

Our work contract's out and we have to move on;
 Six hundred miles to that Mexican border.
 They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers,
 like thieves.
 We died in your hills, we died in your deserts,
 We died in your valleys and died on your plains.
 We died 'neath your trees and we died in your bushes,
 Both sides of the river, we died just the same.
 The sky plane caught fire over Los Gatos Canyon,
 A fireball of lightning, and shook all our hills,
 Who are all these friends, all scattered like dry leaves,
 The radio says, "They are just deportees."
 Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards?
 Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?
 To fall like dry leaves to rot on my topsoil
 And be called by no name except "deportees"?

Along with several other colleagues earlier this week, I filed a bill called the Stop Cruelty to Migrant Children Act. It is a bill that has 40-plus cosponsors. It would do a number of things. It would set safety, health, and nutrition standards in these facilities whose pictures we are seeing—pictures that set an embarrassing example of a nation that should want to set a good example.

It would set minimum standards for food, nutrition, and healthcare. It would guarantee that children in these facilities would receive three meals a day and that the meals would be of adequate nutritional value. It would end the practice of family separation, unless ordered by a court, so the presumption would be that families could not be separated. It would provide additional resources for lawyers so that people can follow the rule of law and present evidence and present a case for asylum or refugee status, if there is a case to be presented. It would allow the restart of programs like the Family Case Management Program, which was a successful program that enabled people to be placed in community settings, not cages or jails or institutions, and have management to make sure that they then come to court dates on time.

The bill has a number of provisions that I think are worthy, but the thing that is the most important about the bill to me and why I agreed to cosponsor it is that I just think it puts our country in a position where we are setting the right example, not the wrong example. It puts our country in a position where if the plumbline of right and wrong is applied to us, we are on the right side of that judgment. It puts us in a position where as we are being directed to be good neighbors—including to people who are hurting, including to people who are suffering—we would be able to look ourselves in the mirror and look the world in the eye and say: The United States believes that we are good neighbors, and we are behaving in a neighborly way toward people.

These issues are of massive importance to the individuals involved. There was a story earlier this week about a border agent inquiring of a young girl: You are going to be separated. Your parents are going to be separated, and you have to decide whether you go with your mother or your father.

Why make a child of tender years make that choice? The young girl's name was Sofia. Many of us know the Virginia author, William Styron, and his book "Sophie's Choice." Sophie is forced to make an existential choice between her children in a concentration camp in Poland during World War II. That is the choice. That is the existential choice in the heart of that novel.

When tiny Sofia is being told: We are separating your mother and father, and you have to choose between them, should a child have to do that? None of us would tolerate that for our own family members. None of us would tolerate that for a member of our community. So is it fair to do that to a child of tender years because she happens to be somebody who has come from Central America?

These issues are of immense importance to those involved, to the Sophies, to the father and daughter who tried to get across a river a few weeks ago and drowned as they were trying to do it. They had come thousands of miles, and they were so close. All they wanted to do was apply for asylum legally: Can you accept my application? We are not trying to sneak across. We want to apply legally and have the laws of your country apply to us if we can justify that we should come. Please do that.

When they reached the border, we are taking so few applications now that they waited and they waited and they waited, and they eventually tried to cross a river and were drowned in the process—that heartbreaking picture of them having come so far and being so close that they could touch the bank. They almost got to touch the bank of this Nation they had dreamed might offer them a better life.

Their case, had they been able to apply, may or may not have been accepted. There is no guarantee they would have met the standards, but all they wanted was the opportunity to apply to enter this greatest Nation on Earth.

So I will just conclude and say I hope, in the days ahead—and I know there are discussions going on between Members of this body and between Members of this body and the White House about what we might do. I just want us to do something we can look in the mirror and be proud of. I want us to do something that we can use as an example for ourselves and for others. I want the plumbline that separates good and bad behavior and foundations that are morally strong versus those that are shaky and weak to judge us fairly. I want us to be neighborly. I want us to be neighborly in the best

traditions of whom we have always been.

With that, I yield the floor.

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. LANKFORD. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, according to the Treasury, since 1960, Congress has acted 78 times to raise the debt ceiling. Let me run that past you again. Since 1960, we have had 78 debt ceiling increases, under Republican Presidents, Democratic Presidents, Republican Congresses, and Democratic Congresses. There has been a steady increase over and over again with the debt ceiling.

The debt ceiling was originally designed to provide a moment of fiscal restraint for Congress, a moment for Congress to look at the debt and determine whether to increase debt again or to determine how to restrain ourselves.

Going back to post-World War II, we had an enormous debt left over after World War II. That was the triggering mechanism for them. Throughout the Korean war, for instance, they didn't raise the debt ceiling. They found ways to find fiscal restraint because they had so much debt.

That doesn't even seem to be the conversation anymore. Now debt ceiling conversations are about what bill will we get it into to make sure it passes so we can just keep going. That moment of determining how we can deal with fiscal restraint seems to be gone.

Let me state just how severe this has become. Right now, our current debt to GDP—that is, gross national product—our debt compared to our gross national product is at 78 percent. That is an enormous number. That means, if you take all of the American economy, every single person in the entire country, group it all together, what they receive in pay, what they make, and put it all together, it would take 78 percent of every single person in the country to pay off our debt for an entire year.

If we were to maintain that debt-to-GDP ratio at 78 percent, just not get worse than where we are at \$22 trillion right now, we asked the Congressional Budget Office how much we would either have to raise in taxes or cut in spending each year to not make it worse. The answer that came back from the Congressional Budget Office was \$400 billion, but the hard part about that—not that \$400 billion is not bad enough—we would have to cut or raise in taxes \$400 billion every single year for 30 years in a row. That is not the original \$400 billion but a new \$400 billion every year for 30 years in a row just to keep us at a debt-to-GDP ratio of 78 percent.

That is not going to happen. There is not the will in this Congress to reduce

\$400 billion this year much less do it every single year for 30 years in a row.

So my simple push is this. We have to get to a real conversation about what we are going to do about our debt and how we are going to respond to this.

I have committed, around any kind of debt ceiling conversation, that the conversation should not be about just raising it and going on; it should be about how we are going to address our debt. I cannot support a debt ceiling that just raises the debt ceiling without any consideration about what we are going to do to actually pay off that debt or how we are going to get on top of it.

We have a broken process. We are not dealing with debt when we talk about debt ceilings anymore, and we are facing a September 30 deadline. There is already an ongoing rumor and conversation around the hallways about could we have another government shutdown.

In the last 40 years, we have had 21 government shutdowns—21—under Republican and Democratic Presidents and under Republican and Democratic Congresses—21 government shutdowns. The one that happened earlier this year was the longest one in history, but that doesn't mean it is the longest one that will ever happen. There may be a longer one coming. The challenge is, how do we solve this issue about debt? How do we deal with some of the simple processes like government shutdowns and how do we stop those?

Government shutdowns actually cause more spending to happen because it costs so much to prepare for it. When it happens, there is a greater cost, and when restarting it, there is greater cost again. All of that is lost money. It is just a waste.

So Senator MAGGIE HASSAN, the Democratic Senator from New Hampshire, and I have worked together to put a simple proposal together to stop government shutdowns. This is not rocket science. Most Americans can't leave their work and walk away, especially if they are small business owners. They can't walk away from their jobs unless the job is done. That is just the nature of it. So our simple idea is this. If we get to October 1—and the end of the fiscal year ends on September 30—and the work is not done on all the appropriations bills, we would have what is called a continuing resolution kick in. The funding would continue to go the same as it did the year before. It basically is putting everybody on hold but is still moving. That would protect Federal workers and make sure Federal workers and their families are not affected by the government shutdown. It would protect the taxpayers, making sure they are not having to deal with “I can't get a permit” and “I can't get an answer on the phone from a government agency because there is a Federal shutdown.” So the Federal workers and American people would be held harmless, but Mem-

bers of Congress, our staffs, and the staff of the White House Office of Management and Budget, in both the House and the Senate, would all be here in Washington, DC, with no travel.

Now that may not seem like a big issue. You may say: So what. It would mean we are in session every weekday, every weekend, and cannot leave to go back and see our families. We cannot do our work that has to be done in the States, and we have work to do in our States as well. We cannot go on any kind of travel. We cannot take any other travel of any sort, and every day we have what is called a mandatory quorum call in the Senate and in the House. We are in session weekdays and weekends continually until the budget work is done.

I had folks say: Well, that doesn't seem like that big of an incentive.

I can assure you, the most precious commodity to Members of the House and Senate, our staff, and to members of the Office of Management and Budget is the same precious commodity every American has. It is time—time.

If we lose the time so we can't do all of the other things we need to do until we get the budget work done, we will get the budget work done because there are a lot of things on our schedule, but our first priority should be the budget work that needs to be done.

This puts us in a position to basically do what my mom did to my brother and me. When my brother and I had an argument, my mom would lock the two of us in a room and say: You guys work this out. When you are done, you can come out of the room, but you guys keep talking until you settle it. Quite frankly, my mom would be a pretty good role model for this Congress. Lock us in the room, keep us debating until we solve it.

We had the longest shutdown in American history this past time, and it started right before Christmas. What did the Members of Congress do? They left. They left. They went home for Christmas. They went away. While Federal workers did not have their paychecks coming in, Members of Congress left town.

It is as simple and straightforward as this: Federal workers should be held harmless, and Members of Congress should be kept to stay and work it out.

Senator HASSAN and I continue to work through this. We gained wide bipartisan support. It went through the first of two committees—10 to 2 as it passed the committee. Now it has a second committee to go through before it comes here. We want to build bipartisan support to say: We will have disagreements on budget. We will have disagreements on spending. But we should keep debating until we solve it. But do not loop the Federal workers and their families into this, and certainly don't harm the taxpayers in the process.

We look forward to trying to get some things resolved in this place and to keeping the debate going until we do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to ask my colleagues a simple question. There is a lawsuit that is proceeding through the court system right now that has succeeded the district court level, that has had a hearing at the appellate court level, and may be speeding toward the Supreme Court. It is a lawsuit that was brought by 20 Republican attorneys general. It is a lawsuit that is being supported by the Trump administration. It is a lawsuit that many of my colleagues have gone on record saying they support. It is a lawsuit to undo the entirety of the Affordable Care Act, to throw out insurance for 20 million Americans and to end protections for people with preexisting conditions. It is an attempt to do through the court system what this Congress refused to do, which is to obliterate the Affordable Care Act and all the insurance it provides for people without any plan for what comes next.

I have served in both the House and the Senate, and I listened for a long time to my Republican colleagues say that while they don't like the Affordable Care Act, they certainly understand that there has to be something else, and that something else should be just as good as the Affordable Care Act. In fact, the President himself said that whatever plan he supported in substitute of the Affordable Care Act would have better insurance, cheaper insurance, and would insure more people.

Republicans never came up with that plan. In fact, the replacement they jammed through the House of Representatives in 2017 was much worse than the Affordable Care Act. The Congressional Budget Office said that 24 million people would lose insurance because of that piece of legislation and rates would potentially skyrocket for people with preexisting conditions.

There has never been a replacement for the Affordable Care Act. The only plan from the beginning has been to repeal it. Now that Congress has said it won't repeal the Affordable Care Act—why? because Americans do not want the Affordable Care Act repealed with nothing to replace it—now that Congress won't do it because the American people don't support the repeal of the protections for sick people in the Affordable Care Act, Republicans are trying to get the courts to do it.

We are perhaps 60 days away from the Sixth Circuit invalidating the entirety of the Affordable Care Act. Likely, if that is the case, the judgment will ultimately be rendered by the Supreme Court. But that could come as soon as the beginning of next year. We could still be months away from a humanitarian catastrophe in this country in which the entirety of the Affordable Care Act is invalidated and what to do about it is put back before Congress.