

force Americans to pay for Trump's billion-dollar ballroom and tens of billions more for Trump's masked agents, while including zero—zero dollars—to bring down American costs. Ask Americans how many people want to see a billion dollars for a ballroom and no money to help reduce the cost of food, the cost of electricity, the cost of housing, the cost of childcare. When will Republicans take the hint? When will they realize that Americans want lower costs, not a gold-plated ballroom for our billionaire President.

It seems all the President is concerned with these days are vanity projects, not things that make the American people's lives better.

Democrats will fight Republicans' ballroom bill tooth and nail. And Republicans here in the Senate should do the same, if they have any sense.

Can you believe it? You guys are walking off a cliff. Funding a billion-dollar ballroom when people are hurting? It makes no sense. No sense at all.

#### IRAN

Mr. President, now, on Iran and the gas tax, Trump recently signaled to American motorists to buckle up, saying that the cease-fire with Iran is "on life support." The American economy is also on life support because of Trump's mishandling of his illegal war.

Americans are paying over \$4½ for a gallon of gas because Donald Trump refuses to end this war—a dollar and a half more than when this war started.

Americans need every cent they can get right now, and Senate Democrats will work with whomever it takes to bring down costs. But Republicans need to realize that Donald Trump's proposal to suspend the gas tax is simply not enough. Eighteen cents of gas tax relief a gallon doesn't even come close to the buck-50 gas price increase from this war, and Republicans need to stop pretending that it does. Offering Americans literal pennies on the dollar to cope with skyrocketing gas prices just won't cut it. Mr. President, \$0.18 is not \$1.50.

If Republicans want to get serious about lowering costs, they will support Democrat's War Powers Resolution, coming up once again this week, to withdraw American troops from hostilities with Iran. This week, Republicans will have their seventh opportunity to vote for our War Powers Resolution, get our servicemembers out of harm's way, and rein in these skyrocketing costs. I urge Republicans to join Democrats and the American people by supporting the resolution.

Americans can't afford for their economy to be left on life support, which is why we need to end this war and get our economy back on track.

#### CHINA

Mr. President, on Trump going to China, there is an old saying that only Nixon could go to China, but soon they will say: Only Trump could sell out to China. Xi Jinping has Donald Trump salivating at the prospect of a trillion-dollar Chinese investment deal in

America that would threaten America's supply chains, threaten economic independence, threaten national security. Strength in China at the expense of American strength.

Donald Trump wants a deal with China so badly, he could sell out our American manufacturing. He could sell out on chips. He could sell out on Taiwan, which produces many of these chips. He could sell out on AI and on any number of grave issues that will determine who dominates the 21st century.

Right now, again, to get his photo in the newspapers and try—won't work—to raise his very low poll numbers, he is going to sell out to China.

We can't let Trump willingly give China our superior American technology or allow him to serve Taiwan to the Chinese Communist Party on a silver platter, just so he can get the satisfaction of saying he made a deal.

For decades, Trump has complained about how China has cheated America. If Donald Trump wants America to outcompete China, he cannot let Xi Jinping take him for a ride.

#### HANTAVIRUS

Mr. President, on the hantavirus, we continue to pray for all American cruise ship passengers exposed to hantavirus and those who remain in quarantine. I can only imagine how distressing this experience has been.

The Trump administration's gutting of America's public health preparedness has made the recent hantavirus outbreak even more alarming. We often say: You don't miss something until it is gone, and that is certainly true of the cruise ship inspectors, disease detectors, port health station staff, and other pandemic experts that Donald Trump purged without a second thought. Cutting the CDC's Vessel Sanitation Program, as well as a pilot program to study the hantavirus, Trump may as well have invited the virus to our shores.

If the Trump administration wants to keep Americans safe, he should follow my plan to rehire the infectious disease experts he fired, to restore the funding for the programs that protect Americans from these illnesses, and to rejoin the World Health Organization and other monitoring organizations to contain these outbreaks before they spread.

After COVID-19 struck, we knew it was a question of when—not if—the United States would face another pandemic threat. Instead of investing in public health to meet that threat, the Trump administration has raised the white flag and lowered our defenses.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to Executive Calendar No. 727 be waived.

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

#### ENERGY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today because all around the country, people understand it takes far too long to build something in America. It has to do with permitting.

Americans want to build. We are ready to build. People are ready to finance it. The problem is, to build something in America today, it is costly, it is complex, and there is a cumbersome permitting process. In America, amazingly, you need to get permission from the government to build just about anything.

Now, I represent Wyoming. It is an energy State. It is America's energy breadbasket. We have world-class coal. We have abundant supplies of oil and natural gas. We have the richest uranium deposits in the world. And all of these affordable, available, and reliable forms of American energy are ready to power our country, not just now but for generations to come.

We have world-class energy workers in Wyoming, as you do in your home State of Oklahoma, and we do all across the country. These people are ready to do the job. The Federal permitting process is standing in their way.

The Federal permitting process is fundamentally broken. Permitting has become burdened by bureaucracy and weaponized by litigation, and we have a system that will not let us get to work. American energy, mining, roads, bridges, and buildings—all of them are caught in the crosshairs of a culture of saying no.

Energy projects have been especially delayed by the bureaucrats and the trial lawyers. These are individuals who have never built a thing. Yet they believe they deserve veto power over those who do.

Meanwhile, energy demand in America is rising dramatically. The new energy demand across America is adding up like adding an entire new California to the grid. Those are the needs. Every permitting delay costs our economy and our Nation. Delays mean higher utility bills. Delays mean paychecks are lost, money doesn't get earned. Delays mean fewer investments in our communities. This is all unacceptable.

We need to produce more American energy, and we need to produce more in order to lower costs. The best way to spur the government to issue permits is to impose strict deadlines and to stop these endless lawsuits. It seems that builders need a clear yes or no. And once approved, they need certainty that their permits will endure. That has been a real problem.

There is a law called NEPA. It stands for the National Environmental Policy Act. It is the biggest obstacle. NEPA essentially halts any and all development in its tracks. NEPA was enacted in 1970, and it required costly and sprawling environmental reviews.

America was built by men and women of daring. Now they face delays.

Our forefathers laid steel across mountains, they poured concrete into canyons, and they built towering skyscrapers that still inspire the world. Americans forged our Nation's future with speed and with purpose.

We built the Empire State Building in a little over a year. We built the Hoover Dam in just 5 years. We built the 2000-mile Transcontinental Railroad in just 6 years. That was a long time ago. You could get things done.

Today, a single environmental review with NEPA can take 4 years or longer just to get the review done. That means you can't start construction without spending at least 4 years in the penalty box.

It is embarrassing that it takes so long to approve everyday projects today, much longer than it took to build the wonders of the modern world.

Right now, \$1.5 trillion in critical infrastructure is trapped. It is trapped in the desks of unelected, unaccountable, heavyhanded bureaucrats. The money can't move, and Americans pay for every year a project sits on those desks.

To make matters worse, NEPA is also the most litigated of all Federal environmental laws. If you want to do something, you are going to get sued. On average, over 100 lawsuits related to NEPA are filed every year. Malicious lawsuits filed by radical environmental activists lead to higher costs, more delays, no progress. Too many prefer legal molasses to affordable oil and gas.

Just last year, the Supreme Court voted unanimously to limit the scope of NEPA in terms of all these environmental reviews, which have grown dramatically. Justice Kavanaugh wrote in the majority opinion that NEPA has become "a blunt and haphazard tool employed by project opponents . . . to try to stop or at least slow down new infrastructure or construction projects."

The Supreme Court's unanimous opinion is right. NEPA was once called the "environmental Magna Carta." Today, it is a regulatory Berlin Wall.

Since day one, President Trump has prioritized rolling back burdensome regulations. The President has accelerated the permitting process—rightly so. Americans are already seeing the results. We are producing a record amount of energy. But we can do more, and we must do more, and we must do it quickly.

Now is the time for Congress to act. I am soon going to introduce legislation to break the bottlenecks in Federal permitting. This is the No. 1 way to boost American energy and mineral dominance, and to lower prices, lower costs, and lower what has to come out of people's pockets.

My legislation will encourage access to oil and gas resources on Federal lands and offshore. It will also enact commonsense judicial reforms to NEPA.

The Senate has a good start on the permitting process. Senator Manchin

and I introduced the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024. We did that when we were at the Energy Committee together. This was bipartisan legislation designed to fix the Nation's permitting process and the rules. It was carefully negotiated over the course of an entire year, and it earned strong bipartisan support. It passed our Energy and Natural Resources Committee 15 to 4.

Today, Senator SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO of West Virginia and Senator MIKE LEE of Utah are taking the lead to advance commonsense permitting reform using this model as a background. Senator CAPITO chairs the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. Senator LEE chairs the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. They are the key committees for permitting reform. Senator CAPITO and Senator LEE are doing exemplary work. It is time for all Senators to find common ground on permitting.

Americans still know how to build. We build the best in the world, and we want to build. We are a nation of builders, and we are not a nation of waiters.

That is where we are. We need to get this done, and it is time for America's permitting process to get out of the way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

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

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

#### IMMIGRATION

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, we are blessed to live in a nation that has withstood the test of time for 250 years. This country has had its fair share of problems, but we have been able to overcome and get by together, at the end of the day, because we believe in America and what it stands for.

America was founded on a core set of values that have persisted through the years and have given hope to so many who were seeking a better life. American values are rooted in liberty, equality, opportunity, self-governance, and the rule of law.

Liberty means freedom—freedom from tyranny, whether it is political, religious, or economic. Since our founding, individual freedoms have been the foundation of American society. You are free to choose what you believe, how you worship, what work you pursue, and how you build a life for yourself.

Equality means that, in this country, we don't have a caste system. We don't tell people they are stuck where they are born. We believe all men are created equal, and everyone has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their

background—an opportunity that makes this country very special.

You know, I used to tell my players all the time: This country owes you nothing but an opportunity to achieve what you want to achieve.

Now, you might get knocked to the ground and not make it to that point as soon as you would like, but the country that you love so much—that we all love so much—gives that chance to get back up and go again.

You know, we are the only country that does that, out of 200 in the world we live in.

What you decide to do with that opportunity, after you achieve it, is up to you. That is the American dream. That is what this country is about—the belief that, if you are willing to work hard, you can build a better life. The American dream is unique to this country alone.

For centuries now, people have fled dictatorships, failed governments, and oppression because they knew that dream was real.

Then there is the rule of law—the cornerstone for why our country is so great. No one is above the law—not citizen, not newcomer, not even the government itself. In America, if you live here, you are expected to follow the law, period.

Those are the values that have made this country great. Those are the values that drew generations of immigrants to our shores over 250 years. Sadly—sadly—today, we are not seeing immigrants with the same mentality moving to this country.

For most of our history, people have come here to become Americans. They came here to assimilate. They worked hard, they learned, they followed the law, and they contributed. That is what this country is all about.

Today, we are seeing large numbers—and I mean large numbers—of people coming to this country with no intention of assimilating into our culture or our way of life. People from third-world hellholes are being let into this country who have no desire to adapt to our way of life. They not only refuse to work, but they also choose to take advantage of America's welfare system, forcing hard-working Americans to bankroll their lives.

The question must be asked, why are we letting these people who don't share our values and refuse to assimilate—why are we letting them into our country?

The word "assimilate" is often treated with suspicion because it is often related to racism. But assimilation has absolutely nothing to do with race; it is about values. "Assimilation" doesn't mean you abandon your heritage or your faith or forget where you are from; it is about embracing a new, shared belief system.

People that came here in the past understood this. Examples would be Italian Americans, Greek Americans, German Americans who brought elements of their heritage with them, but