Just last week, administration officials acknowledged that hundreds more Americans than they initially claimed remain trapped in Afghanistan, that terrorists in the country are just months away from being capable of conducting attacks on U.S. soil, and that no basing agreements to allow for over-the-horizon operations had yet been reached.

Emboldened terrorists are already stepping up violence against Americans and our allies in the Middle East. The administration is failing to deter Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.

The Russian threat has grown since President Biden took office, though you wouldn't know it by how quiet Senate Democrats have been on the subject. Putin is committed to modernizing his military to threaten U.S. and NATO forces, weaponizing his country's energy resources to pressure Europe, and escalating Russia's military pressure on Ukraine.

Of course, the American military, American industries, and our allies and partners are also facing a communist China that is hell-bent—hell-bent—on dominating trade and repressing dissent. This is not a regional threat but a global one. China's comprehensive military modernization is stunning in its scope. The PRC is building weapons and capabilities to target U.S. forces at greater and greater range. We ignore this threat at our peril.

So there is never a good time for Congress to abdicate its role in guiding and overseeing national security policy, but the Biden administration's muddled mess of a foreign policy makes this an especially terrible time for the Senate Democratic majority to neglect these issues.

Chairman REED and Ranking Member INHOFE have given us an opportunity to fulfill the Senate's role in a serious, consequential way. Now the majority needs to let the Senate work. We need the kind of serious and rigorous floor process that the NDAA deserves.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in all of the time I have been in Washington, in both the House and the Senate, I have seen Republicans in control, in the majority, and I have seen Democrats in the majority. I have been on both sides of that, and I have seen Republican Presidents and Democrat Presidents. But one thing that doesn't change is that, when Democrats get power in Washington, they want to expand government, they want to grow government, they want to spend money.

If you just look throughout history, at least since the time I have been here, that is just a fact. We have already seen them this year—since the President came to power and the Democrats have had narrow majorities in the House and Senate, which they have interpreted somehow as being a mandate, but is a dead-even U.S. Senate—push through on a partisan basis a $1.9 trillion spending bill which expanded government. There is a $1.2 trillion infrastructure bill that has passed the Senate in a bipartisan way, on which there was some agreement, and it is still awaiting action in the House of Representatives.

Already—already—in this new administration, that represents over $3 trillion in spending, which is on infrastructure and some core hard infrastructure with respect to the bipartisan bill.

The other bill was of a lot of things that the Republicans felt weren't necessary, particularly after the five bills we passed last year in 2020 in response to the pandemic.

By the way, every one of those was on a bipartisan basis. So a lot of spending went on in responding to the pandemic—trillions and trillions of dollars.

The first thing that happened when the Democrats came to power was that they passed another $2 trillion, and then an infrastructure bill. So we have already got over $3 trillion spent at a time when we have $30 trillion in debt—and growing by the day. Yet the Democrats' now proposal is to spend $3.5 trillion. Some on their side want to spend up to $6 trillion to grow and expand the government.

So I guess it doesn't come as any surprise that that is what Democrats do. When they gain power, when they get majorities, they want to grow; they want to expand government; they want to spend more money and raise taxes to do it. It is almost like kind of a rite of passage in that, if you are going to be a good Democrat, this is what you do.

As I said before, you know, after last year, in coming through the pandemic at a time when the country had to and both sides agreed to address the concerns and the needs that were out there—to keep people employed, to keep businesses operating and workers employed, to support our healthcare industry, to support our schools—there were enormous amounts of money that went into the economy last year.

You would think that when the Democrats took power this time that they might want to dial it back and just think about seeing how the economy reacts before going on a full-blown effort to grow and expand government once again, but what we saw right out of the gate, immediately—and, again, in a very partisan way—was a $2 trillion spending bill.

I say that again because we all know that the amount of debt that we have today dwarfs, eclipses, anything—anything—in history even close to what we are talking about. Even if you go back to the thirties and the big expansion of government then—and, by the way, I think part of this is that President Biden was convinced that he could be the next FDR. And to do that, you have got to spend lots of money. And so trying to find stuff to spend it on has been a challenge. They have come up with a big list, and a list, again, that would be financed with a lot of tax increases that, I think, would be incredibly harmful to the economy.

But what I want to talk about briefly this morning is just what has happened as a result of the spending that has already occurred and what, I think, is going to happen if the massive amount of spending they want to do from here forward actually happens.

Like I said, we will do everything we can to stop it. I think it is just an absolutely disastrous prescription for the economy right now and as to what people are already experiencing in their daily lives.

Last week, we learned that economic growth for the third quarter had fallen short of expectations, largely driven by a deceleration in consumer spending and supply problems of goods and labor.

Meanwhile, American families continue to deal with what is rapidly becoming a serious, long-term inflation problem that is attributable, in many respects—again, as I will get to later—to the amount of spending and the number of dollars that have been flooding the economy.

Last month, consumer prices rose at the fastest pace in 30 years. A recent estimate from the chief economist at Moody's Analytics suggested that an average household is having to spend an additional $175 a month on basics, thanks to inflation—175 bucks a month.

That may not sound like much to a wealthy Democrat politician, but that is a lot of money for an ordinary American family. Having $175 a month can be the difference between putting something away in savings and living paycheck to paycheck. It can be the difference between whether or not you can afford braces for your child or whether you have the money to replace a broken appliance or to make a needed car repair.

Our inflation problem has gotten to the point that it has overtaken wage growth. Inflation is growing faster than wages, which means that many American families have received a de facto pay cut. The growth in wages isn't keeping up with the increase in costs in their lives.

So how did we end up here?

As I said, a lot of the problem traces back to this past March, when the Democrats decided to pour a lot of unnecessary government money into the economy under the guise of COVID relief. By the time the President and the Democrats took office in January, Congress had passed no fewer than five bipartisan COVID relief bills—the most recent of them in December. The December COVID relief bill that we passed contained almost $1 trillion in funding and met, essentially, all of the pressing COVID needs the country was facing.

But that didn't matter. That didn't matter to the Democrats. Now that they were in charge, they were eager to take advantage of the opportunity the

COVID crisis presented to push their Big Government agenda. So they decided to pass another ostensible COVID bill less than 3 months after the December bill and before a lot of money from the December bill had even been disbursed.

They gave $129 billion to schools, even though schools had spent just a small fraction of the $68 billion they had already been given.

They created a staggering $350 billion slush fund for States, despite the fact that the majority of States already had the money that they needed to deal with the pandemic, and many, many States were operating in a surplus situation.

They extended enhanced unemployment benefits until September of 2021, despite the millions—literally millions—of available job openings; and they made part of the unemployment compensation tax-free, creating incentives for Americans to stay on unemployment instead of returning to work.

Among other things, they provided an additional $21 billion in rental assistance, none of which has yet been needed.

In short, their so-called American Rescue Plan flooded the economy with a lot of unnecessary government money, and the results were predictable: inflation.

The definition of ''inflation'' is too many dollars chasing too few goods and services, and that is exactly the situation the Democrats created. They sent too many dollars into the economy, and the economy overheated as a result.

You don't have to take my word for it. Here is what former Obama economic adviser Jason Furman had to say recently when discussing our current inflation problem:

> The original sin was an oversized American Rescue Plan. It contributed to both higher output but also higher prices.

That was from Jason Furman, Obama's economic adviser.

That quote from Mr. Furman appeared in a recent New York Times article that also noted:

> But some economists, including veterans of previous Democratic administrations, say much of Mr. Biden's inflation struggle is self-inflicted. Lawrence H. Summers is one of those who say the stimulus bill the president signed in March gave too much of a boost to consumer spending . . . Mr. Summers, who served in the Obama and Clinton administrations, says inflation now risks spiraling out of control and other Democratic economists agree there are risks.

So what are congressional Democrats doing in response? Well, they are planning to flood the economy with even more government dollars. That is right. Instead of keeping a sharp eye on government spending to make sure our inflation situation doesn't get worse, Democrats are planning to double down on the strategy that got us into this position in the first place.

Democrats are trying to finalize a new—now it is $1.75 trillion—tax-and-spending spree, the so-called Build Back Better plan, on top, as I said, of the $1.9 trillion spending spree from earlier this year. And I say $1.75 trillion, but Democrats have only arrived at that number through a combination of shell games and budget gimmicks. The real cost of this proposal over 10 years is going to be way, way higher—way, way higher; some estimates in the $4 trillion range.

So, once again, Democrats want to flood the economy with government dollars, including billions for such priorities as tree equity—tree equity—and environmental justice programs at well-funded colleges and universities. That is right—Ivy League schools that don't have problems financially, where students pay tens of thousands of dollars in tuition every year, will get tax credits if they teach courses on environmental justice.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to complete my remarks before the vote begins.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I am forcibly reminded that the definition of ''insanity'' is the doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. What exactly do Democrats think is going to happen to inflation if they pass this $1.75 trillion legislation? Do they think that if one round of excessive government spending triggered inflation, another round of excessive government spending is going to cure it? Do they think that dumping more fuel into an already overheated economy is somehow going to put out the inflationary fire? If they do, they have got another think coming.

The only thing Democrats' latest spending spree is going to do is make our inflation problem worse. We are already looking at serious inflation lasting well into next year. Add Democrats' Build Back Better spending spree to the mix, and we could be looking at a very, very long period of inflated prices and reduced spending power for American families.

Democrats were warned that their March spending spree could spur inflation; they passed it anyway. So I don't have a lot of hope that Democrats are going to heed concerns about inflation, even coming from their own economists, when it comes to their current tax-and-spending plan, but I and every other Republican will stand firm against this reckless tax-and-spending spree and will continue to urge our Democratic colleagues to rethink their spending agenda before inflation soars out of control and American families have to suffer the consequences.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 168, Jonathan Davidson, of Maryland, to be Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Jonathan Davidson, of Maryland, to be Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 88, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 451 Ex.]

YEAS—88

Baldwin	Hagerty	Peters
Barrasso	Hassan	Portman
Bennet	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Risch
Blunt	Hirono	Romney
Booker	Hoeven	Rosen
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Sanders
Brown	Inhofe	Sasse
Burr	Johnson	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Capito	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Kennedy	Shaheen
Carper	King	Sinema
Casey	Klobuchar	Smith
Cassidy	Lankford	Stabenow
Collins	Leahy	Sullivan
Coons	Lee	Tester
Cornyn	Luján	Thune
Cortez Masto	Lummis	Tillis
Cramer	Manchin	Toomey
Crapo	Markey	Van Hollen
Daines	McConnell	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warnock
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Ernst	Moran	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	Young
Graham	Ossoff	
Grassley	Padilla	

NAYS—11

Blackburn	Hawley	Scott (FL)
Braun	Marshall	Shelby
Cotton	Paul	Tuberville
Cruz	Rubio	

NOT VOTING—1

Rounds

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 88, the nays are 11.

The motion is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows: