

It is a really hard time to be in the business of feeding America. But it didn't have to be this way. It didn't have to be this way. Washington Democrats didn't have to ram through a multitrillion-dollar wish list of inflationary spending last spring. The Biden administration didn't have to declare war on affordable American energy on day one.

Needless to say, millions of working American families sit down for dinner these days wondering why on Earth they did.

TRIBUTE TO KENNY KLEIN

Mr. President, now finally, on one totally different matter, it is my privilege today to pay honor to an iconic Kentuckian.

The NCAA basketball season may only last 5 months, but for our outgoing University of Louisville media relations manager and Senior Associate Athletic Director Kenny Klein, the game has been a four-decade odyssey.

When Kenny joined the U of L program in 1983, he was the youngest Sports Information Director at an NCAA Division I football school. Now some might have doubted this young Tennessean could manage U of L's impassioned fan base or Louisville's prickly sports reporters, but he proved them all wrong. Long after games ended, after players went back to the locker rooms, after fans returned home, Kenny would stay in his office well into the night. He would pore over notes and statistics to perfect his answers to journalists' questions, and he would stash a cold beer in his desk for any reporter who spent the long nights with him.

He was there for the team's highs—888 wins, two NCAA titles—and he deftly managed the team's lows as well. Referring to Kenny's flawless handling of media frenzies, one former Courier-Journal sports journalist suggested Kenny could run a course in crisis management in his retirement. That kind of sterling praise from an adversarial journalist, no less, is proof of Kenny's magic touch with the media.

Over the course of his long career, he became the face U of L basketball to fans spanning generations. As an example, the star player of the 1986 championship squad Kenny Payne arrived on campus during Klein's second year on the job. And next year, Payne will be on the court coaching the school's basketball program. So students, athletes, and administrators came and went, but they could always count on Kenny Klein's constant presence.

Since announcing his retirement, Kenny has received an outpouring of support from across the country, including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the College Sports Information Directors of America.

Everyone, from Louisville's newest students to Kenny's biggest fan in the U.S. Capitol, is sad to see him leave his post. And we are glad that, after some

begging, he has promised to stay at U of L in a reduced capacity.

So we all wish him the best in the next chapter of his extraordinary life.

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.

TITLE 42

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 3 weeks ago, a Federal judge blocked the Biden Administration from lifting title 42 COVID restrictions. It was a welcome decision that will hopefully stave off an additional flood of illegal immigration on our southern border. But it has been pretty much the only bit of good news on this front, because the situation at our southern border is out of control.

In April, U.S. Customs and Border Protection encountered 234,088 individuals attempting to cross our border illegally—234,088. That is the highest number ever recorded.

The Border Patrol is stretched thin. A recent article reported that “around 60 percent of CBP agents have been assigned to process migrants, taking them away from field work.” Sixty percent. Detention facilities are overflowing and massive numbers of illegal immigrants are being released into the country, many of whom will never report to an immigration office as ordered.

In short, our southern border is in chaos, and if title 42 is lifted, the situation is almost guaranteed to become much worse.

The Department of Homeland Security has estimated that as many as 18,000 migrants per day could attempt to cross our southern border if the policy is lifted. Eighteen thousand per day—that is more than double the number we are currently experiencing, and the administration has yet to implement any plan for dealing with such a situation.

Illegal immigration, especially the kind of out-of-control illegal immigration we are now experiencing, has serious consequences. Criminals, including human traffickers, drug smugglers, and gang members, regularly attempt to cross our southern border. The worse the situation at our border gets, the easier it is for those individuals to make their way into the United States, and that has consequences for our entire country.

South Dakota law enforcement officials tell me that they are seizing drugs that they can trace directly back to the cartels who smuggle these drugs across our border. Our country is currently in the midst of a fentanyl crisis. In fact, right now, fentanyl overdose is the leading cause of death for U.S. adults between the ages of 18 and 45. And where is all this fentanyl coming

from? Most of it is being trafficked across our southern border; and when more and more of our Customs and Border Protection agents have been pulled off the border to process migrants, it is pretty much a guarantee that drug smugglers are having a much easier time in getting their product into the country.

I mentioned that Customs and Border Protection encountered more than 234,000 individuals who were attempting to cross our southern border illegally in the month of April, but that number only reflects individuals the CBP has actually apprehended. In April, Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas testified that, in addition to the 1.7 million apprehensions at the southern border in fiscal year 2021, there were more than 389,000 “gotaways”—individuals the Border Patrol saw but was unable to apprehend.

The Economist recently reported:

One border expert estimates that less than 20 percent of people trying to cross the border undetected are stopped.

The administration has attempted to suggest that the surge in illegal immigration that we have been experiencing since President Biden took office is, in large part, a function of conditions in other countries; but while these factors exist—and there are legitimate asylum claims at the border—that doesn't mean there is nothing the President can do about our out-of-control border situation. Better border security is well within the President's control. He is just not interested in putting it in place, and his Vice President has all but formally abandoned her role as border czar.

In fact, since taking office, the President has invited increased illegal immigration with the policy decisions that he has made. On his very first day in office, President Biden rescinded the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border; he halted construction of the border wall; he revoked a Trump administration order that called for the government to faithfully execute our immigration laws; and his Department of Homeland Security issued guidelines pausing deportations except under certain conditions. That was all—all—on his first day in office.

Needless to say, the effect of all of this was to declare to the world that the U.S. borders were effectively open. And, of course, the President's anti-border security efforts didn't end there.

The President has significantly limited the ability of Immigration and Customs Enforcement to enforce immigration laws. Deportations dropped precipitously during fiscal year 2021, as did arrests in the interior of the country. In March, the administration rescinded a 2019 rule expanding the expedited removal for individuals here illegally; and as I have mentioned, of course, the administration is attempting to remove title 42 COVID-19 restrictions with no visible plan to control the resulting surge in illegal immigration.

President Biden has made it known that he wants to create a “fair, orderly, and humane” immigration system. Well, he is failing on all fronts. I don’t need to tell anyone that the situation at the southern border, right now, is far from orderly, but it is also not humane. The President and other members of his party tend to convey an attitude that strong border security and the enforcement of our Nation’s immigration laws are somehow not compassionate or humane. Well, they are wrong. We are seeing the effects of the President’s anti-border security policies at our southern border right now, and the results are neither compassionate nor humane.

Encouraging individuals to make the oftentimes dangerous journey to our southern border in the hopes they will be able to slip across illegally is not humane. Encouraging families and, at times, unaccompanied children to expose themselves to the dangers of heat and the elements and human trafficking is not compassionate. At least 557 migrants died while attempting to cross the southern border during fiscal year 2021. That, too, was a record number. How many of them were encouraged to make the journey by the President’s lax border policies?

And I haven’t even mentioned the lack of compassion and humanity the President displays for Americans affected by the illegal immigration crisis. Straining the resources of U.S. border communities by smoothing the way for illegal immigration and cross-border criminal activity is not compassionate. Making it easier for cartels to flood our Nation with fentanyl is not humane.

The President of the United States—any President—has a special responsibility for our Nation’s security, and that includes securing our Nation’s border. So far, President Biden has spectacularly failed to meet that responsibility. This week, a caravan of thousands has reportedly started working its way north, through Mexico, aligning with the Summits of the Americas.

It is long past time for the President to get serious about the border crisis that he has created, and this summit could be an opportunity for him to finally take action. I hope that he will reverse his current course before his administration’s signature accomplishment ends up being a legacy of chaos at our southern border.

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.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

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

HONORING OUR PACT ACT OF 2021

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, every Senator here has a serious responsibility to make sure that our veterans get the support and help they are promised after their service to our country, and that includes making sure that those who have been harmed by toxic exposures during their service get the service and care they deserve. It seems pretty simple, but I hope we can hold up our end of the bargain today.

My dad was a World War II veteran—he was a Purple Heart recipient—and when he got really sick with multiple sclerosis, help from the VA made a huge difference for my family. So I want to really thank Senators TESTER and MORAN for their persistent work on this bill. I am glad we have come to a bipartisan agreement on the PACT Act because it does matter, it will help people, and it will save lives.

Right now, the reality is that too many veterans are living with chronic illness and respiratory diseases as a result of toxic exposures from their time serving our country in uniform. I have heard countless stories about the challenges they have faced struggling to get access to VA care and benefits they have earned, and that is unacceptable.

I believe very strongly that no one who put their life or health on the line for our Nation should face hurdles getting the care or medical treatment they need as a result of that sacrifice. When they signed up to serve, we told them we would have their backs long after their service, so if we are going to live up to our promise, then we need to pass comprehensive legislation to ensure all veterans have access to the VA services they deserve. Simply put, we need to pass this PACT Act.

With this bill, generations of toxic-exposed veterans would finally be able to get the high-quality care they need, and the VA will get the resources needed to process claims efficiently and better serve our veterans.

I remember, back when I was 22 years old, I interned at the Seattle veterans hospital. I have visited with and met with VA staff in every part of Washington State. The doctors, the nurses, and everyone else working at our VA medical centers really care about this work, they care about this Nation, and they care about their mission, but they need us here in Congress to care just as much and fight just as hard for their patients, our veterans. That is really what this bill is about.

When VA was considering closing or reducing services in Walla Walla, I fought back to make sure that our veterans in rural Washington were able to see a doctor without having to drive 2 hours or longer, sometimes through a lot of rain and snow.

About 1 in every 10 residents in Washington State is a veteran, and I am privileged enough to serve on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. It is my job to be a voice for Washington

State veterans who are in Seattle or Spokane or Walla Walla or anywhere, and that is a job I take seriously. That is why I have been continually pressing the VA Secretary to cut redtape and make sure the VA caregivers program works for everyone who needs it, the way we wrote it. It is why I introduced the Helping Heroes Act to get families and kids of disabled veterans the assistance they need. It is why I will keep doing everything in my power to hold the VA accountable for its really unacceptable rollout of the electronic health record system in Washington State.

There is a lot we need to do to really make sure the VA works for veterans, but passing the PACT Act, getting this done, is an important and meaningful process.

Washington State veterans deserve the very best the VA has to offer, and there should be absolutely nothing controversial about making sure all veterans across all generations who are suffering from chronic illness get the care they have earned.

I am glad to see we have bipartisan support for this bill. Let’s get it done and to the President’s desk.

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

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

HEALTH INSURANCE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today on behalf of 9 million Americans who directly benefited from very important health insurance credits in the American Rescue Plan—credits that are set to expire at the end of the year if Congress doesn’t act. I don’t believe enough attention has been focused on this issue.

Last year, in March of 2021, we came to this very Chamber and passed the American Rescue Plan, which provided a crucial lifeline for so many families. We eliminated health insurance premiums for low-wage workers making less than 150 percent of the Federal poverty level, expanded eligibility for health insurance tax credits to middle-class families, and guaranteed that health coverage would not cost more than 8.5 percent of a person’s income. The American Rescue Plan also increased the size of the tax credit for all eligible income brackets, putting more money in workers’ pockets.

As a result, ACA health insurance premiums were brought down by an average of \$50 per person per month, and people in both New Mexico and in Minnesota took great advantage of that. As a result, a record number of Americans—14.5 million Americans—are enrolled in the Affordable Care Act health insurance plans. That is 2.5 million more people who signed up in a