So here is the bottom line: American families don't want Washington politicians waging a holy war on fossil fuels in the first place. They can't afford that nonsense. But it is even more absurd that Democrats' top-down schemes would just increase China's wealth and dominance all along the way. They don't have some smart master plan to invest in America's future. They have a plan to build back Beijing and raise American families' gas prices and heating bills even higher so that we could massively stimulate Chinese export markets. Hurt families; help China—every piece of their reckless policies fits this mold.

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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we are coming up on a year of Democratic governance here in Washington, and what do Democrats have to show for it? Nothing good.

On the international front, the President's most significant act was his disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, which lowered our standing with our allies and continues to jeopardize our national security.

On the domestic front, Democrats have largely ignored a massive crisis along our southern border that continues to rage because they can't take on the open borders left in their own political party.

Look at what is happening with the supply chain. There are 90 containers sitting at the port at Long Beach waiting to get into the country, and the President and his team can't really do anything about it because they are unwilling to take on the Teamsters.

If you look at our cities, homicides are up in all of our major cities across this country. It seems that perhaps a ''defund the police'' approach to communities' safety isn't something that sends the right signal to people who want to break our laws.

Then there is inflation. You might call it the Democrats' signature domestic achievement.

So how did we get here? How did they get us here? Well, despite their lack of a mandate and their extremely narrow majorities in Congress, Democrats came into office last January determined to expand government and implement a far-left, Big Government, socialist agenda. In their minds, the coronavirus crisis provided the perfect opportunity to advance their plans.

So despite the fact that Congress had just passed—just passed—a nearly $1 trillion bipartisan coronavirus response bill in December—the fifth, I might add, the fifth bipartisan bill Congress had passed in just 10 months—Democrats declared that we immediately needed another piece of ostensibly coronavirus relief legislation—and not just another piece of legislation, a massive piece of legislation.

Despite the fact that the December bill had met essentially all of the pressing coronavirus needs the country was facing, Democrats decided that we needed to spend another $1.9 trillion. Democrats were warned that the size of their so-called American Rescue Plan, which was substantially in excess of anything the economy required, ran the risk of spurring inflation.

Obama economic adviser Larry Summers warned in the Washington Post:

> There is a chance that macroeconomic stimulus on a scale closer to World War II levels than normal recession levels will set off inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation, with consequences for the value of the dollar and financial stability.

That, again, was Obama economic adviser Larry Summers.

Well, Democrats passed their bill anyway. They flooded the economy with a lot of unnecessary government money, and the results have been predictable. Inflation. Significant inflation. Inflation, to borrow a phrase from Larry Summers, ''of a kind we have not seen in a generation.''

Last week, we found out that inflation rose 6.2 percent last year in a year-over-year analysis, the largest increase in more than 30 years—30 years.

Families are facing higher prices at the grocery store. And when I say ''higher,'' I mean a lot higher. The price of meat, poultry, fish, and eggs was up 11.9 percent year over year in October—11.9 percent. Families are also facing higher prices at the gas pump, for housing, for electricity, for furniture and vehicles and pets and pet products, and the list goes on.

While wages are rising, they are being outstripped by inflation, which means that many families are dealing with a de facto pay cut. Think about it—6.2 percent increase in inflation. That is essentially a 6.2-percent pay cut for American families.

A big reason families are struggling with the higher cost of pretty much everything is Democrats' decision to flood the economy with unnecessary government money by passing the so-called American Rescue Plan. You don't have to take my word for it; I quoted Larry Summers earlier.

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.

Now, you might think that the inflation that has resulted from the American Rescue Plan would be giving Democrats pause right now. You might think that they would be putting a hold, you know, tapping the brakes a little bit on any more big spending until inflation calms down somewhat from its 30-plus-year high. But you would be wrong. Democrats are actually planning to double down on the strategy that helped cause so much inflation in the first place and pass another giant spending bill.

That is right.

Democrats are trying to finalize a new $1.75 trillion tax-and-spending spree, the so-called Build Back Better plan—on top of their $1.9 trillion spending spree from earlier this year.

I say $1.75 trillion, but Democrats only arrived at that number through a combination of shell games and budget gimmicks. An honest accounting of the cost of this proposal over 10 years would reveal a much higher pricetag—some analyses and assessments suggest as high as $4 trillion or more.

And if Democrats succeed in passing this latest partisan spending spree, Americans should brace themselves because this new flood of government money will undoubtedly make an already serious inflation situation much worse.

It is no exaggeration to say that Democrats' main focus this year has been growing the size of the Federal Government and expanding its reach into Americans' lives. No sooner had they passed their massive $1.9 trillion spending bill in March, then the Democrats moved on to their next massive spending proposals which have been coalesced into the so-called Build Back Better bill the House is planning to take up later this week.

Other government business has been forced to take a backseat. Democrats have ignored, as I said earlier, the massive—massive—crisis at our southern border. They have ignored our inflation crisis. And they have pushed consideration of essential legislation in favor of working on their tax-and-spending plan.

This week, the Senate will finally—and I say finally—consider the fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, a month and a half after the 2022 fiscal year has started. Shipbuilding projects, military infrastructure projects, development of new combat systems, a pay increase for our troops, they have all had to wait—all had to wait—while Democrats negotiated over their Big Government socialist spending spree.

And about that socialist spending spree, despite the fact that Democrats have pushed aside most other matters in favor of focusing on their spending plan, they still haven't managed to come up with a bill that can pass the House and the Senate.

And the tax proposals they plan to use to—and I say partially—partially pay for the bill seem to change on a daily basis. And I say partially because, again, a great independent analysis from places like Penn Wharton suggest that the revenue that they would raise to pay for all the spending in the bill would fall somewhere between $2 and $2.5 trillion short of the

cost of the bill. That is $2 to $2.5 trillion that would be added to the already $30 trillion national debt.

Let's just say, for example, that these ideas they have to partially pay for this bill seem to change on a daily basis. A corporate tax hike? No, let's change it to a corporate minimum tax. A new death tax? No, let's change it to a new tax on wealth—something we have never talked about before in this country, taxing unrealized gains. That is taxing income before people have actually seen the income—the realized income.

Funding for their bill seems to be a matter of throwing spaghetti at the wall on a daily basis to try and see what sticks. There isn't a day that went by in the last couple of weeks, when we were in session the week before last, where there wasn't another horrible idea that came from that side of how to raise revenue to finance this massive, reckless, and radical spending bill. And of course all of Democrats' current funding proposals put together will not be able to pay for their legislation, especially when you remove, as I said earlier, the budget gimmicks that are disguising the true cost of their plans.

As their narrow majorities made clear, the 2020 election did not give Democrats a mandate for Big Government socialism. And if that wasn't clear to Democrats in 2020, it should certainly be clear to them now after the election for the Virginia Governor this month, which saw Republicans win statewide for the first time since 2009. Voters in Virginia sent a clear message to Democrats that they weren't looking for far-left government or a far-left social agenda that would seek to circumvent parents' role in their children's lives and education. But just as inflation concerns have not stopped Democrats, it has become clear that their rebuke in Virginia won't stop them either. In fact, some Democrats seem to think that their response should be to run faster and further to the left.

So the big agenda item for Democrats for the rest of the year continues to be passing their partisan Build Back Better tax-and-spending spree, which means Americans will be able to look forward to further inflation and a weaker economy, not to mention increased government control of their decision making.

It is a poor legacy for Democrats' first year in office, but it seems to be the legacy Democrats are determined to secure.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I am glad to follow my colleague from the Dakotas because I would certainly never attempt to interpret the electorate of another State.

I can tell you about the Virginia elections that happened a couple weeks back. The message, I think, from our voters pretty loud and clear was: We want you to get stuff done. If we in the Senate and in the House had passed the infrastructure bill and passed the Build Back Better bill before the Virginia election, I think the outcome would have been different.

What we were hearing again and again from voters is: We gave you a majority. Please act on it, especially at this time when Americans are so challenged by now nearly 20 months of pandemic and economic devastation.

So I stand on the floor as a proud Virginian, very focused on celebrating the accomplishment of yesterday—President Biden's signature on the infrastructure bill—but also saying we have to pass the Build Back Better bill in order to respond to what our constituents are asking of us at this challenging time.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

Mr. President, I want to speak today, sort of, maybe not so much as a Senator but as a former city councilman and mayor.

I am sort of unique. There are 30 people in the United States who have been a mayor, Governor, and U.S. Senator—1 of only 30 in our entire history. The first time I was introduced and someone said that, I thought, that clearly cannot be right. So many Governors become Senators, that clearly cannot be right. I asked the Historian to research the matter because someone introduced me that way. And it came back that that is correct. Only 30 people in the history of this country have been a mayor, a Governor, and a Senator. And as I pondered the reason for that, it suddenly occurred to me: Being a mayor will kill you.

Governors can become Senators, but mayors often make everyone mad, and it is hard to go from being a mayor to having a post-mayoral political career because the job is so tough.

And yet, when people ask me: Which job do you like better, Governor or Senator, I always say: Look, I like them all. But if you made me give up every title I ever had except one, the one I would hold on to is mayor. I would hold on to being a mayor because when you are a mayor, it is 24/7, 365. There is no recess for a mayor. City councils and mayors don't go into recess. You are dealing with people on the issues that are the closest to them. You can make people happier or madder.

You can convince people in local government, in a nation of 330 million, sometimes they think: What does my vote matter? What does my voice matter? No one will listen to me. In local government, you can convince people that actually they will be listened to.

So I would hold on to that mayoral role, and, frankly, if I had not been mayor, I never would have been a Lieutenant Governor or Governor or a U.S. Senator. So I owe anything that I am or do in politics now to the fact that I started in local government.

I spoke yesterday to the Virginia Association of Counties, the gathering of all county supervisors of all 95 counties around Virginia. They gather once a year, usually in person. Last year, it was by Zoom.

They were so glad to be back together, in person, in Norfolk yesterday, hundreds of them in a conference room. And they asked me to come and talk about what is going on in Congress. And I said: How much time do you have? But what I really focused on was three things, and I want to focus on those three things now, speaking about them from the perspective of local officials not just in Virginia but all over this country: first, the American Rescue Plan, which was passed in March, but it is just beginning to have an impact in Virginia's cities, counties, and towns; second, the bipartisan infrastructure bill that was signed at the White House yesterday; and, third, the education and workforce bill that we are working on now that I believe will reach the President's desk in December.

I started off by telling these county supervisors what I truly believe; that anybody in public life right now, elected or a first responder or any classroom teacher, when we are all finished with our times in public life, I think we will look back on this period of time, beginning March 2020, as the most important period of our public service careers. The pandemic has created such destruction, death, economic catastrophe, illness, and division that we have all been tested in our personal lives and our work on behalf of our citizens. Our constituents have needed us in unparalleled ways since March of 2020.

Last year, on a cold Saturday in March, we passed the American Rescue Plan. It contains significant funding in four basic pillars: healthcare, relief to individuals and families, aid to businesses, and then, finally, aid to State and local governments, including educational institutions.

The American Rescue Plan immediately affected millions of Americans—families, healthcare, institutions, businesses—through measures like massive vaccine deployment, checks to individuals, business grants. These kept families afloat and helped protect themselves against COVID, and they also kept the lights on for many of our local businesses.

But what I want to focus on is the aid that we gave to State and local governments and, again, particularly—particularly—to local governments. Virginia and its localities, through the American Rescue Plan, received $7.2 billion in the American Rescue Plan; $4 billion to the Commonwealth of Virginia and $3.2 billion to our cities, counties, and towns.

And as soon as we passed it, I started to go around and talk to our cities, counties, and towns: How are you going to spend these local moneys? What they told me was interesting in April