

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to talk briefly to the Senate today about two issues. With respect to the first issue, I suppose I am talking to my people back in Louisiana as much as I am talking to my colleagues in the U.S. Senate.

This is New Orleans. This is the Mississippi River, which, as you know, runs through New Orleans. Much of southeast Louisiana, including but not limited to the city of New Orleans, gets its drinking water from the Mississippi River. Of course, the Mississippi River is freshwater, and the Mississippi River is long, wide, and mighty.

The Mississippi River's source is the northern part of our State. It drains a number of other rivers. This is the southern portion of the Mississippi River. In New Orleans, it kind of meanders around and shifts to the east before it hits south again into the Gulf of Mexico, which is, of course, saltwater.

You probably never thought about this, Mr. President. Perhaps you have. Most people haven't. Why doesn't saltwater—the Mississippi River runs into the gulf, which is saltwater, and the gulf is a big area. Why doesn't saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico flow up the Mississippi River? That would be a good question.

The reason is pretty simple. As I said, the Mississippi River is long, big, wide, and mighty, and it drains a good portion of the United States. When the Mississippi River is at normal levels, it flows very, very quickly and fast, and it keeps the saltwater down here in the Gulf of Mexico at bay.

But sometimes the Mississippi River gets low, and it flows less swiftly, and that is the situation right now. When that happens—it has happened I think five times in the last three centuries—sometimes saltwater actually comes up from the gulf into the Mississippi River, which is a problem for my people in southeast Louisiana, including but not limited to New Orleans, because they rely on the Mississippi River for their drinking water because it is freshwater.

This red line represents the saltwater intrusion. Saltwater is creeping up the Mississippi River just like a thermometer. We know, based on historical evidence, that it is not likely to go all the way up the Mississippi River, but that doesn't solve our problem in Louisiana because we depend on the Mississippi River for drinking water. If it gets far enough up the Mississippi River—"it" meaning the saltwater—then we have a real problem in southeast Louisiana.

As I say, in the last 25 years, this has happened four times—in 1999, 2002, 2022, and it is happening this year as we speak. I think the time that it happened before was in 1888, if I recall correctly.

I am an optimist who worries. I am worried about this because about 1 million of my 4.6 million people in my

State depend on this river for drinking water, and we are in the middle of watching the saltwater come up the river, and we don't think it is going to stop coming up the river until sometime around, I don't know, the end of October maybe. We could be wrong.

But I want the Senate and I want my people to understand that their local, their State, and their Federal governments are dealing with this problem.

First, I want to thank President Biden. President Biden declared a disaster declaration, which allows us to get the assistance of FEMA, and I am very, very grateful for that.

No. 2, our Corps of Engineers is involved. They are very able people. Our Corps of Engineers, below the city of New Orleans, has built an underwater dam. That is what it looks like. It is like a dam. They call it a sill. I call it a dam or a levee. It is under the water. It is down below New Orleans.

Well, why in the world would the Corps of Engineers do that? Because saltwater is heavier than freshwater and when the saltwater comes up the Mississippi River, it is not coming at the top; it is coming at the bottom.

And the Corps of Engineers in a place called Myrtle Grove below New Orleans—by the way, Myrtle Grove is also known for its great fishing, wonderful fishing, and really good people. But at the area in the river next to Myrtle Grove, the corps is coming in, and they built an underwater dam.

Now, that is not going to stop all the saltwater. It is just going to slow it down and stop some of it. So some of the saltwater, despite this dam, is still flowing north, headed toward New Orleans. The corps is talking about, if necessary, adding an additional 25 feet to the underwater dam.

Right now, the underwater dam is about 55 feet. We add another 25 feet. The river at that level or at this point is about 90 feet. And they are leaving a hole in the dam, in case you were wondering, for ships to come through.

No. 3, the Corps of Engineers and FEMA are both prepared, if necessary, to deliver us freshwater, if we need it, by barge. And if you ever wonder about the might of the Federal Government and particularly our Corps of Engineers—again, I can't thank them enough—they can deliver up to 36 million gallons of freshwater a day. So thank you, Corps of Engineers, and I want my people back home to know that, so they won't be worried.

Also, looking on the bright side—put that back up for me will you, Henson—by the way, Mr. President, with me today are two of my colleagues from my office, Mr. Henson Webre and Mr. Christian Amy. I want to thank them for their help.

Again, this is New Orleans. Here is the saltwater creeping up. Not everybody in New Orleans and in the New Orleans area and Southeast Louisiana gets their water from the Mississippi River. Some people have well water. So that is a plus.

Some facilities in New Orleans have also started installing what is called reverse osmosis filtration machines to take the saltwater out of the freshwater. And we in government stand ready and willing to advise facilities of the right to do that.

The other thing we are talking about doing—we are trying to not do this except as a last resort because it is so expensive—as you see here, the red is the saltwater; the blue is the freshwater. Folks who live down here by the saltwater and can't get water out of the Mississippi because it is too salty, we are thinking about building pipelines this direction, going north sort of along the river to get freshwater from a point in the river further up north and take it through those pipelines down south where we need it.

Now, that is expensive. It is being looked at by local governments, being looked at by the State government. We are in discussions with the Federal Government about it. It will be a last resort because it is so expensive, and I hope that the saltwater intrusion can stop. We can stop it.

Frankly, what is causing this is we are having a drought, and there is not enough water in the Mississippi River. If we could get a little rain up north, that will add to the volume of the river, and it will flow more quickly, and it will push that saltwater out.

The final thing, I want my people to understand what we are doing. This is Southeast Louisiana. It is sort of the toe of the boot. Further up here in Louisiana, we have built a minidam. We call it the Old River Control structure on the Mississippi River, and we divert some of the water out of the Mississippi River into another river in Louisiana called the Atchafalaya River.

In fact, we do that pursuant to a statute passed by Congress which says that 70 percent of the water at this point, which is way up here, has to be diverted—or kept in the Mississippi River, but 30 percent is diverted further west to the Atchafalaya River.

Why do we do that? Because the corps decided years and years and years ago, that river at that point is so strong and so mighty and moving so quickly and so swiftly and that if we did not divert some of that water, the Mississippi would change course and, instead of flowing through Baton Rouge and New Orleans, it would change course and flow this way to the gulf. So years ago, the corps said, We need to take some water out.

The corps is thinking about opening that dam up, if necessary, at the Old River Control structure and putting some of that water back into the Mississippi River that it is diverting right now to increase the flow of the river, which will, of course, push the saltwater back out.

So I appreciate, Mr. President, the Senate's patience in allowing me to explain this. As I say, I want to thank President Biden for his declaration. I

want to thank FEMA. I want to thank the Corps of Engineers.

I don't want my people to worry. Your folks in government have pounced on this issue like a ninja, and I am not saying we have it solved, but we are doing everything we can to get us through this.

INDEPENDENT AND OBJECTIVE OVERSIGHT OF
UKRAINIAN ASSISTANCE ACT

Second issue, I will try to be brief. Mr. President, as you know, we have spent over \$100 billion to help Ukraine defeat Vladimir Putin, whose thirst for blood we now know is legendary. He has the same—"he" meaning Vladimir Putin—has the same thirst for blood that Stalin did. We have spent over a hundred billion dollars helping Ukraine. Some people think we have spent too much. Some people think we need to spend more. Some people think we shouldn't have spent their money there at all. Some people think we ought to spend less.

This is America. You know, opinions are kind of like bellybuttons; everyone has one. Some are innies; some are outies. But everybody has one, and you are entitled to share it in America.

The Senate is going to be debating Ukraine soon, as you know, Mr. President. But regardless of how you feel about beating back Putin and whether you think that is in America's national security interest and whether you agree with me that Putin is a pirate—he is a gangster—wherever you stand on that, there is one thing we all ought to be able to agree on: This hundred billion dollars plus—it is actually around \$113 billion—and that is not just money for arms. That is also money for humanitarian aid and money to keep the government of Ukraine running. And that money, that \$113-plus billion didn't just fall from heaven. We thank heaven for it. But it came out of people's pockets. Those people are called the American taxpayers.

And one thing—regardless of what you think about Ukraine—I think we can all agree on is that we have to watch that money like a hawk. We cannot allow it to be stolen. We cannot allow it to be wasted.

Now, Mr. President, I know you have had this experience in life because I know you are a wise man. Nothing in this world makes it easier to resist temptation than a proper upbringing, a strong set of values, and witnesses. And we need more witnesses, and I am talking about an inspector general.

Senator SINEMA and I have a bill; it is called the Independent and Objective Oversight of Ukrainian Assistance Act. All this bill does, it says, Mr. President—not our Mr. President here in the Senate, President Biden—appoint an inspector general to watch this money like a hawk.

And that inspector general would have to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. President picks; we confirm. And that inspector general would give periodic reports to the President, to the

Congress, and to the American people on a weekly basis, if they would like, about its audits of this money and who has been stealing, if anyone, and who has been calling.

Now, let me make two quick points. President Zelenskyy is also fighting corruption, and there has been some corruption in Ukraine. You would expect there to be, frankly, when you are spending \$100-plus billion. And President Zelenskyy—I am proud of him—he has fired the people that he has caught, and they are prosecuting others. So he is watching.

I also want to be fair. Right now, the inspector general from the Department of Defense and an Agency called USAID and the Department of State, they say they are auditing the money, and I am not saying they are not. I am not saying they are not. But have any of you heard from them? I haven't.

I know they had one meeting where they came up here at their convenience to talk to us, and a bunch of us couldn't go. We were in hearings or something. But they haven't been giving periodic reports to the American people. And I am not saying they are doing a bad job. I am not saying that. What I am saying is that we don't need a cluster of Agencies involved here turning into a cluster of another description. Just like we did in Afghanistan, we need one inspector general, one woman or man, that we can hold responsible, appointed by the President, confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

The inspector general at the Department of Defense and the inspector general of the State Department, the inspector general at USAID can work under the people's inspector general, under Senator SINEMA and I's bill. But we need one person—one person—to hold accountable, just like we did in Afghanistan. And the American people, regardless of how they feel about the funding in Ukraine, and the Members of the U.S. Senate, regardless of how they feel about the war in Ukraine—surely, we can agree that we will all rest easily—or at least easier if we follow the money.

Now, I tried to pass this bill once, Mr. President, and I want to be fair. Some of my Democratic colleagues opposed it, but some of my Republican colleagues opposed it, too. And some of them were quiet about how they opposed it, but I know who they are. I love them, but I know what they were up to. They were taking orders from the Department of Defense because the Department of Defense—bless their hearts—they don't want any of us intruding on their turf.

They say, We have got this. Well, let me tell you something. There is one Agency in the Federal Government that has never been audited. One Agency in the Federal Government that has never been audited. Guess which one? The Department of Defense. The Department of Defense.

Now, I am not saying that is the fault of the inspector general there

now, but he needs to start with his own Department and let Senator SINEMA and I pass this bill. We are trying to help him, not hurt him. We are trying to give him some help. So that is what our bill will do.

I am not giving up. "I will be back," as I said the other day, just like the Terminator, on another issue. This is something that all Senators can agree on, regardless of our position on Ukraine, that this money shouldn't be wasted.

I am going to say it again. Nothing makes it easier to resist temptation than a proper upbringing and a strong set of values and witnesses.

Senator SINEMA's bill and my bill will provide those witnesses, those auditors, those inspectors general that we need.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, according to news reports, September was another recordbreaking month at the southern border. My State, of course, has 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico so we are bearing the brunt and have borne the brunt of this flow of humanity, this humanitarian crisis, which has created now a public safety crisis as a result of unrestrained illegal immigration.

News reports are that more than 260,000—more than a quarter of a million—more than a quarter of a million migrants crossed the border last month, making it the busiest month on record. I know sometimes it is hard to grasp the immensity of these numbers, but let me put it another way. It is an average of 8,600 migrants coming to the United States every day. Of course, when they come to Texas or Arizona or California, they don't stay there. That is why you are hearing from the Governor of Illinois, the Governor of New York, the mayor of New York City, talking about the impact on their States and their cities.

Of course, we all know that the fentanyl crisis, which is part and parcel of this open border, has taken the lives of 71,000 Americans last year alone. We know where the precursors come from. They come from China. We know where it is manufactured—in Mexico—and then it comes across the border. The business model of the cartels is flood the border with people, divert the attention of the Border Patrol who have to engage in pushing paper and processing these migrants. Meanwhile, the unprotected border allows for the surge of drugs across the border, and they end up in all 50 States and in every community.