

but it will certainly help build the coffers of some of Democrats' political allies.

If Democrats were really just focused on COVID relief, this would be a much smaller and targeted bill, but Democrats' ambitions were much larger than just addressing the COVID crisis. As a Democrat political operative famously said, "never allow a good crisis to go to waste."

Well, Democrats have taken that advice and are using the COVID crisis as cover for a whole list of partisan priorities with potentially very negative consequences. The Democrats' COVID bill runs a very real risk of overstimulating the economy, as evidenced by the large increase we have seen in money supply which could, among other things, drive up prices on the goods that Americans use every day—in other words, inflation. Even some liberal economists have sounded the alarm over the size of the Democrats' coronavirus legislation.

And then, of course, there is the danger posed by driving up our debt. We had to borrow a lot of money last year to meet the demands of the coronavirus crisis, and while it was money we needed to borrow, we need to be very aware of the fact that we added a substantial—substantial—amount to our already very large national debt. We need to be very careful about any additional borrowing and ensure that we are only borrowing what is absolutely necessary.

I think it goes without saying that the more that we borrow, the more debt we have to retire. If something negative happened on interest rates and interest rates normalized—went back to a more normal setting—the interest itself on that amount of debt would literally dwarf anything else we do in our budget, including defending the country.

And that, I believe, is a very, very real threat, because if you look at what is happening right now with the economy and with all the money that we have flooded out there so far and another \$2 trillion, if the Democrats have their way in this particular proposal, and all that money out there starts pushing up those costs and we start seeing inflation in the economy, it doesn't take very long for interest rates to go with it. In fact, they already are. If those interest rates start pushing up very quickly on the amount of debt that we are piling up, financing that debt—the amount of interest, the cost of interest on that debt—would be absolutely overwhelming and devastating to this country.

So we need to be very, very careful about any additional borrowing and ensure that we are only borrowing what is absolutely necessary. That means making sure that anything we do in terms of additional pandemic relief is targeted and fiscally responsible, and that does not include money for a bridge in New York or a taxpayer bailout for mismanaged States.

It is deeply disappointing that Democrats chose to turn their backs on bipartisanship. Republicans were ready to work with Democrats on additional targeted relief.

As I have pointed out before, the pandemic has been an issue on which, at least up until now, there has been very much bipartisan support. Last year, when Republicans were in the majority, we did five—five—coronavirus bills, all bipartisan, all done at the 60-vote threshold that governs most legislation that moves through the Senate in a cooperative way.

In this case, the Democrats are plowing forward, pushing this legislation in a very partisan way, and I think that is unfortunate given our history on this issue of bipartisanship and the importance of making sure that we are doing the right things on behalf of the American people to help them get through this pandemic.

Choosing to pursue a partisan process allows Democrats to stuff the bill with unnecessary spending and political payoffs, but that is not the way to help our country or our economy recover.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### NOMINATION OF GINA MARIE RAIMONDO

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to urge my colleagues to support President Biden's nominee to be Secretary of Commerce, the Governor of Rhode Island, Gina Raimondo.

Many people know that Governor Raimondo was the first woman to serve in that position in her State, and she has made tremendous impacts to that State at a time when it needed important leadership. So we are very excited that the President has nominated her for this position and that she will put those same skill sets to work here in Washington.

The mission of the Department of Commerce, at least according to its website, is to foster, promote, and develop foreign and domestic commerce. Well, I can tell you that she is going to inherit a big challenge because obviously our domestic economy is still reeling from the impacts of COVID-19, and certainly she needs to think about the continuing transition to a digital economy in an information age. The foreign economy that she also will be charged with trying to help and impact as it relates to the United States is certainly plagued by the same pandemic and the impacts of that.

So we are looking for someone who can come in and help, with private sector experience, to really move the agenda of this administration forward. For me, Governor Raimondo's private

sector experience really means a lot. She knows how to invest in new technologies and things that are going to help us grow jobs for the future, and she knows how to match up a workforce with those job opportunities that are also so critical as we move forward on many, many different policy issues that are going to usher in change.

As Governor, she invested in workforce training and matching workers with relevant small business experience, called her Rhode Island job initiative. The program served more than 1,700 employers and 11,000 people throughout the State. She was able to send her State's unemployment rates tumbling to a 30-year low simply by doing a really focused job of matching workforce training to the needs of those industries that were growing in her State. So I certainly appreciate the fact that she has that private sector experience in knowing where to invest and bringing people together, and she certainly created successful programs on matching the workforce for tomorrow.

But make no mistake, the Department of Commerce is going to have a very challenging role as we try to deal with the impacts of COVID-19. One of the most important responsibilities, I believe, will be dealing with the sectors most hard hit by the COVID pandemic.

I am glad that Governor Raimondo is a Governor of a coastal State because one of the most impacted industries, as we have seen, is the seafood industry, which has been affected greatly by COVID-19 since early January 2020 when the lockdowns in China and around the world impacted the seafood sector. U.S. seafood exports to China dropped by 31 percent by January of 2020 and 40 percent by February of 2020. Lobster, Dungeness crab, shellfish—everything was experiencing severe declines, and west coast fisheries have seen as much as a 40-percent drop in revenue.

Sustainable fisheries are important economic drivers in coastal communities. I know that Governor Raimondo gets that. She understands that commercial fishermen and the impacts they have will impact not just seafood processors, shipbuilding, and trade, but also our restaurant economy. Marine anglers took in more than 194 million fishing trips, which fueled our outdoor recreation and tourism economy.

So I am glad that Governor Raimondo, from a coastal State, is going to come to oversee some of those key functions at the Department of Commerce, particularly at NOAA, and harness the incredible data and information that help us manage these economies, that keep them safe and keep them focused on science. I know she understands that, as Secretary, she can use those good scientific Agencies within the Department of Commerce to better understand the impacts of climate and the impacts of COVID and what we can do.

We know in the State of Washington that just a little bit of science done at

the University of Washington helped us immensely in saving our shellfish industry. We now need to do more for fisheries across the United States. We need to invest in things that I call salmon infrastructure to keep—as we continue to grow our economy and continue to move forward on infrastructure, that we are also keeping ways to return salmon.

I think this is one of the most important things Governor Raimondo can do as Secretary of Commerce—restore the respect for the scientific process, the scientific community, and the important issues that are going to be at the heart of how our coastal economies are impacted by climate.

I have invited Governor Raimondo to take one of her first trips to the State of Washington to see exactly how our State has dealt with these fishery issues. I know that the Presiding Officer from California knows how important the seafood industry is and the impacts to our coastal communities because of climate as well. We need a leader in the Department of Commerce who is going to help us mitigate and adapt to those impacts.

I am also counting on Governor Raimondo to help us with our export economy, everything from our ports to farmers to aerospace. Exports mean jobs, and about one in four jobs in the State of Washington is related to trade.

Frankly, I think she is a departure from the last President and the last Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross. I think he and the President spent a lot more time shaking their fists at the world community than engaging them on policies that were really going to open up markets and help us move forward with getting our products in the door.

Ninety-six percent of the world's customers live outside of the United States, and prior to the COVID pandemic, half of the world's population had reached middle class. That means that is a big market, almost 4 billion people. U.S. exporters need to be able to reach those markets and to grow the U.S. economy and grow U.S. jobs.

We need to work with our allies, like Europe and Japan, to meet the real challenges we face from China. We need to expand U.S. exports in other fast-growing markets around Asia and South America and around the world. The Department of Commerce has a key role in promoting those exports and helping our companies enter new markets, and U.S. commercial service officials are on the frontlines of these issues around the globe.

I know Governor Raimondo understands the importance of this export market, and she understands that the Department of Commerce can play a very big role in it. I hope that she will get to work soon on working within the Biden administration to make this a big priority.

I also want to say that I know she is going to, on other science Agencies

within the Department of Commerce, play a critical role, everything from the National Institute of Science and Technology—a small Agency that doesn't get a lot of attention, but it is very consensus-based on standards and fostering growth in a number of industries that are so important to communications and manufacturing and public safety.

So I hope that she will use, again, her private sector experience in knowing where to invest in new technologies to help us continue to grow economies like the space economy that we have in the State of Washington. We are very proud that, as commercial space travel has started to be a major focus of the private sector, it has grown many businesses and many jobs in our State in that area, and we want to see it continue to grow.

But we need Governor Raimondo's leadership on the important policies that divide us on these issues. The U.S.-EU Privacy Shield agreement is such a negotiation. I know my colleague Senator WICKER, who has been very involved in these discussions and negotiations, knows exactly how important digital trade is, and Commerce is leading up these talks to resolve these disputes.

We must ensure the continued free flow of commercial data between the United States and Europe. A lot is at stake. The U.S. and EU digital trade is worth more than \$300 billion annually and includes more than \$218 billion in U.S. exports to Europe. Every business that exports or imports or has a presence in investment in the United States or Europe will face difficulties if we don't resolve these issues and barriers to cross-border data transfer.

So all of this is very big risk, and we want Governor Raimondo to get to work on this very quickly and help resolve these issues.

The free flow of data between the United States and Europe is critical to 5,000 tech companies in my State and more than \$2.8 billion of digital exports in our economy. So I am pretty sure that this is the same—as I said to the Presiding Officer, I know he gets how important digital trade is to the State of California and would like to see these issues addressed as well.

So these are very big challenges for the Department of Commerce and the next Commerce Secretary to basically make sure that the impacts of COVID are dealt with in our economy and to usher in a new era of an information age by making the right investments and depending on science to help our key coastal communities that also have been greatly impacted, using and harnessing the aspects of NOAA and really bringing in the type of leadership we need at the Department of Commerce to resolve our problems as a new digital age emerges here on an international basis and continue to allow our economy to grow. I know she is the right choice. I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this week our Democratic colleagues are striving to break Congress's perfect record of bipartisan pandemic relief. Last year, five relief packages were signed into law, each with overwhelming bipartisan support. No bill received fewer than 90 votes here in the Senate, and 1 even passed unanimously. The reason why these bills received such broad support is because they address the crisis at hand in a targeted manner; no controversial provisions or unrelated partisan priorities, just clear-cut relief for the American people.

As I said, the perfect record of commonsense, bipartisan relief packages will apparently end this week.

The bill our Democratic colleagues are preparing to bring to the Senate floor has been drafted by only one party. As you can imagine, that process lends itself to a sort of partisan Christmas tree decorating. Democrats have taken the framework of the COVID relief bill and added a range of liberal priorities that have absolutely nothing to do with COVID-19: a Silicon Valley subway system, a blank check for mismanaged union pension plans, a bridge from New York to Canada, and funding for climate justice.

It is no surprise that this bill passed the House on a strict party-line vote. But the COVID-19 relief label isn't fooling anybody. This is a partisan wish list that does more to advance a political agenda than to respond to the legitimate public health and economic needs of our country. That is why our Democratic colleagues have chosen to abuse the budget reconciliation process in order to make a law.

Based on the pricetag of this bill, you would think it was March 2020 all over again. Despite the fact that we have made serious headway in vaccinations, our economy is recovering by leaps and bounds, and all signs show we are moving toward that light at the end of the tunnel, our Democratic colleagues are prepared to spend another \$1.9 trillion of borrowed money. That is about half as much as all previous bills combined.

What is even more concerning than the cost is how the money is going to be spent. One great example is funding for education. So far, Congress has provided more than \$110 billion for K-12 education, including \$68 billion in the relief bill that was signed into law in December, just a couple of months ago. Schools in Texas have used this money to update air filtration systems, purchase personal protective equipment,