

called it “the transcendent issue of our era.”

He said, “Until we fix that problem [the deficit], we can’t fix America.”

He said Americans are “tired of the spending, debt and government take-overs” and complained that our debt “makes us look a lot like Greece.”

He claims to be a fiscal hawk—he has done it his entire career—but the truth is there is not an American, living or dead, who has put more debt on the balance sheet of this country than MITCH MCCONNELL—\$17 trillion—and that is just over the last 20 years. And for what—to invest in education? to build our roads and bridges? to do something about mental health in the country or water infrastructure? For what? It has been to cut taxes for the richest people in the country and to borrow it all from China, which is the opposite of what he said he was doing, the opposite of what he promised.

He said the tax cuts would pay for themselves. They never have. He said they would benefit the middle class, but two-thirds have gone to the top 20 percent at a time when we have had the worst income inequality that we have had since 1928, when we have had an economy that, for 50 years, 90 percent of the American people haven’t seen a pay raise. That means, in the first 25 years of this century, we are on track to spend \$6.8 trillion on tax cuts for the richest 20 percent of Americans.

It is exactly the same thing as if a mayor in any one of our communities in our States had said to their neighbors and to their city councils and to the press: I am going to borrow more money than we have ever borrowed before.

You would say: Well, that worries me a little bit. What are you going to spend the money on? Are you going to spend it on our roads?

No.

Are you going to spend it on our bridges?

No.

On our water system?

No.

On mental health? On COVID? On our public health infrastructure?

I am going to take that money that I am borrowing from the Chinese, and I am going to give it to the two richest neighborhoods in town.

That is the majority leader’s tax policy, and that is what it has been since 2001.

This speech isn’t about spending, but while I have the microphone, here is what we could have done for \$6.8 trillion: We could have created universal preschool for every child in America. These are not either/or by the way.

That is how big a number \$6.8 trillion is. We could have invested in the 70 percent of Americans who don’t graduate from college so that they can earn a living wage when they graduate from high school, not the minimum wage. We could have made public college affordable for every middle-class American, given every teacher in America a 50-percent pay raise and paid them like the professionals that they are.

We could have cut child poverty by 40 percent in this country. We could have protected Social Security so that we would know it would be there for our children and our grandchildren. We could have rebuilt America’s roads, bridges, tunnels, and airports. We could have laid high-speed broadband in every community, lowered the cost of prescription drugs, covered everyone with high-quality healthcare by creating a public option. We could have passed paid family and medical leave, invested in science and public health so that we could have been more prepared for the global pandemic. We might have even paid down some of our debt and actually acted fiscally responsible.

In other words, we could have changed the destiny of America. We could have added to Justice Ginsburg’s legacy by making this country more democratic, more fair, and more free. We still can, but we can’t do it as long as the majority leader is continuing to pursue these policies.

We have to choose leaders in the Senate who will build this country better than we found it, not leave it in tatters for our children and grandchildren to pick through the rubble.

Instead of making the Senate work on behalf of the American people, the Senator from Kentucky has run roughshod over this institution, doing whatever he can get away with politically. We are at a point at which what you can get away with here is the only rule that is left.

As I said last night in this Senate, words have lost their meaning, and when words lose their meaning and when promises mean nothing and when commitments mean nothing, that is when institutions fail. It is moments like this that I remind my colleagues that this is not the first Republic to risk failure because of all of this—the Senate, the Supreme Court, the centuries of rules, written and unwritten, that have guided this Republic.

We are not preserving them for us. We are preserving them for the American people because, without our institutions, we can’t do what we need to do in this democracy, whether it is regarding climate change or healthcare or education or any issue that the

American people care about, no matter what side of the political aisle they are on.

Justice Ginsburg appreciated this. She described her philosophy this way:

I think I am an originalist in the sense of what these great men meant—a Constitution that would govern through the ages. At least, they hoped it would provide an instrument of government that would endure.

That is what is at stake in this election—whether we will accept this sorry chapter in our history as the new normal or insist on a government that can actually govern and is focused on the needs and desires of the American people.

I hope deeply that we are going to put this era behind us, and I am not for going back to some old era but to build a democracy that is worthy of the 21st century, worthy of the example Ruth Bader Ginsburg set, worthy of the expectations that our kids and grandkids reasonably have of us and that most of us have for America in this world.

That is the choice in this election, and to borrow a phrase from the majority leader, the “American people should have a voice” in the outcome. It is my hope that in 41 days they will.

Madam President, I thank you for your patience and thank the staff for their patience.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:16 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, September 24, 2020, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nomination received by the Senate:

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL
INTELLIGENCE

ALLEN ROBERT SOUZA, OF NORTH CAROLINA, TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY, OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE, VICE MICHAEL K. ATKINSON.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate September 23, 2020:

THE JUDICIARY

JOHN CHARLES HINDERAKER, OF ARIZONA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

JOCELYN SAMUELS, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING JULY 1, 2021.