

many of our departments—these critical care nurses. They offered them a generous, generous financial incentive to stay, and they stayed.

The hospital said it was an easy calculation to make: how much more we need to pay in bonuses versus shutting down critical services in our hospital for a year because of lack of nurses.

That is the reality of what hospitals are facing all over the United States, not just nurses but many other medical professions.

While we are at it, I also want to put in a word for the rural EMS agencies, the first responders that we all depend on.

A few years ago, I had a visit from Mark Kennedy. He is an emergency medical technician from Nauvoo, IL. In his county, Hancock County, his ambulance service is critical. It is life and death to get people to their nearby hospital, which is 40 or 50 miles away. He told me about challenges that they had with their volunteers, by and large, running this agency—this ambulance agency—and keeping up with the equipment that is needed to make sure that they could save lives. So I joined with then Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas, who was the ranking Republican in the Senate Ag Committee that was writing the farm bill.

I convinced Pat Roberts to look the other way on the question of jurisdiction and to put this bill, which we called the SIREN Act, into the bill—into the farm bill—as a possible way of helping rural communities.

We have now enacted it into law through Senator Roberts' efforts and my own, and we have sent \$38 million to emergency medical services agencies across America, including many in my State but all across the United States. This is an equally important part of medical care and our future.

Now that Senator Roberts is retired, Senator SUSAN COLLINS and I are doing the bill together, again on a bipartisan basis, to reauthorize this program. I ask any Senator who has a question as to whether this is money well spent to contact that ambulance service in your own State and ask them what it means to have up-to-date equipment to save the lives of people that they are called on to help. I hope we can pass it out of the Senate this month.

The solutions to many of our pressing healthcare challenges are at hand. The question is whether we can find a bipartisan commitment to move them forward. After the month of August, in which I journeyed around my State, I sincerely hope that we can.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TEXAS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, following a busy summer in the Senate, it was great to spend a little bit of time back home in Texas and, for at least a couple of days, in the great State of Vermont courtesy of the Presiding Officer's recommendation.

I always look forward to the Washington break here in Washington because it gives me time to travel across my State and to hear from many of the 30 million Texans I am honored to represent. I enjoy getting an update from them on what is happening, to hear their concerns, and to talk to them about what I am working on.

One example of that is the Carla Walker Act. This bill carries the name of a 17-year-old Texan who was tragically murdered in 1974 and whose case went unsolved for many decades—nearly five decades. It wasn't until September of 2020 when Carla's family finally received the answers they had been searching for. DNA evidence that was collected at the crime scene was sent to the State DNA testing facility in the The Woodlands, TX, called Othram.

Now, just a little bit of detail. Traditional DNA testing frequently will not tell you everything you need to know about who this is a sample from, but thanks to forensic genetic genealogy, or FGG, enhanced DNA testing was able to identify Carla's killer, and justice was served.

FGG—this enhanced DNA testing analysis—has the potential to provide answers for countless victims and their families, and I am working on legislation to make it more widely available when needed, especially for criminal investigations.

As this legislation is being worked on, it is great to hear about the usefulness of this DNA testing technology from law enforcement as well as forensic DNA experts.

I also had the pleasure of meeting Carla's family, who finally received closure after decades because of this enhanced DNA testing process.

But it is not just the bills that are in the works; I also appreciate the chance to hear firsthand about how the laws that we passed recently are actually being implemented. One great example of this is the CHIPS Act.

Last week, I visited the University of Texas at Austin for its first annual Semiconductor Day. The University of Texas has built strong partnerships with companies and other academic institutions across the State and Nation and is eager to do its part to help revitalize America's semiconductor industry.

Just a refresher: We used to produce about a third of the advanced semiconductors in the world, but now that is down to about 10 percent. Ninety percent of the world's advanced semiconductors are manufactured in Asia. We all can imagine what would happen if, because of natural disaster—Heaven forbid, another pandemic—or an inva-

sion by the PRC of Taiwan—what that would mean to our access to advanced semiconductors, things that power everything from your mobile phone to the Joint Strike Fighter, the fifth-generation Joint Strike Fighter. Everything these days requires semiconductors, these microcircuits.

Well, the university launched the Texas Institute for Electronics, or TIE, as it is called, which will support the future of semiconductor manufacturing through education, training, and collaboration with industry leaders. The Department of Commerce staff who are responsible for actually implementing the CHIPS Act were there to learn about the incredible public-private partnerships that are driving the chip industry already forward in Texas.

This is exactly the kind of collaboration I think we envisioned when I first introduced the CHIPS Act more than 3 years ago, together with our colleague Senator WARNER from Virginia. It is gratifying to see this vision becoming a reality in the Lone Star State, as I am sure it is in other parts of the country.

Over the last several weeks, I have also heard from my constituents about the many challenges that families and businesses are facing, starting with high prices on everything from food to housing, exacerbated by what President Biden calls Bidenomics. Like Texas Governor Ann Richards said in the summer of 1992 at the Democratic National Convention—she said: “Well, you can put lipstick on a hog and call it Monique, but it's still a pig.”

Nevertheless, I have come back to the Senate refreshed and ready to get back to work. So I listened to what the majority leader has said and written about his agenda for this period between now and the end of the month. We face a number of deadlines to fund the government and reauthorize critical Federal programs.

This year, four major deadlines arrive on September 30, just 25 days from now or 16 legislative days—16 days. Of course, none of these deadlines popped up out of nowhere. We have had plenty of warning and plenty of time to advance each of these bills. But the Senate majority leader—the one responsible for the Senate agenda and who is the only person in the Senate who can actually schedule floor action—has created this mash-up and dysfunction.

As it turns out, some of the biggest legislative achievements of the year have actually been led by this side of the aisle, by Republicans, who fought to overturn damaging Biden administration rules.

The Senate did pass legislation to raise the debt ceiling and place caps on discretionary spending, but it is important to remember that this was a deal cut between the Speaker, Speaker MCCARTHY, and President Biden. The Senate was essentially a bystander.

The biggest accomplishment of the year so far has been passing the annual Defense bill—not a small thing—but it is still a long way from reaching the President's desk.

I would say that considering the number of must-pass bills still on our agenda for the year, that is an embarrassingly short list of accomplishments. So now we have a lot that needs to be done in the next 4 weeks, but really I think you would have to acknowledge that this schedule is designed to fail—designed to fail.

One of the biggest tasks we have to complete in that time is to fund the government, and it looks like we are in for a bumpy few weeks. But I would hasten to point out that this is not a bug but a feature of the majority leader's plan. In other words, it didn't have to be this way. This is all according to Senate Majority Leader SCHUMER's plan.

Why? Well, it maximizes his leverage on the final product to the detriment of every other Senator on our side and on yours. Why, Senator SCHUMER might ask, would I let 99 other Senators participate in the appropriations process when I can hold it hostage for my demands?

And, to be clear, the Senate Appropriations Committee has done its job, passing 12 bipartisan appropriations bills out of committee, and they did that before the August recess.

You know, when you look at the schedule and what it is that hasn't been done and needs to be done in such a short period of time, it is incredible to me that the Senate majority leader decided that the Senate would be out of session for 40 days—40 days; that is how long it has been since we were here last—especially with all this work to do. And we have not been in session on most Mondays recently, starting on Tuesday and then wrapping up 2 days later on Thursday afternoon. So I think the picture of the majority leader's plan is becoming very clear.

Party-line disagreements over funding levels are nothing new, but the path to success is especially muddy this year. Several months ago, Speaker MCCARTHY and President Biden reached a deal that raised the debt ceiling in exchange for deeply needed spending cuts. The national debt has ballooned to more than \$32.8 trillion, and the American people are unhappy with Washington's out-of-control spending. Well, that is exactly what the Speaker sought to address during the debt ceiling negotiations with the White House this spring, and it is no question that he made substantial progress toward that goal. He negotiated across-the-board spending cuts, marking a small but significant step to curb Democrats' reckless spending habits.

Now, with the funding deadline just 3½ weeks away, Republicans on both sides of the aisle are eager to make good on our promise to return to responsible government spending bills. House Members are knee deep in discussions over the best way to pursue those spending cuts, and I expect we will hear more when the House returns to Washington next week.

But still, that hasn't stopped the majority leader from criticizing them. Just last week, he referred to the Republicans in the House and their spending cuts discussions as political games. Well, if this isn't a game, I don't know what is—planning for the failure of the appropriations process and trying to jam through a spending bill with 16 legislative days left. I suggest the majority leader look in the mirror for the identity of the person who has brought us to this point, the one who has been playing the games.

As I said, he is already trying to blame Republicans in the House for a potential shutdown, and, right on cue, the press has started the drumbeat driving that narrative. That is all you are going to hear between now and the end of the fiscal year—is there going to be a shut down or is there not going to be a shut down?—all of which is absolutely unnecessary if the majority leader had used the authority he has to schedule a vote on 12 appropriations bills that we could take up and pass out of the Senate. The House could do the same. We could reconcile the differences and avoid all of this drama.

Well, thank goodness our Democratic colleagues no longer control all levers of government. Senator SCHUMER and the President now only have some say, not total say, over legislation. With divided government, Democrats no longer have the power to jam spending bills through both Chambers of the Congress, like they did last year. The American people elected a Republican majority in the House, which has pledged to rein in reckless Federal spending. Well, I hope that Speaker MCCARTHY and our other Republican colleagues in the House will succeed in their efforts this time on appropriations bills.

It is nothing unusual for the House and the Senate to have a different approach when it comes to spending money, what those priorities are, and what the top line should be. It is entirely within their authority and their responsibility. But they have to have a dance partner. Senator SCHUMER has to be willing to engage in a negotiation in good faith, not play these kinds of games and threaten another government shutdown.

If Senator SCHUMER wants to avoid a shutdown, he needs to drop the preemptive blame game and actually listen to the concerns of House Republicans on the Federal government's out-of-control spending and then negotiate a compromise. He needs to accept his responsibility.

Funding is only one major item on the to-do list. Congress also needs to pass a farm bill, as you can see on the list.

My State is home to nearly a quarter of a million farms and ranches, more than any other State in the country. One out of every seven working Texans has an ag-related job. I had a chance to sit down with some of these constituents in Lubbock last month and hear

how their lives and livelihoods are affected by the farm bill. It is important to them, which means it is important to me.

This legislation is critical to America's supply of food and fiber, as well as to the livelihoods of the hard-working men and women who grow and produce it. We simply can't let this legislation continue to shift and be delayed. I know Senator BOOZMAN and, I suspect, Senator STABENOW are committed to passing a strong bill that will meet the growing needs of our ag industry. That is on this list, and that is not going to happen either between now and the end of the month.

Then there is another item on the list: reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration. We all heard news of some of the near misses or collisions of some of the aircraft at our airports, which is harrowing to listen to, especially for those of us who do a lot of flying. It is important that we update and reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration in the reauthorization bill.

Over the last couple of years, travelers—millions of travelers—have dealt with widespread flight cancellations, paralyzing staffing shortages, and rising prices. As I said, we witnessed or read about some jarring safety issues, including these near collisions on runways in Austin, where I live, and in Minneapolis and New York. The Agency is clearly lacking when it comes to safety, efficiency, and reliability. I hope we can address these and other issues with the FAA reauthorization.

But it ain't going to happen between now and the end of September, when the current authorization expires. Again, this is part of a design—a design to fail—to meet our responsibilities to do things like pass the FAA reauthorization.

I know Senator CRUZ and Senator MORAN are leading the effort on our side of the aisle on the FAA reauthorization, and I know they are committed to helping the Agency meet the challenges of today and the future. I am sure Chairman CANTWELL feels exactly the same way.

But last and, certainly, not least, the two Chambers need to resolve the differences between the two bills that we passed—our respective versions of the National Defense Authorization Act—so we can send the final bill to President Biden. Thanks to the hard work of Senator REED and Senator WICKER and the bipartisan effort in the Armed Services Committee, the Senate bill received an overwhelming vote of support, 86 to 11. It invests in our military bases, our defense stockpiles, our modernization efforts, and, of course, American servicemembers.

The NDAA is vital to our military readiness, and there is no reason it couldn't be completed before the end of the month. But under Senate Majority Leader SCHUMER's leadership, the Senate has developed a major legislative pileup. If these were cars, this would be

a major pileup. The majority leader has procrastinated when it comes to the Senate's most important duties.

In the next few weeks, we need to pass government funding, the farm bill, FAA reauthorization, and the final version of the NDAA. These are some of the most fundamental responsibilities of Congress, each of which comes with a clear deadline, which we are preparing to blow through.

I am disappointed that we are now rushing to complete an impossible task of completing all of these bills before September 30. It is impossible. It is not going to happen.

As I said, it didn't have to be this way. There is only one person with the authority and the responsibility to avoid this situation: the senior Senator from New York, the Senate majority leader. He is the only one who can set the Senate agenda and move a bill across the floor. The Presiding Officer and I can't do it as rank-and-file members, but the majority leader can, and he simply has failed to do so.

There is a lot riding on the Senate's productivity this month, and we owe it to the American people to do our best to get the job done with the cards that the majority leader has dealt us.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, over the last few years, we have all witnessed a devastating rise in fentanyl overdoses. While I have been around Tennessee this month and visiting with so many citizens and local elected officials, I have heard a lot about this and about how Tennessee has really not escaped this threat.

In 2021, the latest year for which we have stats, there were over 4,000 Tennesseans that lost their lives to fentanyl overdose. Equally as concerning is the amount of fentanyl that local law enforcement is finding. This is something that they see coming up in routine investigations.

They are trying to protect their citizens. They are doing all they can. They are distributing and using Narcan, trying to save precious lives, and they feel like the fentanyl just keeps coming.

There have been several significant seizures in Tennessee this year. Just last week, police were chasing down a stolen out-of-State car in Dyersburg, TN. While they were trying to locate the fleeing suspect from that stolen car, they discovered a lunch box that he had dropped. When they looked in the lunch box, they found 750 suspected fentanyl pills. The street value is over \$14,000. That is in rural West Tennessee, in Dyersburg, TN.

Law enforcement officials in Knoxville found thousands of grams of fentanyl in one man's possession. They found it in his car, and they found it in his house.

In Bledsoe County, the drug task force recovered a thousand pills that were disguised, made to look like

oxycodone—again, in rural Tennessee. These pills that were manufactured to look like oxycodone each contained lethal doses of fentanyl.

We hear these stories popping up all across the country, but we continue to see these massive amounts that are in seizures. Last year, the DEA seized more than 58.3 million fentanyl-laced pills and more than 13,000 pounds of fentanyl. This constitutes 388 million lethal doses of fentanyl.

This year, border agents intercepted over 22,000 pounds of fentanyl, more than double what they seized during the same time period last year. That was just what they managed to catch. Think about what is coming in with the "got-aways." These are the people the border agents can see on surveillance video, but they cannot get to them. The stats I have just given you are what they are seizing. But think about what they don't apprehend and what is coming in with these cartels and coming in with the "got-aways."

We have to realize that fentanyl is so deadly. The equivalent of four grains of sand can kill you. That is how deadly it is.

And as a mom, as a grandmom, to hear these stories, it is just absolutely heartbreaking of lives which are lost. Fentanyl is now the No. 1 killer of Americans age 18 to 45. This is something that needs our attention.

When I was over in Chattanooga, they were telling me the story about a 2-year-old who died, and when the medical examiner was doing the report, the autopsy, a lethal amount of fentanyl is what he found in this baby's system.

These parents were charged with murder, and the prosecutor suggested the parents knowingly exposed their kids to large amounts of drugs in their home—a 2-year-old.

In August, I had the opportunity to meet with local leaders in Fayette County, and they told me another heartbreaking story of a mother and her 4-month-old child. This is another rural Tennessee county, and when they did the test, the mother and the baby tested positive for fentanyl.

At the Fayette County roundtable, I also learned about new measures that the school superintendent and the sheriff's department have implemented following the tragic deaths of two teenage girls. They were aged 16 and 17, and they were found dead in the school parking lot in Somerville, after overdosing from a drug combination believed to include fentanyl. Now, there was a third teenager involved in this incident. That teen survived. She was found unconscious, and law enforcement charged her with both second-degree murder and possession of a controlled substance.

So we see what is happening. We know how this is coming across that border, and people are saying we have got to do something about this.

Now, in Tennessee, local law enforcement agencies, local elected officials are stepping up, and Fayette County

that I just mentioned, Mayor Skip Taylor is starting a new program, Drug Free Fayette, and he has based this on a successful model that another county mayor, Mayor Huffman over in Tipton County, has started because they have decided if that border is going to be left wide open and this is coming in here, steps have to be taken to protect their citizens.

Now, what they are doing is establishing programs that are going into the schools, going into elementary school grades, high school, middle school, and educating about the dangers of drugs like fentanyl and like xylazine. A good example of this was when the new school semester began last year, Sheriff Bobby Riles, the Fayette County Sheriff's Department, and the Somerville Police Department worked with the Fayette County schools, and what they did was to implement a new DARE Program so that you have got somebody there in those schools, with those kids, establishing that relationship, helping to educate them and pushing back on what these kids are seeing on social media, what they are hearing from gangs and different individuals, trying to tempt them.

Now, local law enforcement officers are receiving training that is necessary to work with kids and teens in the schools. They are pushing forward with that to get their officers trained. And the officers I heard from report that kids are beginning to bring some drugs to school from the community and from their home.

This is why the training is important. This is why these programs like they are implementing in Fayette and Tipton County are so important: educate the kids, make certain the community is aware, make certain the officers have the education that is necessary so that we are all doing everything we can to save these lives.

Now, we have talked a good bit about these cartels over the last several months, and it was so interesting to me, as I was across the State, to hear local law enforcement talk about the cartels and how active they are in our State. It is why every State is a border State, every town is a border town now.

And what we see happening is that the cartels have linked up with some of the scientists in the labs in China where they create these precursor chemicals. Then they are sending it into Mexico. The cartels have labs, and this is where you are getting the fentanyl-laced gummies, you are getting the pills that are pressed to look like oxycodone. All the manufacturing is there.

I had one sheriff tell me he just assumed everything was laced with fentanyl because, he said, you will get marijuana, you will get gummies, you will get pills, you will get all these different things, but what they really are is laced with fentanyl. All of this is ending up in our backyard, but it is also ending up on social media.