

THE ECONOMY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, inflation continues to batter American families at a rate we have not seen in 40 years. Since last year, the prices of items that Texans use every day have increased more than 9 percent. That is, if your paycheck is still the same, you have 9 percent less purchasing power just since last year. At the grocery store, the price of bread is up nearly 11 percent. Chicken is up more than 17 percent. And the price of eggs has jumped a whopping 33 percent.

I sense there is a huge disconnect between the folks here in Washington—perhaps in Congress—that this does not have a dramatic effect in terms of our daily lives; but to the people we represent, the 29 million people I represent, this is real, it is happening now, and it is to the detriment of their quality of life.

Groceries aren't the only thing that are challenging family budgets. Electricity is up 14 percent.

I will be traveling with some colleagues to the Rio Grande Valley this afternoon. I looked at the weather forecast for today and tomorrow. It will be 104 degrees in the Rio Grande Valley; and, no, it will not be a dry heat. And demand on our electricity is real because people cannot live without air-conditioning and climate control; but in order to run your air-conditioning, you are going to have to pay 14 percent more for that electricity this year as opposed to last year.

Propane used at summer barbecues costs 26 percent more. And gasoline prices—there are about 280 million cars on the road today that run using gasoline. The price has jumped 60 percent since last year. If people want to go on a vacation, they just commute to work, they want to take their kids to summer camp, they have got to pay 60 percent more for gasoline than they did last year. And, for the first time, the national average price has exceeded \$5 a gallon. Over the last few weeks, thankfully, prices have fallen slightly—and I emphasize the word “slightly”—but there is no reason to celebrate. The national average is still about \$4.60 a gallon, which is about a buck and a half higher than it was last year alone.

So the American people are looking to Washington, DC, to their elected leaders, and they are wondering: Why aren't you doing something about it? They want to know what the Biden administration's plans are to address these rising costs, especially when it comes to things that are not—I mean, there are some things you can substitute for others. I even saw a woman on the news who said she decided to become a vegetarian because she couldn't afford the meat cost in the grocery store. But there are some things that are simply irreplaceable, and gasoline to drive your car is one of them.

Well, one of the most logical ways to increase the supply of gasoline—because it really is about supply and de-

mand—would be to boost American production of our domestic energy supply. That way, we could reap the economic benefits of strong production here at home, along with the jobs that go along with it. We could continue to use our capability to export things like natural gas to countries that previously were dependent almost exclusively on the Russian Federation.

Actually, the capacity of the United States to produce energy at home and export it around the world has changed the geopolitics of the planet in a very positive way. But, unfortunately, we see the Biden administration has taken a different approach. He knows that a part of his political base would have an absolute meltdown if the President showed anything other than contempt for the domestic energy producers. So he has come up with a different strategy that, frankly, makes no sense whatsoever.

So he is on a trip to the Middle East. He is going to visit with Muhammad bin Salman, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and ask him to increase production of oil and gas from not the United States but from Saudi Arabia. Forget American energy producers. President Biden would rather go, hat in hand, and talk to an autocrat, an oligarch in the Middle East, than take his boot off the neck of American energy producers.

So, apparently, the President is not anti-fossil fuels; he is just anti-American fossil fuels. President Biden's trip illustrates a remarkable show of his priorities. He views the crown prince in Saudi Arabia as a more dependable ally than energy producers in Texas.

Well, the decision to shop for oil in the Middle East instead of harnessing what is in our backyard is absolutely baffling. The sooner the administration views domestic energy producers as a friend and ally rather than enemies, the better we will all be off.

We are fortunate to live in a resource-rich country. Growing up, I learned in school that countries that are endowed with great natural resources have an advantage over other countries that do not have those natural resources. And we do have them here in the United States, along with the technology to develop them. But, for some strange reason, we just simply refuse to do so—take what is a gift and ignore it completely and go, hat in hand, and talk to autocrats in other parts of the world and ask them to do what we should be doing here domestically.

BORDER SECURITY

Well, Mr. President, on another matter, I am eager to head home this afternoon to Texas, where, as I mentioned, the weather is a little warm. We have been having, I think, about 33 days of plus-100-degree temperatures. And as I was telling some of my colleagues here, no, it is not a dry heat, which is usually the response when you tell somebody how hot it is. They say: Well, at least it is a dry heat.

It is not. It is very hot. But it is summertime in Texas, so we expect it, and we adjust to that.

But we are going specifically to the Rio Grande Valley, which is that 1,200-mile strip of land that is contiguous to Mexico, between Texas and Mexico. And we are going with some of our Senate colleagues so they can see for themselves what Senator CRUZ and I have seen before and have come to learn as a result of talking to the world's best experts in what is happening at the border, and that is the people who live and work there.

The men and women who live and work along our border are the experts and the best people to talk to and learn from, which is one reason why I continue to be disappointed that the Vice President, having been appointed border czar or immigration czar, has yet to make a substantive visit to the border to do what we will do this afternoon and tomorrow, which is to listen and learn. And maybe—just maybe—it would prompt a change in the failed policies which have created a huge humanitarian crisis. Well, the folks who live and work on the border know the strain this has placed on local law enforcement, on their hospitals, on their schools, and the danger it creates for their communities.

Just to be clear, I am not talking about safety concerns in those communities. Cities in the Rio Grande Valley and along Texas's southern border are not dangerous and lawless places, but the people who pass through there can be. And amid the 3 million people that the Border Patrol has encountered in the last year and a half, there, unfortunately, presents opportunities for people with criminal records and people who are members of gangs and drug traffickers to be obscured by the vast flow of these 3 million people.

But once people cross the border, they want to get to places like Chicago, San Diego, New York, Seattle, Atlanta. These are all places that have a presence of the drug cartels. What I don't think enough people realize is once the drugs come across the border—the same drugs that took the lives of 108,000 Americans last year through drug overdoses—once those drugs come across the border, the network by which they are distributed is largely criminal street gangs, who are also responsible for most of the violence in our communities across the country because they are fighting each other for territory, for market share, to sell these illegal drugs to unsuspecting consumers.

This is another reason for the spiking crime waves that we have seen in recent months across America. People want to act like this is something that is just contained in cities like Chicago, that it is a local problem. No. This is a systemic problem that flows from the Biden administration's unwillingness to provide any level of controls to people coming across the border or to deter people from making the long,

dangerous journey and perhaps dying in the process.

I have been in Brooks County, which is where the Falfurrias checkpoint is. What happens is the smugglers smuggle people across the border, they put them in stash houses, and then periodically they will get them in some vehicle and travel up the highway. But that is why we have Border Patrol checkpoints about 50, 60 miles inland. But what will happen is the smugglers will tell the migrants: Get out of the car and meet me on the north side of this checkpoint.

And maybe, if they are lucky, they will get an old milk carton full of water and maybe a power bar, something to sustain them. But I have seen the bleached bones of migrants who have been left behind and simply died in the process, and recognizing the extreme temperatures that exist, particularly at times like this in places like Texas, it is no surprise that a number of these migrants don't make it.

Well, our Border Patrol is simply the frontline in our law enforcement efforts along the border; but due to the failed policies of the Biden administration, the Border Patrol is unable to do the job that they swore to do, which is to defend and protect our borders, because they are simply overwhelmed by the number of people coming across.

Last month, the Rio Grande Valley Sector agents arrested 10 MS-13 members, one of the most violent gangs in the world, and 2 other gang members within a 4-day span—12 gang members in 4 days. And that was in just one of 20 Border Patrol sectors. Since October, the Border Patrol has arrested more than 450 gang members, and we have already surpassed the total for the entire previous year.

And the scary thing is, these are just the ones who were caught, because we know, with the volume of people coming across, there are what the Border Patrol calls the get-aways, and they estimate that as many as 300,000 more people are getting across the border unbeknownst to the Border Patrol because they are simply preoccupied with these huge numbers, and they get away into the interior of the country.

And once they get across the border, particularly if they are people who have an intention to do harm and commit crime in the United States, they will end up in Boston, Sacramento, Detroit, Miami, or any other city in the United States.

Somebody said: Well, every city is a border city now, and, for all practical purposes, that is true. Folks who live thousands of miles from the border can't write this off as a problem for somewhere else. This is a national problem. Gangs and cartels are sending their henchmen to our cities and our communities. They are trafficking in fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine, and other deadly drugs, along with guns and human trafficking.

They are what one person called years ago commodity agnostic. In

other words, they are in it for the money. They don't care how they make the money. They don't care about the people. They are just in it for the money. And in doing so, they are ushering in crime and violence and creating unsafe communities all across our country.

This administration has ignored the crisis at our southern border in an effort to appease open-border members of their political party. They have created a gateway for cartel and gang members to come into our country and wreak havoc on our communities.

Criminal organizations are very sophisticated. Their business model is to overwhelm our capacity to stop them and to make that buck by selling people drugs or other contraband in the communities all across our country. So the situation at the border is not simply about immigration. It is about security. It is about public safety. It is about knowing who is crossing the border and coming to live in your community.

So I am eager to get back home to the Rio Grande Valley to talk to some of these women who are doing heroic work on the frontlines of this crisis, who are getting no help from the Biden administration.

As I said, I wish President Biden would come to the border. We would welcome him and show him what we have learned ourselves from our frequent trips there. Maybe if the President saw and learned about the impact of the failed policies of his administration in person, he would begin to take this crisis seriously.

Every State is impacted by the security breakdown at the border, and something needs to be done before the situation becomes even more dangerous than it currently is.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from Illinois.

HIGHLAND PARK SHOOTING

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, 2-year-old Aiden McCarthy was lying bloodied and pinned underneath his unconscious father when he was found—just a toddler, Aiden was still in diapers, had somehow lost one shoe and was down to just one blood-soaked sock, with scrapes across his body.

It was last Monday, July Fourth, and Aiden was rescued from the site of a massacre, from the site of the latest mass shooting that has marred our country and left scarred all those who bore witness to its senseless terror.

I was at a nearby parade in Illinois when I heard about the shooting. I rushed to the emergency operation center and was there the moment the police came in and told us that two Good Samaritans had found this young boy sheltered under his father's body.

When Aiden was rescued, he kept asking for his mom and his dad. But, tragically, horribly, we later learned that they were never going to be able to comfort him ever again. Both his mother and father were among the

seven people murdered during that Fourth of July parade shooting in Highland Park. Their names were Irina and Kevin McCarthy. And they, like so many of us, had spent that holiday morning eager to take pride in our country, eager to celebrate the freedom and goodness and greatness that has defined our Nation since its first breaths on that first July Fourth, eager to celebrate America at her best.

Instead, they experienced the very worst of it. They saw firsthand what can happen when a sick fealty to the gun lobby is prioritized over American lives. And Aiden is an orphan because of it.

I woke up today unable to get the image of 2-year-old Aiden's one bloodied sock out of my mind. I woke up, as I have every day since that day, unable to stop thinking about how his mom or his dad put on his diaper that morning, just like I have done thousands of times with my own two little girls.

I woke up thinking about how, when the first shots of that military-style rifle rang out, his parents' first thoughts must have been about saving him, shielding him.

So today, I come to the floor to say their names and the names of the five other victims, my constituents who should still be breathing at this very moment but aren't: Katherine Goldstein, Jacquelyn Sundheim, Stephen Straus, Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza, Eduardo Uvaldo, and Irina and Kevin McCarthy.

There are too many victims of preventable gun violence to name all of them here. In fact, gun violence is the largest killer of children under the age of 16 in this country—not disease, but the disease of gun violence. It happens in Buffalo, in Chicago, in Uvalde, in Newtown, in Pittsburgh, in DeKalb, in Virginia Beach, in El Paso, in two different Auroras, in Las Vegas. It happens in wealthy suburban communities, in low-income rural communities, and in urban areas across our Nation.

It happens everywhere in America but almost nowhere outside of this country. It happens so much here that we only hear about it in the national news when a large enough number of people are killed at one time and in one place.

Think about that. Every time gun violence occurs, someone decides whether or not the number murdered is worthy of column inches and breaking news graphics on TV. And, too often, the answer is no because there have been more mass shootings thus far in 2022 than there have been days in the year and because we, as a country, have grown numb.

We witnessed that just last week in Chicago, as over the holiday weekend, Chicago's death toll climbed even higher than the devastation seen in Highland Park. Yet there was no national outcry.

In Chicago's communities, gun violence is now viewed as all too common,