

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CRISIS AT THE BORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. CISCOMANI) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address something that I keep hearing from my constituents, and quite frankly, is the top issue on people's minds all across the entire country: The situation at the border.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have several Members join me for this Special Order hour to speak about this issue.

Mr. Speaker, whatever angle you look at this, this is something that is considered a crisis.

Whether you are looking at the national security implications; whether you are looking at the lack of order at the actual border; whether you are looking at what our agents in our offices are going through; whether you look at the disrespect for the rule of law and the abuse in the asylum system; whether you look also at the humanitarian crisis and what women and children are going through as they are getting trafficked—as we all know, the report of missing children within the care of the State, over 85,000—there is no upside to this crisis. There doesn't seem to be a turnaround of this situation either.

Mr. Speaker, I will be addressing my colleagues in the House today quite extensively about this issue because it is, again, something that has been top of mind for us.

It is not a new subject. It is not a new issue. It is something that we have seen continue to get worse and worse as the months and the weeks, and actually the years, have gone by. This administration has lost complete control, if at any point they had any, of the border.

This wasn't the case just 2½, 3 years ago. So when we talk about the policies that can actually work, we are not talking about in theory. We are not imagining that this could work. We actually can point to successes that we had as a country in controlling the situation at the border.

Now, I will be talking about this in a little bit as well, but I am an immigrant myself. I have gone through the process, and I will be digging a little deeper on that. I can tell you, having gone through this process, I understand

how broke the system is and how much improvement it needs in a lot of areas.

However, abusing the system the way it has been abused is not good for anyone. It is not good for our country, not good for the order of our country, and not good for the migrants themselves either.

It is also not good for those that have been waiting in line to have their turn at this shot of the American Dream that I have enjoyed. I want many others to do so as well, as they follow the system that we have put in place that—I will repeat—needs fixing and improving.

However, the numbers that we are seeing at the border, the data on the crime and the crossings, are unprecedented, as the chief of the Tucson sector, which is now the busiest sector in terms of encounters in the entire country, described it not too long ago.

He said: Before I called it unprecedented. Now I don't have an adjective to describe what the situation is now.

Mr. Speaker, just about 10 days ago when the week closed, it was reported that 17,500 encounters had happened in the Tucson sector alone. Before a couple thousand a week was an alarming number, and even borderline crisis, now we are looking at 3,000 or so a day on some days.

These are unsustainable numbers, and it is not trending in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have some of my colleagues join me in addressing this topic on today's Special Order.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. RUTHERFORD), a former sheriff that has experience in battling crime and fighting for law and order.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Arizona for yielding.

As very well stated, Mr. Speaker, a little over 2½ years ago, the Republicans in this body were talking about a crisis at the southern border. The illegal immigrants that were pouring into this country had created a crisis.

Finally now, 3 years later almost, the Democrats across the aisle finally want to admit that there is a crisis, but they blame it on funding. We need more funding.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am here to tell you, it is not a funding issue, it is a policy issue. We need to change our policy.

In May, House Republicans passed H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act. In 2023, we passed that bill. This robust border bill will require the Biden administration to complete the Trump-era border wall, increase the number of Border Patrol agents, reinstate the remain in Mexico policy, and remove all the incentives that are encouraging people to cross our border illegally.

Senator SCHUMER must bring H.R. 2 to the Senate floor for a vote. We need them to do their job over in the Senate. We need relief from this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, for the last 7½ months, that bill has been sitting, languishing in the Senate, with Democrats refusing to even negotiate the issues.

It is very clear now, 7 months after House Republicans passed that bill, that now the Democrats own the border crisis and the Democrats own the national disasters that will flow from this crisis.

In 7 months' time, over 1 million illegal immigrants have been encountered at our southern border. Make no mistake, the United States has been and will continue to be a nation of immigrants that welcomes people from around this world who love this land.

I have seen firsthand the death, destruction, disorder, and diseases that have been brought into our communities by the unvetted migration coming over our porous southern border.

Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago, a 24-year-old man, who HHS left unidentified, posed as a minor, was flown to my district, where he killed one of my constituents.

The Democrats own that. He was not the first criminal to enter as a criminal, and he won't be the last.

□ 1300

Even the leaders in New York, California, and other blue States are calling out for support as they deal with the influx of migrants into their cities. The Democrats own that.

Among the 2.4 million people that CBP encountered in FY 2023, 15,000 of them had criminal records, and 169 of them were on the terrorist watch list. Again, these are just the ones that we know about. The Democrats own that.

This humanitarian national crisis has stretched our immigration system to a breaking point. A nation without borders is not a nation.

Every day that President Biden and Senator SCHUMER ignore this crisis, our country becomes less safe. While the Senate has refused to negotiate and accept the major tenets of H.R. 2, CBP has intercepted 8,400 pounds of fentanyl at the southwest border.

The fentanyl pouring in over this border is killing our neighbors, friends, and families at an alarming rate. In just 2022, over 70,000 people died of fentanyl poisoning. The Democrats own that, too.

If we can't prove who is coming across the border, the default policy, according to Secretary Mayorkas, is to let them in. Don't know who they are, but come on in. That has to stop. The Democrats own that, too.

I implore Senator SCHUMER to bring H.R. 2 to the floor for a vote. The Democrats own this border crisis and the death and destruction it has and will cause in our country. The Democrats own that, too.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend being here and speaking so passionately and also from experience on this, both personally and professionally, as we just heard.

This is exactly what the issue here is. It is the need for partnership and bipartisanship on this issue. This is not a

partisan issue. I think that we can all see that. Some have tried to make it a partisan issue, and it is really not.

What Mr. RUTHERFORD just explained is exactly the nature of the problem. Both sides should be equally concerned about this issue, both sides of the aisle.

I know that is for sure the case at home. At home, you don't see partisan division around this issue. I hear from mayors that are Democrats and mayors that are Republicans. I hear from county supervisors that are Republicans and county supervisors that are Democrats. They are both equally concerned with the situation because we are dealing with it on the ground.

That is exactly why, in my district in Arizona's Sixth Congressional District, we get it. We know what the solutions are. That is an enforcement of the current laws, and as was described, the measures in H.R. 2 that need to be adopted.

These are the kind of policy changes that we need. It is not just all about resources. Resources are definitely a part of the solution, but resources without the proper policy changes and the proper policy enforcement will be an incomplete solution to the problem.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. VALADAO).

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona for yielding.

What we are seeing at our southern border is a humanitarian and national security crisis. Earlier this year, I was at the border with my colleague from Arizona to see the situation on the ground firsthand.

Our Border Patrol agents are overwhelmed by the surge of migrants from around the world, and we need to give them more support.

Unfortunately, the Biden administration has sent a clear message that our southern border is open for business for drug smuggling and human trafficking. The flow of illegal drugs, guns, and human traffickers has a direct impact on the people from the Central Valley.

I just held a teletownhall this week, and one of the issues that came up the most was the situation at our border and concerns with fentanyl.

We must take action to combat the loss of life from illegal drugs, like fentanyl, which are flowing across our open border at an alarming rate. The House has passed legislation this year to increase the number of Border Patrol agents, deploy new drone and surveillance technologies, and restore construction of the border wall. These are commonsense measures that would go a long way to ensure our Border Patrol agents have the tools they need to deal with the crisis.

For too long, extremes on both sides of the aisle have discouraged real and meaningful discussion regarding border security and immigration reform. We need to secure the border and make reforms to our broken immigration system. We won't be able to make these reforms or find compromise with the

current humanitarian and national security crisis we have at the border today.

I will continue working with my colleagues to find common ground for reforming our broken immigration system and to secure our border.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative VALADAO for his words.

Obviously, California is a border State as well, but we heard from Florida and Arizona. This is a top issue. As I was mentioning at the beginning of my remarks, this is the number one issue of our constituents and it should be. This is something that is impacting us every day, and it is something that has been getting worse and worse.

It is not just in my district. My district, the Sixth Congressional District, is a border district, and we know that is obviously impacted. There are other border areas, even outside of my district, where migrants are being released on a daily basis, up in the hundreds. This is something that alarms the community and is something that needs to be fixed.

Let's understand something. Arizona, like Texas and California, have clearly experienced living and breathing and existing and collaborating and prospering with our neighbors to the south. This is something that is part of our culture, part of who we are.

Although the border has never been perfect, and no one is claiming that it has been, it has never been as open as it is today and has never been described as a crisis at the level that it is now.

That is why it is concerning to all of us living there, because we have seen it deteriorate and get worse by the day. In the last 2 years, we have seen examples of records broken that we never thought would be broken in terms of apprehensions and also the amount of drugs coming in, specifically through our ports of entry.

When the Biden administration has gotten involved, like they did about 10 days ago, it was to close a port of entry. Well, the results of closing that port of entry have been nonpositive ones, given that the legal traffic has stopped while the illegal traffic continues to not only happen but increase while people are no longer able to cross for legal purposes. That is a problem, and that is another sign of the administration missing the mark on this.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BIGGS), my colleague and neighbor up north, someone who has been fighting for these issues longer than most, even in Arizona, in public office.

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I appreciate him holding this Special Order to discuss this most existential of issues.

Talk about nihilism for a second. Nihilism is where you actually are fostering programs and activities to ensure your demise. I can tell you, what is happening on the border is unbelievable.

When my colleague, Mr. CISCOMANI, starts talking about Lukeville, he is talking about the Lukeville port of entry. Thirty-five people live in Lukeville. This is a port of entry people from Phoenix and southern Arizona use to transport down to Rocky Point on the Sea of Cortez and vice versa and our friends from Mexico come up and go shopping in Arizona. It is a very synergistic type of relationship.

What happened, more than 10 days ago, that resulted in the closure 10 days ago of that port of entry, is that there were so many illegal aliens coming there and entering our country that the Border Patrol couldn't process them. We couldn't keep enough people there to process legal traffic and deal with the influx of over 1,000 a day. Wow. Now, we have that port of entry closed, and you still have 1,000 to 1,600 people a day coming there from all over the world.

That is one of the distinctions from my friends in Texas. Eagle Pass, which is also being inundated right now in the Del Rio sector, most of those folks coming across there speak Spanish, because they are coming from Central American and South American states.

What happens is, when you have these people coming in from Mali, Mauritania, Madagascar, West Africa, Somalia, Syria, or the Middle Eastern countries that are coming through Lukeville, we don't even have translators for them. Our port agents down there can't even communicate with these folks.

That is just one port of entry. I am going to give you one more example. Yuma is a town of about 80,000, 85,000 people, sits right on the border across from San Luis, Mexico. They have got one hospital in Yuma.

By the way, what is Yuma? You need to understand what it is. Almost every piece of lettuce that you eat, or other green leafy vegetable, in the winter-time, for about 6 months out of the year, comes from Yuma, Arizona. It is an agricultural community. They work well together. During planting and harvesting, 7,000 to 10,000, sometimes 12,000, people a day come across legally to help the farmers in Yuma.

What happens now? What happens now is if you are a lady and you are going to give birth to a baby, many times you can't even get into the maternity ward at the Yuma Regional hospital. Why is that? Because of the influx of people from across the border, who are in the country illegally, and the women are going to have babies right there at Yuma Regional. Every maternity bed is taken up with someone who doesn't live in this country. Where do they go? They drive 3 to 3½ hours up to Phoenix or 3 to 3½ hours over to San Diego.

We have known people who have had heart attacks and other really serious emergencies who could not even get into the emergency room in Yuma. They had to be transported by helicopter, Air Evac, up to Phoenix.

Why is that? Because we are inundated at the southern border. This is a crisis of our own making. Not ours, but this administration's making.

People say to me: Why do they do this? It is inexplicable. It is not incompetence. Surely, if you are incompetent, at some point you would say: Hey, almost 10 million illegal aliens in the country in 3 years, we have got a problem; we probably ought to change our policies.

They don't want to change their policies. They do not want to enforce the law. There are laws on the books that would help slow this down immediately, if they would enforce them. You know what the first one would be? You actually take the 1.5 million people who are in this country illegally, who have received due process and have removal orders to leave the country but who refuse to leave the country, you would actually find those people and remove them.

You know what happens when you are removing people? Then folks say it is probably not worth spending every dime that I have, every dime my family has, getting in debt to the cartels, and going across all of that hardship to get into the country. That is what they would say. How do we know that works? Because when President Trump said we are going to start removing people by their orders, it slowed it down.

By the way, let's go back to Yuma for a second, Yuma, Arizona, where I was talking about the hospital. During President Trump's last year, the entire year, 8,600 people who were illegally entering the country were apprehended in the Yuma sector. It is like 120 miles long. They do that in a week now. That is about a week's worth of illegal aliens crossing. Trump had that for an entire year. You couldn't do that by accident or incompetence. It almost has to be by design.

How do you stop it? You start enforcing the law. How do you get this administration to enforce the law? You tell them we are going to fund only certain aspects of the government, like the military, like the border patrol, like ICE, like air traffic controllers, and like the TSA. Let's make sure the country is safe, but we are not going to give Mr. Biden any more money than that.

For all of the bureaucracy and the crazy programs that he has out there—by the way, they churn out 40,000 pages of laws on a regular basis from those bureaucracies—we are going to slow that down until they do something with measurable metrics that shows us that they are actually bringing down the number of illegal border crossings and bring it under control. That is how you settle this.

□ 1315

We have to settle this. It is going to change this country.

We can talk more about fentanyl. When my colleagues across the aisle

say that 95 percent of fentanyl is seized at the ports of entry, why do you suppose that is? It is because, at the ports of entry, you actually have people waiting there, investigating and inspecting vehicles and individuals crossing. There are machines where they can look into a truck and see what is in there. They can see if there is something disorderly in there and then inspect it.

Between the ports of entry is where we know that 1.75 million people have come across during the Biden administration. They are wearing camo and carpet shoes so they won't be detected. Our BuckEye cameras and field cameras pick them up, but we just can't get to them.

Where Mr. CISCOMANI and I live in the Tucson sector, the terrain is so rough and rugged that we might see somebody there, but it will take you 2½ to 3 hours to get your vehicle there, get out of your vehicle, and hike to where they are.

They will then pop up south of Phoenix. They will go through the Tohono O'odham Reservation. They will pop up through Pinal County. When they come out, they are 40 miles, as the crow flies, from Phoenix, which is a major hub for transporting illegal drugs and human trafficking. That is what is going on between the ports of entry.

Every hearing that we have held in the last 3 years where this has been brought up, the Democrats have said we interdict 95 percent of that at the ports of entry. No. You interdict 95 percent of the overall interdiction at the ports of entry, but you don't know what you are not interdicting.

What we do know is that 1.97 million people carrying backpacks come into our country. What is in those backpacks? It used to be bales of marijuana. It isn't bales of marijuana now. It is small backpacks to bring in fentanyl pills. That is what is going on.

I beg this administration to wake up. I beg my colleagues to join us. Let's entice this administration to do what is right and enforce our border laws.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for having this Special Order today. Let's join hands and defeat this wide-open border that is forever going to adjust our country.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. BIGGS for his words and his work on this.

As we close today's session, I will re-emphasize something that I said at the beginning. This crisis, as much as we talk about this, and it is absolutely true on the national security side, on the risk, and all the issues that I mentioned, I absolutely believe that the Biden administration has utterly failed. We square up the responsibility for failing at the border on the President and his team, for sure.

This is also something that is a humanitarian crisis. We have children who are being trafficked. In a lot of cases, as described, they are recycled through when they cross. They get sent

back and then keep getting recycled through.

They are abusing the laws that protect adults and treat them differently when they are carrying with them children, minors, specifically tender age children, which would be 12 and under.

These issues are real. The New York Times published a story where they reported that there were over 85,000 minors missing in our country who had been smuggled into the United States. There was no way to track them. The Federal Government had lost track of them.

Mr. Speaker, I am a dad of six. I am an immigrant myself. When I look at that, it angers me. As a father, it angers me. As an immigrant, it angers me. There is no reason that our government should have lost track of these children. This crisis affects kids and women and everyone being trafficked, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to thank our Border Patrol agents who have continually put their lives on the line—the different organizations and, obviously, the rank and file, those men and women who are on the front line, the officers and everyone involved in this job. It is a thankless job.

They are seeing the worst impact ever with the least support that they have ever had. We need to make sure that we have their backs. I want them to know that we have their backs.

One of the last things that I want to say is that this is not going to be a complaining session. This is not a session where we highlight and add light to the failures of the administration and complain about that. That is something that we need to be stronger on and to voice.

I have been offering solutions. We have been offering solutions. We have been writing letters to the Secretary, demanding answers for the closure of the port of entry, working on a bipartisan basis, and calling the National Guard to the border so they can be activated by this administration. We have also offered different bills that would address the criminal aspect of what is happening at the border.

I believe we need to secure our border now. The time is now to do that. I also agree that immigration reform is needed. Asylum process updating is needed, as well. All this can be done and should be done. This should be the number one priority that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I am committed to making that happen in my time here in Congress. In my first year, this continues to be my issue.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for listening. I thank my colleagues for participating. I thank my colleagues for a partnership to protect the border, protect our communities, and make sure that everyone has a shot at the American Dream, the way that our system has been created for people to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair.

TACKLING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GROTHMAN) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, we are going to follow up on the last series of speeches and point out to the American public that over the next month—we are now going to leave for about 2½ weeks. But over the next month, all eyes should be on the Republicans of the House of Representatives as we finally dig in and try to tackle the biggest problem that America faces today. That problem is the illegal immigration across the southern border.

I want to give some statistics because I have talked to a lot of people, and some people are still confused. They think we will be mean if we try to cut off the illegal immigration, or xenophobic, or something.

I point out to the American people one more time that the number of people coming across our southern border each month is historically wildly high. It is even high by the standards of the Biden administration.

The most recent figures we have are still for October 2023. Almost 300,000 people came across our southern border in October. That is up from about 180,000 a year ago. It went from 180,000 to 290,000. If you go back 2 years, you are down under 100,000. If you go back 3 years, it was under 20,000.

We are going up even higher than I thought. We are going up to about 14 times as many people crossing the border today as were crossing the border 3 years ago. It is a disaster for the United States.

Of that amount, depending on the month, we are up to having 6,000 to 9,000 unaccompanied minors crossing the southern border. There was a time when Americans' heartstrings were pulled a little bit if a family was separated. If a 16-year-old comes across the border without either of their parents there, isn't that a broken family? For all we know, they may never see their parents again. They may be human trafficked. They might wind up working illegally on a third-shift job.

The New York Times reported it, and the Biden administration objects to it, but I think anybody would agree that we have lost track of tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors in America.

Why aren't more people upset by this? There are people who say some of them are okay. Are we making any effort to find out if they are okay?

Some other statistics that should be tackled here, as we permanently change America, is that we not only look at the number of people coming here illegally, but we should be looking at the number of people who are coming here who are being deported after they do bad things.

Let me say that one more time. We find dramatic reductions in the number of people who are coming to our country who are being deported from our country after they do bad things.

In the most recent year available, 72,000 people were deported, primarily for breaking the law. You have COVID in the middle there. If you go back 2 years, that 72,000 was 185,000. Before COVID hit at all, we were deporting about 250,000 people a year for breaking the law. We have now dropped that to about one-quarter as many.

We not only have a problem with the current administration that has an open border, with the number of people crossing the border up by 14 times what it was 3 years ago, but the number of people deported compared to—and I don't like to make this a Trump thing—under Trump has dropped about one-quarter as many.

It is hard to believe right now, but at the time of the Trump administration, people were critical because people were doing horrible things and not being deported. I think President Trump should have been deporting more. Nevertheless, almost a quarter as many people are being deported as were 4 years ago.

We are both letting far more people in the country and kicking out fewer people who I think everybody should agree are a problem.

Mr. Speaker, there is going to be a strong effort made when Congress returns from our Christmas break to do something to aid Ukraine. The Republicans feel, and rightfully so, that this is such a crisis of what is going on at our southern border that we should not be addressing any other crises around the world until this situation is solved.

There are other statistics that the public should be aware of. Every year in this country, over a million people are allowed in the country with green cards. It is not impossible to come here. Right now, almost a million people are sworn in every year to become new citizens.

This is the highest number that we have had since 2006, so don't let anybody say it is impossible to come here. Don't let anyone say that America is xenophobic and turning its back on the world. Just shy of a million people every year are being sworn in legally. A million people a year are also being let in on visas. As a result, nobody should say that America is afraid of people from other parts of the world.

The only question is: Should we have people coming here who have not been appropriately vetted? How much of a quick change in the makeup of America's population can we stand?

Mr. Speaker, I have statistics available for last year, when 970,000 new people were sworn in as Americans. I was at a ceremony in Milwaukee County where 270 people were sworn in in 1 month by itself.

Last year, despite this huge illegal immigration, we had just short of a million people naturalized. That is the most since 2008.

□ 1330

There were only 2 years, from what I can tell, in the last 50 years when more people were legally sworn in as new citizens than who were sworn in last year. I am led to believe, at least by my local officials, that that number is going to go up again when we collect the final numbers from 2023.

I strongly encourage my Republican colleagues to hold the line. We have passed legislation out of the House—and we don't even really need legislation, but we have passed legislation out of the House to change the immigration laws the degree to which we will go back to where we were a couple years ago and only a small number of people will come here who are not legal, and we will stop the current trend of having such a wholesale change in the make-up of our immigrants coming to America.

John Adams said that the Constitution is built for a moral and religious population and totally unfit for any other.

We therefore have to make sure that just as we do a good job of raising our children who are expected to live in a country under our wonderful Constitution which anticipates a limited government which is necessary for a free people, we have to make sure that the people who come here are a moral group of people who are prepared to live in a country based upon less government and leaving people alone. If the House Republicans do not get what they want in January or February, then it is scary for the future of our country.

This is a fight the Republicans, of course, do not want.

Who wants to fight?

Nevertheless, it is something that is necessary to change our country. If we lose that fight, then we are going to go back to the days, or continue the days, of 180 or 300,000 people per month crossing the southern border.

I hope the press pays careful attention to what is going on here, and I hope the American people pay close attention to what is going on here.

The next topic I am going to address, and we have addressed it before, is that we are right now working through the 12 bills which we call appropriation bills and which the people back home would call budget bills.

In virtually every bill, there will be a disagreement as to whether America ought to be spending more money identifying people based on racial make-up, trying to use the racial make-up of where your parents were born 2 or 3 or 10 generations ago when determining who gets a job, who gets a promotion, and who gets a government contract.

This has been a big part of American life since 1965, but under the Biden administration it has become a much bigger, I won't say problem, but a bigger part of American life because we ask people what their racial background is.

Maybe I should explain why it is something of concern to me.