

our Federal budget. Part of our Federal budget—an important part of our Federal budget—is the budget for the National Institutes of Health. This is the premier medical research Agency in the world—in the world. I am proud of the fact that it is in the United States and that every day it is responsible for dramatic breakthroughs against diseases and illnesses all across the spectrum and all across the United States and benefits to the world. Their discovery of new drugs for ALS is just one indication of the good work that they do.

For instance, Collins was the head of the NIH for many years under Presidents of both political parties. He is so good—and I am glad he is still working with the Biden administration—he is so good that Presidents—conservative, moderate, liberal; all of them—wanted Francis Collins to head up the National Institutes of Health, which he did remarkably. He was part of the team that discovered the human genome, which literally changed overnight the way we approach medicine in the United States and around the world.

I met with Dr. Collins a few years back and said: I would like to help you at the NIH. I think your work is one of the most important assignments in the Federal Government. What can I do?

He said: Senator, if you could give me 5 percent real growth in NIH budgeting each year, my researchers will continue their inspiring work to find cures and find new drugs that will make a difference in the lives of millions of people.

I set out to do that with the cooperation and help of Roy Blunt, a Republican; with Lamar Alexander, a Republican; and with PATTY MURRAY, who has just been our North Star when it comes to medical research.

We said: Let's try to achieve the goal of 5 percent real growth each year with the National Institutes of Health. We were lucky in the last 10 years to do it six or seven times. The question is, Will we be able to do it in next year's budget?

Sadly, the budget proposed by the Republicans in the House of Representatives devastates the National Institutes of Health's budget—at least a 20- to 25-percent cut in the amount of money on medical research. What impact does that have? Well, I can tell you it has a direct impact on lessening the number of grants that are awarded each year for medical research, but, secondarily, it sends a message to the researchers who are working so hard across the United States that they can't depend on us in Congress to fund their needed research in the years to come. That will discourage some, and some will walk away from a lot of research that could be very promising. And to do that in the name of helping America is just plain foolish. In fact, it is offensive.

I would like to say to Speaker MCCARTHY and those who are endorsing his budget: Stop for a minute and con-

sider the impact of what you are doing. There are people and families all across America who are counting on medical research for someone they love, and that research is coming through in remarkable ways, unprecedented around the world.

To think that we would cut the medical research budget of the United States by 25 percent and to argue that that is in the best interest of our country is madness, and it is political selfishness.

I would just plead with my friends on the other side of the aisle: At the end of this debate on the budget, don't let medical research be one of the casualties.

There are so many important areas I can add to that list of things that are critical for the future of America, but I wanted to speak to medical research this morning because Brian Wallach was a visitor in my office, and he reminded me that the determination of Brian and his wife Sandra and many people just like them to push for medical research is literally making a difference so that Lou Gehrig's disease will one day be a disease of the past that we will have conquered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. President, for more than 35 years, Congress has failed to fix the immigration laws of America, and this week that failure is going to be on full display on the news every night. That is because tomorrow the COVID-19 emergency measure known as title 42 comes to an end.

This program was first created by President Trump during the earliest days of the coronavirus epidemic, and for the past 3 years, title 42 has done nothing to address the challenges at our border. It has simply shut the border down and turned away families seeking refuge in America.

Title 42 is not only inhumane, it is ineffective. By turning our back on asylum seekers and leaving Federal and local officials unequipped to address this crisis, we have only created more chaos and misery at our border. At this moment, there are thousands of families who have fled unimaginable horror and have nowhere else to go. And title 42 certainly hasn't made our border more secure; it has only postponed the inevitable.

Truthfully, there is only one group of people who has benefited from title 42. I am sorry to say they are the transnational criminal organizations. How can that be? It is because for the past 3 years, title 42 has shut down nearly any ability for one to seek asylum in America. That means asylum seekers have had no other option than to seek illegal pathways into the country. So they turn to smugglers, human traffickers, who charge them thousands of dollars to take them on dangerous journeys across the border. And what happens when these asylum seekers are caught and sent back to Mexico instead of being processed under our Nation's immigration laws? The cycle

repeats itself again and again and again. These smugglers can multiply their profits by taking asylum seekers across the border over and over again.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, the illicit smuggling enterprise has become a multibillion-dollar operation. One reason this enterprise is raking in the profits is that lawmakers in Congress, right here in the Senate, have refused to reform our immigration laws and instead have relied on Executive actions like title 42.

Now, it is worth noting that the Biden administration is at this moment doing everything it can to create an orderly process at our southern border, with the limited tools of our current immigration law. With the lifting of title 42 in just a matter of hours, we will likely see a significant increase in migrants seeking asylum. It goes to show that title 42 has failed to reduce the demand for those seeking entry into America. Really, that demand has been piling up for 3 years. So to help to manage this expected increase in border crossings, the Biden administration is deploying every resource at its disposal. They have increased the capacity to process asylum seekers, expanded access to lawful pathways into the United States, and partnered with other countries, like Colombia and Guatemala, to create new processing centers away from the southern border.

While all of these steps are important, there is no action by the President alone that can address the fundamental problem we face. Our outdated immigration system is collapsing under the weight of modern-day challenges, and the only way to change it is by enacting comprehensive immigration reform. If it seems like it is impossible, it is not.

Last week, the MAGA majority in the House introduced a proposal they claim is a solution, but really it just codifies the failures of title 42. Their bill provides no new legal pathways for entering into this country, erases nearly all humanitarian protection for families seeking asylum, and makes the situation at the border even worse.

The fact is, the Republicans can try and build a border wall as high as they like, but it will not change the reality on the ground. And here is the reality: We in this world are in the midst of the worst refugee crisis in history. From Ukraine to Venezuela, 100 million people around the world have been displaced from their homes by war, by hunger, by political persecution, by climate change; and one in five of these refugees reside in the Western Hemisphere.

Simply ignoring this global humanitarian crisis solves nothing, and shutting down our border won't deter these families from still trying to find refuge in America. It will force them to extremely dangerous alternatives, like smugglers and cartel members who are raking in billions because of our public policy failures.

Let's stop pretending the American people can't handle an honest debate on immigration. They can. Talk to small business owners and family-run farms in States like mine. They are the first to tell you our Nation needs more immigrant workers. We have two times as many jobs in this country as unemployed people to fill them.

I had the CEO of a major international corporation in my office yesterday. We talked about opportunities in the future, and he said the one thing that is holding him back is the lack of skilled employees. He begged me to find ways.

I gave a few suggestions to him, but I told him as well: Don't ignore the reality. America is a nation of immigrants, and with so many jobs unfilled in this country, we need help. There are thousands of immigrants who are ready, capable, and willing to meet our workforce needs. What are we waiting for?

Communities across America are struggling with worker shortages. It seems many in the other party are willing to entertain any solution except immigration in the land of immigrants.

Just look at States like Arkansas and Iowa, which recently passed laws rolling back child labor protections—kids they want to work in dangerous settings. When I hear the suggestion that a 15- or 16-year-old can work in a slaughterhouse, I remember those jobs that I held when I was going through college.

I spent 12 months working in a slaughterhouse in East St. Louis, IL. It was dangerous, deadly work. And to think that you would put a young person on that job without the training and protection that they need is just not American. It is mindless.

If you have any doubt that asylum seekers at our border are ready to fill the jobs that are available, let me tell you the story of Carlos from Venezuela, a country with one of the most ruthless dictators in the world.

Back in Venezuela, Carlos had a full-time job. But the political and economic crisis was so bad in this country, he couldn't put food on the table. His family was on the brink of starvation, and he feared for their safety from political violence. So last May, Carlos and his wife did what any parent would do: They picked up their 4-year-old daughter and their nursing infant and they took off for the border. It was an incredible journey, 5 months—much of it on foot—to the Texas-Mexico border from Venezuela. It was a nightmare of violence, theft, and exploitation.

I sat down with Carlos and his family when they got off the bus in Chicago, and he told me what they went through. He told me that at one point he thought they would die as they spent 9 consecutive nights in the Panamanian jungle. They were rescued by a local military force. All of their money, all of their cell phones had been stolen, but they pressed on to try to get to America.

After filing a claim for asylum once they arrived, Carlos and his family were relocated to my city of Chicago. That is where I met them last September. When I spoke with Carlos, I asked him: What can I do for you? What can I do for your family? What do you need? He said one word: "job." I need a job. I will go to work anywhere. I will do anything.

There are many employers across this country who would take Carlos up on his offer in a minute, but they can't because he is not legally allowed to work. Though he is legally in this country waiting for his asylum hearing, he is not legally allowed to work for at least 6 months or maybe longer. How does that make any sense?

Last week, the House Republicans finally introduced their response to our immigration hearings. The bill is more than 200 pages long. Not one word of it offers anything to employers in my State who need workers like Carlos. That is not a serious proposal.

Yesterday, the mayor of Chicago, noting that some 8,000 immigrants who have been sent to our city by the Governor of Texas and the Governor of Florida, begged for help and issued an Executive order saying do something to help me deal with these very serious problems. At the current moment, immigrants are sleeping on the floors of police stations in the city of Chicago.

Do you want to know what a serious immigration proposal looks like? Well, 10 years ago, the Senate actually passed one. We had a group of eight of us who worked for months to put together a bipartisan proposal. We brought it to the floor of the U.S. Senate, and it passed with an overwhelming majority. What happened to it in the Republican House? They refused to even consider it or debate it. Even Donald Trump's Secretary of Homeland Security admitted that that bipartisan bill would have made our border more secure, but the House Republicans refused to take it up and still refuse to face the reality of what comprehensive immigration reform looks like.

We still need that package today, one that addresses the needs of our economy, provides a path of citizenship for Dreamers and immigrant farm workers, and lives up to our Nation's legacy of providing safe harbor to refugees fleeing for their lives.

I have been told repeatedly by my Senate Republican colleagues that they will not negotiate until the House sends us a bill. We have waited long enough. This week, I am introducing a proposal that I hope we can all support and will start the debate.

My bill would provide immediate assistance to border officials and authorities to help secure the border and officially process asylum seekers. It would provide support to the communities that welcome migrants in our country.

This bill is by no means a comprehensive package, but it is an opportunity to show the American people

that we are not ignoring the reality and we can support our frontline officials and the communities that need help.

The American people are tired of partisan bickering and excuses over immigration. They want us to work together to secure our border, support our economy, and stand by the fundamental principles and values that have started this Nation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. DURBIN assumed the Chair.)

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it is May 10—May 10. If the President's Treasury Secretary is correct, in 3 weeks, the United States could reach the limit of its borrowing capacity, and—and, absent an agreement between the President and Congress to raise the debt ceiling, begin to default on its debts. But if you think that means the President has gotten serious about reaching a debt ceiling agreement, you would be wrong.

The President did invite the Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate to the White House yesterday, presumably, one would think, to finally begin negotiating. But as it turned out, the meeting was apparently a little more than an occasion for the President to reiterate his position that he won't negotiate.

Here is the political reality: The President can't raise the debt ceiling by himself. He has to work with Congress, and, more specifically, he has to work with Speaker MCCARTHY and the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. That is just the reality.

The American people sent divided government to Washington last November, and divided government requires compromise. It requires negotiation. Frankly, it is the height of arrogance for the President and the Senate Democratic leader to think that they are somehow the exception to that, to think that they should be able to simply decree what they want—in this case, an increase in the debt ceiling with no spending reforms—and have everyone else just fall in line.

That is not the way our system of government works. I get that the President would like things to work that way, but they don't, and the sooner he accepts that fact the better because the fiscal stability of our country is hanging in the balance here. Unless the President comes to the negotiating table for real, he is going to be responsible for the United States defaulting on its debts.

Let's talk for a minute about why the President doesn't want to negotiate, why he is insisting on a clean