STATE BUDGETS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, recent headlines have reinforced a warning that Republicans and economic experts have been articulating literally for months: The massive spending the Democrats insisted upon at the outset of the Biden administration was not in step with actual needs.

Yesterday, I talked about some of the ways the multitrillion-dollar spending spree rammed through in March has actually delayed our reopening and our recovery: about the disappointing falloff in hiring, despite a historic number of open jobs, after the Democrats renewed a Federal program that pays people extra not to work. Well, here is another misplaced priority from that spending spree: our Democratic friends' insistence on stuffing another wheelbarrow of cash into the accounts of State and local governments that were already rebounding from the crisis.

Back in February, as the Democrats insisted States were in dire need of another huge bailout, 29 of the 50 States were actually closing a 12-month chapter in which their revenues met or exceeded the year before. Twenty-nine of the fifty States were actually closing a 12-month chapter in which their revenues met or exceeded the year before the pandemic.

The faster-than-expected economic recovery, combined with the five bipartisan bills Congress passed in 2020, left a lot of cities and States in even better shape in exiting the pandemic than they were heading into it. Rising tax revenues had put these States in a position not only to weather pandemic-related downturns but to fill in preexisting budgetary potholes that actually had nothing to do with COVID hardships.

Of course, that didn't stop the Democrats from cramming nearly another $200 billion in State bailouts into the American Rescue Plan. Impressively, California got its hands on $26 billion of the $200 billion. By the way, the State of California now claims it already has a budget surplus three times that size—three times that size of a budget surplus—and we are sending them another $26 billion.

They are having to brainstorm new ideas to spend the unneeded avalanche of cash. I understand the State's Governor has come up with one idea he likes. He is planning to cut a timely round of State-level stimulus checks to include people who are in the country illegally—just in time for his recall election later this year. Is that the kind of urgent priority the Democrats had in mind when they used COVID to push through what they called the ''most progressive'' legislation in history?

Experts warned it was poorly targeted, and Republicans said American families deserved better, but the big catalog of political payouts was pushed right through. Let's remember exactly how this played out before we are doomed to repeat it again.

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, yesterday, the Senate took a step toward considering wide-ranging legislation that would touch on multiple parts of the U.S. economy in the name of increasing innovation and competitiveness.

A secure, productive, and innovative America that can outcompete China is something that all 100 Senators want. Of course, in a place like the Senate, you are guaranteed to find a wide variety of different ideas about the best ways to encourage that. A number of our colleagues have assembled a proposal that touches on a long list of subjects—everything from funding universities, to regional economic development, to Indo-Pacific geopolitics, to artificial intelligence, to cyber security, and beyond. Legislation this broad needs a thorough, robust, and bipartisan floor process, including a healthy series of amendment votes.

As one of my Republican colleagues—the ranking member on the Commerce Committee—explained, as he supported moving the legislation out of committee, the current draft is ''not ready for prime time'' yet and deserves a robust process here on the floor.

I understand this bill has come to the floor with a bipartisan understanding and the Democratic leader's assurances that there won't be an effort to close debate on amendments prematurely. So I look forward to the Senate's considering these important issues, and I hope all of this interest in our competition with China will lead our Democratic friends to rethink President Biden's intention to cut our defense spending after inflation. The single best thing we can do to stay competitive with China is to give our Armed Forces the resources they need to stay competitive with China.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, sometime soon, we also expect to vote on a Democratic resolution to overturn a rule put in place by the previous administration. Under Republican leadership, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—an aggressive Washington regulator of the American job market—issued modified marching orders that increased transparency and decreased the odds of expensive lawsuits.

Several years back, one investigation found the EEOC had become very aggressive and was perpetrating a kind of legal harassment on job creators, often leaving American taxpayers on the hook for court cases which the Commission had actually lost. Taxpayers were paying to sue job creators and lose in court, so the Republicans updated their guidance. It was the first substantial update of the way the EEOC handles disputes and conciliation since 1977. It said that the employer in question deserves a written summary of the facts behind a complaint, a written explanation of the legal justification, a few other details, and 14 days to respond. Sounds pretty reasonable. This helps ensure the Commission is making a good-faith effort to see if the dispute can be settled outside of court before beginning a costly, adversarial process.

Apparently, even these modest steps were too much for my friends on the Democratic side. They want to roll back this progress. A number of groups have asked them not to do this, from small business owners, to builders and contractors, to restaurant owners, to retailers, and beyond. These are the same employers who are already struggling to climb back out of this pandemic and rehire workers. They don't need any more Washington headwinds in their faces, and taxpayers don't need more of their dollars being funneled back toward trial lawyers. So I would urge Senators to vote against this resolution so the current, improved rule can actually be left in place.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT-MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1260, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 58, S. 1260, a bill to establish a new Directorate for Technology and Innovation in the National Science Foundation, to establish a regional technology hub program, to require a strategy and report on economic security, science, research, innovation, manufacturing, and job creation, to establish a critical supply chain resiliency program, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS APRIL JOBS REPORT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Ronald Reagan once said that the nine most terrifying words in the English language are ''I'm from the government, and I'm here to help.''