

This is a big problem in Texas but not just in my State but across the country. But we have seen a surge of fentanyl-related deaths in my State. Last year, more than 1,700 Texans died from fentanyl overdoses, and we continue to see the heartbreaking toll this drug is having on communities of every size. Cities across the State have experienced strings of overdose deaths likely tied to batches of drugs laced with fentanyl.

There is no single profile to describe the victims of these fentanyl deaths that cover every age, every demographic, and every walk of life, but one of the most concerning trends we have seen is a spike in teenage overdose deaths.

Nationwide, 77 percent—77 percent—of all teen overdose deaths last year involved fentanyl. Fentanyl is, believe it or not, the leading cause of death of Americans between the ages of 18 and 45—a shocking statistic. Teenagers may think they are buying prescription opioids—things like OxyContin or some other drug—but they may be unknowingly taking drugs that contain a deadly dose of fentanyl in addition.

One Texas community is feeling the devastation of this situation at an almost unimaginable degree. In Hays County, situated just southwest of Austin, 2½ weeks ago, only days into the new school year, a 15-year-old high school sophomore died from a suspected fentanyl overdose. Sadly, this wasn't the first death in the Hays Consolidated Independent School District. It wasn't even the second. In 1 month's time, this school district lost three students to fentanyl-related overdoses. The other two students were both seniors. We are talking about young people who are at the starting point in their lives. They have endless potential and an army of people who want to see them succeed and live happy, productive, and successful lives, but that human potential is lost because this deadly drug has made its way into our country, into our communities, and into our schools.

But Texas isn't the only State confronting a wave of fentanyl overdoses. A few weeks ago, a woman in Colorado found her 13-year-old grandson, Jose, leaning over the bathroom sink, unresponsive. Jose's family said he had no history of illicit drug use, and they believe he received a pill from someone on his way home from school. That pill contained enough fentanyl to kill this energetic eighth grader who had his entire life ahead of him.

Sadly, this is an all-too-familiar story. Earlier this summer, a 15-month-old toddler in Georgia died after being exposed to fentanyl. The same thing happened recently in California, also to a 15-month-old infant.

Law enforcement in big cities and small towns alike have seen a spike in arrests and overdoses connected to fentanyl. The problem has gotten so bad that a number of major cities, including Las Vegas, San Diego, and New

York, have installed vending machines to distribute lifesaving shots of Narcan, which is an antidote to fentanyl overdoses—vending machines on the city streets of an antidote for fentanyl because the problem has become so pervasive. This is a crisis facing everyone from toddlers to teens to adults of all ages.

Last year, more than 71,000 Americans died from a fentanyl overdose. That is 71,000 out of the 108,000 drug overdose deaths that I mentioned a moment ago. Given the rate at which fentanyl is coming into the United States, I fear the worst is still to come.

Drug cartels are taking advantage of the security gaps at the border and going to extreme lengths to boost their sales. For example, last month, the Drug Enforcement Administration seized brightly-colored fentanyl tablets in 18 States. Children appear to be the target demographic for what the DEA is calling rainbow fentanyl. They are small, colorful pills that look like candy, as well as pressed blocks of powder that look like sidewalk chalk. Mexican drug cartels and others have turned a dangerous and deadly drug into something that any child would be quick to pick up.

No, there is no question there is a crisis at the border notwithstanding the fact that President Biden and his administration have been ignoring it for the entire time he has been in office. It is certainly hurting the migrants, but it is also having a deadly impact on the American people.

Coming from a border State, I have visited the border many times, and I have spoken often to the officers and the agents who are on the frontlines of this fight. They know well about how the cartels are gaming the system, using the migrants to divert and distract while moving deadly drugs into the country. But, frankly, they cannot stop this humanitarian crisis on their own. They need a change in policy that can only come from Congress working with the administration. But so far, the administration has refused to take any steps—any steps at all—to address the migrant surge, and so the problem continues day after day after day.

I know the mayors of New York and Chicago and Washington, DC, have expressed concern that migrants are being bused to their cities, even though they advertise themselves as sanctuary cities, but, frankly, I think if that is what it takes to get the attention of the mayors of those cities, who can then hopefully get the attention of President Biden and his administration, that it is worth it.

Unless something changes, though, the 108,000 Americans who lost their lives to drug overdoses, including the 71,000 who lost their lives to fentanyl last year, will only go up. More fentanyl will come across the border and find its way into our communities. More cartels and criminal organizations and street gangs will get rich off of our suffering. And more of our chil-

dren, our neighbors, our friends, and loved ones will die.

We often talk about the need for a humane response to the border crisis. And these conversations largely focus on migrant care, and there is no question these individuals should be treated humanely. But a humane response also involves consideration for the impact this drug infestation is having on the American people.

By allowing our border to descend into chaos, the President may think he has taken a humane route, but he is sorely mistaken. Families are burying their loved ones, children are losing their schoolmates, and our country is suffering while the cartels get richer and richer and richer.

Until we can get this crisis under control, the cartels will continue to move drugs across the border and poison our communities. No, an open border policy is not humane; it is not sustainable; and despite what President Biden may think, it is not benefiting anyone.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant 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.

UKRAINE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to report back from a trip that Senator PORTMAN and I took to Ukraine last week. And the No. 1 thing I would like to report is that President Zelenskyy personally asked us—and I know that Senator PORTMAN addressed the Senate last night and reported this—but he personally asked us to thank the U.S. Senate, to thank the people of this country for the generous and unending continuing help that the Senate has given to Ukraine in their fight for democracy.

This is a country that has given it all. Sometimes we wonder, in our own country, what are we going to put on the line for our democracy? Are we going to go over and vote today? How much do we care? There, the people of Ukraine are putting their lives on the line every single day.

The ballerina who puts on camo and goes to the front lines, the exhausted workers at the nuclear plant trying to protect not just the country of Ukraine, but surrounding countries because it is the biggest nuclear plant in all of Europe, supplying 20 percent of the electricity to the people of Ukraine.

They go to work every day, under incredible stress and pressure that we can't imagine, trying to keep their country safe while surrounded by 500 Russian troops. We think of the cellist playing beautiful melodies on the front steps of bombed-out remnants of a

town square to remind people that culture and love still exist in this country.

I think of the mass grave that we visited in Bucha, in Irpin, the apartment buildings after apartment buildings burned out, but Ukraine goes on. We saw firsthand the strength of the Ukrainian people in the face of Vladimir Putin's inhuman barbarism. But just as Putin has shown his true colors, so have the people of Ukraine in brilliant blue and yellow. Over the past 6 months since the invasion, their bravery and humanity has consistently shone through.

When Senator PORTMAN and I went to Ukraine last January as part of a group of Senators—we were the last group which went in before the war started, with Senators SHAHEEN and MURPHY and Senator BLUMENTHAL and Senator WICKER and Senator CRAMER—we witnessed the incredible resolve of the Ukrainian people. Last week, we saw up close a nation defending its homeland in a way that few expected would even be possible.

We had an excellent hour-long meeting with President Zelenskyy and Defense Minister Reznikov and the President's chief of staff.

Our country has helped them so much. We heard the story of how our employees at the Embassy—we now have people located in Kyiv—went to get some takeout food from a Ukrainian restaurant, and when they got the food back, got the bag back, someone, not even knowing who they were or where they worked but thinking they were American, had written on it: “Thanks for the HIMARS.”

Along with at least 42 other nations, from Japan to South Korea, to Poland, we have stood with democracy. We have stood with Ukraine.

We also discussed with President Zelenskyy the counteroffensive Ukraine is making to reclaim its territory in the Kherson region. This was one of the first cities Ukraine lost when the war began, but we have seen some initial signs of success.

Ukrainians have also announced that they have recaptured some villages and knocked out weapons and radar stations and a pontoon bridge the Russians had built.

We are working closely with the Ukrainians to tailor our security assistance to meet their immediate needs on the frontlines of the conflict, something that was more difficult to do at the beginning. Now we actually have people back in Kyiv, and we also have clear lines of communication with the Ukrainian leadership.

Of course, as I mentioned earlier, the situation on the ground remains incredibly dangerous, especially in the Zaporizhzhia region, home to the largest nuclear plant in Europe, which was a central issue that we raised in our discussions with Ukrainian leadership.

The plant, which, as I noted, previously provided Ukraine with 20 percent of its power, is at significant risk because of Russian shelling.

Just today, Ukraine announced that they may have to shut the plant down for fear of a nuclear disaster, as this skeleton crew constantly has to reconnect the lines that have been shelled to not only get the power out to Ukrainians, which Russians are trying to divert to their territories—to Russian-held territories—to making sure they have the power to keep the reactor going and safe.

We called on Russia to establish a demilitarized zone around the plant and to allow the team from the IAEA to inspect the plant. We were glad when the team of 14 inspectors visited the plant. Two inspectors will remain there indefinitely. This is all happening as we speak.

The IAEA released its report yesterday and said:

While the ongoing shelling has not yet triggered a nuclear emergency, it continues to represent a constant threat of nuclear safety and security.

The agency, which is full of nuclear safety experts from around the world, noted extensive safety concerns. They urged an immediate stop to fighting on site and in the vicinity.

I continue to call for that demilitarized zone around the plant. We know that this nuclear incident wouldn't be just an incident; it would be a catastrophe.

We all know this is a hard fight, but America must continue to stand with Ukraine.

If Vladimir Putin had been allowed just to enter their country, take over an entire democracy, he would never have stopped there.

We also held a meeting with U.S. military leaders at the 101st Airborne Division in Poland, who are there to underscore our commitment to our NATO allies and the defense of Europe. They affirmed that the Ukrainians are making great use of the weapons we have supplied in their fight against Russia.

In addition to the direct support we are providing to Ukraine, we are also seeing that sanctions are working in Russia, as just yesterday, the administration reported—our administration—that Moscow is in the process of purchasing rockets and artillery shells from North Korea. It shows how much trouble Russia is in when they are purchasing military equipment from the country of North Korea. This type of desperate purchase says a lot about the state of Russia's supply chain.

In fact, we have seen that as Russia has attacked Ukraine, its actions have been met with almost universal condemnation. It was a key factor in Finland and Sweden's decision to pursue NATO membership, a measure we here in the Senate supported on the floor with a resounding 95-to-1 vote.

The United States has provided economic, military, and humanitarian aid since the invasion. Our leadership has brought and continues to bring other nations to the table and has allowed Ukraine to continue to fight for its freedom.

We remember that moment after the invasion began when President Zelenskyy stood in Kyiv and said the simple words: “We are here.” “We are here.” That video went viral. “We are here.”

From that moment on, he and his people inspired the world—a living symbol of courage. So now it is our time to assure the Ukrainians, knowing that they are up against the evil of Vladimir Putin, with the simple words: “We are here.”

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:37 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the the Presiding Officer (Ms. CANTWELL).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

VOTE ON LEE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Lee nomination?

Mr. CARDIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSOFF), and the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BARR), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote 327 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Baldwin	Hassan	Peters
Bennet	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	Kennedy	Sinema
Carper	King	Smith
Casey	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Lujan	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Warner
Duckworth	Markey	Warnock
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Feinstein	Murphy	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murray	Wyden
Graham	Padilla	

NAYS—44

Barrasso	Boozman	Cassidy
Blackburn	Braun	Cornyn
Blunt	Capito	Cotton