

traffic control, and then they advance to the next level. They actually get out on the job and to be trained by folks who are in the towers. It is incredibly important as a task.

Now, for years, that academy has trained literally every single person that the FAA could send them. They haven't had a time where they were like: I am sorry. You have to stop. We can't take any more people.

They have got gaps and openings. In fact, right now we need more air traffic controllers, but, thankfully, the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center is ready to go. They are ready to take on more students to be able to expand. In fact, they have got room to double in size. If we wanted to double the number of air traffic controllers across the country, let's do it. Our challenge has been getting enough students to actually do it, to get the training, not actually training space or trainers.

So I would tell you Oklahoma City is proud of that heritage.

We are grateful for Mike Whitaker and the position that he is now in. We look forward to him being back in Oklahoma City. He has been in Oklahoma City multiple times in previous tasks that he has had. He knows full well the value of that facility, and I look forward to training a lot more folks to be air traffic controllers in Oklahoma City, in the days ahead, because our trainers and our folks who are there are ready to put more folks in more towers.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. President, there are lots of conversations happening right now about border security, and rightfully so. I mean, it is not news in this Chamber. It is not news nationwide—the numbers that have increased and people crossing the border that are not legal.

Millions of them in the past 3 years have crossed the border asking for asylum. Now, a lot of folks have said: Hey, we want to help people all over the world. We are the United States of America. That is who we are.

I would say: I agree. We are the United States of America, and we are dominantly made up of immigrants in our country.

That is a good thing, and it is a strength of this culture that we have of people who want to succeed, want to be able to work hard, and want to be able to contribute to their neighbors and their families. Let's draw them from all over the world.

But things have really significantly changed. Americans see it on the headlines in the news, but they may not understand the data behind it and how significant the change has been.

If I go back to 2010—ancient history, 2010—that year we had 21,000 people cross our southern border and ask for asylum that year—21,000 in the year 2010. We now have 21,000 asking for asylum in 3 days now.

There is a huge shift. What has occurred is that the cartels have found a gap in our law. The gap in our law is

not new. It is just being exploited in a new way. That is that they are recruiting people worldwide and saying: I can get you into America for a fee.

And they are asking people worldwide to be able to give them thousands of dollars. They will get them across the border, teach them the magic words to say: "I have fear in my country." That meets the minimum threshold. No matter how many countries they have been through to be able to get there, they can say, "I fear my original country," and we allow them in and then put them in line to get to an immigration judge. That line currently in New York is 10 years long to get to a judge.

So they wait 10 years to get to a judge on the first stage. Then they still have got to do the next stage. It could be up to 20 years now, with the backlog, before they get an answer to the question: Are you eligible for asylum?

By the way, statistics show the vast majority are not eligible for asylum, and everyone knows the joke. But there is a gap in our law that is being exploited by cartels.

How can I say this so certainly? Well, Canada closed that gap two decades ago. Canada also saw the same gap that was being exploited there, and so they made a simple change in their law; that is, if you have crossed in another safe country and then come to Canada and want to ask for asylum, they will just respond to you: You should have asked in the previous country. That is the international standard, by the way. It is not crazy. That is actually normal. You see, asylum is the same as refugee status, the same in international law. A refugee is somebody who flees to a spot, who is afraid, gets to a refugee center, and says to the U.N.: I have dramatic fear of persecution in my country. If they do, then they actually share them all over the world, including here in the United States. We take refugees here from all over the world.

Asylum seekers are on the same standard. They are supposed to go to the next safe place, get there, and request asylum. That is the international standard, but we don't do that here.

Can I give you more evidence? So far this year, we have had 45,000 people from India who have crossed our southern border, paid the cartels, crossed into our country, and said they had fear in their country—from India. They take about four flights, including through dangerous countries like France, to be able to get to Mexico—the closest airport—and then literally take a bus rented by the cartels up to the border to be dropped off for their last delivery there to us so they can say: I have fear in my country.

This doesn't make sense to just about everyone in the world. Just about everyone in the world has shifted on this except for us. We are literally inviting people from all over the world to exploit our system.

I am a "tall fences, wide gates" person. I think we need to have good bor-

der security so that we know who is coming in but have wide gates so we are open to legal immigration and to say: We want the interchange of people from all over the world to be able to come here, work here, grow their families here, and invest in the future of America. But when we are encouraging illegal immigration, that is a real threat to us as a country.

Don't just take my word for it; ask mayors all over America. They will tell you. They don't know what to do with the number of people who are coming—this is not a red State-blue State issue—whether it be New York State and New York City, which are saying "Make it stop," or whether it is areas in South Texas and Southern Arizona that are saying "Our small communities are absolutely overrun." None of those folks are opposed to immigration. They are just opposed to illegal immigration, what everyone knows is an exploitation of the system. We should fix the system.

Now, this is more than dollars. There has been a lot of conversation in this body lately. We will just add more money to it. They just need more dollars. Well, I would say not only do I not agree with that, Secretary Mayorkas, the head of Homeland Security, doesn't agree with that. On Wednesday of this week, he released an opinion piece, published in the Washington Post, which I would encourage every one of these Members to read.

There you go—you just heard a Republican say: Read the Washington Post. It is a new day.

If you read that opinion piece from Secretary Mayorkas, in it, he calls the funding request for DHS a "tourniquet," saying that what they really need is a change in law to be able to make a difference for what is happening on the southern border.

It is not dollars that are needed. It is policy changes that are needed. It is this administration enforcing different policies, but it is also us fixing obvious gaps.

Right now, of the around 6,000 people a day who are currently crossing the border illegally—6,000 a day is the most current number—about half of those are being released under something called withholding. Now, I would dare say most of the folks in this room and most of the folks listening—of the five people watching C-SPAN right now—most of those folks are not familiar with the term "withholding." Withholding is a new thing that is being exploited by the cartels. It is another gap in our system like asylum is. It says basically: Hey, I am afraid—not on asylum necessarily—I am afraid there is going to be violence in my country. I want to go to an immigration judge.

As soon as they say that, they end up in the line that is 10 to 20 years long to get to an immigration judge, and they are in the country. Then their next step is, once they are in, they snap a picture of their new little document they have, send it back to their family,

and say: I paid this cartel. I said these words. I am in the country. And everybody else keeps coming from there.

We should fix this gap if we know there is a problem. Why? Not because it is just being exploited in sheer numbers; it is because we don't know who these folks are. Many of them are folks who are coming to work and coming to connect with family. I get that. They should come through a legal route, and we should encourage them to be able to do that. But some of these folks are not coming for our good.

In the past year, 150 people were picked up who are on our Terror Watchlist, coming across our southern border. That is more than the last 5 years combined just in the past year. And those are the people we picked up. This past year, over 1 million people crossed our border who literally the Border Patrol could see in the desert but couldn't get to. We have no idea for those million. They weren't turning themselves in like some other folks are; they are in camo and running from Border Patrol.

Right now, Border Patrol can't get to them because they are processing so many other folks, they don't have the manpower to do it. So the conversation is, well, let's just add more manpower. The problem still remains. We may have more manpower, but we still have millions of people crossing and mayors all over the country saying: Make it stop. We want a legal process to go through.

There is a way to be able to do this, and we should.

In the past 2 years, 70,000 people—in just the last 2 years—have been released into the country who are considered by DHS special interest aliens. These are folks from Syria, from Iran, from Iraq, from other areas of known terrorism. They weren't on our Terror Watchlist, and we don't have any criminal records for them, but where they are from and their specific areas cause national concerns. What happened to those folks? Those 70,000 who were released into our country are awaiting a hearing 10 years from now. That is what happened to them because the system is being gamed.

If there is any lesson we should have learned from 9/11, where 19 people who were not legally present in the country killed thousands of Americans, it should be that we have to be able to manage legal immigration, to encourage legal immigration and discourage illegal immigration.

It is an issue that I have talked about over and over again in this body, but it is an issue that continues to rise in the hearts and the minds of the American people because more people are feeling it nationwide and in more States, and they are just asking a simple question, and they usually catch me and say a simple statement: I am not anti-immigrant; I just want it to be legal. That shouldn't seem like a radical idea to a body that makes law, that we would want things to be legal

in America, but for whatever reason, it has become more and more challenging to just follow the law and to make clear law.

One other thing. The administration, a year ago just last week, put in a new Venezuela policy. We are at the 1-year anniversary. They put in this new Venezuela policy where they were going to limit access to only a certain number. They did see a decline a year ago for a couple of months. But if you go back to October of last year, we had 22,000 people who were crossing from Venezuela a month. If you look at September of this year, we had 66,000 people from Venezuela crossing a month.

The Venezuela policy didn't work, so do you know what the administration did in October? They started actually returning people back to Venezuela if they crossed and said: You are not eligible for asylum. Within days, the number of Venezuelans trying to cross the border plummeted. Just enforcing the law changes dramatically the policy and the reality on the ground.

Right now, Border Patrol and CBP are processing people they know are a threat to the United States. They know. When I visit with Border Patrol, they will often say to me: I picked up a person between ports of entry who was running, 25 years old, with two other 20-somethings, all dressed in camo, in the night, trying to be able to get across. We encountered them. Within 24 hours, they were released.

They are nervous because they have no idea where they are going or what they are going to do. As law enforcement, they did their best to interdict, but the current policy just releases them into the country anyway. That is not right.

This body should find a way to be able to solve the border crisis and not just ignore it. We should be able to come together and figure this out. Our country is at risk. This is a national security issue, not to mention drugs and everything else that the Border Patrol can't go interdict because they are processing so many migrants at this time.

It is not that migrants are going everywhere. And I have heard it a lot: Well, there are migrants all over the world. That is true. But the folks who are coming here are coming here because it is the greatest country in the world, and I don't blame them for coming here. But let's encourage them to do it legally, not through a process that we all know is being gamed and is illegal. Let's empower those families to be able to move here. If they fit who we are as Americans and add value and they pass their background checks, let's invite them to be a part of us as Americans. Let's not have the person screening the people coming into the country be the cartels in Mexico because that is who is currently controlling our immigration policy, are the Mexican cartels, not us. That should not be so, and I would hope this body would work in the very short period of time in the days ahead to resolve that.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 372.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Monica M. Bertagnolli, of Massachusetts, to be Director of the National Institutes of Health.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 372, Monica M. Bertagnolli, of Massachusetts, to be Director of National Institutes of Health.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Debbie Stabenow, Tammy Duckworth, Mark Kelly, Tina Smith, Tammy Baldwin, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Christopher A. Coons, Tim Kaine, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jeanne Shaheen, Richard Blumenthal, Benjamin L. Cardin, Chris Van Hollen, Catherine Cortez Masto.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 28.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kenly Kiya