

the funds are spent, Members seem to have lost incentive to debate these bills. That is one of the reasons why we constantly face the threat of a government shutdown each fiscal year or that are forced to package these bills into an omnibus in a take-it-or-leave-it form. This is no way to govern. Members must have a stake in these bills.

In 2007, we instituted major reforms for accountability and transparency to the process of congressionally directed spending. We had to certify that neither we nor any member of our immediate family would financially benefit from the requests we made. And we required each earmark to be clearly identified in the committee and conference reports. These reforms brought new transparency to the process, and I fully supported them. These rules remain in place today in rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

Today I am announcing that the Senate Appropriations Committee will again accept requests for congressionally directed spending items on a bipartisan basis, and we will do so in a manner that promotes transparency and accountability. In addition to adhering to rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, we will put a 1-percent cap on all congressionally directed spending items and ban congressionally directed spending items to for-profit entities.

We will require Senators to make their requests public on their websites, and we will make public any items that are actually funded in the appropriations bills. The Senate Appropriations Committee will also ask GAO to audit a sample of enacted congressionally directed spending items in order to increase accountability for the projects that are funded and to restore the trust of the American people in this process.

Congress holds the power of the purse. We should use it responsibly and transparently to address the needs of our communities.

I want to thank the distinguished majority leader for putting Samantha Power on the agenda this week. I think she is extraordinarily well qualified, and I look forward to voting for her.

Madam President, I see my distinguished colleague on the floor.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I thank my good friend—our Senate pro tempore, our chairman of Appropriations, our longtime chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary, who has done a lot on patent work, et cetera—for his graciousness.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, now, the Senate has a lot to accomplish by the end of this week.

We will confirm several highly qualified nominees to the executive branch, starting today with the nominee for Deputy OMB Director, Jason Miller. Later this week, we will also confirm

Janet McCabe for Deputy EPA Administrator, Colin Kahl for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and Samantha Power for Administrator of USAID.

Our Senate committees will continue holding hearings and markups on at least a dozen other nominees. The Senate will also consider two important environmental infrastructure policies.

First, the Senate will take up the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021. This legislation passed through the Committee on Environment and Public Works with unanimous support. In fact, this water infrastructure bill is a core component of the Republican infrastructure proposal released last week. It also addresses many of the recommendations put forward by the Problem Solvers Caucus last Friday. So I hope that this is a signal to the entire Senate that we should work together on infrastructure where and when we can.

Senators CARPER, DUCKWORTH, and CARDIN have been outstanding leaders on this issue and have made sure Members from both sides of the aisle have had the opportunity to offer amendments, just as we did last week on the anti-Asian hate crimes bill. We are going to continue working with our Republican colleagues on the timing for a vote on the water infrastructure bill. On a topic this straightforward and bipartisan, I hope that our Republican colleagues will cooperate so that we may finish the bill ASAP. We have a lot to do.

I want to also thank Senator CAPITO, the ranking member of the committee, for working with Senators CARPER, DUCKWORTH, and COLLINS so well.

The Senate will also vote on a measure this week to restore critical regulations on the release of methane into our atmosphere. In 2016, the Obama administration instituted a rule that required energy companies to better monitor and reduce methane leaks. The rule not only drew cheers from the environmental community, it earned the support of industry as well.

Even though methane is far less talked about than carbon dioxide, it is far more potent. A tonne of methane warms the atmosphere 86 times more than a tonne of carbon dioxide. On the plus side, however, methane does not linger in our atmosphere as long as CO₂ does, and emissions can be reduced rather cheaply. So, when it comes to combating climate change, tackling methane delivers a huge bang for your buck.

That is just what the Senate intends to do this week by reimposing commonsense rules to reduce methane emissions—hopefully, on a bipartisan basis. We already have the support of at least one Republican Senator. We welcome more. The industry supported this. Again, Donald Trump, often with just the nastiness of “it was Obama’s rule, so I ought to repeal it” did. It hurts us big time. I want to be clear. The methane CRA is a big deal. This

measure will help us address the climate crisis in a major way. It is nowhere close to everything we want or need, but it is very important.

Last week, President Biden set an ambitious goal for the United States to cut its greenhouse gas emissions in half by the end of the decade. This week, the Senate will take up the first of many important steps we need to take to achieve that ambitious goal.

FIRST 100 DAYS

Madam President, now, on our first 100 days, Thursday, the 29th, will be the 100th day since President Biden took the oath of office on the East Front of the Capitol. President Biden will mark the occasion with his inaugural address to a joint session of Congress on Wednesday.

Historically, the first 100 days have been a yardstick by which Presidential administrations have been measured. For the first time in recent history, however, due to the lateness of the Georgia runoff elections, Thursday also marks the 100th day of the new Democratic Senate majority and, on a personal note, my 100th day as majority leader.

Without exaggeration, the first 100 days of the Biden administration and the Senate Democratic majority have been more productive than nearly any in recent memory. Despite a delay in passing the organizing resolution and the time constraints imposed by the Presidential impeachment trial, the Senate has confirmed the most diverse Cabinet in history, faster than either of the prior two administrations. Every single Cabinet Secretary received a bipartisan vote in favor of confirmation.

Last week, by a vote of 94 to 1—again, led by the Presiding Officer and Senator HIRONO—the Senate passed legislation to combat the recent surge in hate crimes, particularly against Americans of Asian descent. Then, of course, Congress passed the landmark legislation and the top priority of the Biden administration, the American Rescue Plan. It was the most sweeping Federal recovery effort in a generation, more than twice the size of the stimulus package after the financial crisis of 2008.

The Democrats promised big, bold relief. The Democrats have delivered big, bold relief. As a result, vaccinations are up; unemployment is down; and businesses, schools, restaurants, and bars are finally—finally—starting to reopen. It is no wonder that more than 70 percent of Americans approve of the way that the Biden-Harris administration has handled the pandemic in the first 100 days.

For much of the past year, the country has been plagued by two major crises: a public health crisis and an economic crisis. That is what the Biden-Harris administration and the Senate Democratic majority inherited when they assumed power back in January. Let’s look at how the country has progressed on both fronts.

First, when it comes to the pandemic, we have far outstripped even