continue your studies. Yet, for many of our young people, these school lockdowns have been a disaster in terms of their educations. So we need to do more in that area as well.

Common sense tells us that, when you are sitting across the table, negotiating with somebody, if 80 percent of what you are talking about is agreed to, the process should move along pretty quickly because nobody gets 100 percent of what one wants around here. It is just not possible. While it is unfortunate it has taken us so long to reach this point, I am encouraged that maybe, just maybe—now with the deadline for government funding runing out tonight at 12 midnight—this is forcing action and that a deal is in sight.

There has been more bipartisan cooperation and communication over the last several days than there has been in the last several months. A lot of people have put a lot of effort into this on a bipartisan basis, and now the decision is with what we call the "four corners"-rank-and-file Members of the House and Senate. We are not going to have a chance to amend this deal. It is going to be proposed by Speaker Pelosi, Democratic Leader Schumer, Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and the White House. So I am sure it is not going to be perfect. Unfortunately, we will not have a chance to make it better. I hope the partisan divisions that have paralyzed Congress for much of the year do not rear their ugly heads in these final hours and at this critical stage of negotiation.

There is too much at stake for us to go home for the holidays emptyhanded. There are too many people who are hurting, too many people who are anxious. The number of people having overdosed by self-medicating since the virus hit is, I think, about 80,000, I read. You can imagine people selfmedicating, whether it is with alcohol or drugs or people who are trapped with an abuser, either a spousal abuser or a child abuser. Because they are not going to school, their teachers can't look for signs of that abuse and get them help. Reports of child sexual abuse are down 40 percent. It is not because it is not happening; it is because kids aren't in school, where teachers and others can come to their aid.

I can only imagine a single mom, say, with three kids of different ages at home, trying to continue their educations, but she is worried: How do I keep working—maybe she is an essential worker—so she can pay the bills to put food on the table and pay the rent. Can you imagine the chaos and stress?

There is too much at stake for us to go home for the holidays emptyhanded. We need to remember we are not here for our benefit; we are here for the benefit of the people we are honored to represent—in my case, 29 million Texans. We have a fiduciary responsibility. We are in a position of trust. They have entrusted us with their welfare.

The American people have waited long enough. We can't let them down again. We are on the 5-yard line, and we need to deliver. We need to get this done and get this done soon.

I vield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The

clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 8428

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we had a hearing this week, the Immigration Subcommittee of Senate Judiciary, and Senator BLUMENTHAL was there with me and others. We listened to people from Hong Kong tell the story of what is happening because of the repressive regime in Beijing and what is happening to those in Hong Kong who are demonstrating in favor of democracy.

This hearing on the crisis in Hong Kong also raised a lot of questions about the United States and our own immigration and refugee policy toward those who are being persecuted.

At the hearing, there was some powerful testimony. I recall one of the witnesses, Mr. Chu, who said that he was aware of students-Chinese studentscurrently in the United States who have already been designated as enemies of the state by China and who, if they are forced to return to China, will face prosecution, imprisonment, and who knows. It was a very personal story because these people are friends of his who, through no fault of their own, only speaking out against the regime in Beijing, now will face long prison sentences if forced to return to China.

I am amazed, as I meet these people from China and Hong Kong, at the courage they show. Mr. Chu, for example, had come to the United Statesbeen sent to the United States by his father at the age of 12 because his father had made a practice of helping the Chinese who had demonstrated on Tiananmen Square and providing the equivalent of an underground railroad for them to escape China. I guess the people in Beijing were on his heels, and so to protect his family, he sent his 12year-old son to the United States, who has lived here for a number of years. He is an American citizen now.

This repression and the Chinese Government meddling in the lives of the people of Hong Kong are appalling. Thousands of protestors in Hong Kong have been persecuted for fighting for the liberties that we Americans routinely say we enjoy—freedoms of assembly and speech, the right to vote, due process, and the rule of law.

The national security law imposed on Hong Kong by the Chinese Communist Party in June has enabled the ruthless abuse of protesters, political leaders, journalists, and teachers. Despite its name, the national security law is not about security; it is about fear—fear of the voices in Hong Kong calling for reform of democracy and freedom.

I believe my colleagues on both sides of the aisle share my feelings about the crisis in Hong Kong, but the question today is, What are we willing to do about it?

Last week, on a unanimous voice vote, the House of Representatives passed the bipartisan Hong Kong People's Freedom and Choice Act, which would grant temporary protected status to Hong Kong residents currently in the United States and provide an opportunity for refugee status to Hongkongers facing persecution.

At Wednesday's Judiciary Committee hearing, we received a clear message: Congress needs to pass the Hong Kong People's Freedom and Choice Act in the Senate now. We can do it. In fact, we can do it today. Think about the message it would send from the United States to Hong Kong and to the world if we sent this bill to the President's desk to be signed into law. It is bipartisan. It was unanimous in the House. It is timely, and it addresses a real problem.

Under the bill, Hong Kong would be designated for TPS for 18 months. To qualify for TPS status, eligible Hongkongers currently in the United States would need to first clear a criminal history and national security screening and pay a \$360 filing fee.

Some of the critics have said: We can't trust the Chinese in the United States. They may be spies.

That is why we require, under the TPS, that anyone applying for this TPS status has to go through a criminal background check and a national security screening.

I want America to be safe—we all do—but just to categorically say "If you are from China or from Hong Kong, you are a suspicious character, and we don't want you to stay here" isn't fair. It isn't realistic.

Sixty-seven hundred students are here now legally in the United States from Hong Kong and China, and they were admitted to the United States under standards and investigations. They are students at our universities, and they would qualify for this important temporary humanitarian protection so that they aren't forced to return to a literally dangerous situation.

TPS can be granted by the President if he wishes, but the Trump administration has failed to protect Hongkongers in need.

This bill also establishes expedited refugee and asylum access for qualified individuals and their family members. This would enable persecuted Hongkongers to register with any U.S. Embassy or Consulate, or with the Department of Homeland Security if they are in the United States.

Refugees and asylees would be required to meet all legal requirements and pass background checks before

being granted status in the United States. That is just not a minor administrative chore. We are serious about it. If you want to come to the United States as a refugee or asylee, we will do everything we can to make certain that you are no danger to anyone in the United States.

The refugee policies of this outgoing administration have put at risk Hongkongers who are fleeing Chinese persecution, not to mention millions of other vulnerable refugees. Since the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States has resettled on average of 80,000 refugees a year. That is our annual average since 1980. However, in the midst of the worst refugee crisis in history, the current Trump administration has set record low refugee admissions figures for 4 years in a row, culminating in the lowest levels in history this year at 15,000—from 80,000 to 15,000.

How many refugees has the United States admitted from Hong Kong in the last year? Zero—not one.

When you look at what the Communist Chinese Party is doing in China, threatening these demonstrators who are marching in the streets for things that we say over and over are the underpinnings of our democracy, and to think that we have not granted one single person in Hong Kong refugee status is hard to imagine. The Trump administration has deciprotections mated legal for Hongkongers and other innocent victims of persecution.

For example, under the rule issued last week, Hongkongers could be denied asylum if they transit other countries on the way to the United States, if persecutors detain them for only a brief period, or if persecutors were not able to carry out their threats before the activist fled.

According to the testimony of the Hong Kong Democracy Council executive director, Samuel Chu, on Wednesday—I mentioned him earlier—the people most immediately at risk in Hong Kong are the approximately 10,000 individuals who have been arrested by the Chinese Government crackdown.

Make no mistake. We know what the Chinese Communist Party is up to. As for these concentration camps—they call them reeducation camps—that they created for the Uyghurs, we know what they are doing. They characterize them in many different ways, but we have seen this throughout history. The question is, What are we going to do about it?

We are going to protest what is happening to the people in Hong Kong, but will we take one step—even one small step—to provide them security and safety?

Not all of them are going to wish to leave Hong Kong, I understand that. Some of them can't. Some of them may receive assistance from another country. The British Prime Minister has offered a path to citizenship to up to 3 million Hongkongers eligible for over-

seas passports. The Australian Government has stepped in with visa options for students and workers from Hong Kong. Canada announced multiple new immigration measures supporting Hong Kong residents, including measures to help Hong Kong students in Canada.

I have a basic question. What are we going to do? You hear this about the British stepping up, the Australians stepping up, the Canadians stepping up. Where is the United States?

This is our chance today. Senator BLUMENTHAL is going to make a unanimous consent request to actually have the United States do something.

One country cannot take in all the refugees from Hong Kong nor should it be expected to, but surely the United States of America, the most powerful nation on the Earth and, we hope, a model for democracy in the world, cannot protest what is happening to the repressive regime of Beijing and then do nothing.

Passing the Hong Kong People's Freedom and Choice Act is urgently needed. The situation continues to deteriorate. We need to do it and do it We need auickly. to protect Hongkongers in need. Think about the message that it sends to the world if the United States agrees with Senator Blumenthal's request today and passes the measure that has already passed the House of Representatives and it becomes the law of the land. How will the Chinese Government pass that off as insignificant, when all of these countries are basically saying their treatment of the people of Hong Kong is abominable?

We should act quickly. The Senate Judiciary Committee has failed to raise another bill, the Hong Kong Safe Harbor Act, sent to it 6 months ago. So they have had their opportunity in the committee to do something. Under the Democratic majority, the House did their job and acted quickly with a bipartisan bill.

We have seen a lot of speeches on both sides of the aisle about how mad we are at the Chinese Government. The question today, in the next few minutes, is, Are we mad enough to do something?

Do something significant. I ask the Senate to join the House in passing the Hong Kong People's Freedom and Choice Act now. Let's send this bill to the President and send a strong message to the people of Hong Kong that they are not in this alone.

How fortunate I am to have a colleague like Dick Blumenthal. We see eye-to-eye on this issue. He jumped on the measure and said he wanted to move on it, and I thought, darn, I wish I would have been the first one, but I am happy to accompany him on this effort.

I sincerely hope that this is truly bipartisan. If our protest against the Communist Party of China is meaningful and bipartisan, it will be powerful. I yield to my colleague, Senator BLUMENTHAL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am really honored to follow Senator DURBIN, a staunch and steadfast champion of refugees and immigration reform who, year after year, has shown the courage to stand up on this issue.

And to emphasize a point that he has made, there is an urgency to our acting. There is a sense that time is not on our side for the lives at stake here. The world has watched in horror as China has cracked down on the incipient democracy movement in Hong Kong. We have seen the yellow umbrellas. We have seen the marchers in the streets and the brutality and the cruelty of the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese authorities, using clubs and guns with the kind of thuggishness that has come to characterize the Chinese anti-democracy movement there and around the world. We have an opportunity to take a stand and speak out and do something in defense of the brave protesters who are risking their

We have seen this kind of democracy movement before. We know it is in the great tradition of our country to stand with those protestors and those marchers who are saying to the Chinese Government: We will not let you break the agreement that you did in 1984 with the United Kingdom to preserve these freedoms and to make Hong Kong an outpost of democracy in the repressive regime of China. We will not let you chip away at our rights or extradite our people to China. That law was the spark that ignited these protests. We will not let you mock our demand for freedom and democracy.

The Hong Kong People's Freedom and Choice Act of 2020 was passed unanimously in the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support, and it would very simply give those protesters protective status in this country, the greatest Nation in the history of the world, saying to them: We will give you a safe harbor. We will give you a place where you can be protected.

And remember, what the Chinese are saying is: You can be indicted. You can be arrested. No matter where you are in the world, if you violated our law, we will bring you back.

And we would say to those protestors who are simply demanding fundamental freedoms that often we take for granted here: We will give you protective status. We will give you temporary protective status right away. We will make sure that you have that safe harbor.

Now, I know that my colleagues, Senators Rubio and Menendez, have a bill that is actually called the Hong Kong Safe Harbor Act. We had a hearing on it the other day in the Judiciary Committee. All of my colleagues expressed support for the individuals who came to us asking us to act on that measure.

The Hong Kong People's Freedom and Choice Act of 2020, in fact, would go beyond that measure, only to say that you don't have to be formally charged in China and you don't have to be in specific categories of protestor. You can be a journalist, and you can get temporary protective status. It would also say that you don't have to demonstrate individually a fear of persecution, but you do have to be screened. You do have to demonstrate that you are not going to be a national security threat.

My colleague Senator DURBIN is absolutely right to make this point. Nobody wants Chinese spies in this country. There would be a background check and a screening just as there are for other refugees under this measure.

The other day, at this hearing, we heard from Samuel Chu and Nathan Lau and we heard from Joey Su. These activists are fighting for their freedom. We heard their stories, so powerful and moving. Their faces and voices should be heard and heeded in this body.

We are far removed here in this sedate setting from the clamor and the cruelty of those streets in Hong Kong, where men and women have stood bravely against the physical brutality and force of the Chinese regime. But we should send a message to the world: We are going to stand with those refugees who come here heeding the lady who stands in New York Harbor with a message of hope and freedom. The same lady who many of our forebears in this Chamber saw when they came to this country-like my dad, in 1935, at the age of 17, alone, seeking to escape persecution in Germany, speaking no English, knowing virtually no one, having not much more than the shirt on his back but believing—believing that America would offer him the safety of freedom as a refugee.

That is our tradition in this country. It goes beyond party, geography, race, or religion. It is what makes America truly great. We are a nation of immigrants and refugees, and my hope is, as I stand here, that we will have the same unanimity in this body as the House did, despite all the other divisions that persist at this point; that we will have the respect for the moral imperative to act now and make sure that we fulfill the message of America now that is more important than ever before in light of the repressive regimes, even in our own region, whether it is Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, where we can say to the world: We are going to stand by our principles, and we are going to do it now because of the urgency of this moment and the need of these refugees for temporary protective status.

Let us act now.

So, Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 8428, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and

passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, today, we have good news and bad news. The good news is that our Democratic colleagues are finally discovering that the Chinese Communists are not our friends. They are finally acknowledging that the Chinese Communists are murdering, torturing, oppressive tyrants, and our Democratic colleagues are likewise discovering that Hong Kong is a beacon for democracy and a beacon for liberty. That is, indeed, good news.

The bad news is, the bill that they have put forth is not designed to do anything about it. This is not a Hong Kong bill. It is, instead, a Democratic messaging bill because House Democrats made, I think, a cynical decision to try to exploit the crisis in Hong Kong to advance their longstanding goals of changing our immigration laws.

It is not news to anyone who has been watching the political battles of recent years to discover that our Democratic colleagues embrace open borders; that when it comes to illegal immigration, their preference is to make all immigration legal. This bill advances that longtime partisan political agenda that the Democrats have.

When it comes to standing up for Communist China, for 8 years I have led the fight in this Senate to stand up to Communist China. China is, I believe, the single greatest geopolitical threat facing the United States for the next century.

In October of last year, I traveled to Hong Kong as part of a friends and allies tour throughout Asia, met with the Hong Kong dissidents—those brave, young students standing in the streets, standing for freedom, and standing up against Chinese tyrants. I did a satellite interview on an American Sunday show from Hong Kong dressed in all black in solidarity with those protesters because Hong Kong today is, as I have said many times, the new Berlin. It is the frontline in the battle against Communist tyranny.

This bill, however, is not designed to fix that problem. Right now, today, under current law, individuals in Hong Kong are already eligible to become refugees under our immigration law. In fact, in July, President Trump explicitly expanded the number of refugee slots available and allocated them to Hong Kong. This bill, instead, is designed and would dramatically lower the standards for both refugee and asylum status to the point where individuals would qualify even if they cannot establish an individualized and credible fear of persecution.

The Senator from Connecticut just listed that as a virtue of this bill—that no longer would you have to establish a credible fear of persecution; instead,

this bill would dramatically lower that standard. There is no reason to lower that standard, and there is particular risk when doing so, we know, would be used by the Chinese Communists to send even more Chinese spies into the United States.

The Senator from Connecticut assured us: Well, don't worry. We will do a background check.

Well, the last I checked, when the Chinese Communist Government sends spies into our country, they are quite willing to concoct a bogus background portfolio of materials. Who do you think the Chinese Government would be seeing coming in? We just recently had news of Chinese spies targeting Members of Congress—targeting prominent Democrats. This is an espionage threat America faces of our adversaries taking advantage of our laws and targeting our leadership.

The truth also is that China has confiscated passports and, I am told, stopped issuing exit visas to persons deemed problematic. As a result, China is highly unlikely to let actual dissidents leave Hong Kong, so this bill isn't directed to help them.

But I will say this: We urgently need to have a real, substantive, bipartisan conversation about countering the Chinese Communist Party, about defending the United States of America, about standing up and winning this battle. This bill doesn't advance that objective, but what I am going to do is I am going to give our Democratic colleagues the opportunity to actually support legislation that would stand up to China.

So, momentarily, I am going to ask unanimous consent for one bill and discuss a second bill that I also later intend to ask unanimous consent to pass. But first, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I really regret this attack on a bill that was passed unanimously—Republicans, unanimously—a bipartisan bill by the House of Representatives. If my colleagues are serious about moving a bill to the desk of the President, only this bill will do it because only this bill has been passed by the House of Representatives.

There is an urgency to this cause for the sake of these refugees who haven't been permitted to leave their country, haven't been sent by China, haven't simply come into this country as potential espionage agents. They have come here because they fought for freedom in their country. So to say that we have discovered that we need to stand up to China, sorry about that, but it is just preposterous.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I yield to the Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I would ask the question through the Chair. Isn't it true

that this bill that we are promoting, which just passed the House unanimously on a bipartisan basis, also protects the 6,700 students here in the United States with student visas from being forced to return to Hong Kong when our State Department is warning Americans it is unsafe for them to travel to Hong Kong? Is that not true?

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. The Senator from Illinois is absolutely right, and I was just going to, as a matter of fact, make that point because I think it is central to the objection that has been raised

In fact, the people in danger here are already here. They are in danger if they are sent back, as they would be without that temporary protected status. So that point, I think, refutes, essentially, the argument that has just been made by our colleague from Texas.

Mr. DURBIN. If the Senator would yield further for a question—and this notion that the Chinese in the United States are all suspect spies, is it really—is that the point you want to make? Is that really the point you want to make? Do we have background checks involved here? Do we have screening involved here?

We are all intent on keeping America safe, but to categorize a group of people as all potential spies—and, therefore, they are going to all be fed to the lions of Beijing if they are returnedseems to me to be fundamentally unfair and not consistent with what America has learned about immigration. There were suspicions in World War II about all those people coming from Europe, and they were turned away, many of them to their death. We can't make that mistake again. If there is any suspect person, there is a way to determine that with screening, criminal background checks, and the

So the 6,700 who are here, we were told at the hearing—I think you were there; it may have been a minute or two before you arrived—one of them is a student of Georgetown, for example, who now has a price on his head from the Chinese Communist Party, and the question is whether we are going to force him to return into imprisonment. I don't think we want anyone who is suspected of spying on the United States at all, but to dismiss all of these people as possible spies doesn't sound to me—does it sound to you?—as consistent with who we are as a people.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. To answer the Senator from Illinois very directly, it is totally antithetical to the principles of democracy in the United States of America. It is totally abhorrent to the values of our constitutional Nation, and it is, frankly, absurd.

Here we are, according to my colleague from Texas, standing up and being tough on China, and we are doing what? We are sending back their opponents so they can imprison them and kill them? That is the notion of being tough on China—to enable them to im-

prison and kill their political opponents?

I ask my colleague from Texas to rethink the practical implications of this measure and to consider why the House of Representatives unanimously passed this. It doesn't lower the standards for political refugees coming to this country. It doesn't eliminate any security checks. It takes people, many of them living here already—not spies, by any means—and sends them back to the meat grinder of the repressive Chinese Communist Party. It may sound like good rhetoric to oppose this bill, but my colleague from Texas heard the testimony of these freedom fighters and why they need temporary protected status and why they support a safe harbor.

So I continue to insist that this bill, like the Rubio-Menendez bill, protects essential American values, and I ask him to reconsider his objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3835

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, my colleague from Connecticut just said that they were being tough on China. As I explained, this bill is not being tough on China.

But a bit of good news: They will have the opportunity, moments from now, to in fact be tough on China. I have introduced, roughly, a dozen separate pieces of legislation designed to do exactly that, to stand up to the Chinese Communist Government. I am glad also to see my Democratic colleagues discovering the human rights travesties that are playing out in

Look, my family knows the oppression of Communist governments. My father was imprisoned and tortured in Cuba. My aunt, my Tia Sonia, was imprisoned and tortured by Fidel Castro's thugs. So, when it comes for standing for dissidents, there is a reason why, for 8 years, I have gone to the Senate floor over and over again speaking up for dissidents who are being tortured and oppressed by Communists. Here is a chance for the Democrats to join us in that regard.

Mr. President, there are two separate bills that I have introduced that I am going to discuss. The first is a bill called the SCRIPT Act.

For years, we have known that China's surveillance state and censorship practices are used to maintain its human rights violations. And what this devastating pandemic has shown us is that China's surveillance state and its censorship practices are also profound threats to our national security, to our public health, and to our public debate, as the Chinese Government hid information about the COVID-19 pandemic that began in Wuhan, China, hid it for months on end and allowed millions across the globe to be threatened their lives and health and safety to be threatened

In addition to their espionage activities, the Chinese Communist Party in-

vests billions into spreading propaganda, even using American media outlets, telecommunication infrastructure, movies, and sports teams to spread their propaganda, from buying media outlets so that they broadcast propaganda into America to coercing Hollywood studios and sports leagues to self-sensor by threatening to cut off access to one of the world's largest The Chinese Communist markets. Party spends billions and billions of dollars to mislead Americans about China and to try to shape what we see. what we hear and think.

All of these activities are part of China's whole-of-state approach to amass influence around the world through information warfare, and we need to stand together to stop it.

That is why I will be momentarily asking for unanimous consent on the SCRIPT Act, which would cut off Hollywood studios from the assistance they currently receive from the U.S. Federal Government if those studios allow the Chinese Communist Government to sensor what they are producing.

We have seen this pattern over and over and over again—Hollywood being complicit in China's censorship and propaganda in the name of bigger profit. "Bohemian Rhapsody," a wonderful biography of Freddie Mercury and story of the band Queen-well, the Chinese Government was upset that Freddie Mercury was homosexual and demanded that Hollywood sensor scenes that showed that Freddie Mercury was homosexual. And Hollywoodthose great, woke social warriors that they are—compliantly said: We are more interested in the money than in artistic integrity, than in telling Freddie Mercury's story, so the Chinese Government will happily edit out those scenes.

"Doctor Strange," another movie—comic book movie—in "Doctor Strange," they changed the Ancient One's character from being from Tibet, which is how it is portrayed in the comic book, to Celtic because, you know, the Chinese Communist censors, they don't want to recognize Tibet—another area that has been subject to persecution and oppression from China—and Hollywood meekly complied.

In the sequel to "Top Gun," the back of Maverick's jacket—if you remember the first "Top Gun," maybe the greatest Navy recruiting film ever made—you find the Taiwanese flag and the Japanese flag. The Chinese censors didn't like that, and so Hollywood meekly removed the flags. What does it say to the world when Maverick is scared of the Chinese Communists?

I would point out, unfortunately, the Chinese censorship is being carried out by Hollywood billionaires who are getting richer in the process.

In recent days, it has been reported that one of Joe Biden's top potential choices to be Ambassador to China is the former CEO of Disney, who happens