

I have thought and read quite a bit about just so I could try to understand what they could possibly be thinking.

A recent poll found that 4 in 10 Americans say they prefer living in a socialist country to a capitalist country—40 percent. For those of us who have witnessed the rise and fall of socialism over the course of our lives or who have even read about it in the history books, that is a major cause for concern. Yet today's socialists try to distinguish themselves from those countries that have actually implemented socialism—Venezuela, the Soviet Union, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and other failed socialist nations. They are saying that they are democratic socialists.

As a matter of fact, one of our Senate colleagues who is running for President—the junior Senator from Vermont, not the distinguished Senator on the floor—is speaking today at an event in defense of democratic socialism. I have to say, if you ask me, that is an oxymoron. You can't support democracy and socialism at the same time. Those two ideals are completely at odds with one another. Yet what we see happening is people who use labels to confuse the American people and who claim to be what they are not—literally being Trojan horses for ideas that have been demonstrated to have failed throughout the world's history.

Many of these so-called democratic socialists have gotten into the habit of suggesting that Scandinavian countries are successful models for their ideology. They will point to the economic successes of these countries, combined with their expansive government-run programs—free higher education, universal healthcare, subsidized childcare. They will say: "Look, it works." Robust welfare programs are not the cornerstones of socialism, although many seem to think that this is the case.

The poll I mentioned earlier found that there is a broad disagreement about what exactly constitutes socialism. To me, one of the most interesting findings of some of the polling is when you ask some people what "socialism" is, they say, "Well, that is being social." They also say, "Well, it is universal healthcare, tuition-free education, and a living wage." Only two-thirds of the people say it involves a state-controlled economy, and fewer still believe socialism involves the state control and the regulation of private property, the media, and communications.

Let me be clear. The most fundamental aspect of socialism isn't the social benefits it provides; it is having the government in control. It is the surrendering of your individual freedom and choices to government coercion and brute force. That is the only way people can be forced into limiting their freedom, their activity, and their incomes is by brute government force. That is the single most important, distinguishing feature of socialism.

So those who claim that these Scandinavian countries with social security programs are shining examples of socialism could not be more wrong. These countries largely operate free markets, and they are the first to correct us and say they are not socialists. Nevertheless, so-called democratic socialists continue to name these countries as successful examples because the only true examples of socialism don't poll quite nearly as high. The prime example is Venezuela.

Venezuela's troubled story began in the late nineties when then-Presidential candidate Hugo Chavez delivered an impassioned speech that promised to lead Venezuela into a socialist paradise. He talked about the country's wealth being stolen by evil capitalists and greedy corporations, and he promised hope and change if he were elected. That sounds pretty similar to what we hear from the so-called democratic socialists today.

For any Americans who wonder if that hope and change being promised by these candidates might actually work, let me reassure you that there would be a lot of change but that it would not be the type of change you would want. Again, look at Venezuela. The government took over businesses, shut down free markets, and suppressed free speech. As a result, one of the richest countries in the world is now among the poorest. Basic commodities like food, medicine, and water are in short supply. About 6 months ago, I myself was at the border between Colombia and Venezuela, and I witnessed Venezuelans going across the border into Colombia in order to pick up some of the basics of life—medicine, food, and the like.

Of course, with regard to freedom of the press, well, you can throw that out the window in Venezuela, and, of course, crime rates have skyrocketed. That is why you don't see caravans of people attempting to immigrate to countries like Venezuela—it is just the opposite. The United Nations announced last week that more than 4 million people have escaped Venezuela—4 million refugees from Venezuela—and that a quarter of those have left in the last 7 months. The UN Refugee Agency referred to this mass exodus as the "largest in the recent history of Latin America and the Caribbean."

That is what happens under socialism. Citizens flee poverty, government control, and corruption in search of opportunities to build better lives for themselves. The trouble is, no matter what word you put in front of the word "socialism," it doesn't really matter because it is still socialism.

I think Winston Churchill summed it up best, as he frequently did, when he said:

The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings. The inherent virtue of Socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.

I can assure you that if these democratic socialists get their way, there

will be no shortage of miseries to share.

I urge all of our colleagues and all Americans to learn, to share the lessons of history, and to remind our fellow citizens that so-called democratic socialism is nothing more than a Trojan horse that would destroy our country and destroy our way of life. Most fundamentally of all, it would destroy the American dream.

We can look around America and find good examples, but, of course, I am partial to the example of the State of Texas as to how free market ideals and less government can produce more prosperity, more freedom, and a better quality of life. Yet, if our Democratic friends—particularly those who are running for President—get their way with Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, and a host of other disastrous policies, the sort of prosperity and opportunity and freedom of choice that you see now in places like Texas will be out the window.

When our friend the minority leader, the Senator from New York, calls the Senate a legislative graveyard, in one respect, he is entirely right, because we are going to do everything we can to make sure the U.S. Senate is a firewall against these disastrous socialist policies.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. President, on another matter, there has been a lot of discussion since the election of 2016 about election security, and correctly so. With the first primary of the 2020 election being only 8 months away, there could not be a more critical time to discuss the work that has been done since 2016 to secure our Nation's election infrastructure.

There has been a lot of focus over the last 2½ years on what exactly did and did not happen in 2016. We know there was a lot of meddling by Russian state actors who tried to sow discord and confusion and pit American against American through the use of social media and propaganda. There is one piece of information that has remained perfectly clear—and it is of some comfort to me—which is that no votes were actually changed or altered, but we can't assume this will be the case in the future. What we did see was a concerted effort by the Russian Government to infiltrate our systems and sow division and discord among Americans, as the Presiding Officer knows, which was the conclusion reached by the intelligence community assessment in January of 2017, which was supported by the Senate Intelligence Committee's unclassified summary of that assessment last summer, and which was again reiterated in Special Counsel Robert Mueller's recent report.

I don't want to mince words on this point. Any attempt, successful or unsuccessful, to interfere with our elections is unacceptable and would severely undermine our self-government and our Democratic values.

Across the Federal Government, there was an immediate effort to prevent what happened in 2016 from repeating itself in 2018. The Intelligence Committee began investigating measures taken by the Russian Government in 2016 to find out, one, what happened, and, two, how we can prevent that from happening in the future.

While there was evidence of continued disinformation campaigns, the Intelligence Community found that 2018 was largely interference-free. Again, we can't assume that will be the case going forward, but 2018, thankfully, was largely interference-free. That was the conclusion of the FBI Director, Chris Wray, but he called 2018 "a dress rehearsal for the big show," and that is the 2020 Presidential election.

We have to continue to work to strengthen our efforts to protect our elections, and I believe we are already doing some good work in the Senate to accomplish exactly that. Just last week we passed the Defending Elections against Trolls from Enemy Regimes Act, or the DETER Act. This legislation was introduced by our colleagues Senator GRAHAM and Senator DURBIN, and it sends an important message to foreign governments that attempts to meddle in our elections will not be tolerated.

That legislation makes individuals who have done that—who have attempted to interfere in our elections—categorically inadmissible to the United States.

It passed by unanimous consent here in the Senate, meaning not a single Senator voted against it.

In addition, I hope we will soon vote on the Defending the Integrity of Voting Systems Act, which was introduced by Senators GRAHAM, WHITEHOUSE, and BLUMENTHAL. This legislation amends the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act to make it easier to federally prosecute individuals who engage in election interference. It is an important way to protect voting machines and fight back against those who seek to undermine our democratic processes. I hope these bills and others like them can quickly work their way through Congress so we can get them to the President's desk ahead of the 2020 election.

What we tonight want to do is to centralize our system of local and State-run elections here in Washington, DC. Actually, one thing we learned is that the decentralization of our voting process locally and in the States has been one of the most significant protections against interference in our elections. But, of course, in addition to our legislative efforts, we have approved hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to help States prevent future election interference.

When the American people cast their ballot in 2020, they should be able to do so with confidence, and that is precisely what we are working to provide.

We will continue our work to ensure that State, Federal, and local election officials have the tools and resources

they need to safeguard our efforts and to prevent foreign governments from meddling in our democratic processes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we have had many discussions on what is happening on appropriations bills. So I thought I could help clear some things up.

Next week, the Senate Appropriations Committee will mark up a supplemental appropriations bill. We are doing this to address the humanitarian crisis, which it is, on our southern border. There is absolutely no need for this to be a partisan process. So many of us, Republicans and Democrats, agree we need to address the humanitarian crisis on our southern border.

We have seen the news reports showing crowded conditions at Custom and Border Protection facilities. We have seen the pictures of women and children sleeping outside on the ground because the facilities are full. I have gone through places where they basically have cages holding children—and this is happening in America. And we have seen the numbers of unaccompanied children in our care swell as kids come across the border looking for help and compassion.

Now, most of these people are fleeing violence or dire poverty in their home countries. Most know how dangerous the trek north will be, but they feel they have no choice but to make the trek anyway. Some have said they know they may die on the trek north, but they are going to die from gang violence and the murderers back home if they do not. They fear for their lives.

By the time they reach us, they are exhausted, they are scared, and they are hungry. The vast majority actually just turn themselves over to Border Patrol Agents as soon as they cross into the United States. Rather than try to evade law enforcement, they look for the U.S. authorities in uniform. They turn themselves in to them and are then escorted by Border Patrol through the billion-dollar, actually useless, Trump wall. They are not looking to do us harm. They are looking for mercy.

Now, we may disagree about what has led to this crisis and what changes may be needed to our immigration system. But I take issue with claims from across the aisle that Democrats oppose any and all solutions to address this crisis. Everybody knows that is simply false.

We have a responsibility to make sure that the people in our care are treated humanely. After all, we are Americans. We ought to show the world we stand for American values. As vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, I take this responsibility seriously.

The Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement—the Agency that cares for

unaccompanied children who cross the border—is running out of money. They are expected to exceed their Federal appropriations by the end of this month. Because they are running out of money, they have already begun to scale back on services that are not critical for life and safety, including education, recreation, and legal services. We ought to take action. Customs and Border Protection processing facilities are vastly over capacity. That not only creates dangerous conditions for the migrants who are in our care but also dangerous conditions for our Border Patrol staff.

We have seen these pictures of men and women and children sleeping outside with Mylar blankets in temporary shelters, under bridges, and in overcrowded conditions inside facilities that cannot accommodate them. I have seen this. It cannot continue. We have to do better. We Americans have American values. We should act like it.

The Senate Democrats are willing to provide money to address these problems. We have a responsibility to do so—Republicans and Democrats both—but we also have a responsibility to put basic conditions on this money. We want to make sure the taxpayers' dollars are appropriately spent. We cannot provide a blank check, especially to this administration.

HHS and DHS facilities have to meet appropriate standards. So the care we provide reflects the fact that we are Americans with American values. We must not let detainees languish outdoors in 100-degree temperatures for more than 30 days without showering or changing clothes—and that is happening.

Children in our care should only be housed in facilities that meet State licensing requirements—not in cages. They should have access to education, recreation, and legal services. DHS should not be using information on potential sponsors for unaccompanied children to deport them. We found that has happened. We had people willing and capable of taking care of these children instead of the U.S. taxpayers spending thousands upon thousands of dollars. Instead of saying thank you, we say: Well, we are going to check your background. Maybe we should deport you.

It makes me think about the number of people who have served in our military and overseas that are immigrants and then get deported. Now, that is hard to understand. It is probably easier to understand for people who have refused to serve, but it is hard to understand.

That is no different than saying: Oh, you served our country, you faced dangers, and you were shot at wearing the uniform of this country. But we are throwing you out.

Now, Members of Congress with oversight responsibility of these Agencies should be able to have access to detention facilities. The Trump administration should not request these resources