

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

from Congress and then not tell Congress what they are going to do with it by saying: We sure as heck are not going to let any Member of Congress—Republican or Democrat—see what we do with it.

Money appropriated for humanitarian assistance should be used for humanitarian assistance. It should not be diverted to pay for a wall, which would do nothing to solve this humanitarian crisis.

Now, these should not be controversial propositions. They are reasonable conditions to include. They should get bipartisan support. We can do it if Republicans want to, but what we are not going to do is allow the Trump administration to use this humanitarian crisis to supplement funding for an enforcement agenda that is not only controversial but also ineffective and cruel.

For example, the President has asked for funding to increase ICE detention facilities by 7,600 beds. There is no need for this increased funding. We should not provide it.

The administration's inclination at every turn is to just use detention to solve our immigration problem, while not actually working to solve our immigration problem, at enormous cost to the American taxpayers. It is expensive, inefficient, and it is wrong. The other thing is that it does not work. Alternatives to detention exist. They are safe, effective, and enormously less expensive to the taxpayers.

The administration needs to use the resources it has for ICE detention services to house those people who truly present a danger to our communities. Yes, house somebody who is a criminal. House somebody who has a criminal record. But do not lock up every man, woman, and child simply for being here without proper documentation, spending thousands upon thousands of taxpayer dollars to lock up a 5-year-old. They are really not the people we should worry about. But the Trump administration's dramatically escalating the arrest and detention of immigrants who have no criminal record makes no sense. It is an enormous waste of taxpayers' dollars.

We carefully negotiated ICE bed levels in the fiscal year 2019 Homeland Security appropriations bill just a few months ago, which got strong bipartisan support. That was just a few months ago; there is no reason to revisit it now just a few months later.

Congress should also ensure that funding it approved 2 years ago—overwhelmingly, by both Republicans and Democrats—to deal with the root causes of immigration from Central America is spent for those purposes. If we do not deal with the reasons people are leaving their countries, of course they are going to keep coming. That is just common sense, and that is why we appropriated these funds. That is why Republicans and Democrats voted to appropriate these funds and the President signed those appropriations bills.

We should insist they are used for the purposes that Republicans and Democrats voted for them to be used.

When President Trump decides to withhold a half a billion dollars of that funding, that is self-defeating. That does about as much to stop illegal immigration as tweeting about it does.

So in addition to being ready, willing, and able to help address humanitarian issues at the border, Democrats are also advocating for longer term solutions that both parties should support if we are serious about solving this crisis.

As some Senators recall, when I was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, we had months of hearings, weeks of markup, hundreds of pieces of information coming, and witnesses, and I brought a comprehensive immigration bill to the floor 6 years ago. There were 68 Senators, Republicans and Democrats alike, who voted for it. Even though it passed the Senate, the Republican Speaker of the House refused to bring it up.

The irony is that yesterday the Acting Homeland Security Secretary testified that if we had enacted that bill—the bill I brought to this floor, which 68 Senators voted for—it would have made a difference in the current crisis. It is unfortunate that the Republican Speaker blocked it.

He did say it would violate the Dennis Hastert rule, and they had to uphold that. Well, no, it violated common sense by not bringing it to a vote.

So as we did back then, any immigration reform we consider today has to be done on a bipartisan basis. That is how we got the big vote here. I know that these are controversial matters. Of course they are. That is why we struggle over them. But bipartisanship is the only way to get things done around here.

Given the urgency of the need on the southern border, I hope my Republican colleagues will not use this bill as a vehicle to force debate on divisive immigration proposals that should be left to the authorizing committees, not to the Appropriations Committee. If we turn this into a protracted debate about immigration reform, we will only delay much needed humanitarian assistance on the southern border.

We could do both. Pass the appropriations bills, but then let's have a real debate, as we did a few years ago, on immigration reform, something that got two-thirds of the Senate—Republicans and Democrats—to vote for it.

As I said at the beginning, consideration of a supplemental appropriations bill to address the humanitarian crisis should never be a partisan issue. We all want to make sure that we appropriately care for the vulnerable families seeking refuge at the United States of America's border.

I urge all Members to focus on areas of agreement in this package. There are a lot of areas we can agree on, Republicans and Democrats. Focus on it, pass it, and get assistance out the door as quickly as possible.

I see another Senator is waiting.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, thank you for the recognition and opportunity to speak with my colleagues about an issue that I think is so incredibly important.

We just heard the Senator from Vermont discuss the issue at the southern border. I made a return trip—one of many I have made to the southern border over the past decade—this past Friday. I have to tell you, I thought this situation was just a terrible situation a decade ago. As I have continued to visit and work on issues that deal with illegal immigration, illegal aliens, working on immigration reform over the past decade, many times with great frustration because we cannot achieve bipartisan agreement, I saw a situation on the southern border this trip that was far worse than I ever could have imagined.

In the middle of all of this are some very brave Border Patrol agents, ICE agents, DHS agents, Coast Guard that are there providing healthcare—they are carrying out their job every single day. I am grateful to them for their service. I am so impressed by their resolve to protect this Nation—to protect it.

There is a lesson we could learn from these Border Patrol agents. As they go out, underfunded, disrespected, not knowing what they are going to encounter, there is a lesson that every single American could learn. These men and women are dedicated. They show up. They do their job. They value—they value—citizenship in this country. They value this Nation's sovereignty. And one of the things they know is that citizenship—citizenship—is something the American people should hold very dear. It should not come to somebody illegally approaching our country. It should not come to somebody who is coming here to do us harm.

I will tell you this: To enter one of those reception centers or retention centers in the El Paso sector—which is there in Southwest Texas and right on the New Mexico-Mexico border—is to enter an area where you can just feel the chaos and the uncertainty. It permeates the air.

People know this is difficult. The American people should know this is very difficult. It is a terrible situation that our men and women of the Border Patrol are dealing with—to see young mothers alone with their babies, waiting for answers from a Federal agency about where they are going to go or what is going to happen to them because somebody in Central America lied to them—a cartel lied to them, misrepresented to them what they were going to see.

I heard from a Border Patrol agent that there are adults who are saying:

Well, this is not what we were promised. This isn't what we were expecting. Maybe we should just go back home. They were lied to.

This is why we need to get busy with changing the asylum laws, the magnet that is pulling people here. Change this. It is why I applaud the efforts of the President for making certain that we are dealing with Mexico—having them secure their southern border, having them call out the National Guard to make certain these cartels are not able to operate in Mexico.

Our Border Patrol—as I said, I am just so grateful we have them, and without Americans knowing, they are blessing our lives every single day because they show up and do the job that is in front of them without proper resources because there has not been bipartisan agreement here.

Then, every day they go home, and they have encountered people who have measles, mumps, H1N1 flu, TB, scabies, lice. That is what they are exposed to every single day as they do their job. Healthcare is not their job. Securing the southern border is their job, and everybody who is against giving the Border Patrol what they need to secure that border needs to begin to think twice about that and have compassion for these men and women who are on the frontline.

The appalling conditions absolutely shock the conscience, but they didn't surprise me. This is what is happening because people think they can get by with coming here illegally. Last month, 144,000 migrants crossed the border—last month. In Tennessee, that is just under the size of Clarksville, TN. Think about a whole city coming in.

In the first 8 months of this fiscal year, 411,000 unaccompanied children and families made that same journey.

This past weekend, when I was out with the Border Patrol, 12 people in 3 groups were apprehended right in front of me. That was in the timespan of 30 minutes. There were four from Honduras, and eight were from Cuba. That is just a handful of the approximately 1,000 illegal aliens per day who are apprehended in the El Paso sector.

Ninety percent of those people come as family units, clogging a system designed to process adults traveling alone. The sheer number of people our agents are struggling to process and control is staggering.

Right now, the facilities at the El Paso border station house are taking in 1,247 illegal aliens. That facility is built to accommodate 123. At just one station in the El Paso sector, \$26,000 a day is spent on food, just food—food. Where are they getting this money? It has not been appropriated. They are taking it out of their operations budgets. This is why they need us to surge resources to the southern border—resources for more agents, resources for more technology, resources for a border wall to stop illegal entry into this country.

If it were just a question of numbers, the situation may seem more manageable. But as I mentioned, disease, drugs, and a frightening disregard for the law have transformed these border stations into refugee zones.

Right now, agents at camps are working overtime every single day, trying to keep up. Loopholes in regulations controlling the release of unaccompanied minors to purported custodians are endangering the 11,507 children who crossed the southern border in May of 2019.

I want to be certain everybody understands this: 11,507 is the number of children who crossed that southern border in the month of May.

To make things worse, we are seeing child predators and traffickers cross the border in increasing numbers. Girls as young as 10 years of age are being given pregnancy tests—10-year-olds—because traffickers or adults who are not family members are the ones who are bringing them in. This is an area where my colleagues across the aisle need to work with us and put a stop to this. We don't know if these children are going to smuggling rings, or sex rings and being sent to a pimp, or to labor gangs and being sent to a boss. We don't know because many of the people who are the so-called custodians who are accepting these children, who are their sponsors, guess what, they are in the country illegally.

On June 7, border agents seized enough fentanyl to kill nearly 2 million Americans. I was there in that port when they seized 5 kilos, but the drug lords and the cartels are undeterred. They are so bold in this; do you know what they are doing now? They are posting Facebook ads soliciting mules to run their deadly product across the border. We have to do better. This is something that should no longer be up for debate.

I sponsored the Accountability for Care of Unaccompanied Alien Children Act to codify information-sharing agreements between the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services. This would help protect minors from the ravages of exploitation and human trafficking, but that protection isn't possible if there are not going to be agents able and available to check on who is attempting to claim these children.

I know some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are not for these agencies sharing this information, but let me tell you something. If this is going to help keep children safe, if it is going to keep them out of these sex trafficking and human trafficking gangs, we need to know who is a criminal alien, who is in this country illegally, and these children do not need to be sent to them.

We know the White House in May sent an emergency request for \$4.5 billion in funds to increase shelter capacity at the processing centers, to feed and care for the detained migrants, to

hire agents and staff, and to bolster law enforcement's ability to shelter and protect unaccompanied minors. Our border agents need this money to protect our border and to protect our Nation's sovereignty.

Yesterday, before the Senate Judiciary Committee, acting DHS Secretary Kevin McAleenan expressed serious concerns for Border Patrol agents who are forced to play the part of a translator, caregiver, counselor, and nurse.

Let me ask a question. What do my colleagues think would happen if the Border Patrol decided they had had it? They had had it. They were tired of it, and they were not going to show up for work, to work overtime, to work hard hours, to do a job they are not trained to do. They are trained to protect the border; they are not trained to be a caregiver and a nurse. What would happen if they reached the breaking point, and they didn't show up—because, let me tell you something, this border has reached a breaking point.

It is time for us to realize, yes, there is a crisis. It is a humanitarian crisis; it is a national security crisis, and it is time that our Border Patrol be shown the respect—the respect they deserve by funding the needs that they have to protect each and every one of us and to help keep this Nation safe and secure.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

YEAR-ROUND SALE OF E15

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, yesterday I had the privilege of joining President Trump in Nebraska and Iowa for the official announcement of the year-round sale of E15. The announcement is the product of years of work across party lines to fight for the hard-working agriculture producers in Nebraska.

If you ask any family who lives in rural America, they will tell you how important fuel prices are in their lives. With longer-than-average daily commutes to work or to drop off their children at school, escalating gas prices make life more difficult for everyone.

A needless barrier has restricted consumers from filling up their vehicles with E15 fuel during some of the busiest months of the year—the summer driving season. Each year, from the beginning of June to mid-September, retailers were unable to offer fuels with higher blends of ethanol without a Federal Government-issued waiver. This means that renewable solutions to reach our Nation's vital fuel needs have been needlessly anchored to an older era. The ban on the year-round sale of E15 has robbed Americans of an opportunity to save money at the pump with the purchase of a cleaner fuel.

Nebraska stands proudly as the largest producer of biofuel west of the Missouri River. We are home to 25 ethanol plants, which produce a total of more than 2 billion gallons of renewable fuel each year. According to the Nebraska