

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later today, Senate Republicans are going to deny cloture on a bill that fails to address America's top national security priorities in a serious way. As we have said for weeks, legislation that doesn't include policy changes to secure our borders will not pass the Senate.

The situation unfolding at our southern border on President Biden's watch is a crisis of historic proportions. It is glaring, it is acute, and it is undermining America's national security.

President Obama's DHS Secretary used to say that 1,000 border crossings a day "overwhelms the system." Today, they are reporting encountering over—listen to this—10,000 people a day down at the border—a large town's worth of illegal aliens each day. Thanks to a broken asylum and parole system, the vast majority of them are admitted into the country before their legal status is even determined.

Mr. President, 10,000 arrivals a day would mean a population the size of a middle-sized town in Kentucky every month—every month. The sheer volume has forced officials in the Tucson, AZ, sector, which has recently accounted for nearly 3,000 of those daily arrivals by itself, to shut down one port of entry altogether.

This is the crisis undermining America's national security right here at home, and today, some of our Democratic colleagues are showing just how little they want to do anything about it.

Senate Republicans know this isn't an either-or proposition. We know that national security begins with border security.

I have spent months highlighting the undeniable links between the threats we face in Europe, in the Middle East, and in the Indo-Pacific, but Democratic leadership appears to be telling us today that they are willing to risk each of these urgent priorities to avoid—avoid—fixing our own borders right here at home. Apparently, some of our colleagues would rather let Russia trample a sovereign nation in Europe than do what it takes to enforce America's own sovereign borders.

Now, it wasn't always like this. Democrats didn't always have such a hard time following the logic that national security begins right here at home.

I am reminded of the commission President Reagan set up in the mid-1980s to assess the importance of peace and security in the Western Hemisphere. It was a bipartisan exercise that included everyone from Henry Kissinger to the former chair of the DNC and the president of the AFL-CIO. The commission concluded that America's security in the world "depends on

the inherent security of its land borders" and that our adversaries would reap "a major strategic coup to impose on the United States the burden of defending our southern approaches."

"[A] major strategic coup" for our adversaries. A past generation of Democrats understood the logic implicitly when it pertained to the threat of Soviet influence. Well, that logic applies even more today to the instability, cartel violence, terror, and drugs pouring over our southern border.

But in today's Democratic Party, some of our colleagues appear to be so terrified of their radical base that they are convinced open borders are worth jeopardizing U.S. security around the world, that securing America's borders is less urgent than helping our partners defend theirs.

The Democratic leader has insisted repeatedly that border security is an important issue, but whatever our colleagues want to call the issue, their actions suggest they are not at all interested in actually solving it.

Demanding serious border policy changes isn't injecting an unrelated issue into the conversation. President Biden's own request wanted us to throw billions of dollars at this exact problem. Fixing a badly broken asylum and parole system isn't hijacking the supplemental; it is strengthening it. Securing our southern border isn't extraneous to our national security; it is essential.

I know some of our Democratic colleagues understand this. I know not all of them are beholden to the same radical base that demands open borders at home and supports an intifada abroad. I invite them to work with Republicans on meaningful, lasting border security.

But if today's vote is what it takes for the Democratic leader to recognize that Senate Republicans mean what we say, then let's vote, and then let's finally start meeting America's national security priorities, including right here at home.

COAL

Mr. President, now on another matter, for millions of Americans, expensive heating bills and rolling blackouts are becoming the hallmark of the holiday season under President Biden. So it came as no small surprise when the Biden administration's climate czar, John Kerry, proclaimed this week that no coal plants should be "permitted anywhere in the world"—"anywhere in the world." Goodness. Our former colleague may have bought himself applause from the jet-set crowd assembled at the conference, but his ban on coal would make energy even less reliable and affordable here at home.

As my colleague from West Virginia, Senator CAPITO, pointed out yesterday, many States in Middle America still rely on coal to keep their lights on. Kentucky, West Virginia, Wyoming, Missouri, Utah, North Dakota, Indiana, and Nebraska all use coal to generate over 50 percent of their electricity.

President Biden's handling of the economy is turning in dismal marks from working Americans. But the climate activists in his administration continue to wage war on the most affordable forms of American energy they rely on.

Unfortunately, Middle America is used to footing the bill for Washington's radical climate agenda. For 8 years under President Obama, Kentuckians watched the War on Coal kill jobs and cripple communities across Appalachia. These same communities continue to pay dearly under President Biden. Kentucky coal miner employment has never—never—recovered from the Obama-era coal purge. Hasty plans to phase out fossil fuels only force more miners into early retirement in Kentucky and threaten the livelihood of Middle America.

The sort of power grid failures we have seen in California, Texas, and Kentucky will become even more common if Democrats' full-speed-ahead climate strategy continues. Meanwhile, our top strategic adversary is scaling up coal production. Despite the Biden administration's pleading, China continues to forge ahead with new coal projects and resurrect retired plants. Time and again, the President's climate czar has happily accepted empty climate pledges from our adversaries at the expense of American jobs and job creators.

So Democrats can repeat their tired green energy talking points until the cows come home, but the reality for Americans is all the same: less reliable and more expensive energy this winter.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Nathalie Rayes, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 36 years ago, President Ronald Reagan stood at the Brandenburg Gate that separated East from West Berlin. He said to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union:

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.

Only a few years after his historic speech, the Soviet Union collapsed,

bringing in decades—decades—of freedom and prosperity in Eastern Europe and a welcome end to the Cold War.

Now there comes a man named “Vladimir Putin” who is clumsily and dangerously trying to regain that dystopian Soviet glory with a bloody war in Ukraine.

So I can only wonder what President Reagan would be thinking now, with so many of his Republican Party Members refusing to support critical military assistance to keep Ukraine from falling to Russian tyranny.

Yes, we have other legislative needs in Congress, but refusing to support the forces of freedom in Ukraine in a war against a resurgent evil empire in the name of partisanship is nothing short of reckless.

It is not hard to understand how we got here. Putin gambled and lost a botched attempt to quickly overthrow Ukraine. Now he has to juggle a formidable Ukrainian resistance, huge losses of Russian conscript, isolation on the global stage, a struggling economy, domestic opposition, and an upcoming election in Russia that he needs to rig again to stay in power. Meanwhile, he has been branded a war criminal and has to carefully choose the nations that he visits so he isn't arrested on the spot.

So, given his tenuous position, what is one of his greatest opportunities for clinging to power? It is hope that the partisan chaos in the U.S. Congress will stall or end support for Ukraine. And make no mistake—the President of Ukraine told us point-blank when he visited here several months ago, in a private meeting in the Old Senate Chamber, that if the United States cuts off military assistance to Ukraine, his country will lose the war with Vladimir Putin.

That is what is at stake. The White House was clear. We know that Putin is watching this activity by Congress; so is China and so is Iran.

The White House was clear in warning that the United States is “out of money to support Ukraine in this fight.”

And President Zelenskyy told us the obvious: Ukraine will lose without American support.

So this is not an abstract political theater; what we do has consequences—global and historic consequences. As such, I implore my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, think long and hard about what President Reagan would say today about showing weakness to Vladimir Putin. Let's not flinch when it comes to standing up to such obvious threats to freedom.

It is time to pass President Biden's national security supplemental request. It is hard to imagine that we would actually let history record that we walked away from Ukraine at this moment. And it isn't over a debate of the merits of his defense of his country; it is over an unrelated issue: our border security.

It is obvious that we need to do something on our border. The number

of people presenting themselves for refugee status is at a record high. The system that was designed 60 years ago to deal with refugees never envisioned the volume of demands that we are facing on the border every single day, week, and month.

This is not unique to the United States. Refugees all around the world are mushrooming in size for a variety of reasons: conflicts, the war in the Middle East, the war in Ukraine, environmental changes. All of these have the world in flux. And many people are looking for safety, safety in countries like the United States.

I support the refugee system. I think it was designed at a time when we realized that turning away Jewish people in World War II was a stain on our reputation. We decided after World War II to enter into a pact with other countries around the world to accept refugees under certain circumstances, and we have lived by that ever since through Presidents—Republican and Democratic.

Now, we are being tested. We can meet that test. We can adjust our refugee system to the reality of today, and we can stop the abuse of the system that is taking place on the border. But we don't want to walk away from the very fundamental values of our country. It is trying to find that delicate balance between those values and the disorder that we face on the border that leads us to the point we are today.

I have been involved in immigration issues for as long as I have served in this Chamber, and I know how hard they are to negotiate. And to put this stark choice before the Senate of either finding a solution to a decades-old problem in a matter of days and hours or cutting off aid to Ukraine is a terrible choice.

It is a deadly choice for the people of Ukraine, and, sadly, it is a deadly choice for the dominance of the United States and shaping world opinion. I hope we find our senses and do it soon.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have come to the floor many times to voice my frustration with the timid, ineffective job by the Food and Drug Administration in protecting American children and consumers from Big Tobacco. With new threats like vaping, the FDA has failed—utterly failed—to use its authority under the law to clear the market in the United States of unauthorized e-cigarettes. These addictive products are targeting children with sweet and fruity flavors. Yet the Food and Drug Administration has largely neglected its public health responsibility to regulate these products.

But, today, I want to discuss an area where the FDA can make progress that has the potential to save hundreds of thousands of lives. Last month, the FDA submitted a regulation to the White House for final review. This proposed regulation would ban the sale of menthol cigarettes and prohibit the use of flavorings in cigars.

Scientists have known for years that flavors play a powerful role in addicting people to tobacco by masking the harsh taste of their product, but when Congress banned the use of most flavors of tobacco in 2009, Big Tobacco secured a loophole for menthol. Why? Addiction is profitable.

For decades, menthol cigarettes, in particular, have been marketed aggressively to the African-American community in the United States, through free samples, sponsorship of cultural events, and heavy advertising. As a result, today—today—85 percent of Black smokers use menthol cigarettes, compared to 30 percent of White smokers.

It is part of the reason why Black adults are 30 percent more likely to die from heart disease and 50 percent more likely to die from stroke, compared to White Americans.

Right before Thanksgiving, I met in my office with Marsha Hike, who lives in Chicago. She was in Washington because November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month. She shared the fact that lung cancer is the No. 1 cause of cancer death in America. The No. 1 cause of cancer death in America: lung cancer, killing more Americans than breast cancer, prostate cancer, and colorectal cancer combined.

She met with me because six of her dearest family members have died from lung cancer due to smoking. I am glad there is greater attention today on topics like health disparities, equity, and the underlying factors for why Black people live sicker and die younger in America.

FDA's proposal would eliminate the racial disparity among cancer deaths between Black and White Americans, saving 650,000 lives.

I take this issue very personally. When I was a sophomore in high school, my father died of lung cancer. He was 53 years old. He spent 90 days—almost 100 days—in the hospital before he died, and I was by his bedside regularly. It made a profound impact on me as a high school kid, and little did I know that I would be able to follow up on this issue when I came to the House of Representatives by passing legislation to ban smoking on airplanes and taking Big Tobacco on ever since. The battle continues.

I know what the reaction is that the decision to ban menthol in cigarettes would be unpopular among the African-American population and may be reflected in the next vote. I think that is greatly exaggerated.

The majority of the Members of the Black caucus in Congress support this ban on menthol. And I want to make it clear, they are peddling stories—Big Tobacco is—that we are going to go out and arrest African Americans if they use menthol cigarettes, but that is not the case at all. The FDA proposal would take all of the action against the producers of the cigarettes, not the consumers. The consumers are not drawn into this in terms of any legal liability nor should they be.