

we are making very good progress toward that goal. On the second track, the Senate Budget Committee is close to finalizing a budget resolution, which will allow the Senate to move forward with the remaining parts of the American Jobs and Families Plan. The Senate must pass the budget resolution and an eventual budget reconciliation bill with or without Republican support.

The fact of the matter is, brick-and-mortar infrastructure is very important, but it is no longer the only type of infrastructure that matters in the 21st century. Human infrastructure—what many might call family support as our families come under increasing pressure in this modern society, things like childcare, family leave, education, healthcare—are just as essential to giving our citizens opportunity as building roads and bridges and railways. Both are very important. Twenty-first century investment in broadband internet, the electric grid, and retrofitting our economy to fight climate change in bold ways are just as important as roads and bridges and railways. We must do both. It is not one or the other, and we are going to do both.

Before the week work period is over, it is my intention for the Senate to hold votes on the bipartisan infrastructure bill and a budget resolution. Members should prepare for a busier work period than usual, with the possibility of late-night votes, weekend votes, and changes to the August schedule. It is not going to be easy, but it is certainly going to be worth it.

The Federal Government has not made a significant stand-alone investment in infrastructure in decades. We have the world's largest economy, and yet our infrastructure ranks 13th. America has less generous family support policies than so many of our peers who are not as wealthy as we are. It is time to rebuild our infrastructure, create millions of good-paying jobs—particularly to those who haven't been able to get good-paying jobs—and help American families keep up with rising expenses. If and when we succeed, the benefits—the benefits—will reverberate across the country for generations to come.

NOMINATIONS

Madam President, on nominations, the Senate will also continue to confirm highly qualified nominations to the Biden administration.

This week, the Senate will confirm Uzra Zeya to serve as Under Secretary of State and Julie Su to serve as Deputy Secretary of Labor. Both Ms. Zeya and Ms. Su will add to the expertise, dedication, and diversity of President Biden's administration. As the week progresses, Members should be advised there will be additional votes, in all likelihood, on additional nominees.

Judicial appointments remain one of our highest priorities. Later this week, the Judiciary Committee will vote to advance five additional judges: two circuit court nominees, including Ms. Eu-

nice Lee—one of the great public defenders not only in New York but in the country whom I am proud to recommend to the Second Circuit—and three district court nominees.

The Senate has already confirmed more circuit and district court judges before July 4 than during the first year of any Presidency in recent history. We will continue this critical work in the months to come and restore balance, much needed balance, to the Federal judiciary.

CHILD TAX CREDIT

Madam President, on one final matter, the child tax credit—this, the biggest effort in over 50 years to reduce childhood poverty in America—begins on Thursday. Later this week, tens of millions of American families are going to see extra money hit their bank accounts when the first payments of the newly expanded child tax credit are disbursed across the country.

When Senate Democrats passed the American Rescue Plan in March, we included a provision to provide the majority of parents \$3,600 per year for every child under 6 and \$3,000 for every child between 6 and 17. These payments, I am happy to say, are ready to begin this week, which means that, soon, most families with kids will start receiving \$300 each month for each child under 6 and \$250 each month for each child 6 to 17.

I want American families to know, if you filed your taxes in either 2019 or 2020 or both, you will get these payments automatically; you will see them in your bank accounts without lifting a finger. For those who for whatever reason didn't file taxes in the past 2 years, I strongly urge you to go online and register at irs.gov/childtaxcredit—let me repeat that: irs.gov/childtaxcredit—or contact your representative for assistance.

These payments are going to make an incredible difference to millions and millions of American families struggling with the cost of childcare and groceries and housing and healthcare. Recent estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities predict that more than 4 million children—4 million children—will be lifted out of poverty. Childhood poverty in America cut almost in half—what an amazing thing that is.

Just this morning, I met with a group of parents in New York whose lives would dramatically improve thanks to this policy. Listening to their stories, I was moved to hear the relief in their voices that an extra little help is coming their way and the hope in their voices about giving their children a better future.

This is an example of the difference between a Democratic and a Republican majority in the Senate. As Leader McConnell openly reminds everyone, not a single Republican voted in favor of expanding the child tax credit through the American Rescue Plan.

I am so proud that Democrats found a way to help American families, help

American kids with a brighter, stronger future despite unanimous Republican opposition. I believe that now we must press on and make these expanded payments a permanent part of our Tax Code.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, today is the first day of what could be a productive and maybe even historic few weeks in the Senate. I hope we can live up to the challenges we are facing.

July 6 was a historic day in my home State of Illinois. For the first time in 476 days, Illinois went 24 hours without losing a life to COVID-19. During the deadliest days of this pandemic, Illinois was losing more than 150 people a day to COVID. As our Governor, JB Pritzker, said on the 6th, "The vaccines have done the work. Thank God for the vaccines." I couldn't have said it better.

Seventy percent of eligible Illinois residents have received at least one dose of those lifesaving COVID vaccines, including 90 percent of seniors. But we are at a critical moment in Illinois and across our Nation. With the new, more dangerous Delta variant now spreading rapidly across the Nation, people who are unvaccinated are at greater risk than ever of becoming sick and even facing death from COVID. I hope we can stop the division and disinformation and figure out how to protect the people from this deadly foe.

I want to say a word about an issue I read this morning in an article in the New York Times. The author of the article, Tiffany Hsu, titled the article "Anti-Vaccination Rhetoric Creeps From Fringe to Fox Prime Time." It is a lengthy article, and I commend it to everyone to read it on their own. It raises some important questions.

If our sacred right to free speech can be limited by the time-honored test of crying "fire" in a crowded theater, is there any limit to extreme political rhetoric in the midst of a pandemic?

We know the Republican Party is enthralled by Donald Trump. They have bought the Big Lie. A half to two-thirds of Republicans believe that he actually won the last election, and he didn't. Twenty-nine percent of Republicans believe that Donald Trump will be reinstated as President, triumphantly returning from exile to take over the White House again. Many of them believe that he will return to Washington soon.

Well, there was an interesting scene on the grounds of the Capitol when I

returned today from Illinois. For the first time since January 6, the fence that was erected to hold back the insurrectionist mob was removed. We hope that we are prepared now to protect this Capitol and can get back to business as usual, but we have to recruit additional Capitol Hill Police to be prepared, we have to work with the National Guard units to be prepared, and we have to realize the obvious. There was a decision made on the floor of the U.S. Senate by the Republican Senate leader just a few weeks ago to stop any bipartisan effort to establish a Commission to ask what happened on January 6 and how it can be avoided in the future. Senator MCCONNELL objected to a bipartisan, evenly-split Commission to investigate that terrible day. The GOP Senate leader killed that idea several weeks ago.

I want to commend Speaker PELOSI, who is trying her best through a special committee in the House of Representatives to have a bipartisan investigation. It should have been done through this Commission. Senator MCCONNELL stopped it.

There is one other element I would like to raise when it comes to free speech in the time of pandemic. What caught my eye in this morning's paper, as I mentioned earlier, was this article about FOX Primetime. They recounted the fact that over the last several months, FOX had been losing ground to CNN, and questioning the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines became a split decision at the FOX network.

Some of the leaders at FOX obviously believe strongly in the vaccine, and I commend them. I do too. Rupert Murdoch was vaccinated in December.

When a list of those who supported the effort to encourage the use of vaccines across America was taken at FOX, they put together a 30-second spot featuring host and anchor Steve Doocy, Harris Faulkner, Dana Perino, and John Roberts. Ms. Faulkner said in that ad by FOX: "If you can, get the vaccine." Bret Baier, chief political anchor at FOX News, said in an Instagram post that he was grateful for the shot of vaccine. The hosts of "FOX & Friends" spoke of the relief they felt in becoming vaccinated. Sean Hannity himself said:

I do believe in science, and I believe in vaccinations. Talk to your doctor. You don't need to talk to people on TV and radio that aren't doctors.

Which goes to the point of this message. There are two hosts of programs on FOX Primetime who can only be characterized as anti-vax quacks. I am referring, of course, to Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham. They have been spreading what I consider to be irresponsible information about vaccines across America and about the effort of this Nation to deal with them.

Here is the reality. We have millions who have died across the world from this virus. We may never have an accurate count. We have hundreds of thousands who have died in the United

States. Now it is said repeatedly that those who are headed to the hospital with the most serious strains of COVID-19—99.5 percent of them were not vaccinated. So the facts are obvious here.

I know it is an individual decision on whether to be vaccinated, and I am sure there may be some Senators who have decided not to do it, but I was happy to do it as soon as I could. I think the vaccines are protecting me and my wife and my family. But in the meantime, to have these hosts of TV shows at FOX, in prime time, peddling this nonsense about vaccines being unnecessary and COVID-19 being no threat can only be summarized in a statement which concluded this article:

In a recent opinion essay for The Daily Beast by Preston Padden, a former high-level executive at Fox Broadcasting wrote that Fox News had "contributed substantially and directly" to "the unnecessary deaths of many Americans by fueling hesitation and doubt about the efficacy and safety of life-saving Covid-19 vaccines." He singled out the channel's prime-time opinion programs for blame.

I want to commend those at FOX who have stood up and said the right thing about these vaccines, but I also want to take issue with those who are using this vaccine, for whatever purpose, to mislead and confuse American people about its necessity, its effectiveness, and its safety. They are not doing America any favors, and I hope that FOX will come to its senses.

If there are things that can remove you from the air for being said on a program, I certainly hope that the management of the station will caution Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham for the statements they have made in opposition to vaccines.

GUN VIOLENCE

Madam President, the Fourth of July, of course, is a night when you may not be able to get to bed early, with a lot of fireworks in celebration of our Nation's birthday, and it is celebrated from one corner of America to the next. But sadly, in many places on this Fourth of July, the noise you were hearing was not fireworks; it was gunfire.

One hundred and four people were shot in Chicago. One hundred and four people were shot in Chicago on the Fourth of July weekend. Nineteen died. Among the wounded were 13 children and 2 Chicago police supervisors. The dead included, in Chicago, a National Guard member who was aspiring to join the Chicago Police Department.

The week before the holiday, a 1-month-old baby girl was shot in the head during a mass shooting. A 20-year-old University of Chicago student, just riding on the L train, coming home from an internship at an investment firm in The Loop, was hit by a stray bullet. He, too, died.

Two days after the Fourth of July weekend, two ATF agents and a Chicago police officer on an undercover

operation were shot and wounded. It was the 36th Chicago police officer shot this year.

This is madness. Chicago is not alone with this gun violence experience. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are just cruel taunts if anyone can be cut down anywhere in this great country by gunfire.

Gun violence is a national crisis. At least 233 people were killed, and 618 people were injured by gunfire in the United States over the Fourth of July weekend, according to the Gun Violence Archive. Shootings are up this year in big cities but also in suburbs and rural areas. Don't believe it is only blue cities. It is blue cities and red cities and purple cities and small towns.

Already this year, there have been nearly 23,000 gun violence deaths in America. Did you hear that? This year, 23,000 gun violence deaths in America—that includes more than 12,000 by suicide and fatalities from more than 340 mass shootings. Sadly, virtually every weekend there is a mass shooting in the city of Chicago, which I represent—340 mass shootings, nearly 2 a day.

No other nation on Earth experiences this massive civilian slaughter. Neither should we. We must do more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and others who are prohibited from having them.

I met with the mayor of Chicago to talk about the Fourth of July weekend. We both agreed that more has to be done, and we are determined to work with President Biden, who is committed to this issue as well. But we also believe that we need to enforce the laws that are on the books. Specifically, we need to make sure that guns are not being sold to people without a background check.

Convicted felons have no business buying a gun, nor do people who are mentally unstable. But, unfortunately, they can. There are many loopholes in the law. There are ways to sell these guns at a gun show, without a background check, or over the internet or ghost guns, which have no, basically, identifying serial number.

We have to do more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, and we can if we will just stand up—both parties stand up—and say: Enough. This is ridiculous, it is cruel, and it is heart-breaking.

I have spoken with the mayor about the crisis in Chicago, and President Biden did the same when he came to Illinois last week. Today, the President is meeting at the White House with law enforcement, local elected officials, and others to discuss his administration's efforts to reduce gun crimes.

The American Rescue Plan, which passed the U.S. Senate without a single Republican vote in support, included funding that communities can use for youth unemployment programs, mental health services, and other strategies to break the cycle of violence. The COVID rescue plan also included funding for local law enforcement to improve community policing practices.