

That is why in June, the committee approved the FENTANYL Results Act, legislation designed to strengthen the United States response to fentanyl trafficking—legislation that received unanimous, bipartisan backing of all members of the Foreign Relations Committee, legislation that we hope can be enacted into law before the end of this Congress. That is a serious legislative effort conducted through normal order of the Senate.

I would just say to my friend, if you really want to address the impact that Mexican cartels and drug trafficking have on the American people, I urge you, respectfully, to work through the Foreign Relations Committee and join us in a meaningful legislative effort.

Finally, before I object, I would just say, I know that my colleague keeps talking about the Biden open borders. Well, it is a little incongruous when you self-designate and made in your comments that it is the U.S. Customs and Border large catches of fentanyl and other drugs under the direction of this administration that is making those catches. It is either that we have an open border and anything comes in, or it is that the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol that is actively engaged is stopping the flow of significant amounts of drugs.

For all of those reasons, at this point in time, I will have to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I certainly do respect the comments of the chairman.

I would ask him a question: What would you tell the mother of Cooper Davis? What would you tell the mother of the hundreds of Americans who are going to die today from fentanyl poisoning?

Whatever we are doing now is not working. This is a war. Just yesterday morning, at 1 a.m., we were given 250 pages of legislation that we were asked to vote on that evening. This is a 3- or 4-page bill.

I have declared war on fentanyl. Every day in Kansas someone is dying from fentanyl. Every day in the State of New Jersey probably several people are dying from fentanyl poisoning.

I would ask the chairman: Whatever we are doing, it is not working. What more can we do? What do I tell Cooper Davis's mom? What do I tell these people out there whose babies are dying?

They are young adults being taken from the prime of their lives. Whatever we have done is not working. This stuff is coming over by the tons. What we have captured is a fraction of what is reaching America. That is why Kansas is no longer safe. It is not safe for any of our young adults. This is why this Halloween we are going to have to put our kids on special watches as this candied fentanyl comes across the border. I don't see how anyone who cares about our youth and young adults could object to this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENEDEZ. Mr. President, I can't let the question rhetorically hang there.

I would say to my colleague, first of all, for all of us who have been fighting this issue on a bipartisan basis—I think his bill has only got Republican sponsors on it, a few—that we have been fighting this, and this is a continuous fight. And, yes, every life that is lost is a life that we mourn. But what would I say to them?

I would say, well, if we get the Fentanyl Results Act legislation passed, which passed the committee on a bipartisan basis, we would have a bipartisan approach toward dealing with this.

I appreciate that my colleague has declared war on fentanyl, but just because he has declared war doesn't mean that his view as to how you meet the challenge is the ultimate result, is the ultimate solution.

So in good faith, I offer our colleague to work with us. But you can't end up making the Senate the Committee of the Whole. If we want to do that, good, let's abolish all of our committees, and let's all sit here and we can bring up legislation after legislation that was just introduced, where nobody has a chance to read it and nobody has a chance to understand the unintended consequences, as noble as the intent might be. But that is what my colleague has done on more than one occasion now. He introduces a piece of legislation and, days after, comes to the floor to seek its approval. Well, that bypasses the entire system that is meant as a check and balance to get the best legislation to accomplish a common goal.

So that is what I would say. We need to work on this together. We are committed to it. That is why we passed legislation in the past. That is why we just passed legislation recently. I hope my colleague will join us, and maybe we can get it in the NDAA together.

With that, I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:48 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

#### AFFORDABLE INSULIN NOW ACT— MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it has been a little more than 7 months since Russia launched its illegal invasion of Ukraine, and the destruction that has followed is unbelievable. We

have all had a chance to bear witness to the brutal reality of Russia's invasion as Ukrainian forces have recaptured territories like the city of Izyum.

Soon after the city was liberated, Ukrainian forces discovered mass graves filled with hundreds of bodies, including children. Some of the bodies had their hands tied behind their backs and their skulls crushed, and many showed signs of torture. The images that have emerged from Izyum prove what we have suspected for some time: The mountain of evidence of Russian war crimes is sky high.

These photos illustrate what the Ukrainians are finding in recaptured territory. They are sending out people to redig mass graves to find out just what happened to members of their family and neighbors and their friends.

The same thing is illustrated by this photo as well. In the shadow of this beautiful church, they are finding mass graves left behind by the Russians.

Today, I had the honor of presiding over a hearing of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, focusing on the role we must play in the United States in holding Putin and his thugs accountable for these heinous war crimes. The message was clear: Our Nation must continue the legacy we began with the Nuremberg trials by ensuring that Russian war criminals are brought to justice. And a critical step in doing that is to make sure that the perpetrators of these atrocities find no safe haven anywhere in the world, let alone in the United States.

That is why I have introduced the Justice for Victims of War Crimes Act with the ranking Republican Member, Senator GRASSLEY. It closes a shameful loophole in American law that has allowed war criminals to escape justice. Our legislation updates the War Crimes Act so foreign war criminals who try to flee to America can be prosecuted, even years after their crimes were committed. It is only a starting point, but I hope we can build on it to finally enact the law in this country prohibiting crimes against humanity. This is an opportunity to send a clear signal to war criminals, like those in Russia today who systemically attack civilians, that America is going to hold you accountable for your crimes.

#### IMMIGRATION

Madam President, on a related topic, at our brightest moments, America has not only held war criminals and tyrants accountable; we have also provided refuge to their victims. Many of us in Congress can attest to that fact.

In fact, it is exactly how my family arrived in this country. Back in 1911, my grandmother left Lithuania in search of freedom. She boarded a ship carrying two things in her arms: a bag with her Catholic prayer book, published a year before the Czars outlawed its printing in Lithuania, and her 2-year-old daughter, my mother, Ona.

The moment my grandmother stepped foot on American soil, her life changed. From that moment on, she

and my mother were protected by an incredible shield: the U.S. Constitution, along with the rights and protections it guarantees.

But for Lithuanians, securing those same rights has not been so easy. The country struggled under Soviet occupation for nearly 50 years. Even after the Lithuanian people proclaimed their independence in 1990, their liberty wasn't guaranteed. In January 1991, 9 months after Lithuania held its first free elections, Soviet tanks rolled into Vilnius in a ruthless, last-ditch effort to crush the country's new democracy. Thirteen Lithuanian martyrs were killed that day.

I would like to think it was the sacrifice of those 13 Lithuanians, and millions who also suffered under communism, that inspired the current Governor of Florida to establish a new holiday earlier this year. It was entitled Victims of Communism Day. In his own words, Governor DeSantis created this holiday with the goal of "honoring the people that have fallen victim to communist regimes." In announcing this holiday, he asserted that "Florida will stand for truth and remain as a beachhead for freedom."

That is an admirable aspiration, but, sadly, it is one that the Governor of Florida has failed to live up to because, when it comes to standing up to ruthless dictators of our time, like Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro, Governor DeSantis and his allies are nowhere to be found. Instead of offering safe harbor to victims of Maduro's regime, these very same Governors have chosen to abandon and abuse their families.

This is no way to honor the victims of communism and political repression. It is a cowardly failure of leadership that violates our Nation's basic values.

When news first broke that Governors Abbott of Texas and DeSantis of Florida were using refugee families fleeing desperate conditions in Venezuela as political pawns, I couldn't help but wonder: What if it were my own family?

The families fleeing Venezuela are seeking refuge from the same menace that the victims of communists faced decades ago: political persecution and state-sanctioned violence. Under Nicolas Maduro, Venezuela has been a failed criminal state awash in human misery. It is so dangerous that the State Department warns Americans to avoid traveling to that country, and the people of Venezuela suffer every day under rampant corruption, human rights violations, hunger, and criminal mismanagement. I saw it for myself when I visited Venezuela a few years ago, just before Maduro's latest sham election.

Since then, things have grown worse. Hospitals are devoid of basic medical supplies, kids and parents are too hungry to go to school or work, and Maduro's barbaric regime is being propped up by some of the most repressive powers of the world, like Russia and Cuba.

A recent United Nations report found that Maduro and his cronies have been systemically repressing Venezuelans and gruesomely torturing their political opponents. These horrors have driven nearly 7 million Venezuelans to leave that country in desperation and fear. To put that in perspective, that is more than the number of Syrian refugees and nearly equal to the number of Ukrainian refugees fleeing active war in those countries.

Despite what some Republicans have claimed, families fleeing Venezuela are not "illegals" or "invaders." They are victims of the same ruthless tactics that once defined the Soviet Union. Instead of helping these families, Governor DeSantis and Governor Abbott declare holidays and have chosen to exploit their fear and confusion.

I met with a few of the families who were unwittingly placed on migrant buses to Chicago by Governor Abbott of Texas a few weeks ago. One of the people I met was named Carlos. He and his wife and two little girls were sitting at a table, and we were able to talk to them for about a half hour and ask questions.

Carlos was a hard worker in Venezuela, but the country's political and economic crisis was so severe that his job couldn't keep food on the table. His family was on the brink of starvation.

So on May 15, Carlos and his wife, along with those two beautiful little girls, decided to literally flee for their lives. They embarked on a 5-month journey, much of it on foot, to the Texas-Mexico border. It was a nightmare of violence, theft, and exploitation. Carlos told me that, at one point, he thought he would die, while spending 9 nights in a Panamanian jungle. By the time they were rescued by a local military force, all of their money was gone, their cell phones had been stolen, and they were penniless.

But they pressed on and eventually made it to America. They filed their claim for asylum. We are honored that they were brought to Chicago, though the circumstances were not good.

To me, Carlos is living proof that we have more work to do in ridding the world of violent repression and totalitarianism. These evils didn't suddenly disappear with the fall of the Soviet Union.

I actually share the Florida Governor's belief that America has the responsibility to stand in contrast to dictators like Maduro and Putin by actually defending truth and freedom. But that responsibility is far bigger than declaring a holiday, because it is one thing to speak out against the evils of communism or voice opposition to Maduro, but talk is cheap. The real test for our values begins when the victims of tyrants like Maduro arrive at our doorstep in search of freedom. I am sad to say that Governor Ron DeSantis and Greg Abbott have literally failed that test. To add insult to injury, these Governors not only refused to help these families fleeing Venezuela; they

wasted taxpayers' dollars on a political stunt that only made the problem worse and made us, as a nation, look weak and, to some of the world, look cruel.

Here is the reality. The most powerful way to stand up against dictators like Maduro is by honoring America's legacy as a beacon of freedom. That means coming to the aid of families like Carlos's—families who are applying for asylum the right way and seeking a fair shot in America, like our own families once did.

In fact, we need workers. We have 11 million unfilled jobs in this Nation and 5 million unemployed Americans. Let's put young, able-bodied people like Carlos to work in jobs that Americans don't want. Let's get them on the books and give them their fair shot so they can finally enjoy the security and safety for their families that was denied to them in their home countries. They will contribute to a better America.

Time and again, immigrants have shown us that they rise to the occasion, work harder than most, and achieve things unimaginable. They can do it again, and they will. Let's prove that America was and is better than the cold, iron fist of authoritarianism.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

NOMINATIONS OF MICHELLE KWAN AND MARI CARMEN APONTE

Mr. KAINÉ. Madam President, I was scheduled to come to the floor today to offer live UCs to bring up two Biden nominees—very important nominees—to assume diplomatic posts in the Western Hemisphere.

Senator SCOTT of Florida was scheduled to be here to oppose my UCs and have a dialogue. The hurricane in Florida has pulled him away, and so he is unable to be here. I am left with the case where there is an objection, but the objector can't come for a reason that I understand. Senator SCOTT's team has indicated that he will likely be here tomorrow, and we might be able to repeat this tomorrow.

What I thought I would do, having the floor, is say a little bit about these two countries and these two nominees because I hope Senator SCOTT might watch this or his staff might give him the transcript because I think, if he does, he will see that they are both highly qualified individuals. I want to talk about both, but I will not make the motion at the end of my comments with respect to unanimous consent.

I would say that both Michelle Kwan, who was nominated by President Biden to be our Ambassador to Belize, and Mari Carmen Aponte, who was nominated to be our Ambassador to Panama, are both highly qualified individuals, as I will describe.

But the countries are really important. Belize has not had an ambassador confirmed for more than 5 years. Panama has not had a confirmed ambassador for more than 4 years. And, sort

of, the theme for both of these is, Why punish good behavior? These are great allies of the United States, both Belize and Panama. They are both doing some really important work with us right now, and they deserve to have confirmed ambassadors.

If we won't confirm an ambassador for more than 4 years or more than 5 years, it has a way of sending a message to these countries like: Wow, we say you are great allies, but we clearly don't value you enough to have a confirmed ambassador.

Let me talk about Michelle Kwan, the nominee to be our Ambassador in Belize.

Belize is a critical partner in the Caribbean and Central America. This is a region of significant distress and instability. But Belize has been a bright spot in both relative stability and also closeness to the United States. As I mentioned, no U.S. ambassador has been confirmed there for more than 5 years. It is a stable democracy in a region facing significant threats from organized crime, irregular migration, human trafficking, as well as democratic backsliding in the region.

We worked hard to deepen our relationship with Prime Minister Briceno, and bilateral cooperation between the nations are increasing. Our ability to engage with Belize at this most senior level is crucial right now.

In particular with Belize, there is something fairly unique about this country. In this hemisphere that is very important to the United States, it is also of growing importance to China. We see Beijing active all over the Americas, often outstripping our efforts to pay attention to these countries.

Belize has been willing to be a stalwart partner of Taiwan. There are only 11 nations in the world that recognize Taiwan, and China is going after each one of them, putting pressure on them to strip away their recognition of Taiwan.

The United States is encouraging nations that have recognized Taiwan to continue to do so, but very few are able to hold out against the Chinese onslaught. Belize has been willing to do this. This is good behavior. We asked them to do it, and they have.

By leaving this position vacant, even as Beijing aggressively builds more and more momentum in the region, it is nothing less than diplomatic malpractice. Having a sitting U.S. ambassador there is of utmost importance.

Now, how about Michelle Kwan?

Exceptionally qualified to take on this challenge. She has had an incredibly distinguished career in public service and diplomacy and especially sports.

She is the most decorated figure skater in U.S. history, having won 43 championships, including 5 world championships, 9 national titles, and 2 Olympic medals.

Michelle became the first-ever U.S. Public Diplomacy Envoy in 2006, 16

years ago. For the following decade and a half, under Presidents and Secretaries of State of both parties, she has traveled extensively on behalf of the State Department all around the world to engage youth and especially young girls on social and educational issues.

She would be an extraordinary champion for the United States with this close neighbor, and her global profile will say to Belize: Hey, we value you because we are sending an accomplished and well-known athlete, inspiration, and diplomat to be our representative there.

And so I was going to ask today that she be confirmed by unanimous consent, and I will return, hopefully, to successfully see her advanced by the Senate into this position.

Now let me talk about Mari Carmen Aponte, who is President Biden's nominee to be Ambassador to Panama.

First on Panama, Panama is one of our strongest partners in the Americas. It is a critical ally on a wide range of U.S. priorities.

And, Madam President, you and I remember when we had major problems with Panama—major problems. It has been a success story of turning an adversary into a great ally and even partner, and yet Panama has now been without a U.S. ambassador for more than 4 years.

My friends across the aisle frequently cite migration as a top foreign policy concern. They have a point.

The Venezuelan refugee crisis is now the second largest displacement in the world. The size and scope of this crisis and the humanitarian impact on the region and the Venezuelan people is worsening by the day. I agree. This issue needs much more attention.

Panama is on the frontline of this crisis. Their border with Colombia—the Darien Gap on that border is the primary route by which people migrate from South America, especially Venezuela, north. They have a crucial role to play in any cohesive regional response.

Panama is also critical to narcotics interdiction efforts and in promoting democratic values that are increasingly under threat in the region.

They are also the subject of intense Chinese investment in the Panama Canal. China has a new Embassy built right on the canal.

We are not competing in a vacuum here. We are competing in a highly competitive world, where China is making more investments than we are, and yet Panama still desires to have a very close relationship with the United States.

And there is more.

Recently, Panama, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador noticed democratic backsliding in the Americas and announced the formation of something called the Alliance for Democracy and Development. They want to band together, four democratic nations, and be proudly pro-democracy in a region where we see too much

backsliding. They can punch above their weight. They can do work not only within their own nations but be an influence throughout the region—indeed, throughout the world. This is something that the United States has celebrated and recognized.

So, again, why punish bad behavior? If they are doing these things to help us with migration, if they are stepping forward to be pro-democracy in a region that is backsliding, why wouldn't we want a confirmed U.S. ambassador?

Let me tell you about Mari Carmen Aponte. She is a Puerto Rican native. She previously served with distinction as an ambassador to El Salvador during the Obama administration. She was confirmed in this body with bipartisan support. She has been the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere.

It is hard to imagine a more qualified nominee. She will have impact from the moment she hits the ground. She was nominated for this role in October of 2021. Her Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing was in May, and she has been pending consideration by the entire Senate since June.

Let's get a proven ambassador in the field and put her to work in a nation that is critical to the United States in the region.

Finally, I will just note, Panama is the home of the Panama Canal. It is the world's second largest free-trade zone. It has a sophisticated logistics and financial operations hub. It attracts billions in direct foreign investment, and we need to be there, again, to counter the significant Chinese interest in this country.

So, again, I had planned to make a motion on behalf of Mari Carmen Aponte. In deference to my colleague from Florida and the challenge there, I will not, but his team has committed to me that they will pay attention to my description of both the importance of these nations and the qualifications of these nominees.

I will return in the hopes that we may soon be able to act as the Senate and forward these highly qualified nominees to the field where they can do their work as representatives of the United States.

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. MARSHALL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The junior Senator from Kansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S.J. RES. 63

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I rise today in order to ask for unanimous consent to pass S.J. Res. 63, a resolution to terminate the COVID-19 national emergency declaration. It has been more than 2½ years since the national emergency concerning the novel

coronavirus disease outbreak was declared, and it has been extended now twice already by President Biden since the initial proclamation, most recently in February of this year.

It is this declaration, coupled with other additional emergency powers currently invoked by the President, which this administration is using to supersize government in order to continue their reckless, inflationary spending spree and enact their radical, partisan agenda. In fact, the White House uses these emergencies to justify their inflationary, out-of-control spending, their unconstitutional vaccine and mask mandates, and to forgive student loans.

This is not the first time I have come to the floor to terminate this emergency declaration. In fact, in March, I brought an identical resolution to this floor under the expedited procedures contained in the National Emergencies Act that passed this body by a vote of 48 to 47. At that time, the status of the virus in this Nation had greatly improved since the dark, early days of the pandemic. Everyone ages 12 and over was eligible for a booster shot if they wanted further inoculation. More than 550 million shots had been administered in the United States, with 215 million people being fully vaccinated. Two oral anti-virals had been made available for certain patients, and monoclonal antibody treatments were available for those at high risk of becoming seriously ill.

Fast-forward to today, 6 months later, and the status of our immunity and ability to fight the virus in the United States has improved further still. More than 660 million doses have been administered, and 225 million people are fully vaccinated—nearly 70 percent of the population. If you include natural immunity, immunity gained through natural infection, the CDC stated just last month that approximately 95 percent of Americans over the age of 16 have some acquired level of immunity. Everyone ages 12 and older can receive Omicron-specific boosters, and we have a growing roster of anti-viral drugs and monoclonal antibodies that are helping vulnerable populations avoid life-threatening infections.

Now, this is not the time to ignore the individuals still struggling with COVID or those who are tragically dying with the virus, but it does demonstrate that we have made major advances in our fight against COVID-19 and entered a less dire, more endemic phase. In fact, even President Biden recently acknowledged during a “60 Minutes” interview that the “pandemic is over.”

Of course, the President’s handlers immediately walked back this claim to argue that the pandemic is, in fact, not over. But why? Why would the Federal officials calling the shots in the executive branch not want to declare this pandemic over? Because it is the fearmongering and the robust authori-

ties provided by the emergency declaration that allow this administration to justify infringing upon your rights and validates their continued expansion of inflationary government spending and social programs.

It was this government-imposed state of emergency that justified their continued lockdowns of small businesses and schools. It was this government-imposed state of emergency that justified their vaccine and mask mandates that continue to this day in too many instances. It was this government-imposed state of emergency that justified President Biden’s and congressional Democrats’ inflationary spending binge, starting with the \$1.19 trillion American Rescue Plan last year and their curiously and inappropriately named Inflation Reduction Act this summer. Most recently, it was the national emergency declaration that allowed the President to extend the payment pause and cancel up to \$10,000 in outstanding federally held student loan balances and \$20,000 for Pell Grant recipients.

This rallying cry of the far left that the President is pandering to will cost the Federal Government \$420 billion—\$420 billion—according to the Congressional Budget Office. The Wall Street Journal called the move “an unprecedented act of peacetime fiscal recklessness.” And every American knows this is inflationary.

This is exactly the problem. The Biden administration is keeping Americans under the strain of the national emergency declaration as if we are not living in a time of peace, as if we are living in a time of war that requires the full force of the Federal Government—rights and fiscal responsibility be damned—in order to respond to this crisis.

In order to rein in this massive expansion of government, to slow down inflation, and restore Americans’ fundamental rights, we must take the important step of terminating the COVID-19 national emergency declaration. I encourage all my colleagues to join me in supporting doing so.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 63 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the joint resolution be read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. WYDEN. Reserving the right to object, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I just went over to our colleague from Kansas and told him that I would much rather be on the floor this afternoon working in a bipartisan way on something like this, and I hope that can be part of Senate proceedings in the future.

Here is what I think is important for the public to know about this proposal. It is that in the real world, the Marshall proposal is a prescription for less flexibility and more redtape in American healthcare. I want to be very specific.

Every Member of this body understands that America has a serious shortage of nurses and healthcare providers. Every single time we go home—I am sure this is the case for our colleague from Kansas, who is a physician. He hears from physicians and providers. Every time we are home, we hear from healthcare providers. I see the Presiding Officer of the Senate has been a very strong advocate for healthcare improvement for patients and providers. Every time we are home, we hear about the need for more healthcare providers.

Right now, there are requirements in Medicare for a lengthy process that must be completed before it is possible to hire healthcare providers to serve Medicare patients. If the Marshall proposal goes into effect as written, Health and Human Services could not waive this complicated process to take care of patients. So that would leave our country short of healthcare providers when there is an acute, even more serious need for them.

I am just going to close with this because we are all hoping to be home over the next week or so. When I am home, I always do these open-to-all townhall meetings. I go to every one of my counties every year. I have had more than 1,020 of them—open to all, ask whatever you want. I have never had a constituent at home, an Oregonian, say: RON, what we need is more complicated processes and redtape in American healthcare. Usually, they are talking to us about waiving things.

For those reasons, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The junior Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. I certainly appreciate the chairman’s comments and his sincere commitment. We certainly share some of the same goals.

Practicing medicine in rural Kansas for 25 years, we have been faced with physician shortages for decades, with nursing shortages for decades, and we both agree that is a problem. But the difference is, I don’t think that the government is the solution to the problem; I think that the government has created the problem, that physicians and nurses are so tired of dealing with all the redtape, all the continuing burden that the ACA has put on us.

I am so proud of the doctors and nurses. When this country called for them in an emergency, we—including myself—volunteered, rushing to the frontlines of the emergency rooms to take care of patients. Now this Congress is going to reward them with a pay cut, by the way.

But this is not the solution to the doctor shortages or the nurse shortages. The solution is to respect the profession, to remove some of the redtape. Allow us to be doctors and nurses. Don't make us be tied down with issues like prior authorization, which I know your committee is seriously considering as well. We appreciate your work on that as well.

Certainly, I do have people who come to my townhalls—and, like you, we have been to 100 counties in the past 2 years. We have five left to go. And what people ask me is: Why do our kids in the Head Start Programs still need to wear a mask? Do they do any good? Why are there still vaccine mandates out there? Why is this government continuing inflationary spending?

It is my feeling that this emergency declaration allows the President and the White House to expand those powers to take our constitutional rights away from us.

You know, again, I have encouraged people to take the vaccine and do all the right things. But I still think it is time to end the emergency. Give us our God-given constitutional rights back. I think we should support ending this declaration of emergency.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4984

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, the United States is in the midst of the deadliest drug epidemic in our Nation's history, caused by the most lethal drugs ever created.

More than 108,000 Americans died last year from drugs—more than 108,000—which is almost double the number of Americans killed in the entire Vietnam war. That is the worst slaughter of American citizens by drug dealers and traffickers on record.

The biggest killers, by far, were lab-made opioids, most notably fentanyl, which are cheap to produce and easy to mix with other street drugs. These lethal cocktails have devastated countless families and communities across our Nation. Too many parents have come home to a dead child who has mistakenly taken a prescription pill or a so-called party drug that might have been laced with fentanyl. Indeed, almost no one dies of a fentanyl overdose thinking he took fentanyl. It is laced into other drugs.

That is why, repeatedly, over the past 2 years, I and many of my colleagues have offered a measure to keep it illegal to traffic new variants of fentanyl, but, each time, a Democrat has blocked that measure. Later today, they will do so again.

Perhaps we can at least agree on one thing: We should have no tolerance for people who willingly trick addicted drug users or other innocent persons into taking deadly fentanyl by telling them it is really something else. This happens every day with heartbreaking consequences across the country.

For example, just 2 weeks ago, a drug trafficker was sentenced to life in pris-

on for his role in distributing fentanyl to unsuspecting users in Minnesota. Eleven people died. They thought they were buying illicit Adderall. When he heard about the deaths, the dealer asked his Chinese suppliers for a discount on his next shipment.

That same week, another drug dealer was arrested just minutes from the Capitol Building, where we stand—in Silver Spring, MD—for killing a child with a fentanyl pill, which he said was Percocet. He was hiding the fentanyl-laced, fake Percocet pills inside small bags of marijuana.

Last week, a few minutes in the other direction, a trafficker was tried in Northern Virginia for distributing cocaine laced with fentanyl at a party. Six partygoers overdosed. One died.

These cases happen every day. Drug addicts are especially lulled into a false sense of safety by fake prescription pills, believing them to be medicine for which they have some past experience. That is why fake prescription drugs are on the rise. Federal law enforcement encountered as many fake prescription pills in 2021 as in the previous 2 years combined.

If Democrats refuse to help Republicans keep all fentanyl variants off the streets, hopefully, we can at least agree on keeping deceptive fentanyl traffickers behind bars. My bill would establish that any drug trafficker who knowingly misrepresents fentanyl as though it is something else would be subject to 20 years in prison. If the criminal has a prior felony criminal record or if its misrepresentation kills someone, then the criminal would be subject to life in prison or would even be eligible for the death penalty. There can simply be no leniency for people who trick unsuspecting users into taking deadly fentanyl.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 4984, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, in reserving the right to object, I worried this morning that the Senator from Arkansas was going to offer this unanimous consent request on the floor of the Senate this afternoon. I was a little bit surprised. I wasn't aware of this bill. We have been members of the same committee, the Judiciary Committee, for 21 months, and the Senator from Arkansas has not raised the bill during that period of time. But it is his right to come to the floor today and ask that it be considered. I would like to tell you why I am going to object to this.

If you serve in Congress for any period of time, you become a student of the terrible drug problems of America. I recall a period of time in the House of

Representatives when we had crack cocaine appear in the United States for the first time. It scared us because it was cheap; it was deadly; addictive; and for the women who were pregnant who had taken it, it did harm to the babies they were carrying. So we decided to make sure that we were going to do the right thing in our War on Drugs.

What we said was—listen closely—the penalty for crack cocaine would be 100 times the penalty for the use of ordinary cocaine—100 times. The penalty for using cocaine in general was already serious. One hundred times, we said, for the War on Drugs. I voted for it. I thought, finally, a message will come from the Congress that, if you touch crack cocaine, you are going to be in for it. We expected that fewer people would do it because of the fear of that criminal sentencing and that the price of crack cocaine would go up because the demand was limited.

Guess what happened—exactly the opposite, exactly the opposite.

More and more people used crack cocaine, and the price on the street went down to dirt level. The result was we started filling our prisons in a way that we had never seen before in the history of the United States: 500 percent of the prison population of just 20 or 30 years ago increased in that period of time.

We learned the hard way that getting tough wasn't always the smart way to deal with drug addiction. We thought about it, and we changed the law several times. I have been party to changing it. I voted for the original version, and it failed. We had to do better.

Then something happened that was dramatic—opioids. Out of nowhere came opioids, and what used to be a problem of drug addiction and death in the inner cities of America became a problem of drug addiction and death in the suburbs of America, in the farm towns of America—all over America. Interestingly enough, America started looking at our drug laws and our drug addiction and saying: What are we doing wrong here? What is wrong with this situation?

As a consequence, a lot of attitudes changed. People got away from the old "just say no" routine and started asking serious questions: How do we deal with drug addiction? How do we stop this addiction? It is not easy to stop it, but God knows we need to. So we have seen a transformation with the arrival of opioids.

Now, the Senator from Arkansas is correct. People are lacing these opioids with fentanyl, and fentanyl is deadly; there is no question about it. We should take it seriously, and we do. As a matter of fact, each judge, when imposing a sentence for crimes already involving fentanyl, is pretty serious about it. I just heard the Senator from Arkansas describe a situation in which someone in Minnesota got life in prison for the sale of a fentanyl product. So it is clear that it is not being ignored, nor should it be.

Intentionally selling fentanyl is already a crime all over the United States. Representing that fentanyl is something else is exactly the kind of aggravated factor a judge takes into account in the sentencing. I don't believe this bill is a serious effort to deal with the problem in light of what we know today.

Let's start with the fact that it creates a new Federal death penalty offense.

Well, I have to tell you that I have watched a lifetime—a political lifetime—of death penalty cases and have seen the result. I have my serious doubts that that is the best way for America to go. I think the gentleman from Arkansas realizes it. I am the lead sponsor, along with 20 others, of the Federal Death Penalty Prohibition Act—to repeal it once and for all. So I am concerned about any legislation that imposes the death penalty.

It also creates mandatory minimum sentences that don't allow judges to consider the individual circumstances in a case.

That is straight out of the failed doctrine of the War on Drugs—a mandatory minimum. Tie the judge's hands. Put people in jail, and basically say there will be unlimited amounts of time that they will spend there. People were getting 20- and 30-year sentences for the sale of narcotics like crack cocaine, and we soon realized that it didn't make sense over the long haul. It was 20 years for a single drug sale, which goes up to mandatory life in prison if a defendant has any prior felony conviction, no matter if it has zero relationship to drugs or is based on a defendant's immigration status.

I don't believe that is the right way to go. It wasn't with the War on Drugs. We learned the hard way. I want to get tough on the drug sales, and I am sure the Senator from Arkansas feels the same way. We approach it differently. I have the experience of trying to take the hard position on this issue and of seeing that it failed when it came to crack cocaine.

For that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The junior Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, what we heard is a lot of the same excuses that the Democrats have made for years about being soft on crime and their claims about mass incarceration or systemic racism or what have you.

I would point out that almost no one—almost no one—is in Federal prison for mere drug possession. It is a myth that there are low-level, non-violent offenders in prison because they are addicted to drugs.

Where we are is at a 21-year low in the number of Federal inmates we have. Do you know where we are not at? A 21-year low in drug deaths—the highest on record every single year, year after year. Almost twice as many have died as in the Vietnam war. Almost 24 times as many have died as in

the entire Iraq war. Almost 35 times as many have died as on 9/11. Yet the Democrats repeatedly refuse to crack down on deceptive fentanyl dealers.

As I have mentioned, I have also offered bills in the past that would permanently add fentanyl to the Controlled Substances Act scheduling. The Democrats refuse to do so. They will do it temporarily from time to time, but they want a trade. They want to get a trade for something. They want to either reduce sentences or let prisoners out. This is whether they are Democratic Senators or Democratic Governors in places like Illinois, in their eliminating the bail system, or whether they are Democratic mayors or Democratic prosecuting attorneys in places like Chicago. As a result, we have a crimewave and a drug epidemic all across America.

Let me just reiterate. The bill I just offered, which the Senator from Illinois blocked, would simply say that you cannot sell another drug and not acknowledge that fentanyl is in it; that you cannot misrepresent what you are selling.

It is not just opioids. It is not just heroin. It is even marijuana. It is pills that are passed off as mere prescription drugs, like in some of the examples I gave—Adderall, OxyContin, Percocet—that people all across the America are dying from.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 621

Madam President, let's take another angle on this problem. Almost all of these drugs come from Mexico. Almost all of the drugs in America today come from Mexico. Almost all come from a handful of vicious, depraved cartels in Mexico—cartels that have taken on the powers of a quasi-state, cartels that the Mexican Government either cannot or will not crack down on. So let's look at it from that perspective. It is past time that we bring the full weight of the U.S. Government to bear on these cartels and to destroy them for what they are unleashing on our streets.

Imagine if ISIS or al-Qaida set up shop across our border and was responsible for more than a hundred thousand American deaths every single year. What would we do? What would you do?

I know what we wouldn't do. We wouldn't hesitate to act, and that is exactly what we should do with these Mexican cartels.

Unfortunately, President Biden has done the opposite. Since the day he took office, he has flung open our borders, created a border crisis, and made it easier than ever to smuggle massive amounts of illegal drugs into the United States.

Already this year, the Border Patrol has found over 12,000 pounds of fentanyl being smuggled over our borders—12,000 pounds. You may not be able to put that in perspective. Let me put it in perspective for you: It is enough to kill every man, woman, and child in America many, many times over.

That doesn't even include any fentanyl brought in by the hundreds of

thousands of illegal aliens whom the DHS calls got-aways.

President Biden could declare fentanyl-peddling cartels to be terrorist organizations, but he has refused to do so. So the bill that I am about to bring up would give him additional tools, short of labeling these cartels "terrorists."

My bill would create a new designation called a significant transnational criminal organization, and it would enable the Federal Government to impose many of the same sanctions and use many of the same tools against cartels that it already does against terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and ISIS. Those would include barring cartel members and their immediate families from entering the United States, freezing assets belonging to the cartels to hit their wallets and to keep them from profiting off of death and destruction, and enabling civil and criminal penalties for anyone who provides material assistance or resources to the cartels.

The Democrats are going to block a bill later today that would keep new fentanyl variants illegal. They just blocked another bill that would target drug traffickers who trick people into taking the fentanyl that kills them. I hope at least Democratic Senators would be willing to say that we should give the Biden administration more tools to use against the Mexican cartels, some of the worst and most depraved criminals on Earth.

Therefore, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of my bill, S. 621, the Significant Transnational Criminal Organization Designation Act, and that 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?

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator from Arkansas' views on immigration are well-known. He has been consistent in opposing immigration, but it is interesting to me that people like him who oppose immigration always, at the end, seem to go after the same people: mothers and children.

We saw it with the cages the kids were kept in. We saw it when kids were forcibly removed from their parents at the border during the Trump years. We have seen it time and again, and now we see it with the Governor of Florida and the Governor of Texas putting mothers and children on buses and bus-ing them hundreds of miles away from where they were picked up, whether there is any contact there or not. Mothers and children are always a

focal point of anti-immigration rhetoric, and, once again, this bill does that.

I agree completely when it comes to stopping transnational criminal organizations, but to focus the bill on innocent spouses and children, including minor children, and make them the target of the bill seems to me going beyond any reasonable law enforcement.

There is a narrow exception in the bill that allows a spouse or child to be admitted to the United States if they can somehow convince the consular officer that they did not know or could not reasonably have known of their spouse's or parent's membership in a criminal organization. But there is no exception for battered spouses or children who are often victims of these organizations themselves. And the bill gives what appears to be unreviewable discretion to these consular officers to decide whether an innocent spouse or child has renounced the organization.

These transnational criminal organizations must be sanctioned and stopped, but this is not the way to do it, going after mothers and children.

I want to make a point, since the Senator concluded after my last statement that I am somehow soft on crime. Can I go through a short list here of bills that I voted for to get tough on crime?

Let's take a look at this bill, the American Rescue Plan. That American Rescue Plan passed in the U.S. Senate and provided billions—billions—of dollars to State and local communities for police and crime protection—more money for police and crime protection from this Senate to those communities. I voted for it. The Senator from Arkansas voted against it.

Then the Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. In that bill was a \$430 million investment in our ports of entry, helping DHS to screen vehicles for fentanyl. You see, these drugs come through ports of entry. This idea of a backpack full of drugs being hiked over the border by someone in the middle of the night, that is not where the bulk of these drugs come from. They come through the ports of entry. So we put a \$430 million investment to make those ports of entry even stronger and tougher.

I agree with that completely, helping the Department of Homeland Security to screen vehicles and stop fentanyl from coming in. I voted for that. The Senator from Arkansas voted no. Who is soft on crime?

Then we passed the March Omnibus appropriations bill—tens of millions of dollars in increased funding for hiring police officers and technology upgrades at the border to detect and seize fentanyl and other illicit cargo. I voted for that. The Senator from Arkansas voted against it. Who is soft on crime?

And when we passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the most serious bipartisan step Congress has taken to end gun violence in 30 years, I voted for it. The Senator from Arkansas voted against it. Who is soft on crime?

The American people can see which party is passing legislation and actually funds law enforcement, addresses crime and violence in a thoughtful way. And they can see, when the bills come up on the floor, one party gives the speeches; the other party gets the votes.

I am going to continue to vote to support the police and put an end to this drug crisis in America in a thoughtful and sensible way.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The junior Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, I think we know who is soft on crime. It sounds like I hit a nerve. I didn't stand up here saying I am not soft on crime five or six times in a row. It is the Senator from Illinois who said that, just like Senate Democrats have been saying it for the last several months, just like their candidates all across America are saying it.

Let's look at the first bill he mentioned, the American Rescue Plan. You know what that is, right, the American Rescue Plan? That is their \$2 trillion wasteful spending bill from last spring that is responsible for 13 percent inflation.

Do you know what is also included in it? A measure that would get stimulus checks to prisoners. That is right—depraved, violent felons; murderers and rapists and drug traffickers all across America. People like the Boston marathon bomber got stimulus checks last year because the Democrats believe that criminals are really, at heart, victims as well, victims of an oppressive society and system.

If I am not mistaken, when I offered my amendment to prevent prisoners from getting stimulus checks, I think it was the Senator from Illinois who stood up and blocked it. I know that he voted against it. I know that he wanted prisoners to get stimulus checks. That is what he is talking about.

What about his objection to this bill, that it is going to target mothers and kids, the poor mothers and children of drug kingpins, a very common feature of American sanctions efforts—in fact, sanctions efforts that we are doing exactly against Russian oligarchs and regime figures, which I support, by the way. I support. No, the wives and the children of Russian oligarchs and Mexican cartel kingpins should not benefit from their ill-gotten gains.

But I care more about the lives of American citizens—the hundred thousand-plus American citizens whom we lose every single year—than anyone else in the world.

The Biden administration's policy, though, is that we will use this tool against Russians, but we are not going to use it against Mexican cartel members. I think that goes to show you where their priorities are.

Again, just to recap, we tried to pass legislation that would have imposed heightened penalties on drug traf-

fickers who misrepresent their drugs and say they don't contain fentanyl. The Senator from Illinois blocked it on behalf of the Democrats.

Just now, we tried to give the Biden administration more tools to target the cartels that are smuggling these drugs into our country, that are killing a hundred thousand of our fellow citizens. Again, on behalf of Senate Democrats, the Senator from Illinois blocked it.

I say, again, over 108,000 Americans were killed by drugs last year. Yet the Democrats continue to refuse to crack down on drug traffickers and cartel kingpins.

Some of my other colleagues are going to offer similar bills today, just like I am going to offer, yet again, my permanent fentanyl scheduling bill that would stop the annual Kabuki dance here of the Democrats demanding some pro-criminal law just so we can permanently add fentanyl to the Controlled Substance Act schedule.

Think about that. At a time when 108,000 Americans are dying every single year—that is not an aggregate number, every single year—the Democrats refuse to act if they don't get something in return on behalf of criminals, if they can't reduce drug sentences for hardened criminals, if they can't let more felons out of prison. It shows a depraved indifference to the lives of our people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, passing legislation is difficult at any stage in American history. It is increasingly difficult when it is a 50-50 Senate. You have to work it. You have to be willing to sit down with someone from the other side of the aisle and find a co-sponsor so that you have a bipartisan bill.

I have seen that work. In fact, I was part of it. It was Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY and I who put together the FIRST STEP Act, which was part of prison reform—significant prison reform—in this country.

Who signed the FIRST STEP Act? President Donald Trump.

Soft on crime? What we did was work out something that was bipartisan, sensible, and really makes a difference, and makes certain that people currently serving in prison will one day be released—most will—and not return to crime when that happens. I think that was time well spent, but it took a bipartisan effort.

I could have come to the floor every day of the week and offered my best idea on how to fight crime, but if you can't pass it on a bipartisan basis in the Senate, it doesn't work.

It takes a lot of hard work and a lot of patience and compromise to make a real change in the law. Even if you think you have the best idea on Earth, you have to work at it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Nevada.

FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF LAS VEGAS,  
NEVADA, SHOOTING

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, 5 years ago this Saturday, my hometown of Las Vegas endured one of the darkest days in its history. On a beautiful autumn evening, the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival was interrupted when a gunman showered the concert with bullets from a high-rise hotel room. Those who were at the festival, including my niece, at first thought the gunshots were fireworks, but they soon realized that something much more deadly was unfolding.

Fifty-eight people lost their lives that night, and two more have died in the years since the attack. Over 850 people were wounded, and tens of thousands who attended the concert or helped respond to the shooting bear the visible and invisible scars of that night.

It is hard to overstate the scale of the devastation of that night, and it remains the worst mass shooting in modern American history. As soon as the gunfire broke out, first responders sprang into action, as did ordinary citizens, turning concert barriers into stretchers and trucks and cars into makeshift ambulances. Doctors and nurses rushed to hospitals, and thousands of people lined up all over the State to donate blood. Individuals and businesses contributed food, blankets, airline tickets home, or whatever survivors might need.

At the worst of times, Nevadans came together to support one another, and they have worked to help each other ever since. Local businesses have supported the construction of a healing garden. The commission working on a permanent memorial continues to make progress, and this summer it invited the public to participate in its planning. And scholarship funds and activity groups continue their work to support the children of victims and survivors.

And this weekend in Las Vegas, thanks to the work of the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center, bereaved families, survivors, first responders, and community members will light lanterns together to honor the strength, the light, and resilience of the Las Vegas community.

The fact is, though, that trauma leaves its marks. Many of those touched by the Route 91 attack say that the shooting created a permanent before and after for them. It fundamentally changed their lives. And America has seen far too many of these mass attacks, from Orlando to San Jose, Parkland to Buffalo. More recently, of course, this summer saw the horrific shooting in Uvalde, TX, of 19 students and 2 teachers.

In the wake of Uvalde, Route 91 survivors Geena and Marisa Marano came to see me. They are sisters whose experiences at the festival inspired them to work for change. They told me that knowing how difficult it had been for them as survivors of a mass attack,

they could not imagine what children who survived Uvalde were going through, and so they were in Washington to call, once again, for change. This time, they succeeded.

Over the summer, Congress passed and the President signed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which contains a range of commonsense provisions to reduce gun violence in America. I can't emphasize this accomplishment enough. People thought that passing bipartisan gun safety legislation was impossible, but because of the work and the dedication and advocacy of so many, including Route 91 survivors like Marisa and Geena, we got it done.

I am especially proud that I was able to help secure enhanced background checks for those under 21 years of age as well as additional mental health funding that is needed in our schools. Many survivors will be the first to say the work isn't finished yet. That was a first step; we still have more to do. And I agree with them. They are going to continue to push for commonsense reforms, and I will support them as I always have. Because these shootings are just devastating for whole communities, we have to do something. I know for many in Las Vegas and all over Nevada—this week especially—will bring difficult reminders of that dark day 5 years ago, but it will also bring a renewed determination to heal, to memorialize, to honor those who were affected, and to work toward a safer future.

Madam President, I will continue to stand with my hometown and with those survivors not only in Nevada but across the country and to do everything that I can to work for the same goals that they care about.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Iowa.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, as a leading advocate for lower drug prices in the Senate, No. 1, I have hauled Big Pharma and pharmacy benefit managers' executives before my committee of Congress; second, I led a 2-year bipartisan investigation into insulin price-gouging; and three, introduced bipartisan reforms to lower the cost of insulin and many other prescription drugs. In the past few years, legislation I have championed into law has saved the taxpayers \$9.6 billion.

Right now, the Senate is not acting on bipartisan legislation to lower drug costs. I support a bipartisan plan by Senators COLLINS and SHAHEEN that establishes a \$35 out-of-pocket cap on insulin for patients with private insurance while also reforming PBMs, the powerful middlemen who are behind rising drug prices. If you don't address PBM reform, a cap on out-of-pocket costs will only result in shifting patient costs somewhere else.

In my 2-year bipartisan insulin investigation, we found that a drug's list price is tied to rebates and other fees

that drug companies have to pay the PBMs. The scheme encourages drugmakers to spike the list price of the drug to offer a greater rebate. And then do you know what happens in turn? Secure priority placement on a health plan's list of covered medications. We have to hold PBMs accountable, then, if you really want to lower prescription drug costs.

In 2018, I called on the Federal Trade Commission to assess consolidation in the pharmaceutical supply chain and its impact on drug prices, but I didn't wait for the FTC to act. I introduced the Prescription Pricing for the People Act with Senator CANTWELL, and it was approved out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously last year.

A few months ago, the FTC agreed to conduct a study of PBM business practices. This is very welcomed news, but the FTC needs to complete this study and do it in a timely way. Last week, I asked FTC Chair Kahn about when the PBM study would be completed. Chair Kahn didn't commit to a date.

While we need more sunshine on the PBMs, we don't need to wait to take some action. Senator CANTWELL and I have introduced the PBM Transparency Act, and it has been approved by the Commerce Committee on a 19-to-9 vote. The bill prohibits PBMs from engaging in spread pricing and clawbacks. Both spread pricing and clawbacks are actions that game the system and hurt consumers.

When the majority party pursued a partisan, reckless spending-and-tax package that they called the Inflation Reduction Act, I filed the Grassley-Wyden Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act as an amendment that had 10 Republican cosponsors. I did that in order to show that the majority party could have chosen to pass drug pricing reform on a bipartisan basis if the majority wanted to do that. The bill establishes PBM accountability and transparency, something missing from the Inflation Reduction Act.

So, Madam President, we have bipartisan prescription drug legislation awaiting action. We don't have to wait until 2026 for what happened in August in the Inflation Reduction Act to get anything done because that doesn't take effect until 2026. This includes the bipartisan plan to lower insulin prices and my two bills to hold PBMs accountable. That is what we need bipartisan action on in the U.S. Senate.

I have also led out of the Judiciary Committee three bipartisan bills to establish more competition to lower prescription drug prices. They save taxpayers a combined \$1.9 billion.

So the Senate must act on six bipartisan bills. Collectively, they lower insulin costs, secondly hold PBMs accountable, and lastly establish more competition to lower prescription drug prices.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Tennessee.



## RESTORING LAW AND ORDER ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, last evening, I had the opportunity to get on the phone in a telephone townhall with citizens from Davidson and Shelby Counties in Tennessee, and crime was the No. 1 issue that people were talking about. And one of the points that came up several times was, Why is it that some of our colleagues across the aisle have stuck with this prepackaged, zero consequences crime narrative that they are still trying to sell to the American people?

Crime is an issue. And Tennesseans aren't buying the message. I don't think the American people are buying it because they are living with the real-world consequences of the Democrats' refusal to work to get crime under control.

Now, a few days ago, I was watching the news, and I could not believe what I was seeing. Young people were ransacking a convenience store. They were doing this in full view of the cameras, continuing to talk to one another, just going through ransacking that store.

Now, I know I would like to say that was an isolated incident, but we all know that this is not an isolated incident. What is happening is, this has become a trend in many of our cities. The numbers aren't working in our favor when we talk about this trend, whether you are talking about theft or vandalism or something much worse.

Here are some stats. Since 2019, homicide rates in our largest cities are up 50 percent. That is since 2019. Aggravated assaults are up 36 percent. Last year, 108,000 Americans died of a drug overdose; 4,000 of those were Tennesseans.

Now, we can continue to engage in a cable news proxy war or we can do something about this. We, as lawmakers, cannot control what the pundits and the activists say, but we can do something to help the millions of Americans who have become or are at risk of becoming victims of violence.

Back home in Tennessee, the sheriffs and other local officials whom I talk to as I have done my 95-county tour, visiting with every county, these sheriffs, these local officials, parents, principals—they are all telling me exactly why they are struggling to get this crimewave under control. Go talk to a police chief or a captain or go talk to a sheriff or a deputy, and they will tell you: lack of manpower, lack of funding, and the Democrats' soft-on-crime agenda.

We can help with the first two things right now without spending an additional dime of taxpayer money. That lack of manpower, that lack of funding—yes, this is something that we could take action on today if we chose to.

This month, Senator HAGERTY and I filed a bill called the Restoring Law and Order Act that would establish a grant program to help State, local, and Tribal law enforcement officials do the

work that obviously our President and the Democrats have chosen not to do.

First and foremost, here is what the bill would do. Our local law enforcement officers would be able to use these grants to hire more officers and to train them to deal with violent criminals. They will also be able to pull in more resources to combat interstate child trafficking between the open border and the ease with which criminals are using technology to target kids. This was something we could not afford to leave out of the Restoring Law and Order Act.

These grants would help communities prioritize tough sentencing for repeat offenders and use responsible bail practices and pretrial detention to keep dangerous offenders behind bars. If housing is a problem, they will be able to address it. If food items are a problem, then there would be a way to address that.

We are also going to make these grants available to departments that need help targeting drug crime and getting fentanyl off the streets. Sheriffs in Tennessee tell me that around 80 percent of the drugs that they are seizing—80 percent—contain fentanyl, which means there are a lot of people out there who are ingesting fentanyl and dying without ever knowing that they were taking something laced with fentanyl. This is also putting law enforcement at considerable risk. At least one Tennessee officer is lucky to be alive after accidentally coming into contact with fentanyl.

Last but not least, we are going to encourage law enforcement to make use of these grants to clear the investigatory backlog and get evidence processed as quickly as possible.

So much of our focus has been on urban areas because cities like Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and Memphis are struggling when it comes to controlling homicides, carjackings, and other crimes that are really frightening to people, but rural areas of my State are also seeing unprecedented levels of crime and drug overdose. So to help these communities rise to the challenge, this bill commits no less than 25 percent of its total grant allotment to rural and depressed counties.

Now, as I said, this grant program won't spend an additional dime of taxpayer money. The big IRS payday my Democratic colleagues snuck into the so-called Inflation Reduction Act will be put to better use. Here is how you do it. Instead of using that money to hire more bureaucrats to attack small businesses and independent operators, we are going to use it to keep the communities where they work safe from violent criminals.

We also found that Joe Biden and the Democrats have left a lot of their so-called emergency COVID funding lying around, so we are going to put those funds toward hiring more officers and forensic examiners and clearing the rape kit backlogs. Tennesseans are spending \$616 more per month now than

they were last year just to keep themselves fed and their cars running. They can't afford to maintain a slush fund for far-left priorities when that money could be put to use actually helping clean up our streets, helping keep our communities safe, and helping to apprehend drug dealers and keep them in jail. That is where these dollars should be used.

The final element of this bill would help us get to the root causes of the rape kit backlogs. In 2021, the U.S. Government spent \$251,975,000 through six separate programs to help law enforcement conduct rape and sexual assault investigations. Here is that breakdown. And yes, indeed, Mr. President, \$251 million is a lot of money—you are right. More than \$24 million was spent on advocacy programs; almost \$34 million to train forensic examiners and their staff to collect and preserve DNA evidence, analyze it, and present it in the courtroom; \$4 million to train and provide resources to medical personnel who treat victims of sexual assault; almost \$90 million to get first responders and forensic testing capabilities in rural areas up on par with urban areas; and \$158 million just to address the backlog.

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested, and still it seems we cannot get these rape kits processed. Sometimes it takes a full year to get these results.

I want to use one grant program as a case study to demonstrate the problem that we are seeing. An audit of the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative found that between 2015 and 2021, we sent \$266 million to 75 grantees in 40 States and DC to process these kits, to process and obtain this evidence. In that time, they only managed to clear a little over half of a 136,000-kit backlog.

Now, bear in mind, these kits are the kits that contain the DNA evidence of violent offenders. These are individuals who have committed violent sexual assaults. Every one of these should be processed as a rush order—but no. From 2015 to 2021, with \$266 million being sent to 75 grantees in 40 different States and the District of Columbia, they managed to clear a little over half of a 136,000-case backlog. So you still have tens of thousands of kits that are gathering dust, and that is just the ones in the custody of grantees from one single program.

This represents over 50,000 violations of trust and bodily autonomy, 50,000 worst night of an innocent man or woman's life, and 50,000 times the scum of the Earth thought they committed a crime and they got away with it, but they also represent 50,000 opportunities for us to take that rapist or that violent offender and put them in jail for the rest of their life.

The Restoring Law and Order Act will give the GAO a year to conduct a study and prepare a report to explain why we haven't been able to clear the backlog. Why is it we cannot get these kits processed? They are going to look

for deficiencies in processing and also let us know where and to what extent rape kits aren't available at all.

This month, Tennesseans—especially the people of Memphis—have been stuck in a vicious cycle of grieving and asking: What more could have been done to spare the victims of two of the most notorious killers in recent memory?

We already know that at least one brutal murder could have been prevented if the crime lab had been able to reduce their processing time for rape kits. Three more may have been prevented if the people responsible for keeping criminals in jail had done their jobs and forced a repeat violent offender to serve out a full sentence. That didn't happen. Four innocent people in Memphis are dead.

The community is heartbroken, and they are grieving. Last night, on our telephone townhall, they talked a lot about this. They talked about how it has affected them and their community.

Now, the left has spent 2 years screaming at Congress to defund the police, pull law enforcement out of neighborhoods, and eliminate consequences for violent behavior, and it is just plain frightening to see so many of my colleagues continue to go along with that rhetoric.

Tennesseans agree, and I think the American people agree also. They don't want an unfair system. They don't want innocent people to be behind bars. They want a system that works. They are tired of hearing that they are the problem—at least according to the Democrats' zero-consequences narrative. That narrative has turned criminals into victims and innocent people into villains and has left true victims wondering who was there for them. There is nothing just or equitable about that.

I would ask my Democratic colleagues to abandon the echo chamber and get on the phone. Go see and visit and listen to and hear from your sheriffs and your mayors and other law enforcement officials back home. Listen to what they have to say. They need your help.

Senator HAGERTY and I would love to have their help and support in passing the Restoring Law and Order Act. We need to move this legislation. We need to vote on it now before the crimewave gets even worse.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

## CIVIL RIGHTS COLD CASE INVESTIGATIONS SUPPORT ACT OF 2022

Mr. OSSOFF. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon in pursuit of justice for the Black men and Black women abducted, beaten, and killed during the segregation era in the American South and in retaliation for their participation in the civil rights movement.

I rise today to ask that the Senate pass the Civil Rights Cold Case Investigations Support Act to secure justice and pursue truth for the victims of those atrocities, for the victims of civil rights cold cases, and for their families—justice for folks like Alphonso Harris, a member of the SCLC who was murdered in Albany, GA, in 1966; justice for Ernest Hunter, who was killed in a physical altercation at the Camden County jail in St. Marys, GA, in 1958; justice for Caleb Hill, Jr., who was dragged at night from a Wilkinson County jail in Middle, GA, in 1949 and shot to death by a lynch mob.

Decades may have passed, but the pursuit of justice cannot and will not end. I sat down in Wilkinson County a few months ago with Caleb Hill, Jr.'s descendants, and in his name, they demand justice. By passing the Civil Rights Cold Case Investigations Support Act and by doing it with the support of Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Senate, we will demonstrate that the United States will never rest in the pursuit of truth and justice for those who were lynched, abducted, beaten, killed, and assaulted in the segregation-era South and during the civil rights movement.

I thank Senator CRUZ for his original cosponsorship of this bipartisan legislation, and all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, for bringing us now to a point where, after much work, I hope that we can pass this legislation with bipartisan support.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 451, S. 3655.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3655) to amend the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Collection Act of 2018 to extend the termination date of the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. OSSOFF. I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (S. 3655) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 3655

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Civil Rights Cold Case Investigations Support Act of 2022".

### SEC. 2. CIVIL RIGHTS COLD CASE RECORDS REVIEW BOARD EXTENSION OF TERM.

Section 5(n)(1) of Civil Rights Cold Case Records Collection Act of 2018 (44 U.S.C. 2107 note; Public Law 115-426) is amended—

(1) by striking "4 years" and inserting "7 years"; and

(2) by striking "4-year period" and inserting "7-year period".

Mr. OSSOFF. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1006

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to tell a story of one family's tragedy but also of two wonderful people who turned that tragedy into helping others and finding solutions.

On May 15, 2014, a 19-year-old Wisconsinite named Archie Badura died of a fentanyl overdose.

Two years later, I met his mother Lauri Badura, who testified before a field hearing I held in Pewaukee, WI, together with an emergency room doctor named Dr. Tim Westlake, who testified about the growing problem that he was seeing in his emergency room with overdoses and, in particular, overdoses with, I think, a drug that we all heard was somewhat new, fentanyl, a schedule II drug; one used in medicine but one that had been altered, the molecule changed, and produced in China and shipped through our Postal Service and was killing people like Archie Badura.

It was probably the first time I heard of what was happening to fentanyl. And so Dr. Westlake, because he was seeing the tragedy firsthand, was developing a piece of legislation that he was proposing in Wisconsin as well as on a national level.

The piece of legislation I introduced in 2017 was called the SOFA Act. The reason I called it the SOFA Act—and that stands for Stopping Overdoses of Fentanyl Analogs—is because Lauri Badura, again, who lost her 19-year-old son, turned her tragedy into helping others.

She was the go-to person for other families who also lost a loved one through overdoses, and she started an organization called Saving Others for Archie. The acronym was SOFA. So I thought it only appropriate, when working with Dr. Tim Westlake on this piece of legislation that would recognize the growing problem of these analogs, of these fentanyl-related drugs that were killing and poisoning our citizens—I thought it only appropriate to come up with a piece of legislation named after that organization with that same acronym, SOFA.

So on July 13, 2017, I introduced SOFA for the first time here in the U.S. Senate.