

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I truly am shocked to hear my colleague from across the aisle describe Direct File as too expensive for the American people. I think he said it cost \$41 million to administer this system. If it is fully operational, Direct File is projected to save taxpayers \$23 billion a year and countless hours of hassle. There are very few things that happen here in Washington that give such a good return on investment to taxpayers.

Senator CRAPO said that people didn't use Direct File and suggested they didn't like it somehow. You know why people didn't use Direct File last year with the Republicans in charge? Maybe it was because the Trump administration and the Republicans accepted millions of dollars from the tax prep companies and did their best to sabotage the program. Here is what we know for sure: Polling shows that over 75 percent of Americans support free tax online filing from the IRS. If you invest in free tax filing, Americans are going to use it.

In fact, we know that because in the pilot project run by the Biden administration, 94 percent of those who used the program said it was excellent or above average. Not usually the kind of responses we get from people when they are paying their taxes.

The argument that Republicans make that Americans can already file their taxes for free with Free File, all I will say is: Well, tell that to the millions of people who paid more than a hundred bucks each to file their taxes this year. Independent watchdogs have concluded over and over and over again that the tax prep companies that run Free File make it incredibly hard for people to find it; and, once they find it, incredibly hard for them to use it. So what do people do? They end up paying through the nose just to file their taxes.

And you know who never got charged to file their taxes? The people who used Direct File. Direct File is the only truly free online filing option for Americans.

You know, the Republicans have argued that it presents conflict of interest for the IRS to both prepare and audit your taxes. I think somehow they seem to misunderstand how Direct File works. People who use Direct File are the ones preparing their own taxes, not the IRS—just like the people who use TurboTax are the ones using a program to prepare their own taxes.

And you know what happened when people used Direct File to prepare their taxes? Their returns got accepted at a higher rate than any other self-prep software—that is, it worked better than TurboTax; it worked better than the services that Americans are paying for.

Look, we know what is going on here, and that is that the Trump administration and the Republicans are accepting

millions of dollars in donations—a point that was not refuted by the objector to this bill. They are accepting millions of dollars in donations from these tax prep companies; and then in return for that money, shutting down Direct File. That is where the real conflict of interest is.

Look, we have a choice to make as a U.S. Senate, and that is: Who are we here for? Why are we here to protect two multibillion-dollar companies that manage to make big bucks by charging individual families \$100, \$150, \$175 just to pay the taxes that they are legally required to pay?

We have a system that works. It would save people billions of dollars across this country. The only reason that we are not doing this is because the tax prep companies have figured out that making political contributions to the Republicans pays off big time. They can kill off a program that would be good for the American people but would hurt their own profitability.

You have got to make a decision: Whose side are you on? The Democrats are on the side of saving money for American taxpayers. The Republicans are on the side of two big tax prep companies because they get paid to be on their side.

So we may not get this one through today, but we will keep coming back.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

INFLATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today is Mr. John Lowery one of my colleagues from my office.

I think I get it, Mr. President. I know you do. Tonight, millions of moms and dads will lie down to sleep, and they won't be able to because they are worried. One of the things that they are going to be worrying about is the cost of living. I get it.

We had really bad inflation under President Biden. It was, like, 9 percent. The President just spent so much money and injected so much money in the economy without increasing supply that prices went through the roof. That is what inflation is: creating more demand than supply. And prices went up.

We have gotten it down to about 3 percent—the inflation rate I am talking about. It jumped up a little last month—about 90, 95 basis points as a result of the price of gas, but I think after the fighting stops in Iran, the price of gas will come back.

That doesn't mean the problem is solved. When you reduce inflation from 9 percent to 3 percent, that is good, but all that means is that prices are rising much quicker. They were going up really quickly when they were rising at 9 percent. Now that they are back down to rising 3 percent, that is better, but they are still going up.

What people want—what I want, from one perspective—is deflation. You want prices to go down, not to just rise less

quickly. Well, the problem with deflation is that we can cause deflation, but the cure will be worse than the disease because we will have to endure unemployment of 9 or 10 percent, and I don't want to see that many Americans—I don't want to see any Americans, but I certainly don't want to see that many Americans thrown out of work.

So what do we do about the cost of living? Look, no amount—no amount—of guilt can change the past. It can't. It doesn't mean you shouldn't learn from the past, but no amount of guilt can change it. And no amount of anxiety can change the future. I mean, it is human nature to worry, but it is not going to change the future.

The only thing we have is the present if we want to make things better. I want to tell you what we are doing—we are doing. We passed a major piece of legislation that is just starting to take effect. It is going to impact every American. They came up with a new name for it because they didn't like the old name, but I kind of like the old name so that is what I am going to call it: the One Big Beautiful Bill. It is really breathtaking in its scope—and will be in its effect.

We cut taxes. Right now—don't take my word for it, just pick up the phone and arbitrarily call some Americans who have filed their taxes. They are getting money back. The average tax refund is up, like, 11 percent. The average American who normally gets a refund and who is already filing is going to get what works out to be an extra \$250 to \$300 a month, so that is going to help them deal with the higher prices.

We also extended the prior tax cuts from 2017 that were about to expire. We made them permanent. Anybody who voted against making them permanent wanted to raise your taxes by \$3.4 trillion. We beat them back.

We increased the standard deduction. Whether you get a refund or not, you are going to pay lower taxes because we increased the standard deduction. We gave Americans a larger child tax credit. We cut taxes for many Americans on Social Security. We cut taxes on tips. We cut taxes on overtime. We gave many Americans a deduction on the interest they pay for a car loan. Not everybody—I don't want to overstate the case here—but many Americans, and I hope you qualify.

For people in business—most businesses in America today are small businesses. I know you read about Google and Meta and all of the biggies, but most businesses in America and most of the jobs in America are created by small businesses. And most of the small businesses are what we call LLCs or sub S corporations. They are passthroughs. They are passthroughs. And we have provided that they don't have to pay any income tax on their first 20 percent of income. That may sound complicated; it is really not. But I can tell you it means more money in the pockets of small business women and small business men.

If you are in business, we have also provided for full expensing of research and development, full expensing of new equipment and machinery. Why does that matter? That means you can buy new equipment to grow your business and deduct it from your income tax, which lowers your taxes.

This is a major piece of legislation, and it is taking effect now. It is not going to solve the problem completely, but it is going to go a long way because the best way to deal with inflation is to grow your way out of it. If prices are going up between 2 and 3 percent, rather than suffering 10, 8, 12 percent unemployment to get prices down, to have deflation, you are better off increasing income so people's wages and income will go up faster than prices. And that is what the One Big Beautiful Bill is going to do.

So don't think we are not doing something. We are. We have. And that bill is just starting to take effect right now.

The second thing we have done—and I am not going to talk about all of them. We have a problem with housing in America. You don't have to be an astrophysicist to figure that one out. You don't have to be able to explain the law of special relativity to know that the cost of a home is breathtaking or to know that rents have gone up. Why is that? It is because of the lack of supply. Duh. It is because of a lack of supply.

So what do you do to make a new home or a used home more affordable? What do you do to make rents go down? You increase the supply. And that is what we are trying to do.

I sit on the Banking Committee. We have passed—the Senate has—twice, a housing bill. It is right in front of the House of Representatives right now, and I hope my friends in the House pass it.

I will tell you one of the things it will do. It will increase housing starts. If you don't think this works, just go read an article about what is going on in Austin. They increased the housing supply in Austin. You know, rents are dropping in Austin like a fat guy on a seesaw. They are going down. Why? Because they increased supply.

Our bill I hope the House will pass will offer local governments—local governments control the supply of housing. It is not the Federal Government. It is not the State government. It is local government. Do you know why? Because they have control of the zoning office, and they have to give you—the contractors—the permits to build. If they want to restrict the supply of housing, they just make it very difficult to build a new home. If they want to expand the supply of housing, they make it easy.

For a variety of reasons I won't go into, many local governments have been restricting the supply of housing. So what our bill does—we say: Look, that is up to you, local government. It is your call. We don't want to be in

charge of zoning laws in America. We don't want to be in charge, at the Federal level, of permitting. But you do rely on us for money.

Every year, we send about \$3.3 billion—\$3.3 billion every year like clockwork—to local governments, called community development block grants. They love it. It is free money, and they can pretty much spend that \$3.3 billion—these local governments can—on anything within reason that they want to. They love this free money.

So what we did—this is in the housing bill, among other things that we passed—we said: Look, this \$3.3 billion, you like it?

Yeah.

Well, if you will increase your housing starts—here is the good news. We started out with the sugar. We said: If you will increase your housing starts—you don't have to, but if you will increase housing starts in your city or local area, we will give you an extra dose of that community development block grant money.

Here is the bad news for them. And we also said: Now, you don't have to increase housing starts, but if you don't, we are going to pay the cities that did increase their housing starts with the money that we were giving you that you don't get because you chose not to.

So this bill isn't going to cost the American taxpayer any more money. The \$3.3 billion is going to remain the same. But those cities that do a better job of increasing housing are going to get more money. Where is that money going to come from? It is going to come from the cities that didn't want to increase housing starts. And it will work. All you have to do is go look and see what is going on in Austin.

I have two more topics I want to talk about.

(Mr. MORENO assumed the Chair.)

IRAN

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, look, everybody has got an opinion about Iran. I get it. That is good. Americans are entitled to have an opinion. Every Member of the Senate has an opinion. Every Member of the House has an opinion. Obviously, the President has an opinion. The Pope has an opinion. Everybody has an opinion, and that is a good thing.

I can tell you why I think we did the right thing by going into Iran. First of all, the people of Iran are wonderful people. I am not talking about the people; I am talking about their government, which is run by their Supreme Leader. Now, the old Supreme Leader is now as dead as Woodrow Wilson, but they have a new Supreme Leader. It is the son of the old Supreme Leader, and he is just as crazy as his daddy was.

The people in charge in Iran—they are a theocracy. That means, unlike America, where we separate church and state, in there, they marry their church to their state. And the Supreme Leader, who rules Iran, thinks that he

is speaking for God. He really thinks God is telling him to do all this stuff. The Supreme Leader believes that if you disagree with his version of his religion, you should die.

They hate America, and they hate Israel. They do. They want to kill us and hurt us the entire time we are dying.

They are trying to get a nuclear weapon. This isn't like China having a nuclear weapon or Russia or India or Pakistan.

Let me ask you a question. Would you give Charles Manson a nuclear weapon? That is what we are talking about here. Charles Manson is also as dead as Woodrow Wilson. But would you give a Charles Manson-type person a nuclear weapon? No. That is why we can't let the Supreme Leader and his minions in Iran have them.

Now, how do we stop them? Well, this is what Iran was up to. First of all, President Trump and Israel went in in June and bombed the living daylights out of their nuclear facilities, destroyed them substantially.

To develop a nuclear weapon, you have to have fissile material, enriched uranium. We hit their production facilities so hard that a lot of that uranium is buried underneath the ground, but it is still there, OK. We bombed the hell out of it, and we set them way back in terms of their nuclear ability, but it still exists.

We received intelligence saying that Iran has started to take some baby steps to restart their nuclear program that we bombed to hell and back last June. But that is not really why we went in. We also received intelligence that said Iran has a new game plan. The Supreme Leader—nutty as a fruitcake—the Supreme Leader has decided—here is his game plan—he is going to double and triple missile production.

Ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, also drones—they were producing those things at anywhere from 200 to 600 a month, maybe more, and the Supreme Leader was going to stockpile all these new missiles and these new drones, and then he was going to turn to America and Israel and the rest of the world and say: I am restarting the nuclear program. You can bomb me, you can bomb us if you want to, but we have got all these missiles, and some of these missiles can reach Berlin and Paris and London and Türkiye, and we are going to use them. The first thing we are going to do is destroy the Middle East. We don't care. We are Charles Manson. We are going to destroy the Middle East, and then we are going to start on anybody else that we are mad at.

We couldn't let that happen. We couldn't. So Israel and the President attacked. Now, whether you think it was a good idea or a bad idea, that is up to you. I can tell you the effect of it, though, because this—the media won't report it, but this is undeniable. We hit Iran so hard, they are coughing up bones. The public sector but also