

can speak directly to how important healthcare services are. My mother was director of nursing at a small hospital, and I know, since that time, they have gone through many changes, barely holding on to the hospital. We have had a number of hospital closings and consolidations.

There is important work that has happened in the health community. I want to congratulate the distinguished chairman and also indicate that the Presiding Officer and I, as we were doing the farm bill—it is my honor and privilege to work with the Presiding Officer—we were part of the solution, including language on telehealth in rural development to actually help expand services, and I think telehealth is an important way to do that as well.

I thank the chairman for his comments.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, people in Michigan and across the country were getting ready to celebrate the Fourth of July.

Families were deciding what to take on picnics and planning a day on the water, particularly if you were in Michigan, on the Great Lakes, and were finding the very best possible place to watch the community fireworks display—and we have many great fireworks displays.

So what were drug companies doing to celebrate?

Well, nothing so wholesome, I am afraid. Instead, they were raising prices on prescription medications—prices that are already the highest in the world.

People in the United States have the highest prices in the world. Happy Independence Day.

On July 1 alone, just 1 day, 20 companies ratcheted up the price of 40 of their prescription drugs by an average of more than 13 percent—just in 1 day.

Those companies aren't alone. Already this year, prices have gone up for more than 3,400 different medications. The average price hike was five times the rate of inflation.

I know families in Michigan, seniors in Michigan, would love to have their incomes, their wages go up five times the rate of inflation, but that certainly didn't happen. It is getting harder and harder for the average Michigan family to afford the medications they need to get and stay healthy, and I know that is true all across the country. I know because I hear about it every day.

I know we hear these stories every day. I hear this from friends and family and certainly people as I am moving and traveling throughout Michigan. Some folks skimp on groceries—it is still happening today—or put off paying their electric bill or their gas bill. Other people take their heart medication every other day instead of every day, which, by the way, is dangerous to do. Still others cut back on insulin, putting their lives at risk. We had testimony before the Finance Committee from a mom whose son did that and lost his life.

Perhaps nobody has been hurt more than our seniors. Seniors tend to live on fixed incomes, as we know—pensions and Social Security. They also tend to have more medications than younger people, and costs quickly add up.

In 2017 alone, the average price of brand-name drugs that seniors often take rose at four times the rate of inflation, according to AARP—four times the rate of inflation in 1 year—for the average medication a senior citizen is using. That is one of the reasons why 72 percent of seniors in a recent poll said they are very concerned about the cost of their medications.

It is absolutely shameful that people in America, one of the richest countries in the world, are going without the medicine they need to survive. We can fix that. This does not have to happen.

I have always believed healthcare is a basic human right and that it includes medicine. Over and over again, I say on the Senate floor: Healthcare is not political. For a senior, for a family, for a child, it is personal. It is personal.

We need to do something about it, and the No. 1 way we know we can bring prices down is to let Medicare negotiate—let Medicare negotiate—for prescription drugs. Harness the full power of tens of millions of seniors and people with disabilities across the country who are on Medicare to bring down the prices.

We know negotiation can work because it works for the VA. We know that. The VA—Veterans' Administration—is allowed to negotiate the price of prescription drugs and, on average, saves 40 percent—40 percent—compared to Medicare.

In fact, if Medicare paid the same prices as the VA, it could have saved \$14.4 billion on just 50 of the most commonly used drugs in 2016 alone—in 1 year, \$14.4 billion on just 50 commonly used medications. This is according, again, to the AARP.

So what is stopping us?

Well, we have the biggest lobby in the world called the pharmaceutical lobby in DC. The fact is, in 2018, there were 1,451 lobbyists for the pharmaceutical and health product industry. That is almost 15 for every 1 of us as Senators.

Their job—and they do it extremely well—is to stop competition and to keep prices high.

Back in 2003, Medicare Part D was signed into law. I had worked very hard as a new Member of the Senate to have Medicare cover prescription drugs, but in the end, they blocked Medicare from harnessing the bargaining power of 43 million American seniors in order to bring down prices. Unfortunately, our Republican colleagues supported that.

Sixteen years later, pharmaceutical companies are still doing everything they can to put profits before people. One of those people is Jack, who lives in Constantine, MI, and was diagnosed with cancer late last year.

Imagine being told you have cancer and then being told the drug you need to treat it is going to cost you \$15,000 the first month—\$15,000. Jack was lucky. A generic drug became available. However, that drug still cost \$3,400 the first month and \$400 every month after that. That is about \$8,000 a year. In Jack's words, it is an "extreme hardship"—\$8,000 a year—trying to figure out how to be able to have your cancer medication so you can continue to live.

Jack added: "I hope and pray you and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle would be able to get something done."

We can get something done, and we can do it quickly. The best thing is to let Medicare negotiate and harness the bargaining power of 43 million people. There are various proposals that are good proposals and are being talked about. We can cap increases, but that doesn't cut prescription drug costs right now. If we are going to seriously talk about making medicine affordable and do it the right way—do it the right way and the way we know that will work—it is about letting Medicare negotiate. Let Medicare negotiate.

I think it is time to take Jack's advice. We need to work together. We need to put people above profits. We need, very simply, rather than moving the chairs around on the *Titanic*, to harness the bargaining power of 43 million Americans and get the best price for them. They deserve it.

I yield the floor.

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

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

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last Friday I joined the Vice President of the United States and a number of our colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee for a trip to the Rio Grande Valley and, specifically, to McAllen, TX.

The Rio Grande Valley Sector, headquartered in McAllen, is ground zero for the humanitarian crisis on our southern border. I know some of our colleagues refused to acknowledge that this was indeed a humanitarian crisis on our border, but that seems to have waned in recent days in light of the overwhelming evidence. In fact, in 2014 President Obama himself called it a humanitarian and security crisis, and it has gotten nothing but worse.

Of all the sectors, it is head and shoulders above the rest in terms of apprehensions of people trying to enter the country illegally. In fact, 46 percent of all apprehensions along the southern border last month occurred in the Rio Grande Valley Sector. Across

the entire border, 68 percent of those apprehended in June were unaccompanied children or part of a family unit. In the Rio Grande Valley, that figure shot up to a whopping 79 percent.

People may be asking themselves: Why are unaccompanied children and families—that is, an adult with a child—the ones predominantly coming across the border? It is because human smugglers know our laws better than we do, and they are exploiting the vulnerabilities in our asylum laws in order to make a lot of money. They charge roughly \$5,000 to \$10,000 per person whom they deliver across the border from Central America or from anywhere around the world. As a matter of fact, the Border Patrol told us on Friday, when we were in McAllen, that just in the last year they had detained people from 60—six-zero—different countries coming across the border at the Rio Grande Valley Sector. That is because these human smuggling networks are really worldwide. If you want to come from Bangladesh or Syria or Iran or Russia, all you have to do is make your way to Central America, hire one of these human smuggling networks, and they will work your way up across the border into the United States. This is a national security as well as a humanitarian crisis.

As of July 1, the Rio Grande Valley Sector had 8,000 migrants in custody. They are overwhelmed, to be sure. This is placing a huge strain on our resources. Our Border Patrol stations were never designed to hold that many people.

The men and women who apprehend and care for these migrants have been unfairly criticized and mischaracterized as bad guys, but last week I got to see once again that they aren't the real villain in this scenario. In fact, they are the heroes.

The Border Patrol agents in the Rio Grande Valley, and those along the entire border, are pulling double duty as law enforcement officers and caregivers. They are hired to be law enforcement officers, but they have had to basically end up handing out juice boxes and diapers to unaccompanied children or family units because that is what we are seeing flood across our borders. One minute they are stopping fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine from coming across the border and they are stopping dangerous criminals from entering our country, and the next they are comforting crying babies and providing sustenance to children.

Balancing an overcrowded facility and a constantly growing list of responsibilities is no easy task, but it is not their fault. It is Congress's fault because only Congress has the authority to provide the change in the laws necessary to stop this endless flood of humanity and this overwhelming of our resources, both human and infrastructure. These dedicated agents handle these demands with professionalism and compassion.

My colleagues and I had the opportunity to hear from several of these agents, including Chief Patrol Agent Rudy Karisch. Chief Karisch talked about the work his agents do to provide quality care to those in custody, particularly medical care. In his sector alone, that equates to an average of 32 hospital runs each day—32 hospital runs each day—to ensure that migrants receive the care they need.

As these agents know too well, many of the people who cross the border do so because they are deeply familiar with the loopholes in our immigration laws, and they are eager to exploit them, as I described a moment ago.

One of those loopholes is something called the Flores Settlement Agreement, which was created as a way to ensure that unaccompanied children don't remain in Border Patrol custody for long periods of time. It was expanded in, I believe, an unintended and unnecessary sort of way to effectively expand this protection for unaccompanied children to families as well.

As a result, we can't detain those families for more than 20 days, the adults in particular. As a result, we see the dramatic increase in the number of families arriving at the border. Why not? What is to discourage them or dissuade them?

As we learned during our visit, many of these migrants coming across the border are not families at all. Tim Tubbs is a deputy special agent in charge for Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, HSI. He discussed the rise in fraudulent families. In other words, by that I mean adults claiming to be the parent or family member of a child when, in fact, they are not related at all.

In April, ICE HSI sent more than 400 employees to the southern border to investigate these fraudulent claims of family units. In the roughly 90 days since, more than 352 fraudulent families were discovered across the southern border.

He described one case of a Honduran man that illustrates why leaving these loopholes untouched is so dangerous. Again, only Congress can change that. He mentioned the fact that a 51-year-old man negotiated with a pregnant Honduran woman to purchase—to buy—her baby when it was born. For the equivalent of about 80 U.S. dollars, this man purchased her child and then traveled with human smugglers into the United States. If you have a child with you, it is a ticket to entering the United States and exploiting those gaps in our immigration laws.

Deputy Agent Tubbs said HSI also uncovered an organization that recycled—recycled—approximately 69 children in order to smuggle people into the United States. In other words, once you successfully get to the United States, these children are sent back and used over and over again in an endless loop to smuggle more adults into the United States under the guise of being a family.

We can point the finger of blame at the Border Patrol for being overwhelmed for not having facilities that were designed to handle the influx of this number of people, but that would be a terrible miscarriage of justice. The fact is, Congress needs to look in the mirror. The only people who can change the laws under our Constitution is the U.S. Congress and the President. The President has called time and again for Congress to fix these loopholes in our immigration laws to begin to stem the tide of humanity coming across our border.

Our broken laws are fueling this behavior. Unless we take action to close those loopholes that invite more people to illegally enter into our country, the problem will only continue to grow.

Amid calls from many of the so-called progressive Democrats running for President to do things that make illegally crossing the border legal—in other words, rather than protecting the sovereignty of our country, securing our borders, they want to actually make entry into the United States legal—the work being done by our Border Patrol and our Health and Human Services and other nongovernmental organizations at the border to keep our country safe and care for migrants in their custody cannot be overstated.

The key to solving this crisis isn't opening the door to more illegal immigration; it is removing the pull factors that encourage people to come here in the first place. Of course, you can imagine, if the door were wide open, how many people would come from other countries into the United States at will. They would flood our country. That is part of what is happening now because they don't see any limits or any order or any rules being applied to who enters our country.

We are a proud nation of immigrants. We naturalize almost 1 million people a year. This isn't about being anti-immigrant. Immigrants have made our country stronger. Legal immigration is the key distinction.

Our friends across the aisle seem to be the champions of illegal immigration. We want our legal, orderly, lawful, rules-based immigration system to work so it can be fair to everybody, rather than let people who have been waiting in line for years to come into the country legally see people jump in line ahead of them and enter the country illegally. That is not fair to them, and that is not a rules-based and lawful and orderly system of immigration.

I have introduced legislation that will take major steps to achieve filling those gaps, plugging those holes in our asylum and immigration laws. It is called the HUMANE Act. This bill would close the Flores loophole, streamline the processing of migrants, improve standards of care, which we all want to do for individuals in our custody, and require additional training of customs and Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees who work with children.

This bill is, to my knowledge, the only bipartisan, bicameral solution that has been offered. It is bicameral. My friend and colleague in the House, HENRY CUELLAR, from Laredo, TX, and I have cosponsored this bill—bipartisan, bicameral.

As we consider this and other legislative proposals, I hope our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will finally get serious about taking the required action.

Chairman GRAHAM of the Judiciary Committee tried to organize a bipartisan trip to the border, believing that would be an important step in helping us witness together the facts on the ground and then hopefully work together to try to solve the problem.

I am disappointed that none of our Democratic colleagues accepted his invitation. I hope this is not an indication of what our immigration reform discussions will look like moving forward: no desire to help, no desire to solve the problem, no desire to work together on a bipartisan basis. I hope that is not where we are, but I am fearful that is exactly where we are.

I appreciate the Vice President taking the time to visit Texas once again and getting a chance to see the front-line challenges our officers and agents are facing. I would thank Mrs. Pence as well for accompanying the Vice President.

Despite the challenges this humanitarian crisis has brought, the Rio Grande Valley remains a wonderful region, characterized by a thriving economy and a vibrant culture. You would be hard-pressed to find more generous people. They have been extraordinarily generous to the migrants who found their way to our front doorstep and are trying to take care of them in a compassionate sort of way, but, frankly, they are overwhelmed too.

I thank the men and women of the Border Patrol, as well as local officials, businesses, and members of the border communities who continue to assist with this humanitarian crisis. It would be nice if Congress, on a bipartisan basis, would lift a finger to help.

ENERGY INNOVATION

Mr. President, on another matter, this morning, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to consider numerous bills introduced to promote energy innovation in the United States. Breakneck changes in technology have fueled our economy, propelled our communications sector, and completely transformed each of our daily lives. Just this alone has done that. It is time to harness this ingenuity to revolutionize our energy sector. Smart policies can't prioritize only conservation, productivity, or economic power. We obviously need to strike the proper balance. You are not going to achieve that balance by imposing heavy-handed regulations and driving up costs for consumers.

To put it another way, the Green New Deal will bankrupt our country and crush our innovation economy. In-

stead, we have to harness the power of the private sector and build partnerships to create real solutions.

The NET Power plant in La Porte, TX, is a shining example of how public-private partnerships can drive next-generation energy solutions. NET Power has developed the first-of-its-kind power system that generates affordable, zero-emissions electricity from natural gas. Using their unique carbon capture technology, they have taken natural gas and made it emissions-free.

This technology is relatively young, and it is not ready to be scaled up yet at the national level. By investing in this type of research, I believe we can take serious strides to decreasing our carbon emissions.

While renewable energy sources like wind, solar, hydropower, and biomass have come a long way in recent years, they are not alone sufficient to fuel our economy. As one witness said, the Sun doesn't always shine, and the wind doesn't always blow. So you need a baseload of electricity that has to be provided by other sources like natural gas powerplants like the one I saw.

Last year, renewables accounted for 17 percent of our total energy sources. In Texas, as the Presiding Officer knows, we produced more electricity from wind turbines than any other State in the Nation. Yes, we are an oil and gas State, but we truly believe in the all-of-the-above approach. Some people say that and don't really mean it, but we do it every day in Texas.

While renewables account for 17 percent of our total energy sources, natural gas alone accounts for double that. Imagine if we could take natural gas, a plentiful energy source, inexpensive, and bring more projects like NET Power online. That is precisely why I introduced the LEADING Act with my colleagues, Senator COONS, Cassidy, and Sinema. This bill would incentivize research and development of carbon capture technology for natural gas and support energy innovation.

This legislation was crafted with the understanding that reliable, affordable, and environmentally sound energy supplies are not mutually exclusive. You wouldn't know that sometimes by the rhetoric here in Washington.

By incentivizing research into the development of new technologies, we can keep costs low for taxpayers, for seniors, for people on fixed incomes, while securing our place as a global leader in energy innovation. The goal of this legislation is to accelerate development and commercial application of natural gas carbon capture technologies. We should do this by requiring the Department of Energy to establish a program to develop cost-effective carbon capture technologies for natural gas power facilities.

This legislation would also encourage partnerships with the National Laboratories, as well as universities and other research facilities to improve and strengthen our efforts. I am proud the

LEADING Act passed the Energy and Natural Resources Committee this morning, and I hope we will have the opportunity to vote on this and other similar and related bills before the full Senate soon.

We need smart energy policies that will strengthen our economy without bankrupting American families or turning the keys over to the central government to regulate our lives, to micromanage our lives. We don't need the Federal Government to tell us what to do. We need to follow the private sector and innovate our way to solve these problems, and that is exactly what the LEADING Act would do.

When you implement policies that get government out of the way and let the experts do their job, you can be pro-energy, pro-innovation, pro-growth, and pro-environment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF APOLLO 11

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, today I rise in absolute awe—remain in awe—of what happened in this country and in this world 50 years ago this week, and I am still inspired by the events of our space program 50 years ago.

Fifty years ago today, Americans of all ages, in every corner of this great Nation and, in fact, all over the world, stopped what they were doing to watch in complete awe as Apollo 11 launched from Cape Kennedy, headed toward the Moon. It is unbelievable what we saw, what we witnessed, that entire week.

It would be the first time that humans would set foot on a celestial body other than the Earth. We would step foot on the Moon, which had captured the imagination of the world since time began, trying to reach that big, round object in the sky. It was a remarkable feat, made possible by the sheer determination and grit of the American space program and all of those who participated in it.

I was just a kid growing up in Alabama at the time. I lived just 2 or 3 hours south of what was known as Rocket City in Huntsville, AL. It is still known as Rocket City because of all of the work at NASA and in our space program today. It was a thriving metropolis then and even more so today. That is where all of the rockets were built. That is where the engines, the powerful engines that drove the rockets into space, were built. They were tested in Huntsville, AL. If you go there today, most of those stands are still there. Some of them are about to be used again. Those Saturn V rockets, the most powerful rocket engines man had ever created, were built in Huntsville, AL. They were the engines that would propel man to the Moon.

I was absolutely mesmerized—absolutely mesmerized—by all things involving the space program. I still am. I can remember so many times when my maternal grandfather, Oliver Wesson, whom I called Paw-Paw, and I would just sit for hours and watch and listen