

how the Biden administration plans to ensure proper oversight of \$6 billion to Iran.

This Senator, obviously, won't stop demanding answers, especially when it comes to a terrorist regime's access to billions of dollars that the United States has something to say about.

#### BUDGET

Madam President, then, on another subject, Iowa is home to roughly 28 different types of snakes. Some are venomous—copperheads and rattlesnakes. However, the one snake doing the most damage to Iowans is the snake that is not even in Iowa. So I would like to introduce you to the brown tree snake. The brown tree snake doesn't reside in Iowa, Washington, DC, or any other State represented within the Senate. That snake lives in Guam. That snake is not only damaging the native animals of Guam, it is wreaking havoc on the American taxpayers.

So this gets to money. The Federal Government's goal, from what I have been told, is to eradicate the snakes, and that is where millions of dollars comes in. Now, our government has been trying to do this for the last 30 years.

On June 7, 2023, I sent a letter to the Department of Defense, the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Agriculture. I asked those three Agencies how they have spent taxpayers' money to eradicate this snake from Guam. After waiting 5 months and an additional request on August 3, I received responses from these Agencies. Alarming, none of the three were able to tell me how many of the snakes are thought to be on the island or the estimated timeline for the eradication. It seems to me, our government ought to have better statistics that tell us what their planning is and how their goals are being met, but you can see soon that they don't have that information.

So let me say, it is obvious, with all the taxpayers' money they are getting, they ought to at least have some sort of an estimate on this subject.

So what did my oversight find? We will start with the Department of Agriculture. That Department, from fiscal year 2000 until right now, its budget expenditures were over \$10 million. Now, that is a drop in the bucket compared to others.

This is what I learned from the Department of the Interior. That Department told me that from fiscal year 1993 to now, they have funded over \$90 million to support eradication, suppression, and interdiction of the brown tree snake.

Now, another Department, the Department of Defense, gave me this figure for the same fiscal years. It spent more than \$140 million.

How many more decades and hundreds of millions of dollars do we have to spend on this snake, and what kind of projects have the taxpayers funded related to this snake? I have got some examples for you. Four projects in fis-

cal years 2009, 2010, 2014, and 2018 related to the application of Tylenol-treated baits, which are poisonous to the snakes, \$2.9 million; \$600,875 for multiple public awareness campaigns to educate the public in Guam on how the snake affects the ecosystem and human health and other factors; \$376,659 for various research projects, including improved camera monitoring of the snake; caged bird colonies as superattractors with integrated snake trapping; and studying the efficacy of self-resetting kill traps; \$122,462 for purifying and testing gecko skin compounds; \$56 million in fiscal year 2023 for the brown tree snake barrier south multispecies barrier.

Now, that last one ought to really hit home for you. The Biden administration can't secure the southern border. Millions of immigrants are illegally crossing every year. According to reports in fiscal year 2023, 172 people on the FBI's Terrorist Watchlist have been encountered at the border. How many on the Terrorist Watchlist who haven't been encountered that are "got-aways"? I guess we don't have a figure on that one. So the 172 are the ones that we know of.

Here, Congress and the Biden administration have no problem spending \$56 million on a barrier to secure land against a snake. This is a clear example of spending that is out of control and why Congress must perform more exacting oversight.

Sadly, this is not a new problem. On July 22, 2004, the late Senator from Arizona, John McCain, made the following remarks on this floor regarding earmarks identified in a defense appropriations bill for that year, 2004:

\$1 million for the Brown Tree Snakes. Once again, the brown tree snake has slithered its way into our defense appropriation bill. I'm sure the snakes are a serious problem, but a defense appropriations act isn't the appropriate vehicle to address this issue.

So here I stand, 20 years later, identifying that this snake has continued to wreak havoc on both the island of Guam and, of course, on the American taxpayers.

I recognize that the brown tree snake is a serious problem in Guam, but it has also become a serious problem robbing the American taxpayers, taking millions out of their billfolds without really any plan that I have been able to discover that the government knows how they are going to spend the taxpayers' money to eradicate this brown tree snake.

Congressional appropriations of taxpayer money will be subject to waste, fraud, and abuse without congressional oversight. Accordingly, that is exactly what is needed here to better determine if taxpayer money has been used as it should have and whether these spending levels are needed entirely or at all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. RICKETTS. Madam President, we have a humanitarian and national

security crisis at our southern border. Just last month, Customs and Border Protection encountered 241,000 contacts, people coming across that southern border. That is three times the amount that we had in October of 2020.

Since Joe Biden has been President, there have been 6.6 million border contacts and 1.8 million "got-aways." And the "got-aways"—those are the folks whom Customs and Border Protection, CBP, saw but couldn't encounter, couldn't get to. That is more than President Obama and President Trump's administration combined.

Children are being trafficked; people are dying; and the cartels are profiting. And my colleague from Iowa just referenced the southern border. In total, we have seen 172 people on the Terrorist Watchlist try to enter our country in the last year—169 at the southern border. And to put that in perspective, that number used to be in the single digits every year. Last month, it was 12. We are encountering more people on the FBI's Terrorist Watchlist in 1 month than we used to get in an entire year.

Border security is national security. Certainly, the events in Israel should bring home to us the danger of a border that is not properly protected. And it is President Biden's policies that have led to this humanitarian and security crisis.

Now, I have been down to the southern border four times, just recently as well, and I have talked to the folks at CBP, and, yes, they need some resources. Things like the aerostat blimps have been hugely successful in being able to counter the cartel's drones to monitor people trying to come across the border. So there are resources that we can provide to our southern border to help strengthen. But you know what the No. 1 thing they told me they needed? It was a change in policy because it is the policy that is driving all these people to take this dangerous journey to illegally cross into our country.

Well, now the Senate is going to take up border security, and President Biden's solution is to ask for more money to help process all the people coming across the border. That is not going to fly. If you are just processing them more efficiently coming across the border, you are not deterring anybody from coming across our border. It is the policies that are sending a message to people to come here illegally. The policy needs to change. So as we consider a bill—perhaps a supplemental bill where we are going to have border security in it—it must contain policy changes. The policy is what caused this. We have to change the policy.

But what are some of those policies? We see that we have an asylum system and a parole system that are broken. We need to address that, and then we must have a first safe country policy. You may say, what is a first safe country? Well, if you are seeking asylum and you are fleeing your home country,

what this policy says is you stop in the first safe country and you apply for asylum in the United States from there, not from within our own country.

I know there are people who don't like this idea, but let me tell you, Canada has this policy. So, for example, if you are traveling from Mexico through the United States to get to Canada and you want to seek asylum in Canada, you have to remain in the United States. That is their policy. That is the Canadians' policy.

Do you know who else has that policy? The United Kingdom. In fact, I have a chart right here with all the countries that have that policy—Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Ireland. In fact, not only does our northern neighbor have this policy, but 29 other countries have this policy that you have to remain in the first safe country. What does that mean? It means that if you are coming to our southern border, you must remain in Mexico. That is a part of the policy changes that we need to have. We must bring back "Remain in Mexico."

President Biden has direct responsibility for the humanitarian crisis on our southern border. Children are being trafficked. People are dying. The cartels are profiting off of all of this. He is responsible. If he is not going to act, we in the Senate must act.

My Republican colleagues and I have put forward commonsense solutions on how to address the issues at our southern border. We must have these policy changes if we are going to pass any sort of supplemental that is going to include additional funding for anything else.

The No. 1 issue we have here is addressing the humanitarian and national security crises. That is a priority for the American people, it is a priority for my Republican colleagues, and my Senate Democratic colleagues must make that their priority as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

#### APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, today, I would like to discuss one of the many critical topics we face in the country, in the Congress, in the Senate—Federal spending. We are certainly focused upon the issues that we are trying to bring together in regard to an emergency supplemental, in regard to supporting Ukraine and Israel, combatting China in the South Pacific and around the globe, Iran terrorist activities, and, as the gentleman from my neighboring State of Nebraska indicated, issues involving our national security at our own borders.

Today, I want to take just a step back and indicate that we were on a path and I wish we would get back on a path of making certain that the appropriations bills that the Senate Committee on Appropriations has considered, amended, and approved are brought to the Senate floor.

There are 12 appropriations bills annually. The full committee has consid-

ered all 12 and passed all 12, but the Senate, this body, which is again using this week to consider nominations, still has all but three of those bills yet to consider. It is important that Federal spending is provided to keep our government open and functioning and functioning and open for the American people.

This topic has dominated a lot of conversations nationally now for months. We are operating under a continuing resolution that funds the Federal Government at its current level until mid-January or early February, when that current continuing resolution then expires.

I certainly support the efforts of Senator COLLINS and Senator MURRAY, the vice chairman and the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. I support their work. It is my hope that Leader SCHUMER will allow those appropriations bills and that process to continue. Three out of twelve is insufficient, and the consequences of our failure to address the remaining bills are consequential.

When considering appropriations bills, it is critical that, in my view, two core principles are established. First is that we must get our Federal spending under control. We borrow way too much money. The consequence will come to haunt us economically. Our ability to respond to national security issues is diminished when our spending is out of line with our revenues. Second, it is our duty to draft appropriations bills that are judicious, responsible, carefully tailored, and that we establish priorities and determine what the Nation's highest priorities are for the coming or current fiscal year.

Congress must start this work immediately and not wait for the final moments, not wait until the middle of January or the beginning of February. Otherwise, we are on a path once again to another continuing resolution or, as we said we would not do again, a significant and huge omnibus in which these bills are all packaged together, reducing transparency, reducing the understanding of not only members of the American public but reducing the capability of U.S. Senators to fully understand the nature of the bill and not giving the opportunity for my colleagues who don't serve on the Appropriations Committee to amend and alter the bills that our committee has approved.

A CR puts spending on auto pilot. It is the antithesis, it is the opposite of what these principles involve. The idea that the Federal Government should be funded next year at the same level as last year is wrong, and it is wrong that the same amount of funding ought to go to each program. Some things maybe ought to be eliminated. There are some things I know that should be eliminated. There are things that maybe are receiving the right amount of money. There may be things that are deserving, as the priorities change, of additional spending.

The best hope to avoid another CR and to avoid a much criticized omnibus spending bill at the end is to continue the process—the process we started on fiscal year 2024 appropriations bills, to consider them on the Senate floor and to move them forward.

Over the past 9 months, the Senator from New Hampshire, Senator SHAHEEN, and I have worked to craft the appropriations bill for the subcommittee that we lead called Commerce, Justice, Science and to balance those two core principles: fiscal responsibility with thoughtful allocation of scarce resources.

The CJS bill, one of 12—one of those bills that have yet to be considered on the Senate floor, the Commerce-Justice-Science bill—provides funding for a host of Federal Agencies that play a critical role in the lives of every single American and certainly every single Kansan: the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, NASA, the National Weather Service, the National Science Foundation, and just a host of other activities which enjoy broad bipartisan support both here in Congress and among the American people.

With respect to fiscal responsibility, this bill, Commerce-Justice-Science for fiscal year 2024, cuts budget authority—actual Federal spending—by \$1.3 billion compared to the amount of money that was enacted in the previous fiscal year, fiscal year 2023. That is about an amount equal to 1.5—1½ percent below the current level of spending. So we are cutting spending in our appropriations process.

American families face painful cuts and challenges in their own budgets, and I think they can expect—or "should expect" is the way I guess I would say it—should expect government to prove that it can make the same kinds of difficult decisions. The fiscal year 2024 CJS bill crafted by Senator SHAHEEN and me delivers on that obligation, and I thank my colleagues on our Appropriations subcommittee, both Republicans and Democrats, for working together to accomplish that goal.

In Congress, every once in a while, we have a vote on the penny plan, the seemingly impossible to achieve notion that we should at least be able to cut Federal spending by 1 percent, one penny out of a dollar. Senator SHAHEEN and I have found a way to make that a penny and a half, a little more than 1 percent—1.5 percent. That is a savings of more than \$1.3 billion.

The second core principle that I approach in the appropriations process is that Congress must make careful and deliberate decisions about how we allocate resources. Our opportunity to do that comes from certainly the assistance of our experts in our budget arena but also a significant number of hearings in front of the committee in which people have the opportunity to come highlight each Agency, each Department, their budget priorities, and give