

than 2 weeks—2 weeks. Now they are threatening to shut the Senate down too. They have shut down the government for 2 weeks, and now they want to shut the Senate down. They are threatening to shut down efforts to protect our allies and strengthen our relationship with Israel—something they all recently claim to support.

Let's remember what we are talking about. In light of the urgent humanitarian and security crisis on our border, the President is requesting \$5.7 billion for physical barriers and border security. For some context, that is just about one-tenth of 1 percent of Federal spending—one-tenth of 1 percent—for physical barriers like fences and barriers that already exist, which Democrats have previously voted for with enthusiasm.

Back in 2006, then-Senators Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Joe Biden, and our colleague, the current Democratic leader, all voted for more than \$1 billion to construct about 700 miles of physical barriers.

Then-Senator Obama called it “badly needed funding for better fences and better security . . . that should help stem some of the tide of illegal immigration.” That is what Senator Barack Obama said.

Senator SCHUMER later described his vote proudly as “miles of border fence that create a significant barrier to illegal immigration.”

As recently as 2015, Secretary Clinton boasted: “I voted numerous times . . . to spend money to build a barrier to try to prevent illegal immigrants from coming in.” That is what Hillary Clinton said.

Obviously, that was then, and today the new Speaker of the House is trying to argue that a physical barrier is “immoral”—“immoral.”

Today, my friend the Democratic leader is proposing to add a Senate shutdown to the partial Federal Government shutdown and block even more of the people's business, all—all—to avoid more of what he already voted for. Maybe the Democratic Party was for secure borders before they were against it, maybe they are just making it up as they go along, or maybe they are dead set on opposing this particular President on any issue, for any reason, just for the sake of opposing him.

Walls and barriers are not immoral—how silly. Enforcing our laws wasn't immoral back in 2006 when then-Senator Clinton, then-Senator Obama, and our friend the Democratic leader were proud—proud—to vote for physical barriers. The only things that have changed between then and now are the political whims and, of course, the occupant of the White House.

This is no newfound, principled objection. It is just political spite—a partisan tantrum being prioritized over the public interest. For more than 2 weeks, they have indulged in that partisan tantrum rather than negotiate in good faith over border security funding—hardly something that should be a

partisan subject in the first place. They have put that partisan tantrum ahead of keeping a quarter of the government open. Now they are saying their partisan tantrum is more urgent than pressing legislation that concerns our alliance with Israel and the Syrian civil war.

I hope that isn't the case. I hope our Democratic colleagues don't pile on even more pointless obstruction. I hope they don't block the Senate from turning to this important legislation—legislation, by the way, they support. We will find out later today.

We all know what is necessary to move past the funding impasse: a negotiated solution that can pass the House, earn 60 votes in the Senate, and get the President's signature. That is what it takes to make a law.

As I have stated clearly, the Senate will not waste floor time on show votes, messaging votes, or any other proposals that fail to check those boxes regarding the funding bills.

The Democratic leader actually shared that opinion earlier. Here is a fairly recent quote from the Democratic leader. He said: “The President must publicly support and say he will sign an agreement before it gets a vote in either Chamber.” That is a fairly recent quote.

I am glad we seem to agree on that—no wasted floor time on appropriations bills that fail to clear the President's reasonable threshold.

For the sake of the humanitarian crisis on our border—as the President will describe in his address to the Nation this evening—for the sake of our national security, and for the sake of all the Americans who need all of their Federal Government reopened, I would urge our Democratic colleagues to get past these harmful political games and get serious about negotiating with the President.

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. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

S. 1

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote to begin consideration of legislation that will address some of the seemingly never-ending challenges the world—including the United States—is facing in the Middle East.

The decision made at the beginning of the 20th century by then First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, to convert British ships from coal to oil for fuel changed world history by making access to Middle East oil reserves a national security imperative for all developed nations.

More recently, on 9/11 of 2001, when nearly 3,000 Americans lost their lives

in a terrorist attack directed from Afghanistan on New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we learned a hard lesson: Although separated by an ocean, what happens in the region does not stay in the region.

Finally, with the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the nuclear aspirations of Iran—the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism in the world—to attain them, the relative stability and security of the Middle East have a direct connection to our national security, as well as that of our allies, like Israel.

With the administration's recent announcement that the United States will begin withdrawing troops from Syria, this debate and these votes could not be more timely.

While I am comforted by National Security Advisor John Brennan's recent statement that the withdrawal from Syria will be conditions-based, the precise details of how and when it will be executed remain to be seen. One thing, however, is perfectly clear: We cannot allow the creation of a power vacuum in the Middle East to bolster our adversaries' influence in the region. That is precisely what this legislation addresses. The Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act incorporates four bipartisan, non-controversial bills that were nearly enacted last year, but the clock on the 115th Congress ran out on December 31. As we begin what I hope will be another productive year in the Senate, I am glad we will have a chance to vote on this legislation.

Our national interests demand that we fully support and ensure the security of Israel—our closest ally in the region. As the majority leader said last week, this bill affirms that the United States needs to do more than just talk the talk; we must also walk the walk to support Israel's security.

This legislation will help Israel maintain its qualitative military edge against ongoing threats by authorizing military assistance and allowing the transfer of equipment and defensive weapons. Importantly, it will also assist Israel in countering the emerging threat of unmanned aerial vehicles deployed by Iran, in particular.

In addition to supporting Israel, it will empower State and local governments in the United States to counter the anti-Israel boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement—better known as BDS—and its discriminatory economic warfare against the Jewish state.

In addition to nurturing our relationship with Israel, the bill also recognizes the importance of supporting Jordan—another key regional ally. It reauthorizes legislation to strengthen our defense cooperation and support Jordan's response to the overwhelming humanitarian crisis caused by the Syrian civil war. According to the United Nations, there are more than 740,000 refugees in Jordan. That equates to 89 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, making them the second highest refugee host nation per capita in the world.

The impact of the crisis in Syria is immense and potentially destabilizing and requires our support to maintain the peace.

Finally, this bill takes critical steps to address the ongoing war and humanitarian crisis in Syria by providing aid to impacted communities and condemns the heinous human rights violations committed by the murderous Assad regime.

Until this horrendous conflict is resolved, new sanctions will be imposed on anyone who supports Syria either financially or militarily.

It is true that this bill will not solve all the problems in the Middle East. It will not, for example, provide justice to innocent civilians killed by the Assad regime. It will not rebuild the communities treated as collateral damage throughout this crisis. But it is a step to ensure our allies are prepared to fight for and defend our shared national security interests.

Senate Democrats have indicated, unfortunately, that they are likely to block this legislation from coming to the floor, as their discussions with the President on border security remain at an impasse. Leader MCCONNELL, though, has made it clear that the Senate will not waste time holding show votes on legislation that the President will not sign, so we continue to wait for Speaker PELOSI and Minority Leader SCHUMER to take serious, credible action to break that impasse. Until that time, there is a lot of work we can and should do, such as debating and voting on this legislation, which will protect our national security interests in the Middle East.

Twenty-five percent of our government has already been shut down because of this impasse. I urge our Democratic colleagues in the Senate not to shut down the work of the Senate too.

I want to thank the majority leader for scheduling this important debate and vote, and I look forward to voting yes when the time comes.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as I mentioned, this partial government shutdown continues, now on its 18th day. But 18 days in, not much has changed. The newly elected Democratic House refused to come to the negotiating table with a serious offer or to negotiate in good faith.

This entire debate has been surreal. I would say it has been a joke, but it is really not funny. It has now degenerated into a game of silly semantics, while losing sight of just how much is at stake for the people affected.

A secure and vibrant border is critical to the safety and livelihood of our entire country, and it, of course, plays a vital part in the daily life for many Texans, especially those who live and work in the border region. If you visit El Paso, for example, out West, you will see firsthand how interconnected the city is with its neighbor, Juarez.

Mexico is literally on the other side of the international bridge. Each day at that single port of entry, an average of 20,000 people cross the border on foot legally—going to work, going to school, visiting friends and family, or shopping. That is in addition to the 35,000 car crossings and the 2,500 cargo trucks that cross each day just at the El Paso port of entry.

I often compare the United States and Mexico to an old married couple who have occasional differences but who can't get divorced. We depend on one another, and we depend on a safe, secure, and efficient border to allow both countries to live in harmony.

Not everyone or everything attempting to cross the border is in our country's best interest. Transnational criminals, drug smugglers, and human traffickers try to take advantage of any opportunity, any gaps in our border, and they use it to infiltrate, threaten, and endanger our communities.

For too long, our frontline officers and agents haven't had the tools and resources they need to do their job. Whether it is outdated infrastructure, personnel shortages, or technology, the fact remains that we need additional border security funding to empower these hard-working officers and agents to complete their mission at both our ports of entry and between those ports of entry.

After talking to the experts—Border Patrol officials in Texas, as well as local stakeholders—I introduced legislation in the fall of 2017 to address a number of their concerns. That legislation, called the Building America's Trust Act, would have authorized approximately \$15 billion over 4 years for a long-term border security and interior enforcement strategy. Notably, the bill provided a great deal of discretion to the Department of Homeland Security's experts on the ground to determine what tactics were needed and where.

As my friend Manuel Padilla, former Chief of the Border Patrol's Rio Grande Valley Sector, once told me—he said: The answer to border security from the Border Patrol's perspective is finding the right balance of three things: personnel, technology, and infrastructure.

The landscape along the U.S.-Mexico border—particularly the 1,200 miles of common border between Mexico and Texas—the geography varies significantly, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to border security. That is why it is important to listen and learn from law enforcement and key stakeholders how to adapt the right mix to each area. That way, we can ensure we are deploying the most effective and practical solutions to achieve operational control along the southern border.

Yes, we need physical infrastructure in places—a fence, a wall, a vehicle barrier, for example—because the hard-working agents and officers on the ground tell us that it works, and we

would benefit from more of it. But we also need personnel to enforce the laws along the border and ensure our ports of entry are operating efficiently. And, yes, we need technology, things like scanners to scan for drugs that are embedded in shipments that come across the border. We need drones, radar, and sensors to help maximize border security, as well as access to the Rio Grande for Border Patrol agents so they can police the border for illegal entry.

This shouldn't be a partisan debate, and historically, our differences on this topic have not been so polarizing. I think the nature of our political system today makes it easy to forget that not too long ago, border security was something supported by both political parties.

In 2006, the Senate passed the Secure Fence Act by a vote of 80 to 19. That is what I would call a bipartisan victory. Among those who voted for that bill include many current and former leaders of the Democratic Party, including Minority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER, then-Senator Barack Obama, and then-Senator Hillary Clinton. They didn't believe that fences and walls and physical barriers were immoral, as apparently the current Speaker of the House of Representatives does. Not only did that legislation call for more than 800 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border, it also authorized the other important components of border security that I talked about, things like technology and personnel. That was in the 2006.

In 2013, more recently, all 54 Democratic Senators voted for \$46 billion in border security—every single one—and now President Trump's request for \$5 billion is somehow a nonstarter.

The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act provided funding for, yes, infrastructure, personnel, and technology. That is exactly the right mix that Chief Padilla mentioned, which I referred to a moment ago. These are really the same types of issues we are talking about today. These are not radical ideas. We need a sensible combination of physical barriers, technology, and personnel.

My Democratic colleagues supported border security during the Bush administration. They supported border security during the Obama administration. Now I urge them to come to the table with a serious proposal to help secure our border and end this standoff and to stop the foolishness and the political games.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.