

and others. Meanwhile, the drug cartels move the drugs across the border that took the lives of 108,000 Americans last year alone. And 71,000 of those 108,000 were from fentanyl or synthetic opioids, the precursors originating from Asia, principally China.

Morale is at an alltime low, and it is no surprise. If you are a law enforcement officer sworn to enforce the laws of the land and you are told by your superiors you cannot because of poor policy choices, how would you expect morale to be anything else but low?

These law enforcement officers, principally the Border Patrol, are frustrated that the administration is actively working to make their jobs harder, not easier.

As we know, the Biden administration is trying to remove one of the tools needed for the Border Patrol to control the border, since they have yet to come up with a comprehensive plan; and that would be title 42, the public health title that the Border Patrol is able to use to prevent this crisis from turning into a full-blown catastrophe.

I know I sound like a broken record, but Congress must do something. Inaction is not an option. I have said over and over again that I am willing to work with anyone—Republican, Democrat, or Independent—who is serious about solving this border crisis.

The Presiding Officer, the Senator from Arizona, has been a great partner in this effort. Back in 2021, we introduced the Bipartisan Border Solutions Act to address some of the biggest strains on Border Patrol and our immigration court system. It is admittedly a modest bill, but I was naive enough to think that if things got bad enough, the Biden administration would be looking for a lifeline.

We had a bicameral, bipartisan bill that at least got the conversation started and would make things better if it was embraced and enacted into law. But despite the fact that the bill had bipartisan, bicameral support, the Senate Judiciary Committee refused to even hold a hearing. Let me say that again: bipartisan, bicameral legislation, with the border on fire, an unprecedented humanitarian and public security crisis, and the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman refused to even hold a hearing on the bill.

In the meantime, the Biden administration has weakened or completely jettisoned policies that have checked the flow of irregular migration, and the crisis has grown even worse. And why wouldn't it?

Border Patrol, which are the experts who have taught me about what happens at the border in terms of the flow of migrants coming across, have educated me to the fact that there are both push factors and pull factors. The push factors are violence and poverty. We all understand that. The pull factors are the perception that there will be no consequences associated with illegally immigrating into the United States.

The Biden administration is simply waving the white flag when it comes to any consequences associated with illegal immigration into the United States. Given the growing strain on frontline personnel and our immigration system as a whole, not to mention public safety, I hope the willful ignorance of this administration will come to an end.

Hopefully, with the new Congress, President Biden will reconsider, maybe even travel to the border and talk to the same experts that I have learned from when it comes to how we might do a better job to control the flow not only of migrants but also drugs across the border. But, so far, the President has shown zero interest, as has the Vice President, whom he had named the border czar previously.

They want to talk about root causes of illegal immigration as if that just emanated from Central America and Mexico. But the Border Patrol in Arizona and Texas will tell you that they are detaining people from as many as 150 different countries, which tells me that there are international human smuggling networks and it is just a matter of money whether you can get here from the Middle East, whether you can get here from Ukraine, or whether you can get here from the People's Republic of China. People of all those different nationalities and more have shown up at the border, which shows me it is not just about "root causes" in Central America or South America—or Mexico, for that reason.

It won't surprise you that the border is one of the top concerns of the folks I represent in Texas. Because we have a 1,200-mile common border with Mexico, we are ground zero of this border crisis.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration, this last year, ushered through trillions of dollars in unnecessary partisan spending, adding to the inflation rates that are crushing middle-class families who are struggling to keep up with high prices, particularly at the grocery store.

My constituents are also worried about crime in their communities and the ability to keep their families safe. Of course, businesses that employ—particularly, small businesses that employ—the vast majority of Americans are facing the same inflation headwinds, compounded by supply chain struggles and an ongoing labor shortage.

These are some of the biggest challenges our country is facing, and I hope the Senate will take these problems seriously in this new Congress. Of course, these aren't Republican or Democrat issues. These aren't issues just facing red States or blue States alone. These are problems that are being faced by people across the country, and it is time for the new Congress to act with the seriousness and urgency that is required.

I am proud of the fact that I have consistently ranked as one of the most bipartisan Senators because I am will-

ing to work with anyone who wants to deliver change. That has been the case throughout my time here in the Senate, and it is not going to change now. So I am eager to work together where we can, but I also will never hesitate to fight back against ill-conceived or downright dangerous proposals from some of our friends across the aisle.

Calvin Coolidge, the former President of the United States, has said that one of the most important things a Member of Congress can do is to stop bad legislation, and that remains true today. But that doesn't detract from the fact that, where we can, where we can find common ground, we should work together in order to craft lasting, enduring bipartisan legislation, not by abusing the rules of the Senate but by working together to come up with good ideas that can command the vote of at least 60 Senators, a majority of the House, and a Presidential signature.

So, yes, we will continue to oppose radical policies that the American people overwhelmingly oppose. We won't allow the imposition of government mandates that will kill energy jobs or harm our energy security in an effort to reach unrealistic zero emissions deadlines. We won't let them hamstring our police officers with broad funding cuts or one-size-fits-all policies. And we won't allow the packing of the Supreme Court or the creation of two new States out of Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico so that Democrats get a permanent majority in the U.S. Senate by getting two Senators each from each of those would-be new States. And we won't let our colleagues on the other side impose crippling tax hikes that will make it more difficult for hard-working Texans to put food on the table.

So I trust that our colleagues got some good rest over the holidays, some time with friends and family, and we all look ahead to the need to do more work for the American people. We have big opportunities ahead of us, and I am glad to be back and eager to get to work.

TRIBUTE TO MITCH McCONNELL

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, on one final note, today marks more than the beginning of a new Congress. It also marks a major milestone for our colleague, Kentucky's senior Senator.

Today, Senator McCONNELL becomes the longest serving Senate leader in American history. That is a big deal. No Senator from either side has led their party as long as Leader McCONNELL. This milestone is no accident. As our colleagues on both sides of the aisle know, Senator McCONNELL has the most valuable combination of skills and temperament that you need to succeed in this Chamber: an encyclopedic knowledge of the Senate and an infinite work ethic.

For 16 years, he has put these skills to great use leading our conference through every storm and opportunity

that has landed on the Senate's doorstep. He has championed domestic priorities, including everything from tax reform to confirming judges who actually will enforce the Constitution as written, as well as legislation to address the opioid epidemic. He has guided our work relating to global conflicts, for everything from the ongoing war in Ukraine to the difficult struggle for democracy in Burma. He is a champion of free speech, the Constitution, and the Senate itself.

You could write volumes about everything Senator MCCONNELL has accomplished as the Senate Republican leader, and I have no doubt that each of those books would arrive at the same conclusion: No one has done more to advance the conservative cause in a center-right country than MITCH MCCONNELL. He is the effective and humble hand at the helm of the conference, and it is a privilege to serve alongside him in the Senate.

So thank you, Senator MCCONNELL, for your leadership and your friendship. Congratulations on this historic and well-deserved accomplishment.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Republican leader.

TRIBUTE TO BEN SASSE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, normally when a new Congress convenes on the 3rd of January, the Senate has already said farewell to all of our departing colleagues, but this first week of the 118th Congress is also the last week we will get to enjoy the collegial and cerebral stylings of our good friend, the junior Senator from Nebraska, BEN SASSE.

I spoke earlier this morning about Senator Mike Mansfield, whose path to politics began in the faculty lounge. Well, so did BEN's, but, alas, the legislature's claim on Senator SASSE has proven temporary, and now the ivory tower is literally striking back.

A quick look at BEN's resume leaves no mystery about the intellectual formation of our sharp colleague from the Cornhusker State—valedictorian of Fremont High School, degrees from Harvard, St. John's, and Yale, and high-flying stunts as a sought-after consultant in business.

As I understand it, it wasn't just brainpower that punched BEN's ticket through the Ivy League; it was also a bit of blunt force. Let me explain.

As the story goes, a childhood tumble out of a hay loft left our colleague with a big scar and some lasting numbness in his forehead. I am not literally making this up. Naturally, as a budding

competitive wrestler, our friend started to make a name for himself, turning a would-be handicap into a signature move: the head butt. Needless to say, college recruiters took notice.

This hardheaded practicality has combined with BEN's smarts and creativity to produce an interesting and impactful career, like using the wrestling mat as a springboard to a world-class humanities education; applying the skills of a business consultant to turn around a small, struggling, Christian university; being one of the Senate's most creative big thinkers while also staying attuned to working families' daily struggles; or writing a new bestselling book every few years while spending his summers waist deep—listen to this—in corn and soybean fields.

Now, I could be mistaken, but I believe there was one period where our colleague signed himself and his family's minivan up for a ride-sharing app so that he could pick his constituents' brains as he shuttled them to their destinations.

So, Madam President, just boring old business as usual.

In one of Ben's books, our colleague wrote about a practice that he and his wife Melissa have enjoyed incorporating into their family. He calls it their family canon—a collection of good books on big, consequential topics that are meant to be read and discussed together repeatedly.

So while Corrie, Alex, and Breck are growing up with the Sasse family canon, Ben's colleagues have spent the past 8 years with the Sasse Senate canon—eloquent arguments, new ideas on issues ranging from the future of work to the future of war, to the dignity of the human person.

Our colleague from Nebraska has been among this body's leading voices on data privacy, intellectual property, automation, the economic threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party, religious liberty, civics education—all in a day's work.

But behind the seemingly disparate interests, behind the fascinations with seemingly opposite things like new technology and ancient philosophy, I see a clear common thread: Senator SASSE is passionate about things that bear directly on the future of the American experiment.

That is the central passion that brought our colleague to this Chamber. Now, as he departs to head a major American university, it is the same passion that is taking him away from it. When it comes to protecting and strengthening our country's future, education is right up there with legislation.

And, anyway, I suspect many of us shared a hunch that, one way or another, this Renaissance man's diverse resume was probably not completed when he was sworn into the Senate 8 years ago.

This next adventure for the Sasse clan promises not just more sunshine but also more stability and family

time, thanks to the end of the weekly cross-country commutes.

So, look, I think I speak for all 99 of his Senate colleagues when I offer both our condolences on replacing committee hearings with faculty meetings and our congratulations on this exciting opportunity to lead an important institution.

So, Ben, your colleagues wish you and Melissa all the best as you go write the next interesting chapter to the Sasse family canon together.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The Senator from Nebraska.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I rise to speak from this floor for the last time. Serving the people of Nebraska as their Senator has been a unique honor, and I will remain grateful for all that I have learned from the folks who do more to feed the world than any people anytime or place in all of human history, quite literally.

I know that I speak for my team as well—some here on the floor for the first time, some in the Gallery—in saying to Nebraskans: Thank you for these 8 years—8 years of us getting to be a part of a team much bigger than just ourselves. That is a special privilege, and none of the 32 of us now on the team, and the dozens who have already departed, take that for granted, and so we say thank you to Nebraska.

Running for office is a dangerous business. In asking someone to give you their vote, you are asking them to give you their trust, to put their trust in you that you will rightly prioritize and sequence their long-term interests.

You are asking them to trust your judgment, your conscience, and your common sense.

Our wrestling together—Nebraskans and me—over the last 8 years has had some marked ups and downs, as you gave me victories in all 93 counties when I ran for office the very first time in my life in 2014 and then made me the most censored public official in the history of Nebraska over the next 6 years; but then proceeded, 2 years ago, to reelect me again, again winning all 93 counties and securing the most votes of anyone in the history of our State. Many times it felt like a noogie and a slap and a head butt and a hug all at once.

Besides my State and my wonderful staff, I obviously want to thank my family—my three ladies and Breck—not just for supporting and encouraging me but for charging out to embrace learning across all of Nebraska with me—visiting all 93 counties many, many times; climbing all over combines and tractors; learning so much about cattle and pigs and seed corn. My kids can tell you more about artificial insemination and how to turn a breeched calf that you wouldn't be able to eat again for 72 hours.

They got to know a beautiful State from east to west, from city to country, and from old to young. They have