and put upward pressure on interest rates. To finally stamp out inflation, Congress must recommit to sound budgeting.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we are now more than 6 months—halfway through—the 2026 fiscal year, and somehow, thanks to my Democrat colleagues, there are still parts of the Federal Government that aren't funded for 2026.

Mr. President, 43 days—43 days—Democrats shut down the government last fall—the longest government shutdown ever—all because they couldn't bring themselves to accept a clean, nonpartisan funding bill. Now they have refused to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security for well over 50 days—all because they couldn't take "yes" for an answer.

Republicans and Democrats had reached an agreement in January to fund the Department of Homeland Security for the remainder of the fiscal year, but Democrats reneged on that agreement, demanding reforms to Immigration and Customs Enforcement—over and above the reforms, I might add, that had already been agreed to in the funding bill. Republicans offered to give them additional reforms. In addition to implementing reforms on its

own, the White House repeatedly offered Democrats a robust package of additional reforms.

But nothing was ever enough for the Democrats. They just kept moving the goalposts, and eventually—eventually—they just walked away. It turns out their objective wasn't actually reform; it was a political issue. They didn't want a solution; they wanted a talking point—although I think they have overestimated how well "defund law enforcement" is going to play in November, because, let's be very clear, that is what this is. If this were about making reforms to some of the ways law enforcement does business, then Democrats would have accepted reforms, but they didn't. Instead, shortly before Easter, Democrats voted to defund—defund—law enforcement at the Department of Homeland Security. They voted to defund deportation of criminal illegal aliens—individuals guilty of things like murder, assault, and sexual crimes against minors. They voted to defund drug interdiction. They voted to defund the DHS arm that investigates transnational criminal organizations, narcotics smuggling, and human traffickers. They voted to defund our border security. That is right—Democrats voted to defund U.S. Border Patrol. Apparently, the Biden administration, with its 4 years of record-breaking illegal immigration, was not an anomaly; Democrats really don't believe in defending our borders.

I have to say it is mind-boggling. Leaving aside the national security implications of Democrats' position, Democrats do realize that it was partly the Biden border crisis that helped sink their party in the last election, don't they? I would think so. Do they really think that defunding border enforcement—border enforcement—is going to give them a victory in November?

Since Democrats have chosen to abdicate their responsibility to fund key parts of the Department of Homeland Security, Republicans are stepping in. Thanks to our foresight in the Working Families Tax Cut, immigration enforcement and border security are funded through the end of this fiscal year. But it is clear we can't rely on Democrats to fund law enforcement when it comes time to pass fiscal year 2027 funding in September, and so Republicans are going to take up a reconciliation bill to fund border security and immigration enforcement for the next 3 years.

Senator GRAHAM and the Senate Budget Committee are already working on a budget resolution to set up consideration of this bill. And I want to see the Senate take up this resolution and the subsequent bill—the reconciliation bill—to follow without delay.

We need to keep this process tight and focused so that we can get this done. Otherwise, we are going to end up in the unacceptable situation where parts of the Department of Homeland Security are going unfunded, not just now, but for the long term.

I know the Republicans in both Houses of Congress are in complete agreement on the need to ensure that law enforcement is fully funded. And I am more than confident that if we work together, we can have legislation to the President in the near future.

As for my Democrat colleagues, well, I guess we will see how well open borders and defunding law enforcement play for them in November.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened to the Republican leader from South Dakota Senator THUNE in his remarks today, and I would like to say a few words that may be in disagreement with him on some of the things that he said.

Let me preface my remarks by saying the Republican Senate leader is my friend. I think he would count me as a friend as well. We have served together for many years. There are many things we agree on; many things we disagree on.

But that is what the floor of the Senate is all about: Men and women elected to the Senate come to the floor and discuss the issues that they or the people who gather in the Gallery or at home follow this debate.

And there are differences of opinion. It is not unusual. But what I have seen in the 30 years—this is my 30th year in the U.S. Senate representing the State of Illinois—is that despite these disagreements, there comes a moment where the doors are closed, cameras are gone, and Members of both political parties sit down and say: OK, can we solve this problem? Is there a way to solve it?

And let me tell you what this problem is, and for some of you, it will not be a surprise because you have witnessed parts of it. There was an effort made by this President when he was elected to start a massive deportation effort. That is how they characterized it. It was massive.

Millions of people living in America would be forced to leave. And the Agency, the Department of Homeland Security would be in charge of that effort. We heard the President explain over and over and over again at his rallies what his goal was.

He used the words, you will recognize them: We are going to expel the "worst of the worst." Terrorists, murderers, rapists, criminally insane, sex and drug traffickers, they are gone. They never should have been allowed in this country, and now, they are going to be gone.

Well, let me hold up my hand and say: That is a worthy goal. I believe,