

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.

Now, I found it so interesting, as I was doing some work with our counties and focusing on this issue, we found out that as high as 36 percent of fentanyl cases—think about this number when you think about across our country—36 percent of the fentanyl cases are linked to social media. This is where kids have met a drug dealer. Maybe it was Snapchat or Facebook Messenger or Instagram or TikTok, 36 percent.

These stats have made a few things very clear: The fentanyl crisis is real; it is killing Americans; it is killing Tennesseans; and it is our duty, as sworn representatives, to do something about this.

Here in the Senate, we have already begun this work, and I want to encourage my colleagues who have not signed on to a few bills to get on board and let's give this crisis the attention that it deserves.

Now, TIM SCOTT had a bill—I joined him last June when he introduced this—the FEND Off Fentanyl Act, and recently the Senate passed that as part of our Defense Authorization Act. This bill takes a very important step because it would declare the international fentanyl trafficking cartels and the trafficking of fentanyl a national emergency.

And it also would direct the Treasury Department to target, sanction, and block the financial assets of these transnational criminal organizations, like those in China and Mexico, that are pushing this product forward.

I also joined Senator RUBIO in introducing the Felony Murder for Deadly Fentanyl Distribution Act, which would add the distribution of fentanyl resulting in death to the list of crimes that are eligible to be charged as felony murder.

But given the significant role that illegal immigration has played in the fentanyl epidemic, it is clear that we also need to go right to the source. The Fentanyl Public Health Emergency and Overdose Prevention Act, a good bill that is just plain common sense, gives the Department of Homeland Security authority similar to that under title 42 to expedite the removal of illegal immigrants in response to the public health emergency that fentanyl poses to our country. If you are going to carry this, distribute it, push it, then you are not going to come in this country.

Now, all of these are pieces of legislation that make a difference. What we see happening in counties in Tennessee is that local law enforcement, local elected officials, local school superintendents, and directors of schools are coming together and saying: We have got to get to work on this issue. They are all steps.

What we have to do is have this administration, the Biden administration, stop burying their head in the sand on this issue. They can no longer ignore the influx of drugs coming into this country over that open southern border.

We have to make certain that the border is secured and the resources are there to address the fentanyl crisis.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASSIDY. 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.

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, today I introduced the Congressional Review Act, a resolution of disapproval to overturn the Biden administration's newest student loan scheme: income-driven repayment. Just like President Biden's student loan cancellation scheme that was overturned by the Supreme Court, this policy does not forgive debt, it transfers the burden of almost \$560 billion in Federal student loans from those who willingly took out the loans for college to make more money when they graduated to Americans who never attended college or who have already fulfilled their commitment to pay off their loans.

Under this rule, a majority of bachelor's degree student loan borrowers will not be expected to even pay back the principal. We have moved beyond forgiving the interest, and we are now not even asking them to pay back the principal.

Additionally, 91 percent of new student loan debt would be eligible for reduced payments subsidized by taxpayers. These policies are as unfair as they are irresponsible. Where is the forgiveness for the guy who didn't go to college but is working to pay off the loan on the truck that he takes to work?

What about the woman who paid off her student loans but now struggles to pay her utilities or her mortgage? Is the administration providing her relief? Of course not. Instead, the administration would have them not only pay their bills but the bills of those who decided to go to college in order to get a degree to make more money.

The resolution prevents average Americans, 80 percent of whom have no student loans, from being stuck with a policy that the administration is pushing not to be fair to all but rather to favor a few. The Supreme Court has already established the President does not have the authority to cancel hundreds of billions in student loans without direct consent from Congress. It is clear President Biden is trying to deflect the political fallout of the false promises that he never had the legal authority to make.

President Biden's plan did nothing to address the problems that created the debt in the first place. It doesn't hold colleges or universities accountable for rising costs. According to the College Board, in the last 30 years, tuitions and

fees have jumped in private nonprofit colleges by 80 percent. At public 4-year institutions, they jumped 124 percent. The Biden administration has refused to propose any solution that actually addresses the underlying problems that created the debt crisis in the first place.

We cannot spend our way out of the problem of the ever-increasing costs of higher education. We need real solutions. That is why my colleagues and I introduced the Lowering Education Costs and Debt Act, a package of five bills aimed at directly addressing the issues driving skyrocketing costs of higher education and the increasing amounts of debt students take on to attend school.

Our legislation puts downward pressure on tuition, empowering students to make the educational decisions that put them on track to academically and financially succeed. It also simplifies the student loan borrowing and repayment process so students don't take out more loans than they need and can navigate the student loan process without confusion. Unlike President Biden's student loan schemes, these are commonsense solutions that actually address root causes of the student loan crisis. In fact, some of the bills included in the package already have strong bipartisan support.

President Biden's student loan scheme is not a fix; it is merely a band-aid forcing taxpayers to shoulder the responsibility of paying off someone else's debt. We need strong leadership.

President Biden's failure to address rising tuition costs won't hurt the rich; only the middle- and lower-income Americans who will continue to be punished, forced to take out more and more loans just to get an education.

I will close by urging all my colleagues to support my Congressional Review Act resolution to prevent President Biden's reckless student loan scheme and to work together on real solutions to tackle the rising cost and debt of students. If we don't act, students will continue to drown in debt without a path for success.

(Mr. MARKEY assumed the Chair.)

NOMINATION OF JULIE A. SU

Mr. President, today marks 175 days since Julie Su's nomination for Secretary of Labor was officially transmitted to the Senate. This is the longest a Cabinet-level nominee has waited for a floor vote when the same party controls the White House and the Senate.

Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act, an individual can only perform the role of a Cabinet-level position without Senate confirmation for 210 days. The law was created to prevent the President from appointing unelected bureaucrats to roles that require the advice and consent of the Senate.

Now, the White House has acknowledged that Ms. Su is unable to reach the 51 votes needed for confirmation. Instead of allowing the Senate to do its constitutional duty and reject the