

are worried about that. They are worried about how that is going to affect them this year. My colleague from Texas has touched on some of these issues.

Now, in Tennessee, as they look at what has transpired over the last couple of years, we talked a lot about a tornado in December that ripped through Dresden, TN. I went into the Presbyterian church that was demolished on my last visit over there, and I saw the progress they are making to rebuild that wonderful church. One of the things they talked about was how inflation and supply chain bottlenecks are really thwarting their efforts to get this sanctuary finished so they can have their Easter celebration right there in that sanctuary.

In Waverly, TN, those individuals know exactly how the people over in Dresden feel because we had floods that came through Humphreys County, TN—devastating floods. There were 20 Tennesseans who lost their lives when the floods ripped through that town, destroyed that town, about a year and a half ago, and the town is trying to rebuild.

My team and I were able to help those folks there in Waverly secure a disaster declaration and the funds they needed to help get rebuilding, but the same issues—inflation and supply chains—those things that are hurting Dresden are hurting Waverly as they try to rebuild homes and as they try to recover.

Now, this President, this administration, and my Democratic colleagues have focused on big spending and little else, and it has really created a minefield for our local leaders, whether they are trying to rebuild or whether they are trying to expand. But those issues—supply chains and inflation—continue to come up.

West Tennessee, where I started my 95-county tour, is experiencing massive growth. Ford Motor Company is coming in there, and they have a big plant, a multibillion-dollar investment. Sonova is over in that part of the State. There are other companies that are moving their operations to the area. These communities are set to welcome thousands of jobs, homes, and new businesses, but they are not ready because the existing utility infrastructure cannot support the growth and expansion that are coming into that part of our State.

Until recently, most of this West Tennessee area was fields and small rural communities. These local leaders now are seeing growth, and they need to expand their utilities, their water, their sewer, their electric power distribution, and their telecom services, and they are having to do it quickly as these major employers ramp up. But something is standing in their way, and, again, it is all of this government spending that has driven this inflation and the supply chain crisis that is slowing down what they need. They can't get pipe to build out water and

wastewater systems. They can't get telephone poles. If they could find a transformer to buy, they wouldn't be able to afford it because the price has increased by more than 400 percent—400 percent—since Joe Biden was sworn into office.

I know that the Biden administration has an agenda, and they are willing to do whatever it takes to check these items off of their to-do list. They do have an agenda. It is all about government control. It is all about government spending. It is not the agenda the people have.

The way people in these communities in Tennessee see it is there is a disregard for how this Federal policy, as it comes down, how it affects them and how it makes their future difficult. It should not be this difficult to rebuild a home or run a sewer line or to finish a new road. Tennesseans know this, and they trust me, when I meet with them, to bring that message back here to DC, that decisions that are made here make their life at the local level more difficult.

BORDER CODEL

Madam President, over the past few years, we have seen proof that until President Biden and his administration secure the southern border, every town is a border town and every State is a border State. My colleague from Texas spoke so well about this issue and the impact that an open border is having on our communities.

Tennesseans are suffering because of the open border agenda, particularly when it comes to the disastrous consequences of the cross-border drug trade.

Tennessee law enforcement officials are working overtime to take down the cartel kingpins who have set up shop in our State, just like they have set up shop in so many of our States. But drug overdoses continue to destroy families, they destroy lives and careers, and the Biden administration continues to look the other way.

This month, I had the opportunity to see just how bad the situation has gotten right down on that southern border. Senators HYDE-SMITH and BRITT were kind enough to join me as we went to Eagle Pass, TX, where we witnessed firsthand the chaos that this administration's open border policies have created.

As most of my colleagues know, the situation in Texas became so dire that the Texas officials decided to take matters into their own hands. In 2022, Operation Lone Star helped law enforcement apprehend more than 336,000 illegal immigrants. That is just in Texas. They arrested more than 23,000 criminals—criminal illegal aliens, 23,000—just in Texas, and they seized 354 million doses of fentanyl—354 million doses.

Now, these numbers are appalling. When you hear them stand-alone, they are appalling. When you talk to the Border Patrol and you realize that this is Texas, that this doesn't account for

the other States, that this doesn't account for what is going on as every State becomes a border State and every town becomes a border town—when you hear these numbers, one would think common sense would tell you this Chamber should get busy saying: How do we secure that southern border? But that hasn't happened, and the cost of negligence is more crime and more death and more American citizens losing their lives and the cartels making more money. Yes, indeed, the cartels are running that border. You do not cross. Nothing crosses without paying the cartels.

Now, we visited several locations in the Del Rio sector that are experiencing significant migrant traffic along the river. At every location, we found clothing, IDs, medication, and other personal items that the migrants dropped as they entered the country. What happened to those individuals is anyone's guess, because many of them don't want to be found out who they really are.

Many of them are convicted criminal aliens. Many of them come from countries where they would be sent back, so they create a new identity once they touch U.S. soil. Then they can be here because we have catch-and-release, because we do not have "Remain in Mexico," because we do not have what the Border Patrol has been telling us for 30 years they need—a physical barrier and a better technology where they cannot have a physical barrier.

In Eagle Pass we were able to witness firsthand two separate migrant groups crossing the river. One of those groups included a pregnant woman and several children. The other included children and an elderly woman who was clearly struggling to keep her footing while she was coming across that river. With this dangerous situation, with those freezing waters, the Texas National Guard troops could only watch and just hope that no one drowned.

Now, that is what we saw in the early morning hours. But what we know is, during the night there were 57 other groups that crossed—a lot of them single adults. We know that the cartels, which are multi-billion dollar, multinational organizations, work globally, and they are bringing in hundreds of millions of dollars a week. And they have brought along people from 150 different countries who are going to the cartel to come into the country because they think it is faster to do it that way.

Or maybe they want to be the "got-aways," people we see on surveillance who are known "got-aways" or the unknown "got-aways," which are what the really bad ones are. They are going to completely different areas in crossing to bring in drugs, to bring in sex traffickers, to bring in human traffickers, to put people into modern-day slavery. There were 57 more known crossings—known—that we did not see.

Border agents told us that the day before our tour, there were 1,000 arrests

in the Del Rio sector. The day before we were out, it is important to note that there in Eagle Pass, there were 1,000 arrests. The President, on that very same day, was at El Paso. He saw no migrants. He saw a cleaned-up community. The visit had been sanitized so that he did not see what they were experiencing in the Del Rio sector and at Eagle Pass.

Now, after we had been out with Border Patrol and were watching all of this, we made one more stop, and it was to the Harris Ranch, which is near Uvalde, TX. This area has seen significant migrant traffic. It has disrupted their entire community.

I met with local officials—mayors, sheriffs, DAs, people that own businesses, farmers, ranchers—and they told us that sometimes people may need an ambulance, but many times they are unavailable to the people at Uvalde or Kinney County because they are too busy responding to migrant emergencies. The county attorney stated that he has prosecuted 4,000 criminal trespass cases—4,000—and since August of 2021, he has prosecuted twice the number of people as live in the entire county.

Now think about that: double the number of people in your county where you live. And think about that as cases that are going to come before your local court system. And who pays for that? That's right—you do, the taxpayer. Every penny being spent, every penny is coming out of your pocket.

And when you talk about the humanitarian crisis at that border—the loss of life, the abuse—the humanitarian cost is amazing. People are risking their lives because they are buying the lie of the cartels. They are physically, mentally, emotionally, sexually, and drug abused as they make this journey.

Now, the Harris Ranch has about 30 miles of fencing around it; but even though they have that fencing, it doesn't stop the migrants from coming onto the property. The owner of the ranch told us that he regularly gets a call in the middle of the night informing him that a migrant is having an emergency somewhere on his land and has dialed 911. Sometimes these calls come in too late or they don't come in at all. And we have all seen the news reports of these ranchers finding dead bodies on their property. And I will tell you that nothing in these reports is blown out of proportion. It is devastating. It is sad. It is a humanitarian crisis.

Many of the migrants that the people at Harris Ranch have discovered got lost or they were abandoned by the smugglers. Others were dumped there by the cartels, and we know this because the ranchers have seen it play out on their security footage.

I would encourage my colleagues to think about this the next time they are in front of the cameras and commenting about how compassionate they think the Biden administration policy is when it comes to open borders.

Madam President, it is not compassionate when you talk to a young woman who, for 4 years, suffered at the hands of a cartel and sex traffickers, raped over 400 times, beaten with chains. It is not compassionate when you hear these stories of abuse, when you hear about cartels killing somebody who they think is too weak to make the journey. There is nothing compassionate about it.

In December, according to Border Patrol and the Department of Homeland Security—which, by the way, is this administration's Department of Homeland Security—there were more than a quarter-million migrant encounters, which is the highest number of encounters ever recorded at the southern border. Putting that into context, that is more than the population of Knoxville, TN; more than the population of Chattanooga, TN.

Part of the tragedy is month after month, year after year, this gets worse. It continues to get worse. And we have to remember, these are the numbers that we know. These are not the “got-aways” that they could see on surveillance camera. They think they have had, in the last year, a million—a million “got-aways” that are running into the country. Those are the known “got-aways.” We don't have a number on the unknown “got-aways.” And we have people that want to say this administration's policy is compassionate?

They are bringing in drugs like fentanyl—16,000 pounds of it—enough to kill 3.3 billion people. They are trafficking women and girls and know that because we are hearing their stories. Our human-trafficking organizations are rescuing these women and girls. We hear about the gangs. We hear about crime in our communities, and we also hear from the Border Patrol.

We can fix this. We can fix it. As I said, they have asked for a barrier. They have asked for better technology. They tell us keep title 42. They tell us we need “Remain in Mexico.” They tell us: You have to end catch-and-release in this country, take away the incentives to come to the country illegally.

It is time that we make certain that we secure that southern border. My hope is that my Democratic colleagues will put down their talking points and that they will pay attention to what is happening, not only in the border communities but in towns and cities and communities and in families who are experiencing adverse effects because of what is happening with this open border.

It is time that we realize the cartels are taking advantage of an open border. They are taking advantage of a weak administration who will not stop them.

It is time to secure that southern border. It is time to give the Border Patrol what they need to defend our southern border. It is imperative that we address these issues.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the 5:30 vote commence immediately.

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

VOTE ON OWENS NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Owens nomination?

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) and the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) would have voted “nay” and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) would have voted “nay.”

The result was announced—yeas 60, nays 35, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 1 Ex.]

YEAS—60

Baldwin	Grassley	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hassan	Rounds
Booker	Heinrich	Sanders
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Capito	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Collins	Markey	Tester
Coons	McConnell	Tillis
Cornyn	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Moran	Warnock
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Ernst	Murray	Welch
Feinstein	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Fetterman	Peters	Wicker
Gillibrand	Reed	Wyden
Graham	Romney	Young

NAYS—35

Barrasso	Daines	Mullin
Bennet	Fischer	Paul
Blackburn	Hagerty	Ricketts
Boozman	Hawley	Rubio
Braun	Hickenlooper	Schmitt
Britt	Hoeben	Scott (FL)
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Johnson	Sullivan
Cotton	Kennedy	Thune
Cramer	Lankford	Tuberville
Crapo	Lummis	Vance
Cruz	Marshall	

NOT VOTING—5

King	Murkowski	Risch
Lee	Padilla	

The nomination was confirmed. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Under the previous order,