

As President John F. Kennedy said: “We are not here to curse the darkness but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future.”

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I had planned to come to the floor this evening to talk about our national parks and to talk about the lands bill that just passed, but I also want to talk for a moment, if I could, about the legislation we just voted on on this floor. It had to do with border security, and it had to do with six other appropriations bills that include many of our Departments and Agencies. It also had to do with keeping the government from shutting down. If this legislation is now passed by the House tonight, which is expected, and is signed into law by the President, which is expected, we will avoid a government shutdown, which is really important. We don't need to go there again.

I also want to talk, for a second, about the package itself and the most controversial part of it, which has to do with the border. I voted yes this evening, and I did so because the legislation we just signed takes really important steps towards strengthening our southern border. Frankly, I am not hearing much about that on either side of the aisle.

First, let me just say that President Trump had a proposal on the border. His was a comprehensive proposal—yes—of more barriers and fencing but also of more cameras, more remote sensing, more screening at ports of entry, more judges, more Border Patrol, and so on.

That legislation that he asked us to take up included \$22.8 billion—a lot of money, right?

Now, some will say: But Congress didn't follow what President Trump wanted to do because they gave him less money.

The border security funding in this package is actually about \$300 million less than the President asked for. It is \$22.5 billion.

But Congress decided—and I think Congress is right about this—that our southern border is in need of help right now. Some call it a crisis. Some just say it is a big problem. I don't care what you call it. We need more help on the border. We need more barriers, but we also need more cameras, more remote sensing, and more ways to stop the drugs from coming in, most of which come through the ports of entry. Yes, we need more people to be able to respond. Yes, we need more judges to be able to handle this backlog of immigration cases that has built up. Yes, we need more humanitarian assistance.

By the way, the Trump administration and the Democrats from Congress supported both of those things. The place where there was a difference was the amount of funding to put into the

barriers. They gave him less money than he asked for for new barriers and new fencing.

The agreement includes nearly \$1.4 billion for that—for the new barriers and new fencing. By the way, it might also surprise you to learn that that is the most money Congress has ever appropriated for fencing and new barriers in any fiscal year.

Let me repeat that. This is the most money Congress has ever voted for to provide more barriers along the border. And these are new barriers.

Now, again, if you listen to folks—sometimes on both sides of the aisle—on this issue, you might not hear that, but this is the most ever in any one fiscal year. By the way, we are already 4½ months into this fiscal year.

I am glad we provided the funding because I think it is needed. I believe we do have a crisis on the border. I believe it has to do with illegal immigration, but also it has to do with drugs that are devastating my home State of Ohio.

Crystal meth is on the rise—pure crystal meth from Mexico, almost all of it. Ninety percent of the heroin coming into my State comes across that southern border.

We now have fentanyl coming in from across the border in addition to coming straight from China. We now have, of course, cocaine coming across the southern border. We have serious drug problems that need to be addressed.

I have done a lot of work on the issue of human trafficking, and I can just tell you that what we have learned, sadly, is that the amount of trafficking going on along the southern border increases as you have more and more people who are trafficking human beings for work—illegal immigration, which I think is mostly for people coming here to find a better life for work, but they are bringing with them a lot of people who are trafficking women and children.

So the trafficking issue is real. That is what the experts tell us, and that is another reason for us to have a more secure southern border. So I am glad that we are providing the funding.

With regard to the new barriers, what the President had asked for is that his funding go to fund the top priorities of the Border Patrol. Customs and Border Protection has a border security improvement plan. You can check it out online. The border security improvement plan has a number of priorities. The President wanted to fund those priorities. This proposal that we voted on tonight does fund about 55 miles of new barriers—not just fixing up old barriers, but new barriers—which comprise the top two priorities of that border security plan.

Would the President like to do more in terms of barriers? Yes, he would, and he is talking about ways to do that.

But my point tonight is very simple. If you really care about the southern border, then, this was the right vote to

take because, with regard to barriers, this is the most Congress has ever provided for new barriers, new fencing.

I hope this will work to help stop this flow of drugs into our country, to help control the illegal immigration that is happening, to help stop the trafficking of women and children that goes on along the border, but it is going to require more work. We all know that. This is a start, and my hope is that by passing this legislation we can help to start those even more serious efforts to deal with our broader issues here, including our broader immigration issues that have to be dealt with.

So I am hopeful that the House will pass it. I am hopeful that the President will sign it. I think he will. He says he will.

I am also glad that we are not going into a shutdown. Shutdowns make no sense. We have legislation, as some of you know, to try to stop government shutdowns from happening in the future. Why? Because they are bad for taxpayers, who end up paying more, not less, often because workers who are furloughed actually get paid even when they are not working, but also because of the inefficiencies of government during a shutdown. Taxpayer services are reduced—everything from meat inspection to the security lines, to the IRS information line to figure out how to file your doggone taxes. I mean, all of that gets affected.

So shutdowns don't make sense. It really doesn't make sense for the men and women who work for the Federal Government and for their families. During this last shutdown of 35 days, workers who were told they were essential, therefore, had to report for work, and they were not getting paid. So, again, those who weren't working got paid after the fact, and those who were working were not getting paid during the shutdown. That doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

By the way, missing two pay periods is a big deal for a lot of the government workers I know because they live paycheck to paycheck. They had rent payments. They had house payments, in some cases. They had car payments. They had real issues getting through this. Let's not put them through it again. It is not their fault. They shouldn't be pawns in this.

So my hope is that we can pass the “end government shutdown” legislation. It has 33 cosponsors now, which is a lot for around here, and it gets you started. A third of the Senate has said: Yes, let's stop these things. That is a big deal. My hope is that on both sides of the aisle our leadership agrees to take this to the floor. Let's have a vote on it. Let's decide whether people think shutdowns are a good idea or not. I think they are a bad idea.

By the way, it is the fifth Congress in which I have introduced this legislation, and I must say that we have never had this many cosponsors. So I do think more and more people are realizing that this is just not the way we

ought to operate. It is no way to run a railroad or a government.

NATIONAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT

Earlier this week, as I was saying earlier, the Senate passed other legislation called the lands bill, but it is really about land conservation. It is about ensuring that we have the ability to protect treasures around our great country.

There were two provisions that were in this land bill that were very important for Ohio. One had to do with something called the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area. You have probably heard of the Erie Canal. It ran through Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, and other States. The national heritage area is a 110-mile route on that canal from Cleveland to New Philadelphia, OH. It follows the route of the canals that went along the Cuyahoga River. It is a beautiful, beautiful area. It is the 87-mile trail, which is now enjoyed by 2.5 million visitors a year, that we wanted to be sure to protect in this legislation.

I have been there, and my family has been there. It is a great place to hike and great place to bicycle. It is a great place to go bird watching. It is a great place just to enjoy time with your family.

It is our history that we are preserving. The canalway was established as a national heritage area by Congress in 1996, and although Congress has authorized funding for the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area through fiscal year 2021, we had reached a funding cap this year, which meant we were at risk of losing about 100,000 bucks. That may not sound like much in the context of the Federal budget, but \$100,000 is a big deal to the canalway. Why? Because we use the Federal money to leverage private money and State and local money, and it is a critical part of making sure that we continue to have this beautiful treasure in our State that brings 2.5 million visitors a year. It adds a lot of economic benefits to our area. So Senator BROWN from Ohio and I have promoted this. We know that this limited Federal funding is going to be critical to leveraging those public-private partnerships, helping to create 4,200 jobs in the region and generating \$408 million in economic benefits.

It is important to have that kind of stable funding in our heritage areas so they can continue to do what they do—to tell our Nation's rich history and to provide the recreational opportunities to the people I represent. So I am glad that was included in the land package.

There was also another piece of legislation that was passed. It was a bill that Senator CARDIN from Maryland and I had been promoting called the Migratory Birds of the Americas Act, and it reauthorizes the Fish and Wildlife's program that promotes long-term conservation, research, and habitat protection for more than 380 different species of migratory birds.

This is a big deal to our State of Ohio. We are a big bird-watching State.

We have a lot of migratory species, including our State bird, the cardinal.

George Voinovich, whose seat I hold, was a big champion for this program in his time in the Senate, and he used to talk about the importance of this from an economic point of view. It is true that bird watching brings more than 75,000 visitors a year to just one single birding event in Ohio. For the birders who are listening, you probably know it. It is in northwest Ohio at the Maumee Bay State Park. It is called the "Biggest Week in American Birding," and polls have ranked it as the top birding event in the country. We like to think it is.

There is a study out of Bowling Green that indicates that bird watching around Lake Erie has contributed more than \$26 million annually to our local economy—\$26 million a year—and it has created almost 300 jobs.

So passage of this legislation is great news for us. It is about protecting that habitat in Ohio but also the habitat where these birds go in the wintertime. They are snow birds. They go south. We ensure they are going to come back and ensure we can continue to have that economic benefit and enjoy that natural beauty.

So I commend Senators MURKOWSKI, CANTWELL, and MANCHIN for working to get this legislation through the Senate. I look forward to the House's taking it up. It also has a good provision in there for helping our sportsmen and ensuring that we have public access to public lands. So my hope is that can move forward and we can ensure that we begin to deal with the issues that were addressed in that lands package.

One thing that was not addressed in the lands package that I want to be sure we don't lose sight of is the condition of our national parks.

Now, again, if you are going to talk about the treasures of our country, you have to put the national parks right at the top. We have this amazing park system that is the envy of some of the other countries around the world and the reason so many foreign visitors come to our country. The national parks now attract 330 million visitors annually. By the way, that is more visitors in the last few years than in the previous few years. So it is actually going up some.

These 330 million visitors come to see 84 million acres of parks and historical sites. Again, it is a huge economic boon to our country because a lot of people are coming from outside the country but also from the local areas, where people travel to get a beautiful vacation with their family, one they can afford. So we need to do everything we can do to hold our parks up.

Here is the problem. We have, over time, funded the parks' day-to-day operations but not funded their longer term maintenance problems. So think of a building that has a roof that is leaking. Now we are funding the program within that building and the naturalists, but what we are not funding is

the actual reconstruction of that building. It is called a maintenance backlog. That backlog has grown and grown and grown over the years to the point that we now have a \$12 billion maintenance backlog in our parks, and the park funding that we provide every year can't come close to providing that funding. So what some of us have done over the years is tried to bring attention to this and to figure out a way to get funding that was specifically focused on how to ensure that our national parks don't continue to deteriorate.

Again, they are such a beautiful part of our country, our history, and our culture. We have to preserve that legacy.

In Ohio, we have eight national parks, including Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Cuyahoga Valley National Park is one of the top 14 visited parks in the country. We are very proud of that. Whether it is biking, hiking, fishing, or kayaking, 2.7 million visitors a year go to Cuyahoga Valley. I am one of them. I like to do all of that there.

So these parks need to be sure that they can continue to be this treasure for the future. The infrastructure—the water infrastructure, the roads, the buildings, the bridges—is all deteriorating to the point where actually some of it can't be used.

If you go to a national park today, you may see that there is a trail closed or there is a visitors center that can't be visited. You may see that some of the campgrounds are closed or some of the bathrooms are closed because those facilities have not been able to keep up with their deferred maintenance.

So I think we should be putting more money into deferred maintenance and bringing our parks up to speed and addressing this \$12 billion backlog than the idea of expanding parks. We ought to be focused more on the stewardship of the parks we have, and that \$12 billion is impossible to find within the parks' budget that we have.

Think about your own house. If you allow deferred maintenance to build up and you don't take care of the roof, as an example, what happens? Well, you get a leak in the roof and then pretty soon your drywall is ruined, and I am pretty sure you would find out that your floor is ruined, and the costs mount up. That is what is happening in our parks. So we are not fixing the deferred maintenance, and we are creating other costs and other problems, and I have seen it. I have gone to four of our larger parks in Ohio to see, specifically, what their priorities are in terms of deferred maintenance.

One is a leaky roof. Another is a bridge. Another is part of a railroad track that runs through it, a tourism railroad track. Another is a seawall on Lake Erie. If that is not fixed, it then causes other damage.

My hope is that we can, on a bipartisan basis, deal with this because these problems compound. They get worse and worse if you don't deal with