What Republicans should not do—what they must not do—is squelch any chance for the Senate to debate something as critical and sacrosanct as the right to vote, nor should they pretend like the Federal Government has no role to play in protecting our democracy. On the contrary, throughout history, the Federal Government has sometimes been the only remedy when States try to suppress the vote. And no honest observer can look at the way the States have changed election laws this last year and pretend that there is nothing malicious afoot.

As Senator MANCHIN said earlier this year regarding congressional action on voting rights, inaction is not an option. Let me repeat that because this is one place where Senator MANCHIN and I agree. As Senator MANCHIN said earlier this year regarding congressional action on voting rights, ''Inaction is not an option.'' Inaction is not an option. I agree. All 49 other Democrats agree with Senator MANCHIN. Inaction is not an option.

The Senate can rise to the task if given the chance, but its Members must vote to begin debate first.

BUILD BACK BETTER AGENDA

Mr. President, now on Build Back Better, for decades now, millions of families in this country have found the basic American promise that if you work hard, then you can have a better life for yourselves and your loved ones, the proverbial American dream—Americans have found it is getting harder to reach. That is what creates a sourness in the land. That sunny optimism so crucial to our identity has receded away from view.

Democrats have promised to do something about it. When Senate Democrats secured our majority this year, we committed to delivering on the trust that the American people placed in us and to respond to the challenge of our times. That is why we immediately set to work and passed the American Rescue Plan to propel our economy out of the crisis of COVID. And that has been the driving force behind our efforts to make President Biden's Build Back Better agenda into law.

Last night, I continued my discussions with Speaker PELOSI and President Biden as we work to an agreement on legislation we can bring to the floor. I know that, throughout the day, the President will meet with a number of Members from both Chambers, and, as the week progresses, I will continue to hold talks with my colleagues as we move forward to the finish line.

Here is what matters: Build Back Better legislation is going to dramatically improve the lives of tens of millions of American families for years to come. Something that impactful is not an easy feat, but we are going to keep working. By passing this legislation, we can create good-paying jobs for this generation and the next; we can lower costs and cut taxes for American families while taking overdue steps to meaningfully address the climate crisis.

We still have work to do, but we are going to continue at it until—until the job is done.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, every day, American families are feeling real pain because of the reckless and inflationary policies that Democrats have already rammed through. The American people are facing the highest inflation in more than 10 years. They are paying an extra dollar a gallon at the pump and soaring prices at the grocery store. Real wages are down. Rising prices are wiping out raises and bonuses. Last month's jobs report was another huge disappointment, showing less than half the hiring that had been expected.

But, amazingly, the Biden administration and many of our colleagues seem to think the cure for this inflation hangover is the hair of the dog. They are trying to exploit the economic anxiety they have created by pitching yet another multitrillion-dollar socialist spending spree. They want to try to inflate their way out of inflation.

Oh, and get this: The Biden administration is simultaneously saying that their latest spending spree will cost zero dollars.

Let me say that again. The Biden administration is simultaneously saying their latest spending spree will cost zero dollars—it will be totally free—and it will come with massive, historic tax hikes in order to pay for it.

All this socialism is going to be totally free of charge—but it also needs the biggest IRS cash grab in decades in order to pay for it. Go figure. The Democrats' plan contains more than 40 separate tax hikes on the American people—40 separate tax hikes on the American people. These increases would impact taxpayers at every income level. Small business owners and family farmers would feel yet another pinch. Even the tax hikes that are ostensibly aimed at Washington Democrats' favorite punching bag, American industry, would find their way back down to working families.

Democrats' war on affordable American energy would hit pocketbooks just in time to spike winter heating bills and the prices of made-in-America goods. Their corporate tax hikes would leave American businesses paying a higher tax rate than businesses—listen to this—in communist China. As the Joint Committee on Taxation has shown, two-thirds of the burden of Democrats' proposed new taxes on businesses would fall on lower and middle-income Americans—two-thirds.

But Washington Democrats aren't just laying out massive new tax hikes in the light of day; they also want to hand the IRS new snooping powers to start digging through individual Americans' bank accounts. They want to pay for their reckless taxing-and-spending spree by treating normal American households like everybody is under audit. They want to treat normal American households like everybody is under audit.

So, to review, this has been the story of Democrats' unified control of government in 2021. Here is what they have done: First, they knee-capped our economic recovery with stifling spending, including to pay Americans more to stay on the sidelines than to rejoin the workforce. Then, as working families feel the pinch of runaway prices, they are putting forward even more spending and also massive tax hikes. As icing on the cake, they have schemed for even greater access to Americans' personal finances so Washington bureaucrats can spy—can spy—on citizens' routine transactions.

This is not what American voters signed up for, and it won't earn a shred of support from this side of the aisle.

PROTESTS

Mr. President, now on another matter, last week, Washington, DC, was again the site of illegal political violence from the radical left. A mob of environmental extremists set upon the Department of the Interior. They shoved through blocked doors. They hurt the police and security personnel who tried to hold the line. These radicals put one law enforcement officer actually in the hospital.

Political violence and attacks on government buildings are flatout wrong no matter who is perpetrating them or what they claim to believe. That is why it is puzzling that last week's incidents attracted so little attention and condemnation. The White House was directly asked about the day's demonstrations just a few hours after the violence and the break-in occurred. Instead of condemning the radicals, the Biden administration actually praised them—praised them.

The White House Press Secretary was asked about the protests multiple hours after the violence and the break-in and said—this is a direct quote—''Of course we're listening to advocates and people who have been elevating the issue of climate for decades. They have important voices.''

So that is how the Biden administration officially described the demonstrators who put a cop in the hospital—''important voices.'' This is just absurd. But those weren't just regrettable comments; they capture the politicized and selective approach to law enforcement that increasingly defines the Democratic Party.

Last year, our Nation saw a 30-percent jump in homicides—the biggest jump in the murder rate in modern history; the worst spike in the homicide rate in modern American history. The head of the National Center for Health Statistics says it was the worst increase in more than 100 years, since at