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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—Motion to Proceed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1) to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriation of funds to Israel, to reauthorize the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Act of 2015, and to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, and for other purposes.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I now suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Chair previously laid before the Senate the certificate of election from the State of Florida. The certificate was in the form suggested by the Senate and was printed in the RECORD.

(The certificate of election was printed in the RECORD of January 3, 2019.)

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

The VICE PRESIDENT. If the Senator-elect will now present himself at the desk, the Chair will administer the oath of office.

The Senator-elect, Rick Scott, escorted by Mr. RUBIO, Mr. LeMieux, Mr. Martinez, and Mr. McGillicuddy III, advanced to the desk of the Vice President; the oath prescribed by law was administered to him by the Vice President; and he thereupon subscribed to the oath in the Official Oath Book.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Congratulations, Senator.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—Motion to Proceed (Continued)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). Without objection, it is so ordered.

S. 1

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, a few moments ago we welcomed our new colleague, my colleague for the State of Florida, former Governor and now U.S. Senator RICK SCOTT, who will do a phenomenal job here on behalf of the State of Florida. I welcome him to the U.S. Senate, the world's greatest deliberative body—and, on occasion, perhaps the strangest as well.

In about 1 hour 15 minutes, the Senate is going to take up S. 1, which is a combination of four separate bills that enjoy widespread support in this Chamber from colleagues on both sides of the aisle, all of them sponsored and cosponsored by both sides of the aisle, and apparently we will fail to get a significant number of votes to get on this bill, nonetheless.

So it is perhaps one the few places on Earth where people vote against things they are for because of reasons unrelated to the issue at hand. I don't want to dig too deep into that. That will be a topic for conversation later on, and maybe I will be wrong. Maybe they will change their minds in the next 1 hour 15 minutes, and we will have the votes we need, but I don't think it makes a lot of sense to say: I am upset about the government shutdown—by the way, the Senate voted unanimously to fund the government by a voice vote. We didn't even have a rollcall vote. So this Chamber has already enacted in that regard. At this point, it is incumbent on the leaders of the Democratic Party in the Senate, combined with the White House, to come up with a deal to reopen the government. This government shutdown is not good for anybody. I have never seen anybody win one of these.

That said, I don't know why we would shut down the Senate, too, given the issues we face.

About 3 weeks ago, the President announced that the United States was withdrawing from our engagement in Syria. I—and I think the majority of the people in the Senate—believed that decision was a mistake and is a mistake.

While I was certainly encouraged by some of the comments by the head of the National Security Council, Ambassador John Bolton, on the pace and scale and scope of the withdrawal, nonetheless, there have been conflicting statements since then which put this all in question.

At the time he made this decision, we walked through all of the reasons why this was a mistake—not because we want to be in war in Syria forever. That is false. Of course, it has to come to an end, but it needs to come to an end in a way that is in the interest of the United States of America. It is not in the interest of the United States of America to see ISIS reemerge the way they did after 2011, when the United States left Iraq.

When the United States left and pulled back its presence in Iraq, it allowed ISIS to reconstitute itself and reemerge. They were called something different then, but they were basically a spinoff of al-Qaida. They started out as an insurgency and grew very rapidly. They are larger today and they are more powerful today than when they reconstituted themselves almost a decade ago. I have no doubt that if this moves forward, ISIS will reconstitute itself, maybe not as a caliphate but as something equally dangerous, and that is an insurgency with the capability not just to create havoc, mayhem, murder, and destruction in Syria and potentially once again in Iraq but also to externally plot and attack us here on Homeland.

This raises all other types of possibilities, like the Iraqi troops along with irregular forces sponsored by Iran—the Shia militia that have been on the ground in Iraq—coming across the border and into Syria. We all have read and heard about the Turkish troops that want to come into the Kurdish areas.

If Assad is sitting there now with the United States pulling out and all of this is going on, he figures that at this point what does he need a political solution for, what does he need the U.N. or anybody for? The saddest part is that this diminishes the chances that Assad will ever have to face accountability for the crimes committed by his regime against innocent civilians—children, women, and others—not just for the gassing and use of chemical weapons but for widespread torture and murder. We will discuss that more as the week goes on.

We are also concerned about Iran's growing influence with the United States leaving, especially in southeast Iraq and on the border of Jordan and Israel, with Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies and Iran itself, or the IRGC and General Soleimani, who is a maven of murder in that area, basically doing whatever they want. They have more freedom of movement, and there is the direct threat that it poses to both Israel and to Jordan.

By the way, when the Turks come in or potentially Iraqi troops come in—when ISIS is reconstituted and starts killing people again—you are going to have new refugee flows. Maybe it will be mostly Kurds this time, maybe folks from the Syrian defense forces who had fought alongside us for a while and their families. Where will all of these new refugees go? Potentially, some will wind up in Jordan, further destabilizing or testing that country's ability to deal with all of this.

On that last point, both the Kurds and the Syrian defense forces have in excess of 700 ISIS fighters in custody, in prison. Are they going to let them all go? Because without us there supporting them, I don't know how they