

I hear from Tennesseans every single day who feel like they are fighting a losing battle against the erosion of our basic values. Their government is drowning in debt. The crime rate has gone from bad to absolutely terrifying. And classrooms have become battlegrounds in the culture war between woke bureaucrats and parents who just want to rear their children as they see fit.

Slowly but surely, activists are forcing themselves between parents and their children, stripping words and institutions of their meaning and using their power to eliminate dissent. It is no way to run a classroom, and it is no way to run a country either. But right now, these parents I am talking to are looking at Washington and seeing the left use these same tactics to convince whoever gives credence to these unhinged headlines that reality is somehow up for debate.

They are not going to tolerate it anymore, not from Congress, not from the White House, and certainly not from the Supreme Court.

I think it bears repeating that the purpose of the Supreme Court is to interpret the law, not to take up arms in a culture war. I cannot in good conscience give my endorsement to a Supreme Court nominee whose first instinct was to chip away at the very foundation of the law rather than challenge the expectations of radical political activists.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, we are at a critical point in our battle against COVID-19. While we are still losing Americans to the virus, we have reached a stage where most of us are able to resume many of the daily activities we used to regard as normal. But our sustained effort to improve health outcomes and keep our economy on track is running out of funding. Now is the time to act.

Over the last 2 years, our communities have taken necessary mitigation measures. Healthcare and frontline workers have given everything they have to care for our loved ones. The Biden administration, with funding provided through the American Rescue Plan, has worked hard to ensure we had the resources necessary to continue to adapt our response to COVID-19.

After the peak of the Omicron variant, the reduced COVID-19 transmissions has made it safer to reconnect with friends and family and resume some of the activities we have all missed during the past 2 years. Due to the tireless work of the Biden administration, testing capacity and therapeutics are more available than they have been at any time during the pandemic. Over 81 percent of Americans who are 5 years or older have had at least one COVID-19 vaccination, and nearly 50 percent of Americans who are eligible are fully vaccinated and have

had a booster. In Maryland, 91 percent of Marylanders 5 and older have had at least one COVID-19 vaccination shot.

Overall, we have made significant strides in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, but the threat is not over. Many Americans have children who are too young to be vaccinated and are immunocompromised or otherwise at high risk, so they may not be able to resume normal activities. While positivity rates and hospitalizations are decreasing, almost 700 Americans still are dying, on average, each day.

Additionally, new variants continue to emerge. Countries across Europe and Asia have seen new spikes in cases due to a more contagious version of Omicron known as BA.2. We could soon see a renewed surge as we are oftentimes only weeks behind rising cases in Europe. This latest subvariant already makes up 35 percent of the cases here in the United States.

Fortunately, at this stage, BA.2 appears no more severe than the original Omicron variant. In the United Kingdom, however, as BA.2 increased, children 2 to 11 years old had the highest rate of infections of any group in the country, the younger children.

To respond rapidly to emerging variants, we must keep financing pandemic prevention and response needs. The White House and the Department of Health and Human Services have made it clear that at least \$22.5 billion of additional funding is necessary to replenish pandemic prevention programs that are nearing completion or have already been depleted. Without these funds, we will have to cut back on critical aspects of the pandemic response.

Here are some examples. Our national testing capacity will decline, leaving us vulnerable and less able to detect emerging variants. It will become harder to diagnose infections early enough to take effective treatments. Also, uninsured individuals may no longer be able to access vaccines, tests, and treatments for free. This will cut off a critical support for uninsured individuals and health providers who care for them if they become ill with COVID-19.

In addition to testing and acute care, vital COVID-19 research will suffer if we do not provide sufficient funding. Continued development of new medications and vaccines is critical, but without additional funding, research will stop, leaving us potentially vulnerable to a variant resistant to our current arsenal. Specifically, the National Institutes of Health may shut down some of its COVID-19 research.

Further, the Food and Drug Administration recently granted an emergency use authorization for a new monoclonal antibody treatment that is effective against the Omicron variant. Without additional funding, however, the Federal Government won't be able to continue ordering the monoclonal antibody treatments, vital therapies for immunocompromised patients, and

antiviral pills, all of which are already in short supply.

Additional funding is critically important if we want to see the United States continue its leadership role in distributing vaccinations across the world to prevent more and worse variants from taking off and arriving on our shores.

I will continue to fight to ensure that we get additional COVID-19 funding. The American Rescue Plan Act demonstrated our ability to pass legislation that quickly ramped up pandemic response efforts and effectively mitigated the negative economic impact of the pandemic. This legislation has been critical in helping individuals and communities respond to the challenges brought on by the pandemic. Local governments have had to provide essential services at an unprecedented level, and they have risen to the occasion without falling into financial ruin. Now is not the time to take the foot off the gas.

Restaurants, for example, still need help. The American Rescue Plan created the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, but the \$28.6 billion provided to the program was not enough to meet demand. I remain gravely disappointed that the fiscal year 2022 omnibus spending package Congress passed earlier this month did not include additional assistance for restaurants and other hard-hit small businesses. For the last 2 years of the pandemic, nearly all restaurants have been under great strain as they have struggled to keep staff and adapt to the new variants, while facing increased pricing due to supply chain disruptions and inflation. And those have been the restaurants fortunate enough to survive the pandemic. Thousands have closed their doors for good.

More than 100,000 restaurants received grants from the Restaurant Revitalization Fund that have helped them keep their doors open, but more than 180,000 restaurants that submitted their applications on time to receive funds—their applications were there—have received no funds at all. That is not fair, and they desperately need our help.

If Congress had not acted quickly to replenish the Paycheck Protection Program when it ran out of money weeks after it opened in April 2020—and we did that, by the way, with strong, almost unanimous support, and it was hundreds of billions of dollars that we were short—the program would have been a half-measure, necessary but not sufficient. Instead, we extended the emergency aid needed to meet the crisis we faced, and that is exactly what we need to do again with the Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

For the past 2 years plus, I have worked hard to secure vital resources to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that those who are struggling from the economic effects or emotional toll have the necessary support going forward. I will continue that fight.

The novel virus continues to challenge our Nation and the world, so we must be prepared. I urge the Senate to pass necessary additional funding for COVID-19 relief so Americans can continue to face this challenge head-on and prevail.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO STEVE A. SCOTT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, this evening, I want to take just a few moments to recognize Pittsburg State University President Steve Scott. His long tenure at PSU—over three decades in total—has shepherded the university through various challenges and a period of growth.

Since taking the helm as president in 2009, he has led through a recession, enrollment and recruitment challenges in a global pandemic.

Early on during the pandemic, as our world was shutting down, I hosted a Crawford County virtual check-in with area leaders. President Scott was on that Zoom call. It was one of the many Zoom calls we have made over the last several years. During that conversation, President Scott said that there were three things to do when leading during difficult times: One, tell the truth; two, give people hope; and three, tell people how they can help. That advice has stuck with me and has helped guide my work and my conversations with Kansans ever since, and it is good advice that we can follow yet today.

But President Scott's legacy is not only marked by challenges. Pittsburg State has seen tremendous growth and opportunity over the past decades: the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts, Block22, the expansion of the Overman Student Center, the Plaster Center, and many other positive developments.

These encouraging things highlight his emphasis on being a good community partner and his success in further integrating the university with the city of Pittsburg, Crawford County, and the region.

If you have ever been to Pittsburg on game day to cheer on the Gorilla's football team, it is clear how well the university pulls the community together.

I have always enjoyed walking through Gorilla Village with President Scott to visit with students and community members—with "Welcome to the Jungle," of course, playing in the background.

It is during these events that it is clear how well he relates to students, how much he cares for them and enjoys hearing their goals and their dreams or, for graduates, what they have accomplished since leaving campus.

I am of the view that we change the world one soul, one student, one person

at a time. Education is one of the most impactful ways we can do that, and I appreciate President Scott's dedication to serving students for the past 30 years.

I also appreciate how closely he has worked with me and my staff to advocate for Kansas higher education and identify ways the Federal Government can invest in the campus to move both Kansans and Kansas forward.

President Steve Scott will be celebrated this Friday in Pittsburg and step down from his position as president in June, but before he does so, I want him to know how grateful I am and Kansans are for his service.

He is a public servant through and through, and I look forward to seeing what he does next. Whatever it may be, I wish him and Cathy the very best.

President Scott, thank you for your friendship. Thank you for making a difference in so many lives. We are grateful for what you have done at Pittsburg State University. Best to you and your family.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. PORTMAN. I am here on the floor today to talk about border security, an issue that is intertwined with our national security and, certainly, with the drug epidemic that we see in our communities around the country. We are in the middle right now of the worst border crisis in the history of our country.

This chart tells the story.

Monthly border crossings are at an unprecedented level. Customs and Border Protection reports that there were 164,973 encounters at the border in February. By the way, that is equal to the population of Dayton, OH. Actually, it is far greater than the population of Dayton, OH.

So we have never had this kind of illegal migration into the country—this many people being apprehended. They told us last week that they are seeing over 7,000 migrants per day in this month, in March, and this is while something called title 42 is in effect.

What is title 42?

Well, despite these really big numbers you see here in terms of the number of people being apprehended at the border, under what is called title 42, which is a public health authority—it has nothing to do with immigration, really. It is about public health, and it is in place because of COVID-19. It allows the Customs and Border Protection folks to say: Sorry, you can't come into the United States for public health reasons. And, therefore, they can be turned away.

So that order is in place right now. Here is how that has worked. If you look at this chart, you will see the people who have been turned away because of title 42, in orange. Those are the numbers in orange. Those who have been allowed to come into the country are in blue.

You will see here, at the end of the last administration, in the Trump years, when we had for the most part a secure border, we had very few illegal entries. We had about 75 percent of the people who were coming in who were turned away by title 42.

In this administration, it is closer to about 50 percent. About 50 percent of the people are being turned away by title 42.

Why is this important? Well, obviously, we are making progress on COVID. COVID-19, we all hope, is not going to be here forever. There may be another variant out there, but as we are relaxing mask mandates and telling people that they don't have a vaccination mandate anymore to be able to come to work or travel across our borders, we are hearing reports that the Biden administration may rescind title 42, so get rid of this authority within the next several weeks.

And do you know what? Unless we have a new variant, God forbid, that comes in and causes a new health crisis, they are probably right. Title 42 shouldn't be used in this way because it is a public health authority, not an immigration law. The problem is that if that happens—remember, we already have an unprecedented number of people coming into the country. Look at this chart. If that happens, then all these folks who are being turned away—the orange bars here—are going to be coming across the border also without title 42 in place to have them be turned away. This is why the Border Patrol tells me—and I know the Presiding Officer hears the same thing all the time—that they are already overwhelmed. But they say it will be out of control.

Now, some may argue it is already out of control. But it is going to get a whole lot worse. So they are worried on the border, and rightly so, that the current crisis is going to become far worse.

My two colleagues from Arizona, both Democrats, to my understanding, have just asked President Biden to keep title 42 in place. And I think that makes sense to keep it in place right now because we are not ready for a huge increase of migrants coming across the border. We can't handle the current wave. The information we received from the Department of Homeland Security is that they are planning for a massive increase of migrants when this happens.

I am the ranking Republican—the top Republican—on the Department of Homeland Security oversight committee, called the HSGAC Committee, or Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. We are talking to