

the Vehicle Technologies Office within the Department of Energy, which exists to help create and sustain American leadership in the transition to a global clean energy economy.

This office's leadership has already led to improvements in engine efficiency through vehicle weight reductions and reduced fuel production costs, and the Vehicle Innovation Act will help ensure that these continued innovations move forward.

I am proud to again partner on this bill with Senator ALEXANDER and fellow Michigander, Senator DEBBIE STABENOW. In the last Congress, we were able to pass the Vehicle Innovation Act through the Senate. Now, with fellow Michigan delegation Members, Congresswomen DEBBIE DINGELL and HALEY STEVENS, leading this bill in the House, there is no reason this legislation should not be enacted into law.

The bill is supported by labor, by industry, and by conservation groups, including the United Auto Workers, the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association, the Auto Alliance, the BlueGreen Alliance, and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

America should lead the world in clean energy advancements, and I urge my colleagues to support the Vehicle Innovation Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, while many folks in Washington, DC, remain ambivalent about what is happening along the southern border, I am here to report that we are reaching a breaking point.

Every month, Customs and Border Protection releases the total number of people who attempt to cross the southern border. The total includes those who cross illegally between the ports of entry, as well as those deemed inadmissible at a port of entry. Just to give you an idea of the size and scope of the numbers we have been dealing with in the past, since June 2014—the month that President Obama referred to this as a “humanitarian crisis”—more than 66,000 individuals were encountered along the border. At that time, we thought 66,000 was a huge number, but it pales in comparison to what we are seeing now. Last month, more than 103,000 people attempted to illegally cross the border. That is 103,000 up from 76,000 the previous month.

A few weeks ago, I know we got into a debate about what did and did not constitute an emergency or a crisis at the border. I don't care whether you call it a crisis or an emergency, but the entire system is breaking, and it is unsustainable. This is the highest number of people who has attempted to enter the country that we have seen since 2007.

The mind-boggling figure represents the strain that is being felt by the personnel—those being U.S. Government employees—whether they be Border

Patrol or Customs or whoever is trying to manage the influx of the migrants. The men and women of the CBP lack both the manpower and the facilities to appropriately respond. The already understaffed Agency is reassigning personnel to try to make do, but 40 percent of the Border Patrol's manpower is spent processing migrants and providing care and transportation, and many of the agents are taken off their patrol lines to do this work, which leaves areas of the border vulnerable to exploitation by drug cartels and others.

The detention centers at which these migrants are housed and processed are relatively small facilities that are not designed for these kinds of huge numbers. They were originally built to house single adults for a short period of time, but the skyrocketing number of unaccompanied children and family units is now putting a serious strain on those resources. Last month alone, there were more than 53,000 families and nearly 9,000 unaccompanied children who were apprehended at the border—53,000 families and 9,000 unaccompanied children. Customs and Border Protection simply lacks the facilities to hold these children, and it lacks the personnel to provide appropriate care.

Do we really want the Border Patrol handing out juice boxes and diapers as opposed to interdicting dangerous drugs and other contraband that come into the United States? I don't think so. We know they are desperately asking for additional detention space and staff to be able to manage the migrants who are in custody.

Why is it so important they be detained? It is because, if we engage in the practice that has come to be known as catch and release, then it is doubtful we will ever see these migrants again, even though they will be notified of their time to appear in front of immigration judges months—maybe even years—into the future. They will simply melt into the landscape. If they were to have bona fide reasons to claim asylum but were to fail to appear for their hearings in front of immigration judges, they will have waived those rights and be deported if they are ultimately located in the United States.

We know customs inspectors have been reassigned from their duties at ports of entry to do things like process migrants and provide transportation. With fewer customs agents on the job, you are now seeing lengthy delays at the ports and checkpoints along the entire border. In what is just right across from El Paso, TX, truckers have been reported as sleeping in their vehicles for hours and sometimes days so they will not lose their spots in line.

I have heard from some of the car manufacturers that require there be a flow of their supply chains into Mexico and vice versa, so they are literally hiring aircraft to fly from Juarez to El Paso because that 11-minute flight is faster than a trucker waiting 24 hours in line. Also, when many of our car

manufacturers that depend on just-in-time inventory can't get their inventory just in time but have to wait 24 hours, it disrupts their manufacturing lines and endangers their businesses. Of course, it is easy to see how this could have a ripple effect on the entire border and the American economy.

This slowdown isn't just affecting businesses along the border; it has businesses across the country worried. Mexican products feed the supply chain for many manufacturers in the United States, and these slowdowns affect production. While folks who live far away from the border may have just chosen to look the other way until now, they don't have a choice anymore. The system is breaking.

The ripples will soon be felt across the country unless Members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, work together and are serious about enacting a solution. We know what we need to do, but politics is preventing us from getting it done. It is time to provide our frontline officers and agents with the personnel, the resources, and the legal authorities they need in order to do the jobs we have asked them to do. Yet, without support from Congress, we are sending them into a losing battle, and we are setting our economy up for a disaster.

GEAR UP FOR SUCCESS ACT

Madam President, on another matter, when the Senate is in recess next week, I, like most of our colleagues here, will be running to my State to talk to my constituents and to hopefully listen to what they have to say.

As I travel from El Paso to Laredo, some of the things I will be talking about will include the GEAR UP for Success Act with students, teachers, and school administrators. GEAR UP seeks to increase college and career readiness for underrepresented and low-income students. It currently serves about 600,000 students nationwide, and Texans have benefited from the \$885 million in GEAR UP grants over the last 20 years.

I am glad I have had a chance to visit with some of my constituents in San Antonio and Harlingen about this bill and the incredible impact that GEAR UP grants have had on their students. I guess I didn't fully appreciate the fact that students really have to begin deciding in the seventh grade what their courses of study will be because, if they don't take the required courses, or the prerequisite courses, or the other courses they are going to need in order to graduate or to get into college, they may miss the boat entirely. Many of these students come from families whose parents have never attended college or who may be unaware of the requirement to plan in order for their children to make the right course selections early on as opposed to their waiting until their junior or senior year to begin to think about where to apply to college.

This legislation would allow school districts to better cater to their students' specific needs rather than to use

a one-size-fits-all program, and it would reduce the local cost share required by half.

I am eager to hear from my constituents in El Paso and Laredo and to talk about what else we can do in Washington to promote college and career readiness. In a tight labor market with a booming economy, one of the things we hear about the most back home is the fact that employers can't find adequately trained workers for the jobs that are available and return a good wage. So it is important that we continue to do everything we can not only to promote education generally but also to promote career readiness for many of the well-paying jobs that are going wanting for the lack of qualified workers.

JENNA QUINN LAW

Madam President, I will also take some time to visit the Center for Child Protection in Austin to discuss the Jenna Quinn Law. This would authorize grants for training students, teachers, and caregivers on identifying and reporting child sexual abuse. The bill is named for a courageous Texan and is modeled after successful reforms in my State. It is another great example of how we are working to bring the successful Texas model to the national level.

B-21 STRATEGIC BOMBER

Madam President, finally, I will visit Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, TX, with my friend and colleague, Congressman JODEY ARRINGTON, for a briefing on its latest operations and the recent news from the Air Force that Dyess will be receiving the B-21—the next generation of strategic bombers.

Dyess is the most dynamic bomber base in the country, and I am glad the Air Force has chosen the future home for the B-21 squadrons as well as weapons instruction courses and test squadrons. It just makes a lot of sense.

I look forward to spending time at home with my constituents. These conversations drive my work in the Senate, and I am eager to get more feedback on how these bills could make positive changes in their lives and in the lives of all of my constituents in the State.

REMEMBERING LIEUTENANT COLONEL RICHARD COLE

Madam President, on one final matter, this week, Texas lost a true hero. Lt. Col. Richard Cole passed away on Tuesday at the ripe old age of 103 in my hometown of San Antonio.

For Texans and for so many Americans, Lieutenant Colonel Cole—or “Dick” as his friends and brothers in arms called him—symbolized one of the most remarkable groups from the greatest generation in World War II—the Doolittle Raiders. The group is named for then-Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, who, in April of 1942, fearlessly led 16 B-25 bombers and 80 crew members on a strike that targeted factories and military installations in and around Tokyo. This was actually

Dick's first mission, and he was Jimmy Doolittle's copilot.

After the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, this mission was not just of tactical importance—it was a major morale boost for our Nation.

Air Force Chief of Staff David Goldfein recently said:

Those 80 intrepid airmen changed the course of history. They executed a one-way mission without hesitation and against enormous odds.

The mission was, as you might imagine, perilous. Doolittle's Raiders took off from the USS *Hornet* with barely enough runway to get airborne. In fact, Doolittle and Cole's aircraft only had 467 feet with which to take off in an aircraft that was not designed to launch from an aircraft carrier. The airplanes inadvertently took off 170 miles further from Japan than they had planned, so they had insufficient fuel to make it to their landing fields in China.

As a result, Dick—then 26 and having had limited experience in jumping out of an aircraft—had to leap out of his B-25 into unknown territory. He later reported that he gave himself a black eye when he pulled the ripcord and finally landed in the branches of a tree, where he spent the night, dangling.

He later said:

They don't give a Purple Heart for self-inflicted injuries. I gave myself a black eye.

Yet his heroism was certainly rewarded. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his role in the bombing as well as the Bronze Star and the Air Medal. Then, in 2015, Dick and his fellow Raiders received the Congressional Gold Medal.

These men, as you might imagine, shared an incredible bond, and their lasting camaraderie was evident through one special tradition they shared. At each reunion, the crew would share a cognac in silver goblets. Each goblet was engraved with a Raider's name both right-side up and right-side down. After toasting to the men who had died since their last reunion, they would flip over the goblets of those who had passed away.

At their final reunion in 2013, only four Raiders were left. After determining that this would be the final reunion due to their ages and travel limitations, Dick delivered the last toast. Now his silver goblet will be turned over just as it was for the 79 brothers who left this Earth before him.

We remember the final Doolittle Raider today for his incredible courage and sacrifice and a life well lived. America has lost another hero, but our country will never forget him.

I send my condolences to Dick's family and friends and especially to Rich, his son, and to Cindy, his daughter.

I yield the floor.

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. MARKEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF DAVID BERNHARDT

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I rise today to address the Senate on the nomination of David Bernhardt to head the Department of the Interior.

I ask unanimous consent that I may use this chart in order to further my goal of making it clear why he should not be nominated and confirmed as Secretary of the Interior.

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

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, under Secretary Bernhardt, the Department of the Interior will come to stand for the Department of Oil Interests, DOI.

This wheel of Bernhardt's giveaways makes it very clear what the objective of his tenure as the Secretary of Interior will, in fact, entail.

Bernhardt's nomination is just a continuation of the Trump administration's cartel Cabinet. Only a month ago, a former coal lobbyist was confirmed to head the Environmental Protection Agency. Let me say that again. Just last month, a coal lobbyist was nominated and confirmed to be the head of the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States—unbelievable. But now Republicans want to install a former oil lobbyist to head the Department of the Interior because, in Trump's administration, it is nothing but foxes guarding the henhouse.

We need more answers about Mr. Bernhardt's lobbying activities. We need answers on whether Mr. Bernhardt used his position at the Department of the Interior to help former clients. The American people need to see the documents associated with Bernhardt's lobbying activities. Most importantly, we should not confirm a former oil lobbyist to lead the very Agency that is tasked with protecting our public lands from despoliation.

Let me now point to the wheel of giveaways for more oil—more oil. And that is the goal of his appointment.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of our national treasures that is under threat from Big Oil and the Trump administration. This is the wildest place left in America, and it should not be turned into a drilling playground. Yet Republicans here in the Senate voted in 2017 to hand this special place—the Arctic Refuge—over to Big Oil. Now this administration is trying to hit the gas on drilling there, in one of the Earth's most pristine wilderness areas.

Last year, Mr. Bernhardt said that he would “expedite” oil development in the wildlife refuge, and he has worked inside the Department of the Interior to limit environmental review of drilling activities. So let's just imagine gushing oil poisoning the habitat of magnificent creatures like polar bears and caribou, snowy owls and the Arctic fox; rigs and pumps threatening the ancestral homeland of the Gwich'in and Inupiat peoples, which they call “the sacred place where life begins.”