

degree fever, but they go to work because they know their job is important—have been furloughed because of what Trump has done. Four hundred thousand continue to work without pay. TSA agents, food safety inspectors, border agents—those hard-working, dedicated public servants—are about to miss a paycheck.

Last night, many of my colleagues—including Senators WARNER, KAINE, KING, CARDIN, CASEY, VAN HOLLEN, and others—held the floor to give voice to these Federal employees who live and work in their States, many of whom are living paycheck to paycheck.

President Trump's government shutdown—his choosing, he is the only one who did it—is forcing a personal crisis on those public servants and their families. How unfair, how mean-spirited, and how wrong.

These families are owed a paycheck, but they are left to wonder how they are going to pay the mortgage or the rent and all of their other bills. They are wondering what will happen to the good credit they have worked so hard to maintain over the years. They are innocent victims of the Trump shutdown—a shutdown he said 25 times he would cause, a shutdown he said he would be proud to own.

President Trump, are you proud to own a shutdown that is hurting so many innocent people? Did you realize that when you caused this?

As government agencies remain shut down, American farmers and small businesses can't get the loans they desperately need. Tourism suffers as our national parks go neglected. Some families can't get a mortgage to buy a new home. The American people are suffering needlessly—needlessly—because President Trump selfishly refuses to retreat from an intransigent, indefensible, and increasingly unpopular position.

The Democratic House has passed legislation that received support from many of my Republican colleagues to reopen the government. In no way does that legislation preclude us from having a debate and hashing out compromise solutions on border security. We have done that before.

We can continue to debate because, indeed, Democrats, Republicans, and the President all want stronger border security; we just sharply disagree about the best way of achieving it.

Why not open the government while we continue to hash out our differences? I have asked that of President Trump. I said: Give me one good reason why the shutdown should continue as we debate our differences on border security, which we all want. He could not give a single reason. We know the reason: He is leveraging—mercilessly leveraging—millions of Americans who are caught in his irresponsible action and who are hurt by it.

Let us open the government and continue to hash out our differences. That would be the responsible thing to do,

and I believe Republican Senators, many of them, know that.

I urge my friend Leader MCCONNELL to act now, convince the President to accept legislation to reopen the government, and let's pass it here on the floor of the Senate. The vast majority of the Republican caucus has already supported it. What are we waiting for?

DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL ROD ROSENSTEIN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, this morning it was reported that Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein intends to step down from his post at the Justice Department if the nominee for Attorney General, William Barr, is confirmed. It is a timely reminder of the swirling conflicts of interest and bias that surround nearly every Trump nominee to lead the Justice Department.

Acting Attorney General Whitaker publicly and forcefully advocated for defending and imposing severe limits on the special counsel's investigation, calling it "a mere witch hunt." He has troubling conflicts of interest, including with a grand jury witness in the investigation, not to mention the fact that he appears to have been involved in fraudulent business dealings before joining the Justice Department.

The nominee to take his place, William Barr, is just as fatally conflicted a nominee when it comes to the special counsel. Last month, we learned that Mr. Barr sent the Justice Department an unsolicited memo, criticizing the special counsel's investigation.

Mr. Rosenstein's potential departure only heightens the stakes for Mr. Barr's nomination. From all accounts, Mr. Rosenstein has been an impartial actor at the head of the special counsel's investigation. President Trump is trying to replace folks like Mr. Rosenstein with conflicted loyalists like Matthew Whitaker and William Barr. The Senate, starting with the Judiciary Committee, should subject Mr. Barr's views to the strictest of scrutiny next week. I still believe, after the revelations about Mr. Barr's unsolicited memo, President Trump ought to withdraw this nomination.

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 re-

sume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1, which the clerk will now report.

The senior assistant 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. SCHUMER. Mr. 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. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I think it is important that we remind ourselves about what it takes to make a law here in Washington, DC. It obviously takes passage of a bill by the House of Representatives, passage by the Senate, and a Presidential signature. Obviously, we are in the middle of sort of a, I guess you could say, fight right now between the executive branch—the President—and Democrats in the House and the Senate, which normally would be resolved by the two sides sitting down and negotiating and coming to some sort of an agreement or compromise. That, frankly, is what is going to be necessary to resolve the current crisis we are in.

The Democrats in the Congress have the majority in the House. It takes 60 votes, as we know, to do anything in the Senate, which means it will take somewhere around the order of 10 Senate Democrats in order to put a piece of legislation on the President's desk.

There has to be a negotiation. There have to be two sides at the table. The Democrats have made it very clear in the Senate and in the House that they have no interest in negotiating with the President.

Furthermore, they have determined that they are going to shut down all the rest of the business that is being done in the Senate simply because they do not want to provide funding for the border wall that has been requested by the President. That is the standoff we are currently in the middle of.

I will remind our colleagues that as recently as last month, my friend the Democratic leader said that in order for us to proceed and vote on anything in either Chamber, we need to have a piece of legislation that the President has said he would agree to sign, which, again, suggests the way out of this is for the Democrats to come to the table and enter into a negotiation with the President about how to fund the border wall, how to deal with the issue of border security, and then to open up the government. That is the way this ultimately gets resolved.

It seems to me, at least from my observation so far, that there has been no movement, zero movement—zero movement—on the part of the Democrats when it comes to trying to resolve the current situation.

I will simply say that I agree with what the Democratic leader said as recently as December; that is, in order for either Chamber—the House or the Senate—to vote on a compromise piece of legislation, it needs to be a piece of legislation that the President of the United States has said he will sign.

Each of these elements has to come together, and, obviously, each is very relevant in this conversation. You cannot have a law without a Presidential signature. There are 535 Members of Congress. There is only one President of the United States, only one person who can sign a bill into law. Obviously, the President is a critical player in this conversation.

Of course, the Democrats, as I said, have the majority in the House of Representatives. It takes 60 votes to do anything in the Senate. I think we have a majority of Senators who would vote today to provide the funding that is necessary to secure our borders, the funding that the President has requested, but it is going to take a number of Democrats, perhaps as many as 7 to 10 Democrats, in order for us to pass a bill in the Senate.

The Democrats are very relevant in this conversation. They are not irrelevant. They have to be at the table. Normally a negotiation starts with the two sides saying “This is where I am, and this is where I am” and figuring out how to reach that common ground, how to reach that middle and structure an agreement that could pass both the House and the Senate and receive a Presidential signature.

That is not what is happening right now. I think we all know that. I think it is very clear that the Democrats are very dug in; they have not moved a single inch off of their position from the time that this whole shutdown started. I think there is a path forward. I am hopeful that negotiations, discussions that will continue later today at the White House, will lead us to a conclusion, to an outcome, and to a result that gets Federal employees back to work, making sure the government continues to function and run but also addressing a critical and important priority for all of us as policymakers; that is, ensuring that we secure our border in a way to protect the American people.

I think it should go without saying that border security is a basic national security requirement. Countries have to secure their borders. They need to know who is coming into their country, and they need to be able to keep people who shouldn't be entering the country, such as criminals and drug traffickers, out. Making sure that our borders are secure is one of our most essential responsibilities of Members of Congress. It is a basic obligation, like

making sure our military is capable of defending our country. While border security is always a national security imperative, it is particularly important right now because we have not only a security but a humanitarian crisis at our border.

Over the past year, illegal border crossing apprehensions have shot up by more than 30 percent. An average of 60,000 individuals try to cross our southern border illegally each month. This represents a serious security concern. Among those trying to cross our southern border are drug dealers, gang members, human traffickers, and other criminals.

This flood of attempted border crossings also represents a serious humanitarian concern. Individuals attempting the journey to come here illegally are vulnerable to exploitation, illness, and abuse. One out of every three women attempting the journey to the United States is sexually assaulted. A staggering 70 percent of individuals become victims of violence along the way. Illness and other medical issues are serious problems. Fifty migrants a day are referred for medical care, and Customs and Border Protection rescues 4,300 people in distress every single year.

There is a direct way to stem this crisis, and that is to promote legal immigration and discourage people from coming here illegally. How do we discourage people from attempting to come here illegally? Well, I would argue we enforce our immigration laws and prevent individuals from illegally crossing our borders.

I have mentioned the dangerous individuals who can sneak across our porous borders and the humanitarian crisis we face, but of course there are even more dangers posed by the weaknesses in our border, both around barriers and through our ports of entry, such as the illegal drugs that are pouring into the country.

Every week in this country, 300 Americans die from heroin. Ninety percent of the heroin supply—90 percent—flows across our southern border. In 2017, opioids were involved in the deaths of almost 50,000 Americans. Roughly half or more of those deaths involved fentanyl, and a lot of that fentanyl is coming across our borders illegally. Federal agents have seen a 115-percent increase in the amount of fentanyl seized between ports of entry. One key part of addressing the opioid epidemic in our country is shutting down the flow of illegal drugs across our porous borders.

Democrats used to understand the need for border security. In 2009, the Democratic leader here in the Senate said:

Illegal immigration is wrong, plain and simple. Until the American people are convinced that we will stop future flows of illegal immigration, we will make no progress on dealing with the millions of illegal immigrants who are here now and on rationalizing our system of legal immigration. That's plain and simple and unavoidable.

That is from the Democratic leader here in the Senate in 2009.

In 2006, the Democratic leader and the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee voted for legislation to authorize a border fence. They were joined in their vote by then-Senator Biden, then-Senator Clinton, and then-Senator Obama.

In 2013, every Senate Democrat supported legislation requiring the completion of a 700-mile fence along our southern border. This legislation would have provided \$46 billion for border security and \$8 billion specifically for a physical barrier.

Nearly every Senate Democrat supported \$25 billion in border security funding just last February, and I suspect that more than one Democrat still understands that we desperately need to improve security at our borders. But the Democratic leadership refuses to play ball. More than 2 weeks into this shutdown, they are still not willing to negotiate a solution that would secure our borders and reopen the government. Democratic leaders are willing to ignore the security and humanitarian crisis at the southern border simply because they don't like this President and because they are afraid to oppose the far-left wing of their party.

We need to end this partial shutdown, and we need to reopen the government, but the only way for that to happen is for Democrats to work with Republicans and the President to provide adequate funding for border security. Once they negotiate in good faith toward a serious agreement that the President will sign, the Senate will immediately take it up so that we can end this shutdown and take needed steps to bolster security at our borders.

Border security is not some issue Republicans have somehow dreamed up. Securing our borders is a national security imperative, and both parties have a responsibility to make sure our Nation's borders are protected. I hope Democrats here in the Senate will remember their obligation to our Nation's citizens and work with the President to secure our borders and reopen our government. I would end where I started, and that is to say that in order for that to happen, there has to be an agreement. Both sides have to come to the table. The President, the House, and the Senate, Democrats and Republicans, are all relevant in this conversation because it takes all to accomplish a legislative result that will reopen our government, get Federal employees back to work, and at the same time take the important steps that are necessary to secure our border.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I just note parenthetically that virtually every Republican and every Democrat in this body has voted for the bills that would open the government. Every single Democrat in this body is willing—if the Republican leader would bring

those bills back up—to vote for them, and the government would open. So I hope the Republican leader will allow the government to open. There are a lot of people who need to go back to work, and I will speak about this later today. It is going to be 10, 15 below zero in my home State at one point this week, making it more urgent that we reopen the government. We also have government contractors who would like to get back to work.

CATHOLIC CLERGY MISCONDUCT

Now let me speak about a different matter. I am going to speak as an individual more than as a Senator. My wife Marcelle and I, as Catholics, have shared the concern of many, whether Catholics or not, about the continued revelation of often gross misconduct on the part of some in the clergy and in the hierarchy of our church. We have seen this throughout the United States, including in our own State of Vermont.

I have rarely—rarely—spoken about religious issues in my capacity as a Senator, because I feel one's religion is private and certainly not political. However, I have spoken out about my concern and my dismay with what we have heard, and Marcelle shares those concerns with me.

I mention this because this past Sunday at mass at Holy Trinity Parish in the District of Columbia, we heard a sermon preached by Father Benjamin Hawley, a member of the Jesuits. When he finished his sermon, I will freely admit I wanted to stand up and applaud him. He spoke about what the church is finally doing in facing up to this, but then he spoke about how he was reacting and how one hopes we might react, what the reaction should be from the Pope straight down to every member of the clergy and every member of the laity. Except for some sermons preached by Marcelle's brother, Father Claude Pomerleau, I do not remember being so touched or affected by a sermon.

I had not met Father Hawley before, but after mass, I spoke with him, and I asked him if I could have his permission to put his sermon into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. He agreed.

I ask unanimous consent that the homily by Father Benjamin Hawley, S.J., of January 6, 2019, be printed in the RECORD at this time.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, the appearance of Jesus the Messiah to the world.

In classical Greek the word "epiphany" can refer to the appearance of dawn, as Isaiah, writing 500 years before Jesus' birth, does in our first reading: "See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears his glory . . . Raise your eyes and look about . . ."

This appearance can intimate—Jesus' touching your heart or mine with peace in time of difficulty. Or the appearance can be

cosmic—the Prince of Peace revealed to Herod and to the magi—and to our world today.

Is it possible to see Jesus' latest epiphany in three recent events?

First, about 280 American bishops are in retreat just outside Chicago—no lay staff, no other priests. Guiding their retreat is Raniero Cantalamessa, a Capuchin priest, who is the Preacher to the Papal Household. I have heard him speak, and he is excellent.

Second, a hard-hitting eight-page letter from the Pope is guiding their prayer.

Francis asks them to reflect on "the steps you are taking to combat the culture of abuse and to deal with the crisis of credibility" (page 1).

"The church's credibility has been seriously undercut and diminished by these sins and crimes, but even more by the efforts made to deny or conceal them . . . (T)he mentality that would cover things up, far from helping to resolve conflicts, enabled them to fester and cause even greater hurt to the network of relationships that today we are called to heal and restore" (p2).

"Loss of credibility calls for a specific approach, since it cannot be regained by issuing stern decrees or by simply creating new committees or improving flow charts, as if we were in charge of a department of human resources" (p3).

Then, the Pope then takes them to task on infighting:

"The loss of credibility also raises painful questions about the way we relate to one another . . . (p3) This requires not only a new approach to management, but also a change in our mind-set, our way of prayer, our handling of power and money, our exercise of authority and our way of relating to one another and to the world around us . . . (pp3-4).

Without (a) clear and decisive focus, everything we do risks being tainted by self-referentiality, self-preservation and defensiveness, and thus doomed from the start" (p4).

"Let us try to break the vicious cycle of recrimination, undercutting and discrediting, by avoiding gossip and slander in the pursuit of a path of prayerful and contrite acceptance of our limitations and sins, and the promotion of dialogue, discussion and discernment . . ." (pp5-6).

Finally, third, the presidents of bishops conferences worldwide will meet in Rome in late February in a meeting organized by four church officials:

Blase Cupich, Cardinal-Archbishop of Chicago;

Oswald Cracias, Cardinal-Archbishop of Mumbai, India, and member of the Pope's council of cardinals;

Charles Scicluna, Archbishop of Malta and head of investigating abuses in the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith; and Jesuit Father Hans Zollner, president of the Center for the Protection of Minors at the Gregorian University, the Jesuit university in Rome.

The pope's letter seems to me right on target in tone and content. A retreat for discernment is very Ignatian, and the Vatican meeting will ensure worldwide applicability.

So, can you and I believe that Jesus' epiphany is the motive force behind the bishops' retreat, the pope's letter and February bishops meeting?

We are called by Jesus himself to be hopeful. But we are also called to be thoughtful, discerning good and evil around us. I find myself seesawing between hope and doubt, between hope and fear, between hope and no-hope, as I reflect on the good and evil. I want to have hope, but I have to admit that having hope is hard, sometimes nearly impossible.

It is true that Jesus grew up and became the Messiah. But Herod's murdering a gen-

eration of children went unpunished, as far as I know, and the historical record on mass murderers or mass abusers isn't promising.

I am grateful for what the bishops and Francis are now doing. But I keep asking myself why it takes so much external pressure to get them to do the right, decent thing that seems so obvious and not even that hard.

Some days I feel like Candide, returning from his hero's journey to cultivate his own garden. In my garden I can be hopeful. But I can't live a solitary life. And when I re-engage, I become discouraged when I find the bishops' response so slow and so begrudging.

But then I wonder about how God's justice and mercy might be made real in the next life, especially for bishops, cardinals and popes, but for us too. I imagine Purgatory not as a place of hellfire and smoke, but rather as a place where kindly but determined angels would sit, like referees in black and white stripped outfits, each one in comfortable room in front of a large flat-screen TV, each with a recently arrived soul.

In a gentle way the angel-referee would guide the deceased not through an instant replay but a slow replay of their lives, stopping the action and asking each bishop, cardinal and pope—and each one of us—to reconsider individual events in their lives, and asking questions like, What were you thinking? How did that work out—for you and for everyone else? If you had to do it again, how might you choose?

There would be no scoreboard, because God would want everyone to win, and no time clock. Everyone would have time and all eternity—with the angel-referee's prompting—to rethink what they had said and done.

And some would have a very painful time of it, because angels are messengers of God's justice. Their job is to reveal justice to the minds of souls as yet living in darkness. And the angel-referees would make the final call.

With that much time and such wise, persistent guides, most would probably make it to die podium for their trophy. Angels might have to guide a few of the obdurate to long-term parking, but such souls would have had a chance and in the end would have put themselves there.

In the meantime you and I are on the seesaw.

Jesus began his life in his mother's lap in the stable, as the great artists have shown us, but surrounded by the blood and death of children and the corruption of the Jewish king.

Jesus ended his life in his mother's lap, as Michaelangelo shows us in the Pieta, still surrounded by the blood, death and the corruption of civic and religious leaders.

My question to myself is always, Does it really have to be this hard? And the answer seems to be, No, it doesn't have to be. But, Yes, it is going to be this hard as long as people, especially people in positions of power, make self-serving choices. The blood, death and corruption are constants in human life. And yet he is the Prince of Peace and the source of our hope.

On this great Feast we can come to realize that, if you and I have to live on the seesaw, then at least we can remain anchored to hope there, because Jesus, the source of our hope, accompanied by his Blessed Mother, has the power to anchor us there in love.

So, in our Eucharist today let's share divine love and hope with one another in communion and leave here, imbued with new hope to share with our world, so the world too can find hope and peace.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, from El Paso to Brownsville, TX, my State

shares a 1,200-mile border with Mexico. If you were daring enough to attempt to walk that entire stretch, you would trek through deserts, cross mountains, through cities, and probably end up getting a little wet in the Rio Grande River. You would meet folks who are proud of the strong bonds our country has with our southern neighbor. Many, of course, have relatives in both countries. You would talk to sheriffs, police officers, Border Patrol agents, all who care deeply about protecting our communities. And undoubtedly, you would end up eating some good Tex-Mex along the way.

In my time in the Senate, I have had the opportunity to meet countless Texans who live and work along the southern border, and I seek their advice and counsel on what Congress ought to do, what the Federal Government ought to do to protect them and their communities. What they tell me is that Texans and the Nation rely on the billions of dollars of legitimate trade that comes across the ports of entry with Mexico. But with the growing volume of goods crossing our borders and the persistent staff shortages for Customs and Border Protection, they want to make sure there are no security gaps that can be exploited by criminals or slow down the legal movement of goods. That is a concern I share, and I continue to advocate for additional improvements in our ports of entry to protect this vital lifeline for our economy, as well as our security.

But just as these communities care deeply about the economic benefits of our shared border, they care deeply, of course, about their own safety and security. They believe that both can peacefully coexist, and so do I.

During my visits, I have witnessed some of the horrific treatment that migrants receive at the hands of the criminals, including those who smuggle them. The truth is, these criminal organizations that move people and drugs and contraband across our border exploit our porous border and care nothing for human life. It is a commodity. It is the way they make money. They care nothing for the people they hurt, so they wring another dollar out of someone else's misery on a daily basis. It is a high-volume business, too, and incredibly lucrative.

I have seen the stash houses with windows lined with tin foil, and inside, a veritable cesspool that makes you want to gag or lose what you had for lunch. This is where the human smugglers cram large groups of illegal immigrants in unimaginable conditions while awaiting their transit to the interior of the United States.

I have seen their logbooks where they record their corrupt transactions, correlating real-life human beings with their value in dollars and cents.

I have talked to Border Patrol agents who have discovered tractor trailers full of people attempting to enter our country, some of whom never complete their journey because they die from ex-

posure or are smothered to death in the cramped quarters.

In Brooks County, TX, where the Falfurrias checkpoint of the Border Patrol is located, about 50 miles north of the border, I have seen unmarked graves of the migrants who were trying to cross vast swaths of South Texas in the August heat in order to bypass the Border Patrol checkpoint but then were left to die by the smugglers. Their graves are marked only with identities like "skull case" or "unknown female."

Border security is not immoral, as Speaker PELOSI has shamefully claimed, but refusing to act in the face of evil is immoral. It is clear that there is a crisis, as it is clear that it is our responsibility to restore safety and security and order. In my wildest dreams, I never would have imagined we would be debating whether we should secure our borders, as we apparently are now. That is something on which we should all agree. Instead, we should be focused on how to secure our borders and how to do it in a smart, responsible way.

In my experience, learning from the experts, they tell me there is no one-size-fits-all solution. You can imagine that with a 1,200-mile border with just Texas and Mexico, with the variety of topography and geography, one-size-fits-all does not work. What works best in the Rio Grande Valley doesn't necessarily work in an urban environment like El Paso, with Juarez right across the international bridge.

We need to customize solutions that meet the specific need rather than trying to dictate from here in Washington—thousands of miles away—a solution that solves nothing. We need to look at border security as a combination of three things: physical infrastructure—yes, that includes barriers, walls, fences, vehicle barriers in appropriate locations, but it also includes technology—radar, ground sensors, drones, aerostats. This is a layered approach that provides flexibility for the experts on the ground to determine what is best for each sector, what is best for each part of our immense border, and implement the changes necessary to achieve desired results. As I said, in many areas, the landscape and location mean physical barriers may not be needed and may not be practical. In rural areas, technology—sensor technology or cameras—may be sufficient, but we know we need additional boots on the ground, too, because it is not enough to put a barrier in place or have a radar or ground sensor in place if you don't have the Border Patrol to show up and detain people they discover trying to make their way illegally into the United States or bringing drugs into the United States. So some combination of these three elements I think is always going to be needed, no matter where you are talking about.

I am proud of the work we have done in the Senate, generally speaking, and

I know when we work together we can do a lot of good, but logic and experience should tell us we shouldn't be the ones deciding how every inch of our southern border is secure. I don't claim to be an expert, although I have gone to school on the topic and spent a lot of time talking to those people who are experts and learning from them. I believe we need to let those experts drive the decision-making process on the right combination of resources needed to achieve operational control of the border. Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues' refusal to invest in real border security has landed us in a partial government shutdown resulting in 800,000 Federal workers who on Friday will not get a paycheck. That is unnecessary. Unfortunately, they are collateral damage to a political game which we should not be playing. I know many of these 800,000 Federal workers are already anxious about how they will make a car payment or how they will pay their mortgage or their rent or how they will put food on the table. It is completely unnecessary, this shutdown.

I am afraid this debate on border security of course is not really a debate about border security at all; it is a way for congressional Democrats to take a stand against a President they oppose while putting border communities at risk and sending the men and women who protect them to work without pay. This battle has gone on too long, and I can only hope Speaker PELOSI and Minority Leader SCHUMER show some leadership rather than continue to take the low road. This shouldn't be about winning a partisan fight; it should be about protecting our citizens and stemming the tide of illegal immigration, drugs, and contraband entering our country. If there were ever a time, now is the time for common sense to prevail and end this senseless shutdown.

REMEMBERING RICHARD ARVIN OVERTON

Mr. President, on another matter, I want to share a few words about an American hero I had the pleasure to get to know, Mr. Richard Arvin Overton. Richard's story began more than a century ago on May 11, 1906, in Bastrop County, TX. Throughout his young life, he held a variety of jobs—landscaping, picking cotton, working at a furniture store, and building homes.

In 1940, Richard enlisted in the U.S. Army and began his military service at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Serving with the 1887th Engineer Battalion, an all-Black unit, one of his first stops was Pearl Harbor, the day after what we now know as the West Loch Disaster.

In an interview in 2016, Richard recalled that day, seeing the water turn red from the blood of his brothers, saying: "I didn't look the same, but I got out all right." This was only the first stop on Richard's tour that led him to the Pacific theater. His service included stops in Guam, Palau, and Iwo

Jima, where he witnessed firsthand some of the darkest days in our country's modern history.

When the war ended, Richard returned to Texas and built a home on Hamilton Avenue. He originally reentered the furniture business and then began working for the State treasury department. At the ripe age of 85, Richard Overton decided to retire.

In 2013, the 107-year-old Richard Overton made his first trip to Washington, DC, with an Honor Flight. He was able to witness the memorial built to honor his service and his comrades who died in battle, a sight that brought him to tears.

While his military service alone deserves our praise, that is not the only thing that brought Richard to national attention. His comments about the keys to his longevity and long life and particularly his daily routine made Richard an internet sensation. His penchant for enjoying coffee with whiskey and 12 cigars a day won hearts and caused all of us to question the secret to his long life. Richard also enjoyed a bowl of ice cream every night—always butter pecan. He called this the Overton diet and welcomed anyone interested to give it a shot. Richard used his newfound fame to continue life as he always had but with more fans eager to stop by and say hello while he was sitting on the front porch. He continued to live in the same house he built after the war, although the street name has now been changed to carry his name—Richard Overton Avenue.

I first met Richard in 2013, and I remember the day my wife Sandy and I met him in his home in Austin. I was taken aback to learn he had just gotten through mowing his lawn that morning—107 years old and still mowing his lawn.

Sadly, on December 27, 2018, the story of this American hero came to an end. At the ripe old age of 112 years, Richard passed away, leaving a host of cousins and extended family members.

Yesterday, I introduced a resolution, with my colleague Senator CRUZ, to honor this great man, his military service, and his enduring legacy. Our country has lost a true patriot, our State has lost a legend, and our community has lost a dear friend.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

WELCOMING NEW SENATORS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, a new year begins, and it brings us new challenges, new opportunities, and new faces in the 116th Congress.

I welcome the nine freshman Senators: Mrs. BLACKBURN of Tennessee, Mr. BRAUN of Indiana, Mr. CRAMER of

North Dakota, JOSH HAWLEY of Missouri, MARTHA MCSALLY of Arizona, MITT ROMNEY of Utah, JACKY ROSEN of Nevada, RICK SCOTT of Florida, and KYRSTEN SINEMA of Arizona. Their talent and hard work brought them here, and now we have an expanded Senate Republican majority—a majority we built on in the 115th Congress. Albeit, we are still short of the 60 votes needed to pass most pieces of legislation, we have a group of people committed to the values of our party and our country and working together to find solutions for the Nation.

During the swearing-in last week, as I was sworn in to the Senate, my 96-year-old mother joined us. She attended, enjoyed it, watches the opening every day for the Pledge of Allegiance and for the prayer from Reverend Black, and looks to that as a sign of our Nation moving forward.

From the time I was a little boy, she would always say: "This is the most important year of your life." She started when I was very young, and I think her lesson remains today. For me and for all of us, this is the most important year of our lives, for ourselves, for our Nation, and for the world. She would say: What you do this year makes a big difference for the future, so make sure you do it right. Well, we are now at a point of divided government—Democrats control the House and Republicans the Senate. We need to work together and do it right on behalf of the American people.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, I think we have some immediate tasks; one is to secure the southern border and the other is to fund the government. These goals are not mutually exclusive. We can and we must do both, and the key to breaking the current impasse is for both parties to work together.

President Trump, I believe, is absolutely right to insist on border wall funding. I think he is right to insist on it before agreeing to sign spending legislation to end the shutdown, and he spoke passionately and I think spoke convincingly about it last evening. If the southern border were a patient—and I practiced medicine for 24 years in Wyoming—if the southern border were a patient admitted to the hospital, it would be listed in critical condition.

All Americans want an immigration system that secures the border, enforces the law, and that keeps families together. The problem of course is the rise in illegal entry, terrorists, drug smugglers, human traffickers, the Mexican drug cartels, all exploiting our porous border with Mexico. The Customs and Border Protection Commissioner has called the situation a "border security and humanitarian crisis." That is what we are dealing with, a border security and humanitarian crisis.

Here are the numbers from the Department of Homeland Security. Currently, 16,000 Border Patrol agents and 8,100 military troops guard the south-

ern border. The National Guard has been deployed there continuously since 2006. Still, illegal border crossings increased dramatically from 2017 to 2018.

In this past year, the year just ended, 396,000 people were stopped at the border, including 3,700 suspected terrorists and 800 gang members. Of the border's 1,950 miles, a physical barrier today protects about 650 miles. Border Patrol areas with enhanced or expanded barriers have been successful. They have seen a 90-percent decrease in illegal traffic. That is why the President wants to continue with additional physical barriers to protect the border.

There is a huge improvement due to the wall. Clearly, walls work, barriers work. So I ask: Why is NANCY PELOSI, the House Speaker, prolonging the shutdown by denying critical funding? She has called the wall immoral. I would say what is immoral is refusing to provide for the safety and security of the American people by providing border security.

Border security policymaking has always been bipartisan but not now, it seems. The Pelosi plan to end the partial shutdown isn't serious policy; it is political posturing. I say there is a partial government shutdown because 75 percent of the government continues to be funded. The Speaker's proposal includes billions in wasteful spending while ignoring the crisis at the border. The President has promised to veto what she is proposing, but instead of negotiating, the Speaker is basically playacting.

What is needed is an agreement between the President and the Democratic leaders in the House and Senate that can pass the House and secure at least 60 votes in the Senate and then be signed into law.

As President Trump said in a January 4 letter to Congress, a nation that fails to control its borders cannot fulfill its basic obligations to its citizens, physical safety, economic safety, essential public services, and the uniform protection of our laws.

We cannot afford to play politics with the border. I think we should listen to the advice my mother continues to give me; that this is the most important year of your life. It is important for this body, for this institution, and for this Nation. Let's start 2019 and do it in the right way by passing common-sense legislation that does secure the border, that does reopen the government, and that protects the American people.

Let's work together to make this the most important year, the start of a better future for all Americans.

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

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

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I want to share with the body today my very short New Year's wish list. It is very short because Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are all the same. We need to open the government. We need to reopen the one-quarter of the Federal Government that is shut down today. We need to start acting like adults. We need to start doing the job that we were sent here to do because our Nation's security is at stake, kids' health is at stake, and families' economic security is at stake.

Hundreds of thousands of Federal workers all across the country are furloughed as we speak, including over a thousand in Connecticut. But that is not the extent of the damage. When you start having folks at airport security not be able to show up for their jobs because they have to work somewhere else in order to put food on the table, when you start creating questions about whether food stamps are going to go out or Section 8 vouchers are going to get paid, when you can't have the Department of Agriculture functioning to help our farmers, you are starting to affect a whole lot of people. You are starting to drag down the entire economy.

My hope—my wish—is that we will reopen the Federal Government. The fact of the matter is that this happens every now and again. Occasionally, somebody makes a demand, something that they can't get through the normal political process, and they say if they don't get that demand, they are going to shut down the government. Every time I have been through one of these, it is the party making the demand that eventually relents because we tend to all agree that is not the proper way in order to try to get what you want in the U.S. Government.

Senator CRUZ and others shut down the government for 2 weeks because they wanted to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Eventually, they relented. This time, President Trump couldn't get Congress to approve \$5 billion for his wall in the budget so he decided to shut down the government. This is not how we should conduct a debate about legitimate public policy issues.

The future of the American healthcare system was a legitimate public policy issue, as is the security of our borders, but we shouldn't be having the discussion amidst a government shutdown—trying to use our Nation's security and all of these Federal workers and the work they do as hostages to try to achieve a political result.

Of course, we were all on the same page just a few weeks ago. This body voted unanimously to open the Federal Government, and now Senator McCONNELL says that piece of legislation that all of us voted for in December can't pass.

What changed? What changed in each one of your States that causes so many Members of this body to now say that they cannot vote for a continuing resolution that you all voted for back in December?

We know what has changed. The only thing that has changed is that the President has decided that he will not sign it. That is not how the Constitution works.

The Constitution doesn't make the Senate subservient to the President. The Constitution certainly doesn't make the President's party subservient to him. No one here has to follow the orders of President Trump, especially when he is doing something that is bad for the Nation. We could bring up that same bill that reopens the government at least temporarily. We could all vote the same way that we did back in December. We could send that bill to the House of Representatives and admit that the President shouldn't dictate our votes. Just because his position changed doesn't mean Senate Republicans' position should have changed.

Let's reopen the government so that, then, we can have a discussion about the question of immigration law and border security, because I am more than willing to have it.

OK, I didn't exactly tell the truth. I do have two other wishes beyond reopening the government, but they are connected to my primary wish. My second wish is that the President would stop making up things as he proceeds through this debate. The worst of his lies was the idea that there were 4,000 known or suspected terrorists who came across our southern border. That was a number proffered by the Press Secretary at the White House. It has been repeated in various ways, shapes, and forms by the President's allies.

Of course, we now know there have not been 4,000 suspected terrorists that have come across the southern border. There have been six since the beginning of this year. That is six people on a terrorist watch list who were not U.S. citizens. Do you know how many people who fit that description came across the northern border in the first 6 months of this year? Forty-one. If you really care about the security of this country—if your primary reason for getting up every morning is to make sure terrorists don't get into this country, then we should be putting up a wall with Canada, not a wall with Mexico.

The second fiction is that all of these drugs coming into the United States are crossing the U.S.-Mexican border at places where there isn't a wall. That is not true either. The vast majority of illegal products that come into this country come through ports of entry. We should all talk about why that is and what we can do to beef up protections, but putting up a wall along the treacherous portions of the Rio Grande are not going to stop smugglers who right now can find lots of other ways to get their goods into the United States.

I want to make sure that when we have this debate, we are having a fact-based debate.

My second wish in this new year is that the President and his allies would just start telling the truth, and the

truth is that there is not a new security crisis at the southern border. Illegal crossings have been coming down since 2000. The people who are on the terrorist watch list who occasionally do try to come into this country are predominantly trying to get in through Canada, not through Mexico.

I want to talk about facts.

Here is my last wish. Again, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are to reopen the government. If I had No. 6 and 7, it would be that the President start talking about the real facts, and the other would be this: Let's not get into this very dangerous conversation about trying to do an end-around on the political process with a national emergency. I guess I am talking to my Republican colleagues here.

I get it that I often have some of the sharpest words for this President, but I hope that we can come together on the idea that declaring a national emergency because you can't get what you want through the political process is a really bad precedent to set. It is true that there are a whole bunch of national emergencies that have been declared, but none of the circumstances of those national emergencies and none of the powers that were utilized in those national emergencies compare to what the President is reportedly considering.

If the President is really talking about declaring a national emergency on our border, despite the fact that there is no set of facts that suggests that what is happening on our border is fundamentally different today than what was happening a year ago or 10 years ago, and if the President is really contemplating, by Executive order, reprogramming billions of dollars this Congress set aside for military construction projects to a border wall, that is a Pandora's box that, once opened, cannot be shut again. This is a genie escaping out of a bottle that will not be put back.

I said in jest last night that if President Trump can use a national emergency declaration to build a border wall, what would stop a Democratic President from declaring a healthcare emergency and passing and declaring a national emergency to create a single-payer healthcare system in this country? I wouldn't advise a Democratic President to do that, but I am not sure what the precedent would be if President Trump, having not been able to get Congress and the American public to get behind a border wall with Mexico that nobody really wants, declares a national emergency and builds it anyway. What would then stop any future President from doing the same thing on a host of other policy areas? Really, what would stop a President from declaring a healthcare national emergency because he or she can't get their legislation passed through the Senate and reordering our insurance markets and our Medicare and Medicaid programs to cure that national emergency, simply shifting money around from place to place?

I don't think this is an avenue that the Federal Government should go down because there will be a Democratic President someday, and if you can just declare a national emergency and move billions of dollars around because you can't get your way in Congress, that is a horse that, once out of the barn, is not coming back.

That is my wish list: Open the government, open the government, open the government, open the government; pass the bills that we passed back in December. Don't let the President dictate your votes. Let your constituents dictate your votes.

I hope the President and the White House start telling the truth about what is really happening with border security, and I hope this nonsense about declaring a national emergency goes away. I hope it goes away in part because Republicans in this body recognize the really dangerous precedent that sets for this country, and they recommend publicly and privately to the President that he shutter that idea.

We could reopen the government today. If Senator MCCONNELL came down here and decided to put a continuing resolution before this body and said that it is the right thing to do for the country, it would pass with flying colors. If Senator MCCONNELL exercised that kind of leadership that he has shown in previous shutdowns, it would pass with flying colors. We all know it would. I am sure there would be a handful of Republicans who just got elected with President Trump's support who might not support it, but it would pass just like it passed 3 weeks ago, and it would likely pass the House of Representatives by a veto-proof margin, as well, once the signal was given by Senate Republicans that the adults need to step up and reopen the government.

So this whole crisis can be over tonight. It can be over tonight if there is some leadership shown by Senate Republicans. Why spend all of this time trying to control this body? Why spend millions of dollars trying to run for office to become the majority party in the U.S. Senate if you are not willing to step up in a moment of crisis and lead the country through it? It is still possible, and I hope, as my new year's wish, that it gets done sooner rather than later.

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.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise to speak on U.S. national defense.

In the last couple of years, we have made tremendous progress in strengthening our military and have effectively

realigned our global posture and strategy.

Under the new national defense strategy, the United States has rightfully recognized the return to great power competition, where our priorities have shifted from low-intensity conflict to posturing against peer and near-peer adversaries.

Over the last 17 years of combat in the Middle East, U.S. dominance and deterrence against great power competitors have diminished. Meanwhile, nations like China and Russia have undertaken extraordinary military modernization efforts while engaging in unprecedented and destabilizing aggression.

We have seen Russian intrusions in cyberspace, the illegal annexation of Crimea, information attacks on Western democratic institutions, and the spread of lies, half-truths, and slander in order to sow division and chaos between the United States and other partners.

These gray-zone activities, which are actions below the level that would provoke an armed conflict, have gone mainly unchecked by the United States, which has set a troubling precedent and only serve to encourage further provocation.

From China, we see these gray-zone techniques manifested in their land reclamation in the South China Sea, the construction of their first foreign military installations in Djibouti, and the continuing theft of intellectual property and trade secrets in critical security areas.

They have also greatly undermined our supply chain through the Made in China 2025 initiative, which seeks to ensure that the United States and others remain reliant on the Chinese industrial base.

Above all, the United States is threatened by Russia's and China's advances in emerging technology. This includes hypersonic weapons, artificial intelligence, space capabilities, quantum computing, and directed energy.

Without significant resources and focus, we will lose our technological superiority in these very areas, and both U.S. national security and the global order will be in serious jeopardy.

Building off of our successes from the last 2 years, Congress and the executive branch must remain committed to investing in research, development, rapid acquisition, and the deployment of capabilities that provide for deterrence in line with the threats of the 21st century.

Just as we rose to the challenge in the two World Wars, the Cold War, and following the attacks on September 11, 2001, we must, once again, evaluate our current posture and chart a course that best protects our national security and our interests.

While the national defense strategy correctly prioritizes a return to great power competition, we still have great national security threats in the low-intensity domain, particularly in the Middle East and in North Africa.

The success of our missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Africa are important. They can be seen in our ability to prevent extremist groups from projecting attacks into the U.S. homeland.

Through the heroic and dedicated service of our men and women in uniform, we have put unyielding pressure on foreign terrorists and, in turn, we have prevented another massive attack like we saw on 9/11.

While we have seen tremendous battlefield success against groups like the Islamic State, counterterrorism and stability operations require a sustained commitment of presence and resources in order to consolidate gains and promote good governance and the rule of law. In the absence of the latter, ungoverned spaces quickly transform into breeding grounds for terror groups, and that is why we are in Iraq. That is why we are in Afghanistan, and that is why we should remain in Syria. We must do that until our objectives are met.

Balancing our approach toward both low- and high-intensity threats will require us to rely on our allies and our partners more than we have had to rely on them in the past decades, as we have a limited supply of resources for our national defense. However, if we are able to leverage the resources of our friends, we will assume less risk as we move to more resources toward countering great power threats. Likewise, as we seek to bolster our defense posture toward peer competitors, we will greatly benefit from increased contributions and commitments from our allies and our partners. That means insisting that our treaty allies contribute their fair share to the international security burden and also ensuring that our allies and partners are investing in weapons systems and military platforms that interoperate with ours while effectively deterring our common adversaries.

We cannot and should not abandon those who share our values of democracy and freedom but, rather, work with them to increase defense contributions and build necessary capabilities and capacities. Unlike Russia and China, our network of allies and friends, who have stood shoulder to shoulder with us in the defense of freedom and democratic values, are a source of great strength, as well as an integral part of promoting global security.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to once again acknowledge the most detrimental adversary of our national defense; that is, poor fiscal policy. As then-Secretary Mattis stated when he announced the National Defense Strategy, continuing resolutions and sequestration have hindered our security more than any foe. These wasteful applications of taxpayer dollars prevent long-term planning, stymie research and development, delay critical procurement, and prevent necessary training and readiness investments.

What we do in this Chamber has consequences that reverberate far beyond Washington. When we fail to do our job, we put our warfighters at higher risk and cripple our strategic posture, ultimately endangering our national security. That is why I have come to the floor today to urge bipartisanship and collaboration amongst both Houses of Congress on defense spending policy. The political climate of today will assuredly prevent progress in some areas of Congress's work, but I encourage my colleagues to set those differences aside when we consider policies and appropriations for our national defense.

We have a lot of work ahead in order to protect our security and interests, but I am confident we can come together to solve these issues of critical importance.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, as our colleague from Iowa just pointed out, these problems not only need to be solved, but they are solvable. At the core of the debate we are having right now is obviously border security. Everybody says they are for border security, but they have different views of what that means.

I want to start by saying that I fully support the President's call for a more secure border, and, frankly, I think physical barriers are part of that. We have thought that for a long time. They work. People who now are opposed to them generally have often been for them.

In fact, a generation ago, we began improving and expanding barriers in a few areas along the southern border, and in every instance, they have made a difference.

In 1992, the U.S. Government built a wall in the San Diego sector of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the number of people caught crossing that border decreased by 95 percent when the barrier was erected.

The border is not exactly like a bank. You don't have to have a level of security that nobody can ever get through at any time, under any circumstances, but if you have a solution that solves 95 percent of the problem, that may be about all we can afford to do in terms of solving the problem that way. That barrier, that wall, that fence south of San Diego did exactly that.

The next year, we built a wall in El Paso, TX, at that part of the border, and there was a decrease of 95 percent there as well.

In 2000, we built a wall at the Tucson, AZ, sector, and apprehensions there dropped 90 percent.

We have a 90-percent solution or a 95-percent solution. That is reasonable to the American people who think that the job of the Federal Government—and they are right in this—that one of the jobs of the Federal Government is to secure its border.

You wouldn't have to look very far in troubled parts of the world to find a

story about Lebanon or some other country—to read that sentence that says: This government is not truly functional because they don't have control over their own borders. It is a reasonable expectation of government.

In 2000, as I said, we built a wall in Tucson.

You can call this whatever you want to. If you are offended when I say “wall” or “fence,” you say whatever you want to say—it has the same impact.

I have been to the border a number of times. I have walked along the barriers there. I have been on one side of the fence—the two sides of a fence with a patrolled roadway in between. It looked pretty effective to me, and the numbers indicate it was effective.

In 2005, when we added a wall in the Yuma part of the Arizona sector, apprehensions went down another 95 percent.

We have President Clinton and Presidents Bush—Bush 43 and Bush 41—all were part of thinking barriers worked, and the Congress was too. There was not an issue as to whether a wall works, where a wall works, until President Trump as a candidate began to talk about building a wall. They have made a big difference in the areas where we have tried them in the past.

The President has often said in recent days that the wall doesn't necessarily work everywhere, and I fully agree with that. We couldn't afford to have the wall everywhere, and if we did have the wall everywhere, you would have to monitor it with some remote monitoring device anyway because there are large sections of the border where there aren't people and where there is no access. It doesn't mean you can't monitor that. It doesn't mean you can't have that kind of a wall erected. We need to do that.

In November, there were nearly 52,000 people who were caught trying to sneak across the border. Now, you can act like that is not a very big problem—unless you have ever lived in a community of, say, 52,000 people, and then you realize that is a lot of people. And in 1 month alone, they were coming across the southwest border.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, nearly 17,000 criminals were apprehended trying to get into the country last year. That is about half of the population of the capital city of Missouri. Seventeen thousand people trying to get in with a criminal record just last year.

We have seen a 50-percent increase in gang members being caught trying to come into the country illegally and a 73-percent increase in the seizures of fentanyl.

One of the things we do in the health and human services area that I work in and appropriate for and work for an appropriate opioid response is try to figure out how we can get fentanyl out of this system, how we can get something out of this system that is deadly for a significant number of the people who

turn to that as they get addicted to painkillers. If the fentanyl seizures are up 73 percent over where they were the year before, something needs to be done. We clearly need to secure our borders.

I support the immigration system. I am a proponent of legal immigration. I think how we meet the workforce needs of the country, how we deal with the fact that we have people who are here who aren't legal, who have otherwise not gotten in trouble in the country—about half of them came across the border, and about half of them came in some other way and decided, this is a pretty doggone good place, and I want to stay here and am afraid to go home because I may not get back—how do we deal with that? How do we deal with this in a way that we meet our workforce needs, that the skill needs of the country are met? And skill needs can be unskilled people—we don't have people willing to do some unskilled jobs—and highly skilled people. We don't have enough people doing their jobs in an economy that is growing faster than the economy has grown in a long time. The economic numbers in some cases are better than they have been in 50 years and in most cases have been better than they have been in at least a decade.

Every part of the border doesn't need to be secured the same way, but the border needs to be secured. Our friends on the other side, in what has been a pretty impressive show of party unity, have just decided that they want to reject the options of how we secure the border. People who have voted to build and maintain almost 700 miles of border fencing have suddenly decided that another 50 miles or another 2 miles is immoral. Talk about selective immorality. That it is OK to have 700 miles of fence but it is not OK to have 702 miles of fence is a very interesting place, it seems to me, to draw the line.

Our friends on the other side have rejected attempts to fix the way we deal with children who are brought across the border or come across on their own. There are 48,000 children right now that the U.S. Government is doing their best to take care of—I hope and insist that we do that—who came across the border on their own. Another 2,600 or so came across the border with an adult. More often than not, that adult was their parent, but not always. We have 50,000 children who came across the border, and there is no response to any ideas that the administration brings up, no positive response from the other side as to how to deal with that.

They have rejected adding beds at detention centers for people who are caught crossing the border illegally. Why would you do that? Why would you not want to have additional space for people who are in custody for illegal behavior? I suppose because it becomes so critically important that people just be released on their own recognition, to come back at a later time.

Some of our friends on the other side, in fact, have called for the complete

abolition of U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement efforts. At the very time when these are some of the most stressed people working on behalf of the country for the Federal Government, we have people on the other side saying we should eliminate border enforcement.

We had a bill introduced in this Chamber last year that every Member of the minority supported. When you read it closely—I am not at all sure they all did because I don't believe this is the position they all had, but when you read it closely, it was a clear open borders bill. There was no way anybody was likely to be apprehended crossing the border except just to tell them "You know you are here legally now. Come back sometime, and we will see if we can figure out what to do."

We are for protecting people who are uniquely at risk in the country that they come from.

Asylum is an important thing. No country in the history of the world has been any more open than we have been to allowing people to come here legally, to have people who legally seek asylum come here. But the truth is, there is no asylum granted just because you are from a poor country or from a dangerous country, so most of the people who come saying that they are seeking asylum don't get it. Maybe that is why most of them don't show up in court. They know that their argument—they would rather be here than where they are from, but their argument will never work in court for most of them, and that is clearly understood.

We are going to have a lot better opportunity to solve the problems we need to solve regarding the border if people have confidence that the government has done a reasonable job of securing the border. I don't think anybody expects the border in a big country like ours to be so impenetrable that nobody could ever get in under any circumstances. I think they do expect that when you have found the 90- or 95-percent solution, appearing until now to be affordable and widely supported—when you have found the 90-percent solution, people do expect that at the very least that you would apply the 90-percent standard to the responsibility of the government to secure its borders.

So whether it is trying to figure out what we need in our workforce to have a continued growing and vibrant economy or it is trying to figure out what we do about people who have come here and decided to stay, whether they came here across the border or in some other way but stayed beyond the time they were supposed to be here or got here without going through the normal process—those are going to be much easier to come to a conclusion on if people know that the government has done its job to get the border under an acceptable and anticipated level of security, which we would expect to have in a country as strong and vibrant as ours.

Particularly for people who were brought here and grew up here, this is an 80-percent issue in the Congress and in the country. Virtually nobody thinks kids who grew up here and didn't get in significant trouble shouldn't be allowed to live in the country they grew up in. Frankly, we need them. We need young people entering the workforce. We need people who are, in almost all cases, highly motivated.

I talked to a university president just this week who said that these kids are the kids who, over and over again, set the standard. They are the kids who, over and over again, prove why we want them to be in our country.

These problems will be much more solvable if we will just deal with the one fundamental problem of controlling our borders, of having immigration laws that work.

I hope, as was mentioned earlier today, that we can get to this conclusion and get to this conclusion quickly. This is obviously a place where we need to come together. Not only does the government need to function, but this is an issue we need to solve, and I guarantee that all of these related issues will be more easily solved if we secure the border.

No President has ever had the credibility that this President will have if he says to the American people: I have met my commitment. The border is secure. We are now continuing to work to be sure that the court systems work, that we have protected those people who protect us on the border. There is great credibility here if the President is willing to get to a place that he can say that.

I think his efforts to secure the border are significant steps toward allowing us to solve the other problems we need to solve, and we need to solve them sooner rather than later.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:20 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. COTTON).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CONSTITUTING THE MAJORITY PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP ON CERTAIN COMMITTEES FOR THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sen-

ate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 12, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 12) to constitute the majority party's membership on certain committees for the One Hundred Sixteenth Congress, or until their successors are chosen.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 12) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

CONSTITUTING THE MINORITY PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP ON CERTAIN COMMITTEES FOR THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 13, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 13) to constitute the minority party's membership on certain committees for the One Hundred Sixteenth Congress, or until their successors are chosen.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 13) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

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

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.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, this shutdown is not a negotiation situation. This is a hostage situation.