

us a chance to ask questions and to pursue what the right balance is. We owe that obligation—making the right decisions—to the American taxpayer.

There are also areas that are vitally important where we from time to time include increases where appropriate to address new threats, new challenges, and new areas that are critical to the United States in our maintaining our competitive edge and our national security.

For example, in the fiscal year 2024 CJS bill, we provide resources to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, NIST—home to some of the world's best scientists—to ensure that we understand both the promise and the pitfalls of artificial intelligence.

NASA stands on the verge of returning the first humans—perhaps, in this case, it sounds like the first woman—to the Moon in over 50 years. It was vitally important that we provide NASA with the resources necessary to execute the Artemis mission. There may be those who would say that is not a priority, but the Chinese would like nothing more than to beat us back to the Moon and to become the world's preeminent space power. We will not—should not—allow that to be the case.

The National Weather Service needs to recapitalize its weather satellites. These satellites are vital to people in Kansas as we predict the weather and determine the safety and economic well-being of our State. They are vital to determining new severe weather patterns, and they will save lives.

These examples are just a few of why it is important that we have an annual appropriations process to make the changes to address things that Americans care about and to deal with the things that have changed in our lives across the country.

America's needs and priorities are not static, they are not the same, nor should government's decisions on how to spend taxpayer dollars be, either.

This bill, the fiscal year 2024 CJS bill, even in the context of its savings, still manages to make responsible investments to address the newest and most important challenges facing our country.

I want to spend a moment longer on discussing the funding and oversight of the Department of Justice.

Crime. Crime across the country is increasing. It is a problem for almost every American and certainly every American family, and it is deserving of being prioritized by the U.S. Senate, the Congress, and the administration.

Like many Americans, I have serious concerns with many of the policies coming from the Biden Department of Justice. Many new regulations issued by ATF threaten to trample core constitutional rights and are often a solution in search of a problem. DOJ's investigative priorities are often designed to satisfy the loudest activist rather than the everyday American and their real concern, including sky-

rocketing violent crime across the country and in the State of Kansas. Crime is affecting even our safest communities, and Kansans and Americans are concerned about what Washington is doing to keep their families safe.

Fentanyl is also a crisis—has been and continues to be and grows. It is a growing crisis in our country. This is not just an assertion; again, the numbers speak for themselves.

After a year in which more than 100,000 Americans lost their lives to fentanyl and with the highest increase in deaths among infants over 1 year old, President Biden's budget for DOJ requires hiring only four new DEA special agents, the Drug Enforcement Agency's agents. Yet the President's budget request indicates that the DOJ needs more than 1,200—one thousand two hundred—new attorneys, primarily at the division that files civil lawsuits.

The DOJ's priorities have been and are misguided. When I became the top Republican—the chairman—on the CJS subcommittee, I made it a priority to meet with countless DEA, FBI, and ATF special agents, deputy U.S. marshals, prison correctional officers, intelligence analysts, and prosecutors in the field. I am immensely impressed by their professionalism, their courage, and their dedication to keeping the American people safe. Indiscriminate, thoughtless budget cuts will result in fewer deputy marshals to apprehend violent fugitives, fewer FBI agents to investigate terrorists and intelligence threats from China, fewer DEA agents to combat the Mexican cartels, fewer Federal prosecutors not just to arrest violent criminals but to send them to prison.

Instead of defunding Federal law enforcement, we should use the appropriations process to prioritize and to make deliberate and judicious decisions about the Department of Justice's priorities. This means providing funding for the core activities critical to public safety while rejecting these proposals that make less sense or no sense from the Biden administration.

To that end, the CJS bill cuts funding for the Department of Justice by \$817 million—a more than 2-percent cut. Within that amount, funding for the FBI's construction account is cut by \$591 million. These are exactly the types of careful cuts we were able to achieve while maintaining the jobs of thousands of agents and intelligence analysts and others who help us combat violent crimes, child predators, Mexican cartels, and foreign intelligence agents.

Additionally, in working with my Republican colleagues on the committee, we were able to address some of the worst errors and abuses by the DOJ in recent years. During the committee markup, I secured new legislative language to prohibit funding for the investigation of parents who peacefully protest school board meetings—a DOJ initiative epitomized by the outrageous school board memo. Senator RUBIO, my

colleague from Florida, secured new legislative language prohibiting the Department from targeting Americans for their religious beliefs.

To my colleagues who have deep reservations about the policies of the Department of Justice, know that I share those concerns; yet I believe we have prepared a responsible bill that makes meaningful investments in the Department of Justice and its law enforcement mission. The CJS appropriations bill is a credible demonstration of fiscal responsibility while making judicious and careful investments in programs and services that Americans strongly support.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

IMMIGRATION

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I rise today alarmed at Republicans' demands for drastic anti-immigrant policy changes in exchange for continued support for Ukraine.

For nearly 2 years, our allies in Ukraine have fought off Putin's unjust invasion with the support of the United States—support President Zelenskyy himself has said is essential to his country's success. But now, as Ukrainians fight to defend their country and democracy itself, Republicans are holding additional aid hostage in exchange for unrelated immigration policy changes.

In exchange for one-time funding for Ukraine, Republicans are demanding permanent policy changes that would further weaken our broken immigration system. The proposal put forward by several of my Republican colleagues earlier this month would further complicate our asylum system and sow further chaos—chaos—at the southern border. This plan would require asylum seekers to apply for asylum in every country through which they transit—a clear violation of international law that would effectively deny asylum to almost anyone outside of Mexico or Canada who cannot fly directly to the United States.

Similarly, raising the standard for initial asylum screenings, known as credible fear interviews, would require asylum seekers to present even more detailed asylum claims within just days of a traumatic journey to the United States, typically while being detained in DHS custody and without the assistance of counsel. By making it even harder for the most vulnerable to seek asylum, these changes would result in political dissenters and persecuted minorities being sent back to danger and, in some instances, to their deaths.

The Republicans' plan would also make the situation at the southern border more chaotic by eliminating the President's parole authority, which the Biden administration has used to create safe, orderly pathways for nationals from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela to enter the United States. Eliminating this parole authority

would force vulnerable people from these countries to make a dangerous journey to our border to seek protection rather than applying for protection in advance.

As the only immigrant currently serving in the Senate, I know that the challenges confronting immigrants are not hypothetical. This isn't about statistics; it is about people—people desperate for opportunity and the hope of building a better life in our country. A plan that villainizes and degrades those seeking to enter our country is bad enough; but this plan does little to address the actual issues facing immigrants, failing to acknowledge the plight of DACA recipients, temporary protected status holders, and undocumented individuals living in the shadows while contributing to our communities and our economy.

Just this month, the Judiciary Committee, on which I sit, held a hearing on how to improve immigration courts. Immigration experts shared meaningful, thoughtful ways to improve this key component of our immigration system. Disappointingly but not surprisingly, sad to say, none of the solutions discussed at that hearing are included in the Republicans' proposal.

Beyond the problematic content of their proposal is the precedent that Republicans are attempting to set by tying one-time funding for Ukraine to permanent anti-immigrant policy changes. Pitting vulnerable groups against each other—Ukrainians fighting an unjust invasion and asylum seekers fleeing persecution—is a recipe for bad policymaking. Exchanging permanent policy changes for temporary funding all but guarantees additional Republican demands on immigration next year.

There was a serious effort to enact bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform in the Senate in 2013. I was here then. I had just gotten elected to the Senate. The year 2013 was the last time this body attempted to address this issue of a broken immigration system in a comprehensive way. To this day, I consider that bill that we worked on in a bipartisan way in 2013 as one of the most important issues and bills I have ever worked on in the Senate.

Comprehensive immigration reform was needed then, and it is desperately needed even more now. I stand ready to work in good faith with anyone looking to meaningfully improve our Nation's badly outdated and broken immigration system. However, that is not what the current Republican proposal does.

The American people are tired of rhetoric. They are looking to us to act. I believe this body has the ability to come together and enact comprehensive immigration reform, and I hope we—Democrats and Republicans—both acknowledge that the immigration system is broken—can find the will to do so. We did in 2013, and we can do it again.

NOMINATIONS OF MICAH W.J. SMITH AND SHANLYN A.S. PARK

Madam President, on another note, I am glad that, later today, the Senate will vote to confirm Micah Smith and, tomorrow, Shanlyn Park, to be judges of the U.S. district court for the State of Hawaii.

Shanlyn Park, who currently serves as a Hawaii circuit court judge, was born and raised in Hawaii, where her career has been spent almost entirely in public service. After graduating from Chamainde University and the William S. Richardson School of Law, Judge Park served as a Federal public defender in Hawaii for 20 years. As a judge, she has earned high marks for her even-handed approach and well-reasoned, fair decisions.

Importantly, if confirmed, Judge Park would make history as the first native Hawaiian woman to serve as a Federal district court judge. It is high time and long overdue. Representation matters.

Like Judge Park, Micah Smith has also had an impressive legal career. After graduating from Lock Haven University and Harvard Law School, he clerked on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and then on the Supreme Court for Justice Souter. He went on to become a Federal prosecutor—a job he has held for the last 12 years. He began at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and, in 2018, returned home to Hawaii to join the U.S. Attorney's Office in Honolulu.

I believe both nominees' experience, temperaments, and demonstrated commitment to public service, along with their deep roots in Hawaii, will make them excellent judges on Hawaii's district court. I look forward to voting to confirm them.

I know that we have also voted on cloture on Micah Smith. I thank my Republican colleagues for voting for Micah in a bipartisan way, and I look forward to their support for Shanlyn Park.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise today to once again speak about a subject that President Biden and his administration are refusing to address, and that is this crisis on our southern border.

I have been extremely outspoken about this topic—many of us have—especially when it comes to the need for deterrence along our southern border, the alarming drug epidemic that continues to harm my State and the entire country, and the desperate need to make changes to our immigration policy and the laws that define our homeland security.

The American people see the numbers, but it is not just numbers; they see the actual human effects within their own cities and States of this rampant illegal immigration. It can no

longer be ignored. In just the past year, there have been more than 2.4 million illegal encounters on our southern border—we have all seen them on our television sets—and that is more than a 180-percent increase since fiscal year 2019. There have been 169 encounters with individuals on our country's Terror Watchlist—six times the number of the past year; and fentanyl seizures along the U.S.-Mexico border have hit record highs.

I see my fellow Senator from Kansas. He has spent a lot of time on this fentanyl issue because it is so devastating to our States.

More than 26,000 pounds of illicit fentanyl were seized along the country's southern border this past year, and this is just the data we know. It is hard to fathom that there are 600,000 "got-aways"—those are people who were not even disrupted in their journeys—drugs and threats to our national security that are streaming across our border that we might have missed.

This is truly and simply an unmitigated crisis. There is no doubt that this is leading to and sometimes already has created an unsustainable situation across this country. But don't just take my word for it. I will offer some quotes:

The federal government's lack of intervention and coordination at the border has created an untenable situation.

This issue will destroy New York City.

A federal crisis of inaction that is many years in the making.

These are all direct quotes from Democratic Governors and mayors across the country.

Across the aisle and across the country, we know that President Biden's rhetoric and lack of action on the southern border has created a historic problem. In fact, this is a 50-State problem. I hear about this topic from West Virginians frequently. Constituents have expressed border security concerns to me, things like the catastrophic, flawed, and failed Biden-Harris approach to immigration and the loss of control of our southern border; the vulnerable state that our communities are left in by the flow of human trafficking and illicit drugs currently coming across our border; and the need to bolster our national security with the increase in crossings by those on the Terror Watchlist.

My home State of West Virginia is not a border State, so to speak, but we are all border States now. We are no stranger to the strife and grief created by the flow of harmful narcotics into our communities.

From June 2022 to June 2023, West Virginia's provisional State data shows that an estimated 1,415 West Virginians died from overdoses. These are husbands, brothers, sisters, moms, and dads. It is indescribably sad.

Drug overdoses caused over 5,200 emergency room visits, and our EMS teams responded to over 6,300 calls of a suspected drug overdose. These numbers are staggering, especially for a State as small as mine.