

While Israel has every right to defend itself, the humanitarian toll inflicted on the people of Gaza has been of historic magnitude and increasingly becomes counterproductive to Israel's long-term security.

We are nearing an estimated 20,000 deaths in Gaza. A significant majority of those are not Hamas fighters—they are innocent women and children.

Last week, the leaders of some of the world's top relief organizations wrote in the *New York Times*:

More children have been reported killed in this conflict than in all major global conflicts combined last year.

Hospitals have had to try to treat civilians without the most basic medicines, using only Tylenol for pain management—even in amputations—and vinegar as a disinfectant of last resort.

There are growing fears that disease outbreaks will soon replace the war as the primary cause of death in Gaza. This is simply not an acceptable strategy.

Over the last few weeks, I have spoken to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths, and Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry about reopening hospitals under third-party monitoring.

I have also raised the humanitarian toll directly with Israeli officials. Basic medical needs, beyond treating the wounded, are staggering and include curbing a potential infectious disease outbreak and caring for thousands of expectant mothers.

As such, I again call on Hamas and Israel to stand down from all military actions around Gaza's hospital and allow them to function and be resupplied under a credible, third-party monitor.

I also continue to remind our Israeli allies that any U.S. military assistance must be used in accordance with the laws of war; and, as such, I have joined Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN of Maryland on an amendment to the proposed National Security Supplemental reinforcing this basic point.

The burden is higher in times of war for democracies, but adherence to such norms is what makes democracy distinct.

This horrible conflict has caused so much suffering and is a wake-up call to the need for a two-State solution that allows for a viable Palestinian State living in peace side by side with a secure Israel.

For years, I have warned that despite heroic efforts at such an agreement, spoilers on both sides have repeatedly undermined progress. So we have two challenges, one very immediate: End the suffering and release the remaining hostages immediately; and the second, finally commit to finding a two-State peace agreement.

This will take leadership from both Palestinians and Israelis. And let me be blunt: I do not see the current leadership of either having the vision or political will to take this desperately needed step.

But it is the only way forward. It is the only way that the region and international community will fully commit to helping rebuild Gaza and support a unified Palestinian leadership. It is the only way to end the threat of violence and bring a future of hope to both Israel and the Palestinian people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Ohio.

CONFIRMATION OF MARTIN O'MALLEY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, everything we do here should come back to the dignity of work, the idea that hard work should pay off for everyone, no matter who you are, no matter where you live, no matter what kind of work you do. When work has dignity, people have good jobs, a secure retirement. They can count on Medicare. They can count on Social Security to be there for them.

That is why we, 2 years ago, saved the pension of 100,000 Ohioans who worked their whole lives to earn a pension and peace of mind in retirement. That is why we are still fighting for Delphi retirees who lost their pensions through no fault of their own. That is why we will always—always—fight back against attacks on Social Security. Making sure that all Americans have a secure retirement shouldn't be a partisan issue.

Social Security and Medicare are two of the most popular and unifying institutions in the country. Social Security is our government's promise to working men and women—a promise that they will, in fact, be able to retire with dignity.

Support for Social Security cuts across party lines, geographic lines, and racial lines. Americans want not only to protect Social Security and Medicare, they want to make it stronger. Martin O'Malley, whom we confirmed last night, understands this. As Commissioner, he will make sure that the Social Security Administration is accessible and responsive. He will ensure we are keeping this bedrock promise to the American people.

We need to do our part in this body too. It means passing my Social Security Fairness Act to repeal restrictions from two old laws that are preventing more than 3 million Americans—about 250,000 people in my State alone, including Ohio law enforcement—from receiving the Social Security benefits they have earned.

Ohio first responders put their lives on the line to protect our communities. They paid into Social Security just like everyone else. All these Ohio workers are asking for is what they

have earned; that is, the dignity of a secure retirement.

We need to pass my bill to reform the supplemental security income—so-called SSI—program's outdated restrictions that punish people for working and saving, preventing 8 million Americans with disabilities from building a better life for themselves. It hasn't changed in 40 years. We should update it.

If these Americans have even \$1 more than \$2,000 in their savings account or \$3,000 for married couples—not very high, frankly—all their SSI benefits are taken away. With these outdated rules, there is no way to save for an emergency or plan for the future or, in essence, have agency over your own life.

There is broad support for this; it is not partisan; it is not ideological. At the committee I chair, the Banking and Housing Committee, I asked the CEOs of the eight largest banks if they supported this change, and every single one of them said yes. Every single one endorsed my bill. The big banks and I don't agree on much of anything, but we do agree on this.

By passing our bipartisan bill to update this outdated program, we also can fix the root cause of the SSI overpayments and clawbacks that have been hitting too many Ohioans. This has gone on for far too long and has hurt too many Ohioans, who—again, through no fault of their own—have been forced to deal with the issue of overpayments because of the SSA's outdated policies. Ohioans shouldn't be paying for the government's mistakes.

Martin O'Malley, our new Commissioner, made it clear to me in a one-on-one meeting that he is committed to working with us to finally address the root causes of these overpayments; and by increasing the asset limit, we are addressing what the SSA calls the leading cause of overpayments—stopping them before they ever go out in the first place.

These bills are bipartisan. They provide real fixes to real problems for hard-working Ohioans. People who don't have special interests are speaking out on their behalf. They have us, and it is what we should be—those who are speaking out for them. For years, they have watched politicians give corporate tax cuts; they have watched Wall Street bailouts, in many cases in this body while plotting to cut their Social Security.

In the end, it is about whose side you are on. I will always fight to protect Social Security and to make sure Americans get the retirements that they have earned.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

CONFIRMATION OF JULIE A. SU

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, as 2023 comes to a close, I rise to mark a year of historic progress for working people in our country.

Since President Biden took office, we have created more than 14 million jobs,

including 1.5 million jobs created in manufacturing, construction, and engineering. Meanwhile, unemployment has been under 4 percent for 22 months in a row—the longest stretch in over 50 years. And, across the country, we are seeing the labor movement reclaim its strength.

After decades of declining union membership, working people are coming together to demand their fair share of the economic success our country is experiencing—success they make possible. None of this is happening by accident. These victories are thanks, in large part, to the commitment of the Biden-Harris administration and, to give credit where credit is due, to the work of Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su.

Since assuming the top role at the Labor Department earlier this year, Acting Secretary Su has played a critical role in supporting workers and finding consensus to move our economy forward. In June, just months after taking over the Department, she helped avert a potentially disastrous strike at ports all along the west coast. Had major ports come to a screeching halt, our country would have experienced massive supply chain disruptions, costing our economy billions of dollars. Such a shutdown would have been particularly chaotic for Hawaii, where the vast majority of our goods is shipped to the State.

Gene Seroka, the director of the Port of Los Angeles, the busiest container port in the country, said Julie was “a constant and reassuring voice of reason that has helped to keep both sides at the bargaining table and focused on resolution.”

In October, Acting Secretary Su helped settle a labor dispute between Kaiser Permanente and nearly 75,000 of its union employees who staged the largest healthcare strike in our Nation's history. After weeks of bargaining, Kaiser and its employees had failed to reach an agreement, endangering the care they provided to millions of Americans across our country. At the invitation of both parties, Acting Secretary Su flew to California to sit at the bargaining table and encourage both sides to continue talking in good faith. To help bridge the gap between labor and management and keep the lines of communication open, Acting Secretary Su was regularly moving from room to room, serving as a critical liaison in the negotiations.

With her help, Kaiser workers reached a historic deal that included a record 21-percent wage increase over 4 years. Both sides agreed she was critical to reaching a deal, with the union calling her support “instrumental” and Kaiser's senior vice president of labor relations saying that Julie was “able to get us to articulate where we have commonalities, not about a particular package, but about our interests in the employees, and in healthcare.”

That is what Julie does. She helps people find common ground, setting

workers, businesses, and our economy up for success.

But, even after that historic success, many continue to doubt Acting Secretary Su's acumen, with one labor economist going so far as to question her skills as a mediator. Let's face it: It is not unusual for so-called experts to question the leadership qualities of women, with little evidence to substantiate their criticisms.

In spite of her detractors, just weeks later, Julie Su helped mediate a truly historic deal between the United Auto Workers and the Big Three auto companies, resolving the most significant auto strike in modern American history. Like Kaiser workers, with Acting Secretary Su's support, autoworkers secured a transformational contract—a contract that will see UAW salaries rise more in the next 4 years than they have in the previous 20.

Shawn Fain, the newly elected UAW president, showed his mettle in these negotiations as the country watched. Significantly, he, too, praised Julie Su's leadership, citing her work to build trust between labor and management and encouraging them to focus on their shared goals.

In addition to these and many other settled labor disputes, Acting Secretary Su is leading major initiatives to make life better for working people in our country and grow the middle class—from expanding overtime protections to strengthening apprenticeships and work training programs and much more.

Julie Su's work speaks for itself. She listens; she finds consensus; and she helps those around her stay the course for as long as it takes. What more could we ask of a Secretary of Labor?

Still, there are those who question Julie's ability to do the job, either ignoring or willfully dismissing her track record of successes. To be blunt: Sexism, racism, and double standards applied to women of color are all too common in spite of their denials all around. Julie Su has been doing the job of the Secretary of Labor for months, and she has been doing it well. But still, some of our colleagues cling to baseless criticisms, insisting she is unfit to serve. It is unfair to Acting Secretary Su and to the millions of workers whose lives she has helped to improve. Like the committed public servant she is, Julie perseveres, focusing on the important work of her Department.

Along with millions of working people all across our country, I am grateful for all she and the Biden-Harris administration have done for workers, businesses, and our economy. This administration and Acting Secretary Su understand that workers are the force that keeps our country moving forward. With their continued leadership, I look forward to more wins for workers and our economy in the years ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, President Zelenskyy visited Washington, DC, last week to ask for the United States' continued support for Ukraine as it defends itself against Russia.

As someone who strongly believes that it is in our national security interest to aid Ukraine as well as our allies Israel and Taiwan, I am disappointed that we have not already passed the aid Ukraine needs. But let's be very clear: The reason the Senate has not already passed a national security supplemental is that Democrats, so far, have chosen to prioritize an open border over aid for our allies.

Democrats have known for months that border security was going to be a part of the national security supplemental. After all, the President himself requested border funding in his supplemental request. Republicans have had a border security proposal on the table literally since the beginning of November, but Democrats wasted weeks, refusing to engage in substantive negotiations even though they were well aware that border security was going to be a requirement for getting this supplemental through both Houses of Congress. Now the supplemental will be pushed to January because Democrats have run out the clock to the point where getting a substantive border security deal passed before Christmas is impossible.

Last week, President Biden said that failing to pass the national security supplemental before the holidays would be a Christmas gift to Putin. Well, I would like to point out, once again, that the only reason we haven't passed the national security supplemental already is because of the Democrats and President Biden. Only one of the two parties has been dragging its feet on negotiations, and it has not been the Republicans. A lot of us Republicans are eager to get Ukraine the aid that it needs, but we cannot—and I say we cannot—tend to our national security interests abroad while ignoring the national security crisis right here on our doorstep.

President Biden wants to talk about a gift to Putin? Well, let's talk about the gift the President has been giving to terrorists and criminals and cartels for 3 years now with the chaos we have at our southern border. We have had three successive, record-breaking years of illegal immigration at our southern border on President Biden's watch; and the President is no closer to getting this crisis under control than when it first started.

During October, the latest month for which we have data, U.S. Customs and Border Protection encountered 240,988 migrants at our southern border, which is the highest October number ever recorded. I might add that among those numbers in October, there were almost 1,600 convicted criminals, 50 gang members, 90 people who have warrants out for their arrests, and 12 people on the Terrorist Watchlist. That was just in