

22nd circuit court judge since January of 2017.

Now we are considering Brian Benczkowski, the President's choice to serve as Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice. His resume includes distinguished service in five different leadership positions at the Department of Justice under three Attorneys General. His nomination has won praise from a number of former Justice Department officials who served under Presidents of both parties. Their letter describes this nominee as "a tireless worker . . . a fine leader and colleague . . . honest and a straight shooter." I look forward to voting to confirm him later today and to continuing to confirm more of the President's team.

JOB GROWTH

Mr. President, on one final matter, last week, the Labor Department released its monthly jobs report. As has become a pattern, it contained good news about the state of job opportunities across our country. In June alone, our economy created 213,000 new jobs, with contributions from nearly every sector. That continues a prolonged streak of strong jobs performance month after month, quarter after quarter.

The pro-growth, pro-jobs policies of this united Republican government—from historic tax relief to sweeping regulatory reform—are helping unleash this wave of new opportunity and new prosperity for America's workers and middle-class families.

More than 600,000 Americans entered the workforce last month alone—another sign that the Obama-era stagnation continues to lose its grip on our communities. The rate of hiring reached its highest level in more than a decade. Here is another promising sign: the rate at which Americans are quitting their jobs voluntarily. Economists tell us this is an important sign of a healthy job market because it indicates workers are moving upward, seeking better pay or superior benefits at a different employer. That number just hit its highest level in more than 17 years.

More jobs; more opportunities; more Americans coming off of the sidelines and getting back into the workforce; more Americans moving up the ladder to bigger and better things and opening up their current positions for other jobseekers at the same time—helping to produce conditions like these is what Republicans had in mind when we chipped away at the regulatory rust that kept American job creators from doing what they do best. That is what we had in mind when we used the Congressional Review Act a record 16 times to relieve bureaucratic bloat that had forced job creators and entrepreneurs to cut back or close up shop. That is what we had in mind when we overhauled our Tax Code so it better rewards workers and more strongly encourages job creators to deepen their roots in American soil. Republicans are

proud of this thriving job market, and we are proud that our policies are playing a part in making it happen.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant Democratic leader.

THAI RESCUE MISSION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the world breathed a sigh of relief. For almost 2 weeks now, we have had our attention focused on 12 children, Thai soccer team players who were lured into a cave with their coach and were thought to be lost for days. They couldn't be found in that flooded cave.

Then came the good news that they were discovered. They were still alive. It was a miracle.

Then came an extraordinary challenge: how to safely bring these 12 children out of this trap they were in and bring them to safety. I cannot imagine the effort that was undertaken. It included countries from around the world and the United States coming together to provide extraordinary levels of assistance at great cost to save the lives of these 12 children, to bring them out of this trap they were in and reunite them with their families.

All the prayers and all the hard work, all the bravery and all the investment paid off. These children are safe, as is their coach. They are currently being tended to for medical care, but the day will soon come when they will be back in the warm embrace of their families.

It was a great illustration of the caring heart of people around the world for children they had never seen; children who, through no fault of their own, found themselves in a deadly circumstance; children separated from their families with no hope when it came to their future. People responded. It was a great moment for the world to reflect on those children.

FAMILY SEPARATION

Mr. President, I wish to reflect on some other children. I wish to reflect on the 3,000 children forcibly removed from their parents' arms at the borders of the United States of America over the last several months. These children were victims of the zero tolerance policy of the Trump administration—a policy which Attorney General Sessions announced that resulted in those who appeared at the border, whether or not they were there for legitimate claims of asylum, being treated as criminals, and, treated as criminals, their children were removed from them.

I met with some of those children. It was 2 weeks ago in Chicago. It was at one of the agencies that the Department of Health and Human Services has used for decades to provide safe care for children who are unaccompanied at our border. Historically, those children came to the borders of United States without an adult, but in this circumstance, there were 66 children in Chicago who fit a different definition. While at the border, they were actually removed by the U.S. Government from the arms of their parents.

Of the 66 children in the Chicago facility, 22—one-third of them—were under the age of 5. It is an important fact to keep in mind as we consider what has happened.

I come to the floor to speak about the Trump administration's shameful policy of forcibly removing innocent children from their parents. Since our Nation's tragic failure during World War II to rescue Jewish refugees who fled Hitler, generations of Americans and leaders of both political parties—Republicans and Democrats—have tried to set an example for the world by providing safe haven to the world's most vulnerable people.

Ask the Cuban Americans which country opened its doors for them when they tried to escape the communism of Fidel Castro. It was the United States of America, and we are better for it. Three Members of the U.S. Senate are Cuban Americans who can trace their lineages to that refugee flow from the island to our shores.

Ask the Soviet Jews, who were persecuted under Soviet rule and who finally found freedom of religion and opportunity here in the United States, whether the U.S. refugee policy was good for them. Of course, it was, and it was good for America.

Ask those who came out of Vietnam, who stood by our side during that bloody war and came to this country as refugees to escape persecution, whether that was the right choice for them. It was, and it was the right choice for America, most certainly.

Now we face the worst refugee crisis in history, and what is the United States of America's official policy? The Trump administration is doing everything in its power to prevent innocent victims of war and terrorism from even seeking safe haven in our country.

The Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala are the sources of the vast majority of migrants who arrive at our southern border. These people are driven to our borders by horrific gang and sexual violence. What is at the root cause of that violence? It is the appetite for narcotics in the United States. It is the drug money that flows south from our border into Mexico and Central America. It is the firearms that flow by the thousands into South and Central America from the United States of America. This creates these gangs and creates these cartels that bring such violence on local people.

These countries have among the highest homicide rates in the world. Girls face a constant threat of sexual violence and rape and have little protection from local authorities. Is it any wonder that in desperation so many of them seek our shores and seek our country for the safety of their kids? This is why families are taking extraordinary risks to flee to our border. Any parent would do the same to save a child.

What has been the Trump administration's response to these families

who flee for their lives and to the mothers and fathers who try to protect their girls from sexual violence and rape?

On April 6, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the Trump administration had adopted a new zero tolerance approach in prosecuting border cases, making family separation the official policy of the United States of America. It declares that all who present themselves at our borders, even those who legitimately seek asylum, are to be treated as criminals.

The goal is clear. White House Chief of Staff John Kelly said that separating families is a “tough deterrent” to parents who flee persecution. Kelly also dismissed any concerns because “the children will be taken care of—put into foster care or whatever.”

Under this harsh and harmful policy, thousands of children have been forcibly removed from their parents by our government. They have been transferred to facilities all over the country, often thousands of miles away from their parents. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association have condemned this Trump policy. In the starkest terms, the President of the American Academy of Pediatrics has called it “government-sanctioned child abuse.”

Two weeks ago, on June 26, a Federal court in California mercifully stepped in. Judge Dana Sabraw was appointed to the Federal bench by Republican President George W. Bush. Judge Sabraw held that these family separations result in “irreparable harm.” He ordered the children who were separated by the Trump administration under the zero tolerance policy be returned to their parents within 30 days and within 14 days for those kids who were under the age of 5.

The Trump administration has tried to paint a rosy picture of the situation. On June 26, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar testified to the Senate Committee on Finance: “Every parent has access to know where their child is.” Secretary Azar said: “There is no reason why any parent would not know where their child is located.” He also claimed that HHS had 2,047 separated children in custody. Last Thursday, Secretary Azar admitted that, actually, “up to 3,000” separated kids are still in its custody. As has been documented in numerous heartbreaking reports, many parents of the separated kids still do not know where their children are, and their attempts to contact them have been unsuccessful.

Yesterday was the deadline imposed by Judge Sabraw for reuniting children under the age of 5. What did we learn? The Trump administration notified the court that it had identified 102 separated children under the age of 5 and that only 4 of those 102 children would be reunited before the deadline. The administration only has concrete plans to reunite about half of these 100 children. It has made no effort to contact

12 parents whom the government deported, and it can’t even identify the parents of one toddler. We still don’t know the fate of thousands of other children who are supposed to be reunited in just a few days.

This is an outrage. This is a toxic mix of cruelty and incompetence. The Trump administration continues to try to shift the blame for this humanitarian crisis to Congress and the courts, but Judge Sabraw said that this is a “chaotic circumstance of the government’s own making.” He went on to say yesterday, as reported in the New York Times, that these are firm deadlines and not aspirational goals—admonishing the government.

In another Federal courtroom, the administration’s real plan was made clear. Because of the backlash from the courts and the public, it is no longer separating families. Instead, this administration wants to jail these families indefinitely. Experts tell us that separation is child abuse, that jail is no place for children, and that even short-term detention can do permanent damage to a child’s health and well-being.

The administration asked the Federal district court to set aside the Flores settlement—a legally binding agreement to protect the best interests of kids that has been in place for over two decades. On Monday, the Federal court rejected the Trump administration’s request, saying it was “wholly without merit.” According to media reports, the Trump administration plans to appeal, and it is asking Congress to pass legislation to overturn the Flores agreement. Instead of putting social workers to work in reuniting families and children, the Trump administration wants to lawyer up so that it can be spared from the standards that Democratic and Republican administrations have faced in the humane treatment of children.

The Trump administration’s goal is clear. In the midst of the world’s worst refugee crisis, it wants to make the situation for families who flee persecution as painful as possible in order to deter them from seeking safe haven.

Let me be clear. This Senator will do everything in his power to stop legislation that would authorize the Trump administration to put migrant children in jail. It is immoral. It is shameful. It is un-American. I call on my colleagues—Republicans and Democrats—to join me in opposing the Trump administration’s cruel immigration policy.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THANKING THE SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me first thank my friend and colleague from Illinois. He is a lamp of light in this horrible moment when children are being separated from their parents, when we don’t even know where they are, and when we don’t even know who

their parents are. He is showing the inhumanity and the incompetence of this administration rolled into one. He has been a constant and vigilant voice to reunite the families and bring some justice, some peace, some calm to these poor kids. So I thank him for the work he has done.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. President, President Trump’s nomination of Judge Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court will bring up many issues. The next Justice on the Supreme Court will have an ability to impact labor rights, women’s reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, voting rights, civil rights, environmental rights, and so much more for generations to come. We need to know how Judge Kavanaugh views those issues.

On the issue of a woman’s freedom to make her own health decisions, for example, yesterday, while shepherding Judge Kavanaugh around the Capitol, Vice President PENCE said that he wanted to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned. This isn’t some ancient belief that the country has pushed aside. There are people in high parts of the government—the Vice President yesterday, the President constantly, and some others—who want to repeal *Roe v. Wade* tomorrow. Americans should not be complacent. The vast majority of Americans wants to see *Roe* in place, but there is an active movement here now, personified by Judge Kavanaugh’s potential elevation to the Bench—I hope it doesn’t happen—and we have to be vigilant.

Vice President PENCE’s remarks that he wants *Roe* overturned was a prescient reminder that both the President and Vice President have explicitly promised to appoint “strict constitutionalists to the Supreme Court” who would “consign *Roe v. Wade* to the ash heap of history.” Those are the Vice President’s words.

Judge Kavanaugh has also written some troubling things about environmental protections, consumer protections, commonsense gun safety laws, all of which should be carefully examined by this Senate and by the American people before we have any hearings. His history as a Republican partisan lawyer during the Clinton and Bush eras—documents, emails, writings—needs to be thoroughly examined, particularly his more recent writings about executive authority.

Judge Kavanaugh argued that a President should not be subject to an investigation while he is in office, that a President should be above criminal and civil indictments, even going so far as to say that a President need not enforce a law that the President deems unconstitutional.

Those are serious and dangerous beliefs. They are particularly dangerous—maybe even more dangerous now—because we have a President who clearly wishes to aggregate all power to himself regardless of the separation of powers, regardless of the norms this country has had for centuries, regardless of the rule of law. Senators from