

accounts and retirement savings shrink and shrink. Hopes and dreams were dashed.

Americans can't afford to go back to the days when Wall Street gambled with their hard-earned money. The crisis has cast a long shadow over these families. Today, 4 out of 10 adults can't afford an emergency expense of \$400. If your car breaks down and it costs \$500 or \$600, you don't have the money to do that if you are much of the American public. You go to a payday lender who charges you exorbitant interest rates. You go back and go back because you can't get ahead.

One in four renters pays more than 50 percent in income to keep a roof overhead. One in four renters pays 50 percent in income or more to keep a roof overhead. One bad thing happens in their lives—a child gets sick; they miss work for a few days; they can't make payments because they have had broken-down cars. All kinds of things can happen. They can be evicted, and many of them are. More and more workers have irregular schedules and incomes that vary up and down from month to month. It is those Americans we are sent here to serve.

It also comes back to whose side you are on. Are you going to stand with hard-working Americans or with risky Wall Street traders? We need to go home and listen a little more to the people we serve and a little less to special interests. That is how we create an economy that values work and that serves the common good, not by falling all over ourselves in this body to serve Wall Street.

UNION ORGANIZING

Mr. President, last week, American workers had a victory. Boeing flight technicians in South Carolina voted to join a union for the first time, giving them a voice in their workplace and the freedom to bargain for the pay and the benefits they have earned. This will make a tremendous difference in the lives of those workers, but we know far too many Americans aren't so lucky. Tens of millions of Americans have no voice in the workplace, and when they try to organize a union, they are almost always met with resistance from corporations at every turn.

Boeing fought these workers' efforts tooth and nail. The corporate leaders used every trick in the book to try to prevent these workers from organizing and from standing up and speaking with a collective voice. It took three tries for workers to finally overcome that corporate obstruction. Their fight is not over. Boeing is appealing the results of the election in a last, desperate attempt to silence these workers.

For too many workers, hard work doesn't pay off. They are paid less, and they have little economic security. Corporate profits have gone up. The GDP has gone up. Executive compensation has gone up. Executive salaries have skyrocketed. Workers, simply, haven't shared in the wealth they have created.

More workers have no control over their own schedules. They work odd hours. They have no paid sick leave and no overtime pay. Companies use temporary workers and independent contractors to pay people less for the same work. Workers on the traditional payroll have often seen their wages and benefits stagnate and their job security whittled away. That is what happens when workers have no voice and no power in the workplace. We have to change that because it is not corporations that drive the economy; it is workers.

We know it from the way we write tax bills here. When we write a tax bill that focuses on the middle class and gives tax breaks to them, the economy grows because you build the economy up. When we pass a tax cut here, overwhelmingly, it goes to the wealthiest people and the largest corporations. The trickle-down effect creates very, very few jobs. When workers can bargain for higher pay and better benefits that reflect the dignity of work that they do, we are all better off. That is how you grow the economy.

This victory for Boeing's workers is a small but important step in the right direction. Now we need to give workers all over this country the same power in their own workplaces.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The clerk will call the roll. The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

IMMIGRATION

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I am coming to the floor tonight to talk about the issue of immigration here in the United States of America.

I think all of us are very familiar with the Statue of Liberty—a symbol we know about from the time we begin to talk, a symbol that represents much of the history of our country, where so many of us coming from every corner of the globe have family histories that involve parents or grandparents or great-grandparents or, generations ago, people fleeing persecution from around the world.

That welcoming sign—"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free"—those words inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty represent the fact that when it comes to people fleeing persecution, America is a place ready to receive them.

This isn't just something that is woven into the history of our country. It is not just something woven into the DNA of our souls as Americans. It is also woven into our laws—our national laws and our international treaties—for how to treat refugees fleeing persecution. It works like this: A family who has been in horrific circumstances can come to the U.S. border and an-

nounce that they are fleeing persecution and wish to seek asylum in the United States of America. They are then given a court date to appear to present their case. Their case has to be substantial, it has to be documented, and the court will decide whether it meets the test of whether they are legitimately in fear for their lives or for their children's lives should they return to their homeland overseas. That is the process.

But we have a new policy that was announced just in April and amplified in a speech by the Attorney General in May, last month. This new process says that when those families come to the United States fleeing persecution, we are going to proceed to take the children away from the parents while they are awaiting adjudication—the day to come before a judge to present their case on their affliction abroad.

Let me explain this in more significant terms. Families who have experienced trauma abroad are then subjected to trauma when they arrive at our border. This is the new policy that Jeff Sessions announced in April and gave a speech about in May. He called it "zero tolerance" because he wanted to put a positive spin because somehow those words carry positive weight. But let me state this: There is nothing positive about subjecting children to trauma who are fleeing trauma abroad. It is un-American. It is inhumane. It is absolutely in every moral sense wrong, and the administration knows it.

They first started debating this policy when the President came into office early last year, in January and February. They held these conversations and decided that it was way inappropriate for America to treat children in this fashion, subject these children fleeing persecution to trauma upon arrival in the United States of America, so they put it on hold for the better part of a year. Then last summer they decided they would experiment with it and have a pilot project. So at a few locations, they started this process of taking a family seeking asylum and ripping the children out of their parents' arms and sending them off to who knows where. The children didn't know where, the parents didn't know where, and the American people didn't know where, because when stories started to come up about this, the administration denied it was happening.

More and more stories started coming out. Then the administration said: We have a policy of, in some cases, taking children away from their parents in order to protect them from smugglers.

Now, I ask, does that make any sense to anyone? A family here in the United States, a family who is together—the children have the stability and security of being with their parents. They are no longer abroad. They are no longer in danger of a smuggler grabbing them or kidnapping them. And the administration says: We are protecting the kids from smugglers by ripping them away from their parents.

It is obviously such an incredibly phony story that no one would believe that story, so the administration started to wrestle with how to present this story. They came up with this zero tolerance. They really had to explain what they were doing. Here is the idea. They said: We believe that if we impose this kind of affliction on the children and the parents, families won't come here seeking asylum. So that is what this is about. This is about hurting children in order to dissuade families pursuing their rights under American and international law to ask for asylum here in the United States of America. This asylum is not granted to just anyone. People have to prove persecution abroad and a huge likely threat of injury, damage, and persecution should they return.

So now we have it. This is not a zero-tolerance policy; this is a zero-humanity policy.

When I say that we are subjecting these children to trauma, let me paint the picture for you. A family somewhere in the world has stood up to the local drug cartel. The local drug cartel has killed one or two of the members of that family and threatened the rest or gang-raped a daughter in the family and threatened to kill her and then to burn down the family's house. That is the type of trauma we are talking about.

The family says: We have to escape. We will flee. And they know that America has a Statue of Liberty. They know that America has received families over generations fleeing persecution, that this is in our tradition.

These children who have already been through so much knock on our door. They probably left their hometown and their house and just ran as fast as they could to escape before they suffered the injury they feared. They arrive here and they think: Wow, we made it. We made it through the various challenges of fleeing halfway across the world to come to America. Here, we can be treated well, be safe and sound.

They know that if they can prove their case, they can get asylum, and they have come to present their case. Then what happens? These children who don't know our country, who don't know the language, who don't know anything about how our systems work, are with their parents, and then up comes an official who says: I am taking the children away. The parents have no knowledge of where they will go. When will they be reunited? They have no knowledge of when they will be reunited. What will happen to my children? Then the parents and the children start screaming because they are terrified of being separated.

Well, we are putting these children through this trauma. So yesterday I went to Texas to try to see the facilities that are involved with this new policy. Specifically, there are two key places. One is operated by the Department of Homeland Security, and one is

operated by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Let's take a look at Homeland Security first. I was given permission to visit this facility. I very much appreciate being given that permission. This is not a picture that I took because I wasn't allowed to take in a camera. This isn't a picture of the facility that I visited, nor is this a recent picture, but I am presenting it here because this is what the big warehouse looked like that I visited. This is a general picture of what I saw.

I saw a smaller room—maybe about the size of the Senate Chamber—divided into a series of cages. Just to give you a rough approximation, these cages may be 15 feet by 15 feet with tons of people jammed in, so that if they all tried to lay down, there wouldn't be room for them to do so. They have space blankets like the space blankets in this picture. In this room I am describing, there weren't mattresses, but in this picture, there are. I will get to that in a moment. Some of the women crowded into some of these cages had children in their arms. Others were by themselves.

This is a processing facility. Next to this particular room is a much bigger warehouse room that looks more like this—a massive room. It has bigger cages that look like these cages made out of fencing.

I think about this one particular cage that I stood next to for a little while that was full of young boys. They were having them line up to prepare to get food. They had them line up by the shortest to the tallest. The littlest tyke must have been about as tall as this desk right here—I don't know, maybe 4 or 5 years old, something like that, on up through 16 and 17 years old.

What you have to realize is that some of these folks arrived as unaccompanied minors, but many of them came with their families as they sought asylum, and they had been separated from their parents. Their parents might have been in another cage somewhere across this facility, but they wouldn't necessarily be able to see them. They wouldn't necessarily be able to know where they are. They certainly didn't know what was going to happen to them.

So that is the processing side of this. After the children are separated, they are sent to a child detention center. That is the second step.

Let me go to another picture. I was standing here yesterday in front of a former Walmart. Above up where the Walmart sign would be, it instead says "Southwest Key Program." Then it says "Casa Padre." There is irony in that name, "Casa Padre." "Casa" means "house" in Spanish. "Padre" means "father," but there are no fathers there. There are no parents there—or so we are told; I wasn't able to get inside to see.

My team had contacted the Department of Health and Human Services and asked permission to visit, just as

my team had contacted the Department of Homeland Security to visit the processing center. The processing center said yes. This detention center for children said no. I thought, well, you know, as long as I am down in the vicinity, I am going to go by and just ask again because why would a facility want to have a policy of preventing Members of Congress from seeing what is going on inside? My understanding is that everyone has been turned down as far as seeing what is inside of this building.

It is reported that there are 1,000 children inside this Walmart without their parents. I think the American people have a right to know what is being done with their taxpayer dollars in treating children. Maybe if you go inside, you would see very clean mattresses and children playing games. It is a reputable nonprofit, as I understand it, that is operating this place. But what are the stories behind those children, and how long are those children there before they are shipped somewhere across the country to a foster home? They have no idea where they are going. They have no idea how they will be treated. They have no idea when they will see their parents again.

This is significant, unnecessary trauma being inflicted on children, and it is wrong. For the Trump administration to try to keep what is going on inside here a secret is unacceptable. Members of Congress need to be able to visit—not with 2 and 3 weeks' notice so the children can be shipped out and maybe the place can be cleaned up. You should have some chance to visit to see what it really looks like. How are the children really being treated? When it is rearranged, it can give you a false impression.

Members of Congress need to be able to talk to the children, to hear their stories to understand what they are going through. So I am calling on the administration to end this secrecy at these child detention centers. Apparently, there are a number of these across the country, but we don't even have that information. We don't know for sure how many children are in this former Walmart. We are told there are approximately 1,000.

Here is one thing we know: We know, because the Department of Homeland Security told us this, that they separated 658 children from their parents at processing facilities in a 12-day period in May. That is over 50 times a day that children are being ripped out of the hands of their parents, producing enormous trauma—and trauma not just for the child but trauma for the parent.

I am a parent. I have two children. They are no longer small tykes, but I can only imagine having escaped horrors overseas and then coming and having my children torn away from me, out of my arms, having my children snatched by an unknown force and sent to an unknown place.

It is important for Members of Congress, on reasonably short notice, to be

able to see what is going on in this building. So I knocked. There was a sign up here. This is probably what appears in this picture. It says: If you want to go inside, call this number. I asked people coming out: Can I come in and talk to a supervisor? They pointed to this sign. I called up, and they said they would send out a supervisor to talk to me. I waited 10 minutes and called again. They again said a supervisor would come out. I waited, and a supervisor did come out, but he didn't want to talk to me, he wanted to talk to the policemen he called.

Cop cars pulled up. He explained to the cops that he didn't want me on the property. I explained that when I had called, they said the supervisor would be happy to talk to me. I had been waiting for him, and in that sense, it was an invitation to be there. I pointed out that nobody asked me to leave the property, but that invitation to leave the property came soon enough thereafter.

Clearly the supervisor is under instructions not to share anything about how many children there are or about what is going on inside or any kind of activity. This is coming from the highest levels. When I was at the processing center, they told me that they were simply doing what they are being ordered to do from DC.

So there it is. The Attorney General and the President have created a new policy—a policy we have never seen in the United States of America of abusing children, causing trauma to children as a way to dissuade people from actually exercising their rights under our laws and under international laws to present their case for asylum.

Here are the policemen coming to talk to me. Here is the supervisor suggesting to them that perhaps he didn't want to have a conversation with a Senator trying to understand what was going on inside.

We have had various cases in our history of child-snatching. There was an article today in the New York Times that was about child-snatching during slavery, where children were ripped out of the arms of their parents and sold to far-away plantations, never to be seen again. The article went on to talk about child-snatching with Native American Tribes, where children were ripped out of the arms of their parents to be sent off to who-knows-where.

It is not an acceptable practice of any kind. It is morally bankrupt. It is harmful. We do not harm children in the United States of America in order to increase our leverage, to dissuade people from asserting their asylum rights and getting an asylum hearing. We do not do this—until now. It is morally bankrupt. It is so beyond wrong that the administration is wrapping it in secrecy, not allowing the press to see it. I am talking about without cameras—not something to violate the children's rights but to see what is going on inside. And they will not allow policymakers to see it. When

something is wrapped in secrecy like that, you know it is wrong. The administration knows it is wrong.

I call on my fellow Members here in the Senate to make it very clear to the administration that this is unacceptable. Every Member of this body and the House has every right to visit detention centers or any other immigration facility to see what is happening so that we can debate it here. We should hold a hearing in our HELP Committee—Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee—about what is going on with the organization for refugee resettlement and what they are doing detaining these thousands of children.

The reported numbers of children detained by our government—ripped out of the arms of families seeking asylum—have gone up 20 percent in 1 month. Some 10,000-plus children are being held at centers like this, foster homes, other halfway houses, and so forth around this country.

We have a responsibility in this Chamber to get to the bottom of what is going on and to put an end to it.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, June 5, all postcloture time on the Wier nomination be considered expired and the Senate vote on the confirmation of the nomination; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to pay tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, who some here also know from his service as Jordan's Permanent Rep-

resentative to the United Nations and as Jordan's Ambassador to the United States.

The High Commissioner has held his post since September 1, 2014, and his term will end on August 31, 2018. He has carried out his responsibilities with exceptional courage, compassion, commitment, and even humor, qualities that are indispensable for any successful U.N. High Commissioner. In so doing, he has been the target of relentless attacks by government officials who abuse their authority by manipulating their countries' electoral processes and security forces to arrest, imprison, abuse, and even assassinate their critics, whether independent journalists, members of political opposition parties, or civil society activists.

In a speech delivered Tuesday at an international conference marking the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted on June 25, 2003, in response to the atrocities committed in the former Yugoslavia, the High Commissioner warned that human rights are under siege in many parts of the world, including Europe.

He said, "This anniversary could be the occasion for a polite celebration of the achievements of my Office over the past two and a half decades—and they are many. But today is not a time for soporific complacency. Human rights are sorely under pressure around the world—no longer a priority; a pariah. The legitimacy of human rights principles is attacked. The practice of human rights norms is in retreat. Here in Europe, ethno-populist parties are in the ascendant in many countries—fueling hatred and scarring their societies with deepening divisions."

No one should be surprised by this. We see the consequences every day, including in countries that are friends and allies of the United States. Legitimate dissent is labeled "terrorism." Those who defend human rights are themselves maligned and targeted. Dictators are feted, and their crimes are ignored. Xenophobia and racism are treated as legitimate responses to domestic problems.

As the High Commissioner noted, it is incumbent on each of us to defend human rights and to counter those who promote hatred and intolerance. What is the alternative? Despotism. Fascism. Isolationism. Forces and ideologies we have resisted and fought against for generations. We owe it to past and future generations, as the High Commissioner said, "to stand by our achievements and the advances which have been made." This is not only a moral imperative for upholding the values our country stands for and preserving our international reputation, but a pragmatic necessity for protecting our interests at home and abroad.

I want to thank the High Commissioner for his extraordinary efforts during the past 4 extremely challenging years. He has been a tireless, principled defender of universal human rights,