

that is President Bush's former Secretary of Homeland Security, not a Democrat.

Well, the Senate is not going to tolerate this irresponsible and unconscionable delay. Despite the tactics from the Republican side, the Senate will begin work on this crucial nomination today, and he will be confirmed.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on COVID, Madam President, quickly, this Chamber must also consider additional relief for the American economy and the American people suffering from the prolonged effects of COVID-19. Congress must pursue a bold and robust course of action to defeat the disease, recover our economy, and get our country back to normal. Again, our country requires bold and robust action.

A trio of economic news items this week has underlined the glaring needs in the country.

First, the Federal Reserve issued a sobering warning yesterday that the pace of economic recovery is weakening, and as a result, they decided to leave interest rates low.

Second, the unemployment report this morning reminded us that jobless claims are still extremely high—at or near 1 million per week. That is a lot larger than usual.

Third and maybe most astoundingly, most striking, the Bureau of Economic Analysis this morning revealed that last year, the economy shrank by 3.5 percent—the worst year for economic growth since World War II and the first time our economy has contracted since the great recession.

Given these economic numbers, the need to act big and bold is urgent. Given the fact that the GDP sunk by 3.5 percent last year, we need recovery and rescue quickly. Everywhere you look, alarm bells are ringing—mortgage deferrals are increasing, businesses are still closing, schools are closed in many States, restaurants and bars and travel are in crisis.

Our new Secretary of Treasury, Janet Yellen, who was days ago confirmed with the support of 84 Members of this body and a large majority of our Republican colleagues, just told us that “with interest rates at historic lows, the smartest thing we can do is act big.” That is what Yellen said. “[T]he smartest thing we can do is act big.”

Given these numbers, given the weakening state of the economy, only big, bold action is called for. To cut things dramatically at a time when the economy needs a boost would be irresponsible and hurt millions of people.

We are in the midst of a once-in-a-century crisis. It requires a once-in-a-century effort to overcome it. The dangers of undershooting our response are far greater than overshooting. We should learn the lesson from 2008 and 2009, when Congress was too timid and constrained in its response to the glob-

al financial crisis and it took years—for the economy to get out of recession. We must not repeat that mistake today.

So the Senate, as early as next week, will begin the process of considering a very strong COVID-relief bill. Our preference is to make this important work bipartisan, to include input, ideas, and revisions from our Republican colleagues or bipartisan efforts to do the same. But if our Republican colleagues decide to oppose this urgent and necessary legislation, we will have to move forward without it. We have a responsibility to help the American people fast, particularly given these new economic numbers. The Senate will begin that work next week.

I yield the floor.

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. MCCONNELL. Madam 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

MARCH FOR LIFE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, normally, today and tomorrow, we would be welcoming many thousands of Americans to the Capitol for the annual March for Life. Every year, the march is one of the most important things that happens here in Washington. Americans of all ages, diverse backgrounds, and many faiths speak up peacefully and powerfully for the most fundamental human right. They make our Nation confront the fact that even the most modest protections for innocent life are still not secure.

The pandemic has taken this year's march online. That is a particular pity, given signs that the new administration may be poised to steamroll even the most limited—limited—safeguards for conscience, let alone for life itself.

The new Washington needs to hear the marchers more than ever. A case in point, the word is out our new administration is planning to rescind the Mexico City policy this very day, run over the consciences of American taxpayers, and put them back on the hook for funding abortions overseas. An administration that wanted to pursue unity might observe that 77 percent of Americans—including a majority of Democrats—and 85 percent of Independents don't want taxpayer dollars to fund foreign abortions.

This and many other commonsense pro-life policies enjoy broad support from the American people, but the

radicalism of the modern Democratic Party seems dug in. Fortunately, political dynamics change, but the moral truth does not. Executive orders can't alter the basic science of human life. So I thank my fellow Kentuckians and all Americans who are participating. We will see you in person next year.

BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now, on a totally different matter, the country has waited to see whether the new administration would follow a pro-job, pro-worker, pro-working family approach or give in to the far left and put ideological concerns before kitchen table ones. Unfortunately, we didn't have to wait long.

As recently as October, now-President Biden said: “You can't [legislate] by executive action unless you're a dictator.” Well, in 1 week, he signed more than 30 unilateral actions, and working Americans are getting short shrift.

The President abruptly canceled the Keystone Pipeline, a massive setback for energy security in North America. The Canadian leader called it “a gut punch.” I imagine the 11,000 American workers, including 8,000 union workers who were counting on that work, feel the same way.

We have headed back into an international pact that would have us self-inflict serious pain on working families, has failed to curb China's emissions, and without which our own emissions have been dropping anyway. And yesterday, the administration slammed the brakes on further domestic energy development on the huge swaths of land owned by the Federal Government: no new oil, gas, or coal leases on Federal land.

Our responsible use of these lands accounts for more than a fifth—one-fifth—of our domestic production, about 2.8 million barrels per day. That is almost the equivalent of Kuwait's daily oil production from our Federal lands alone; plus, more than 10 percent of domestic natural gas.

And 2019 marked the first time in nearly 70 years when U.S. energy exports outpaced imports. For the first time since the 1950s, our Nation ran an energy surplus, not a deficit. That has been great news, but some leftwing elites are not happy. The sources of this affordable domestic energy are not sufficiently trendy.

As John Kerry explained yesterday on behalf of the administration, he wants the large numbers of American workers in those sectors to find “better choices”—better choices than their good jobs that feed their families and strengthen our independence. Remember, with the pipeline cancellation, the President effectively closed the door on thousands of American jobs with the stroke of a pen.

According to one news report, one welder from Pipeliners Local 798, who had been working in Nebraska, says he has already had to lay off his whole