Facing fresh criticism over inflation, President Biden got help from his allies in Connecticut recently in an apparent PR stunt that attempted to shift any responsibility for high food prices onto grocery stores and away from the president’s high-profile struggles to bring inflation under control.

A gaggle from the legislature’s increasingly progressive Democrat caucus, joined by the attorney general, held a news conference in the Legislative Office Building to highlight a Federal Trade Commission report that surmises large grocery store retailers such as Kroeger and Amazon are driving high food bills because they’re taking more profit than they should.

The event was steeped in familiar themes. Corporations are greedy. Connecticut residents are facing financial pressures from a variety of angles. The latter point, of course, is true.

What was missing, though, was any measure of self-reflection. President Biden, who has faced criticism for paying too little attention to consumer pain, isn’t responsible. Policies that Democrats have passed here in Connecticut? No mention of those, either.

To focus solely on grocery stores and ignore the idea that the government they control has played a role in cost-of-living issues, such as the price of food, is naive if not disingenuous.

After all, the Connecticut lawmakers who tried to throw President Biden a lifeline on this issue that’s dogging his re-election bid are the same people who installed the highway use tax on trucks that transport goods and equipment to and from stores, restaurants, and farms. That affects menu prices and the cost of filling our carts at the local grocery store.

The tax on restaurant meals? Yes, they did that too.

It’s also worth noting that just four short years ago, the figurehead of the majority party, Governor Lamont, gave serious contemplation to a tax on groceries.

Hopping on a high horse now to talk about food prices smacks of hypocrisy.

The pushback from the state’s grocery retailers was understandably swift, as they correctly explained to President Biden’s foot soldiers that the study they promoted lacked solid data supporting any claims that Connecticut food retailers are raking in exorbitant profits.

Facing questions from the news media, Democrats admitted they didn’t know if there was a problem here in the Nutmeg State. They’d like to determine if there’s a problem here. And to do it, they want to give the attorney general more power to meddle in the affairs of businesses.

From where I sit, attacking an important sector of our state’s economy without evidence to do so is reckless. Unfortunately, it’s commonplace in our legislature, which is notorious nationwide for its antagonistic attitude toward businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Food retailers here have been saddled with a mountain of costly regulatory burdens over the years, such as substantial minimum wage increases, and mandates over paid sick time for employees. Unemployment benefits for striking workers? It’s coming.

It’s fair to have examination of what’s driving the price of groceries. But to do so without considering government’s role isn’t just unfair, it’s patently political.

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