

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,

the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Arizona.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO LOURDES E. "ALFIE" ALVARADO-RAMOS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, the Director of Washington State's Department of Veterans Affairs, who will retire on January 31, 2023, after serving Washington State and our veterans for over 29 years. Alfie's impressive career is marked by many well-earned accolades, but most of all by her dedication to serving Washington State and the Nation.

Throughout her military service, Alfie's service has been recognized with awards and decorations, including the Legion of Merit, Order of Military Medical Merit, Expert Field Medical Badge, and Meritorious Service medal. After 22 years, she retired from Active Duty in August 1993 as the command sergeant major of Madigan Army Medical Center and Troop Command, Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

She has also proven herself a distinguished and passionate leader in the management of medical services delivery and human resources management, especially for our veterans. Alfie is an alumna of the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government Executive Program, the University of Washington Executive Management Program, and holds a master's degree in healthcare administration, and a licensed nursing home administrator.

As director of Washington State's Department of Veterans Affairs, Alfie was a member of Governor Jay Inslee's executive cabinet and chaired the Washington State Military Transition Council. In this capacity, she has helped the agency lead statewide efforts for the seamless transition of servicemembers and their families to Washington State's communities. As a leader in our State, she has been honored with many well-earned local, State, and national awards, including the Governor's Distinguished Management Leadership Award and the Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary's Leadership Award.

Alfie's extraordinary commitment to servicemembers and veterans is unmatched. Anyone who has worked with Alfie, as I have been honored to do for

many years, knows her tireless dedication and relentless drive to improve services for members of the military, veterans, and their families. From mental health to education and training, military spouse employment, to emergency funding for State veterans homes in the depths of the COVID pandemic, Alfie has been an incredible partner.

Although there are so many stories I could share about the way Alfie has fought for veterans in Washington State, there is one in particular that I will never forget. Back in 2013, the State of Washington, thanks to Alfie's leadership, secured Federal funding for a veterans home in Walla Walla. Unfortunately, through a series of bureaucratic mishaps, our State was in danger of losing that funding—that is, until Alfie stepped in. She called to let my office know about the problem and was absolutely furious the Federal Government would pull the rug out from under those veterans who needed care the most. I couldn't have agreed more. It was unacceptable—so we didn't accept it. Together, we fought to keep the funding, and we won. There is now a beautiful veterans home in Walla Walla thanks to Alfie's tireless dedication to Washington State veterans.

I will miss working with her in the years ahead, but it has been an honor to know Alfie throughout her career as dedicated mentor, teacher, and guide for the next generation of military and veteran leaders. I know Washington State and the Nation will be in good hands, thanks to her and her legacy will continue far beyond her own retirement.

I offer my deepest appreciation for Alfie's dedicated service to the United States of America and Washington State. I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Alfie on her well-earned retirement and wishing her many years of enjoyment with her family.

REMEMBERING ROBERT "BOBBY" SILVERSTEIN

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and honor the life of Robert "Bobby" Silverstein, who was a champion for people who experience disabilities and who made an incredible impact throughout his career.

During his time working for both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, Bobby held a number of leadership roles where he helped develop legislation to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. This includes serving as staff director and chief counsel for the Subcommittee on Disability Policy on what is now known as the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. During his tenure, Bobby worked to build bipartisan consensus and helped negotiate critical pieces of bipartisan legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act—ADA.

Bobby made a profound impact on countless families across the country,

including my own. My son Ben experiences physical disabilities and because advocates like Bobby worked to pass critical legislation like the ADA, Ben had the opportunity to go to school, to learn, and make friends in our community.

But my family's story is not unique. Across the country, in the more than three decades since the ADA was signed into law, people who experience disabilities have been more fully included in their communities and have received the support that they need to thrive at home, in school, at work, and in all aspects of their lives.

As we mark Bobby's legacy, we also recognize that we have more work to do to build on his incredible efforts. And we must follow his example of working to build consensus and make a difference for the American people.

While Bobby passed away in November, the impact that he has made in the lives of millions of people will live on in our democracy. I am profoundly grateful for the work he has done and will continue working to honor his legacy and ensure that Americans who experience disabilities are fully included in every aspect of our society.

TRIBUTE TO CHERYL L. MASON

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, today I would like to honor the 30 years of public service and career of a distinguished American and champion for veterans, servicemembers, and their families: Mrs. Cheryl L. Mason.

As the Department of Veterans Affairs' Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals, Chairman Mason helped deliver thousands of veterans and their families appeals on their earned benefits and VA services, ensuring they received timely decisions, including throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chairman Mason's lifelong commitment to serving veterans, servicemembers, and their families is no surprise given her background. She is the daughter of a U.S. Navy World War II veteran and a proud military spouse, serving her country alongside her husband Brett during his nearly 21 years in the U.S. Air Force.

Like many military spouses, Chairman Mason experienced a few breaks in her professional career due to relocations. However, she never let that stop her from working, whether it was as an LBJ intern on Capitol Hill for Congressman Bob McEwen, for the Department of the Air Force, in academia, or in private practice as an attorney. In fact, her experience served as a catalyst for her to become a champion for the military spouse community, where she went on to assist VA, the Department of Labor, Defense, and the Hiring Our Hero's Program at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to reduce military spouse unemployment and underemployment.

After decades of public service, Mrs. Mason was confirmed by the U.S. Senate and sworn-in as the Chairman of