

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

September 1, 2023

Dear Colleague,

I want to thank you all for a productive August in-state work period. This month has given us the opportunity to talk directly with our constituents about Democrats' efforts to lower costs and grow the middle class at a critical time – as the historic legislation we passed under President Biden continues to bear fruit in every corner of the country, having a deeper and more meaningful impact for millions of American families and communities.

As you know, last summer, we passed one of the most consequential legislative feats in decades—the Inflation Reduction Act—securing the largest action to fight the climate crisis, lowering energy and healthcare costs, cutting the price of prescription drugs, and taking the first steps to ensure the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share. We cannot take our eye off the ball as we implement our agenda—from the IRA to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to the CHIPS and Science Act and more. It is our job to make sure these historic laws are put to work as intended and ensure that Americans across the country—in major cities, small towns and everywhere in between—reap the benefits, and when they do, to know that Democrats have led the way.

In the last few weeks, the Biden administration has continued our progress rolling out new initiatives that will significantly lower costs and create good paying jobs for American families:

1. On Tuesday, the Biden administration announced the first group of drugs subject to Medicare negotiation. Finally, after years of promises to take on big drug companies and lower drug prices for consumers, Democrats delivered. Seniors and Medicare patients are already seeing the price they pay for insulin capped, an annual out-of-pocket spending cap is a few months away, and negotiations are now underway to lower the price Medicare pays for some of the most expensive and widely used prescription drugs in the country.
2. This week, the Biden administration released wage and apprenticeship guidelines for clean energy projects funded by the IRA. For the first time ever, projects receiving federal tax credits must pay their workers prevailing wages and use registered apprentices. This is a massive win for working families, creating hundreds of thousands of new good-paying and long-lasting clean energy jobs.
3. Also this week, the administration put out new guidelines making millions more workers eligible for overtime pay. This is long overdue and comes after years of opposition from Republicans and corporations.
4. And they took massive steps toward decreasing the burden of crushing student loan debt in announcing their SAVE Plan, a student debt repayment plan that will cut many borrowers' payments in half or low-income borrowers' payments to zero.

I'm proud of the indispensable role Senate Democrats played in crafting the IRA and other historic laws passed last Congress. I thank the Biden administration for following through on their promise to lower costs and believe that with the IRA, the best is still to come.

When the Senate returns next week, our focus will be on funding the government and preventing House Republican extremists from forcing a government shutdown. We will also continue confirming President Biden's well-qualified nominees, especially qualified and historically diverse judges, building a federal bench that reflects our diverse country.

I want to thank our Chair of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Murray, for her steadfast leadership and for working on a strong bipartisan basis with Vice Chair Collins to pass all 12 appropriations bills out of committee, some with unanimous support. To avoid a harmful and unnecessary government shutdown, the House should follow the Senate's incredible lead and pass their appropriations bills in a bipartisan way.

We cannot afford the brinkmanship or hostage-taking we saw from House Republicans earlier this year when they pushed our country to the brink of default to appease the most extreme members of their party. Because of what we accomplished last year, our economy is gaining momentum; we cannot afford to jeopardize that progress because MAGA Republicans want to play political games. The only way to avoid a shutdown is through bipartisanship, so I have urged House Republican leadership to follow the Senate's lead and pass bipartisan appropriations bills.

Also in September, we will build on the Senate's bipartisan efforts around artificial intelligence. On September 13th, I will convene the first in a series of bipartisan AI Insight Forums to give all Senators the opportunity to learn, expand, and build upon our knowledge of this rapidly growing technology. These forums will convene the leading minds in AI, including AI developers, civil rights and worker advocates, researchers, and other key thinkers, to lay a foundation for action on AI. We know there is real bipartisan interest in developing a comprehensive AI framework to give Congress the opportunity to bolster and accelerate AI innovation in a safe and responsible way. These forums will build on the longstanding work of our Committees by supercharging the Senate's typical process so we can stay ahead of AI's rapid development. This is not going to be easy, it will be one of the most difficult things we undertake, but in the twenty-first century we cannot behave like ostriches in the sand when it comes to AI. We must treat AI with the same level of seriousness as national security, job creation, and our civil liberties.

In the remaining months of this year, we also have an opportunity to advance legislation on a number of critical issues: lowering the cost of insulin and prescription drugs, safeguarding cannabis banking, defending democracy and aiding our allies in Ukraine, disaster relief for communities in Vermont, Hawaii, Florida and beyond, the National Defense Authorization Act, reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration, advancing kids and teens online safety and privacy, holding bank executives accountable, addressing rail safety, artificial intelligence, and more. Our committees have done excellent work to move these along, but we are under no illusion that we can make progress on the senate floor unless we get bipartisan cooperation.

Finding compromise is never easy, but our efforts to do precisely that have led to significant accomplishments under this majority. I thank all of you for your diligent work so far on such a wide range of issues and for taking our message of lowering costs and economic prosperity for the middle class to the American people. We must keep working in good faith to achieve even more.

I look forward to returning to the Senate to work with you all to build on our tremendous success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator