

asylum hearing before the judge. In other words, the information may be inaccurate, and they never get the notices to appear. They are therefore out of status and never had a chance to make their case.

NGOs in Texas made a strong case to our delegation to reinstate the Family Case Management Program, which the Trump administration has canceled. They explained that if ICE reinstated this program, we could see 99 percent compliance with immigration court orders without the need for expanded detention and overcrowding. This compliance rate is backed up by the track record and statistics of the Department of Homeland Security itself when the program was in use. This program is a promising alternative to detention that should be expanded instead of canceled by the Trump administration.

Let me say a word about the Border Patrol agents themselves. They are trying to do their jobs under difficult circumstances. The main problem is the Trump administration's asylum policies, not the Border Patrol agents. I hope that the recent emergency supplemental appropriations measure passed by Congress and signed by the President will help in terms of providing better and more humane care to children in Health and Human Services Department custody, under the auspices of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The measure seeks to improve conditions for migrants in the Department of Homeland Security's custody by addressing the dangerous overcrowding found by the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general. The bill improves due process for migrants and seeks to ease the immigration court backlog by hiring new immigration judges to hear cases and giving migrants greater access to the legal orientation program.

What should Congress do to address the immediate needs of migrants, particularly the children, as well as addressing the root cause of this humanitarian crisis? I am a cosponsor of the Stop Cruelty to Migrant Children Act. This bill would provide guardrails and minimum standards for the treatment of children and families, ensuring that government funds are not used to traumatize or harm asylum seekers. It would do so by dramatically reducing family separations, setting health and safety standards, ending the operation of refugee shelters by for-profit contractors, making it easier to place children with sponsors, and ensuring that unaccompanied children have access to legal counsel.

In terms of root causes, I have joined with my colleagues in introducing the Central America Reform and Enforcement Act designed to address the endemic violence and humanitarian crises that are driving immigration from Central America and also to smooth the path of those seeking asylum in this country. This bill would condition assistance to the Northern Triangle governments in order to address the

root causes of the violence and instability that are driving migration and crack down on smugglers, cartels, and traffickers exploiting children and families.

This legislation also enhances monitoring of unaccompanied children after they are processed at the border, provides a fair legal process for asylum seekers, and improves immigration court efficiencies. Those are some of the things we can do.

In particular, this legislation would reverse the ill-advised foreign aid cuts made by the Trump administration that are worsening the migration crisis in the Northern Triangle, which includes Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

I am concerned, however, that the President sees immigration and immigrants as a good political issue for the 2020 election. Congress needs a partner to take up and pass comprehensive immigration reform, which I believe could pass comfortably in both Houses if the President of the United States would join us in a constructive manner for comprehensive immigration reform.

This administration has shown just the reverse. The administration has proposed a Muslim ban, canceled temporary protected status, canceled the DACA—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival—Program for Dreamers, tried to institute an asylum ban, lowered and now seeks to eliminate refugee admissions, increased domestic immigration enforcement for nonviolent offenders, and sought to expand the program of expedited removal of residents in the United States without due process or a court hearing.

In many of these cases, the Trump administration's decisions have been subjected to successful legal challenges in court, and, thankfully, our independent judiciary has largely continued to uphold the rule of law and serves as an important check and balance against the worst excesses of the Trump administration as it disregards our laws and the Constitution.

I therefore urge the President to reverse course and work with Congress on comprehensive immigration reform, which must include sensible border security. Yes, we do need border security. In these times, when we have international terrorism and international drug trafficking, we need to know who is coming into our country. We have to have an orderly way to process those who want to work or live or go to school in the United States. But it must include an asylum policy for families who are at risk in their native country.

Let us build on the proud history of America and welcome those who seek refuge from persecution and want to help build a better America.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, 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. TESTER. Madam President, as I travel across Montana, I hear from folks who work tirelessly every day to make ends meet.

Many work long hours for too low wages, and they face ever-rising costs in housing and healthcare and other basic necessities, but folks in Montana are resilient, they are resourceful, they know how to live within their means, and they know how important it is to make the numbers add up at the end of the month.

I rise because, as usual, Washington, DC, could learn a lot from Montana. This week, we will vote on a bill that swipes Washington's credit card to the tune of about \$250 billion over the next 2 years—dollars that will come out of the pockets of our kids and our grandkids. Now, this \$250 billion comes on top of the \$1 trillion the United States will add to the national deficit this year because our budget is that far out of whack. The previous year to this year was \$800 billion that we added to the national debt.

So to put that in perspective, that is about \$2.2 trillion in just 2 years. If you are sitting at home wondering, \$2.2 trillion; how much is that, it is far more than \$250 billion.

With \$250 billion, half the students going to college for 4 years would not have to pay anything to go to school in the United States. We are adding \$2.2 trillion, and it is going to continue on until we get our budget in line.

Unfortunately, this sort of reckless spending by both parties has shown a disregard for its impact on the national debt, and it is now the norm in Washington, DC.

Folks on both sides of the aisle are calling for this agreement, and they are calling it a compromise, but in reality, the only thing it will compromise is our children and our grandchildren's future.

Montanans expect me to hold Washington, DC, accountable and fight back against irresponsible spending and poor tax policy. This falls on the irresponsible spending side.

The bipartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget projects that this administration's policies will add \$4 trillion to the debt over the next 10 years. I am here to tell you that is too conservative a figure.

At this point in time, we are going to be adding about \$1.2 trillion to the debt every year if things don't change. Our debt is skyrocketing, and guess what. We are not fixing the healthcare problems that need to be fixed; we are not fixing the high cost of education; we are not investing in our infrastructure, but our debt continues to skyrocket because of irresponsible spending and, quite frankly, a Republican tax giveaway for the wealthy at the expense of our kids and our grandkids.

I have listened to colleagues on both sides of the aisle during my tenure here

who warned of debt and how our national debt could damage our economy and our national security.

Two years ago, my Republican colleagues passed a partisan tax giveaway, drafted behind closed doors, with no—with no—public input from Montanans or anyone else in this country. They promised that this tax giveaway would pay for itself, but it did not. Let me say that one more time. They promised the tax giveaway would pay for itself, but guess what. Just like the previous ones, it didn't.

Instead, it tacked about \$2 trillion onto our national debt, and it is another example of why we can't get our books in order—because we have a shortsighted fiscal approach that makes us the first generation to inherit from our parents and borrow from our kids.

My colleagues made campaign promises to tackle this debt. As a Congressman—as a Congressman—Mick Mulvaney, who happens to be the President's Chief of Staff, pledged to eliminate it, but this White House has done just the opposite.

As we stand here today, the debt has exploded to more than \$22 trillion, and it continues to climb higher every day, despite the country being in the middle of the longest period of economic expansion in our history.

Now, I am going to tell you it is one thing to run a deficit when you are in a recession—it is necessary to bring the economy back—but when you are in the longest period of economic expansion in this country's history, we should be paying down that debt, and we are not. We are adding to it as if we were in a recession.

Running trillion-dollar deficits during times of growth like this one, and everybody in this body knows it, puts the economy on a sugar high. It feels good now, but we all know it is not sustainable, and a crash is inevitable.

The same folks who voted to pile \$2 trillion onto the deficit now argue—some of them—that we cannot find the money to provide our veterans with the healthcare they have earned. They say we need deep cuts—deep cuts—into Medicaid and Social Security and other programs that many folks have paid into for their entire life, but yet we are going to cut them.

I have known, and we all know, that budgets and spending are about priorities, and it is clear that Congress's priorities are out of whack.

You wouldn't know it from watching C-SPAN, but it is possible to be fiscally conservative without cutting working folks off at the knees. I know this because, as president of the Montana Senate, I negotiated and passed a balanced budget because the State constitution requires it. Since coming to the U.S. Senate, I have led a push to add a constitutional amendment requiring that Congress pass a balanced budget.

Now, look, we all know it can't be done overnight, but in a measured ap-

proach, with bipartisan cooperation, we can at least get headed in the right direction. There is no reason why we cannot make smart investments in working families, our kids' education, 21st century infrastructure, and the other needs across this country without bankrupting future generations. Folks in the Treasure State know that, and Washington, DC, needs to know that too. It is time for Congress to follow Montana's lead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as much time as I may require.

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I often recommend to Tennesseans that they look at the U.S. Congress as if it were a split-screen television set.

Here is what I mean by that. During the last month, on one side of the screen you saw the usual Washington, DC, turmoil—Trump versus the squad, Mueller testifying, impeachment votes, battle over the border, Presidential candidates posturing, and of course the daily tweets.

On the other side of the screen was the President and congressional leaders agreeing to a 2-year budget that will strengthen our military, help our veterans, fund research for medical miracles, fund research for our National Laboratories, support our national parks, and save taxpayers a boatload of money by providing stability in funding.

I might add that this part of the budget—31 percent of the budget—is not the part of the budget that is creating the budget deficit. This part of the budget that we will be voting on tomorrow has gone up at about the rate of inflation for the last 10 years and is projected by the Congressional Budget Office to go up at about the rate of inflation for the next 10 years.

It is the entitlement part of the budget that is the problem, which is why I am voting for what the President and the congressional leaders have recommended, but then also on that side of the screen, away from the Washington, DC, turmoil, there was another story, which is the story I want to talk about today.

During that last same month, three Senate committees, by my count, made more than 80 bipartisan proposals, sponsored by at least 75 U.S. Senators of both political parties, to reduce the cost of healthcare that Americans pay for out of their own pockets.

On June 26, after 17 hearings, 6 months of work, recommendations from 400 experts, our Health Committee, which I chair and of which Senator PATTY MURRAY, the Democrat from Washington State, is the ranking member, voted 20 to 3 to recommend to the full Senate 55 proposals from 65 Senators that would end surprise med-

ical billing, increase transparency so you can know the cost of your medical care—you can't lower your healthcare costs if you don't know your healthcare actually costs—and increase competition to reduce the cost of prescription drugs.

The next day after our Health Committee reported that legislation, the Judiciary Committee, headed by Senator GRAHAM and Senator FEINSTEIN, reported out 4 proposals from 19 Senators that would reduce prescription drug costs by banning anticompetitive behaviors by drug manufacturers and helping the Federal Trade Commission to block those who game the citizen petition process to delay generic drugs and biosimilars.

Then, last Thursday, the Finance Committee—this one headed by Senator GRASSLEY and Senator WYDEN—by a vote of 19 to 9, reported more than two dozen additional bipartisan proposals also aimed at reducing the cost of prescription drugs.

That is not all. The House Energy and Commerce Committee has passed its own solution to surprise billing.

Last Thursday, Senator MURRAY's staff and I met with Representatives FRANK PALLONE and GREG WALDEN, the leaders of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. The four of us agreed to work together to lower healthcare costs.

All of this work is consistent with what Secretary Azar and the President have been saying and doing to lower prescription drug costs and increase transparency.

For example, last week, after the Finance Committee released its legislation, the White House said it "is encouraged by the bipartisan work of Chairman GRASSLEY and Senator WYDEN to craft a comprehensive package to lower outrageously high drug prices, and today we are engaging with coalitions to help build support." That is from the White House.

Here is why this amount of activity is, in so many ways, such a good sign for the American people. In our committee, what we have seen before with fixing No Child Left Behind, 21st Century Cures Act, last year's response to the opioid crisis—the last of which occurred, by the way, while on the other side of the split-screen television was the acrimonious Kavanaugh confirmation hearing—what we have seen with these recent new laws I just mentioned is that when that many Senators and that many Congressmen of both political parties go to work together on a big issue that affects millions of American people, there is likely to be a result that affects the American people.

In other words, I believe legislation to end surprise medical billing, increase transparency, and lower prescription drug costs is looking like a train that will get to the station when Congress reconvenes in September, and well it should.

The cost of healthcare is Americans' No. 1 financial concern, according to