

in the wake of the Watergate scandal. That certainly was not easy.

He was also an early Republican leader on issues of environmental stewardship and responsible, commonsense conservationism in the spirit of Republican President Teddy Roosevelt that has the support from local communities.

He cosponsored legislation that created the Gateway National Recreation Area, which stretches along the northeast Atlantic coast from New York to New Jersey and is home to one of the most significant bird sanctuaries in the northeast part of the United States.

As an avid birder himself, I am sure that this is one of the many proud aspects of the judge's important legacy to New York and to the rest of the country.

I think without a doubt, the most important legacy Jim Buckley has left all of us in the past 100 years has been his commitment to freedom and American liberty in both words and deeds.

He fought for American freedom in the Pacific in World War II. Like so many from his "greatest generation," he literally saved the world from tyranny.

He spoke eloquently of American freedom throughout his life. In another one of his books, titled "If Men Were Angels," he wrote the following:

I believe that in the last analysis the most important thing in social and political life is freedom, and I believe that it is because of the safeguards written into the Constitution, and the character of the American people, that we have enjoyed it in so great a measure.

More than any other country.

Mr. President, this great American patriot has left his mark on the American soul and American history and American heritage at the highest levels of our Federal Government, in all three branches of service.

Thank you for your exceptional service to our great Nation, Judge Buckley. All of the U.S. Senate and all of America wish you a happy and healthy 100th birthday.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Lujan). The majority whip.

WOMEN'S HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, yesterday, I joined Leader SCHUMER, Senators BALDWIN, BLUMENTHAL, and MURRAY and a number of my colleagues in introducing a piece of legislation that is urgently needed. It is entitled the Women's Health Protection Act of 2023.

This bill would protect the right to obtain and provide reproductive healthcare—as basic as anything in America—as well as the freedom of Americans to seek this care free of medically unnecessary restrictions or limitations as to where a patient can receive it.

It has been about 9 months since the Thomas-Alito Court ripped away this fundamental right in America and put a target on the backs of women and healthcare providers across the coun-

try. Since then, we have heard one horror story after another—stories of rape victims as young as 10 years old who have been forced to travel across State lines to receive critical healthcare, stories of women who were suffering miscarriages but still have been denied care by doctors in red States where the doctors are afraid of being charged with a crime, stories of women who have been abandoned by their State's leaders, many of whom have found refuge in the State of Illinois.

Despite these stories of girls and women who have been denied critical healthcare because of partisan politics, Republicans are continuing to push dangerous abortion bans and restrictions. These politicians think they know better than the women who are affected by these decisions and their doctors.

Beware of the moment when legislators start playing doctor. They are doing it all across America on this issue. They are wrong.

We need to respect the freedom and right of women and the expertise of their medical professionals, period, and we need to recognize that politicians have no business in the hospital room or in the doctor's office. There should be a matter of privacy and respect that should be guiding our policy.

If we want to defend freedom and fundamental rights in America, we need to pass the Women's Health Protection Act.

The debate has even gone so far as to affect the corner drugstore.

This week, I was on the phone with the CEO of Walgreens, an Illinois-based company, one of the largest pharmacy companies in the United States of America. They are torn currently by an announcement of policy earlier this week which generated a lot of controversy: whether or not they will dispense medications which are used to end a pregnancy.

I begged them to at least wait until this issue has become clearer in the courts before taking a corporate position. The other major pharmacy chains are making the same decision themselves. We will find out what they conclude.

But it is an indication that this debate has gone far beyond the floor of the U.S. Senate in Washington—it is on your street corner; it is in your mall; it is in the shopping center that you have been going to all your life—as to whether or not you can have access to a drug that was judged safe and effective 20 years ago by the Federal Government.

That is what happens when legislators decide to be doctors.

CHILD LABOR

Mr. President, on another topic, when you stop by the grocery store to pick up your favorite box of cereal or some chicken breasts for dinner, would you ever guess you were buying a product that had been produced by exploited children? Not in America. Not in 2023. Sorry, I am afraid it is so.

Last week, the New York Times ran an extremely important article about an investigation on what it deemed the "new economy of exploitation." That economy is powered by young migrant children who arrived in this country without their parents and are working at unthinkably dangerous jobs in the American economy.

But the exploitation is not limited to migrant children. In factories across the country, from North Carolina to South Dakota, children as young as 12 years of age—that is right, 12 years of age—are working in the dead of night, in some of the most grueling environments imaginable: freezing cold slaughterhouses and auto part assembly plants—12 years old. These children work as long as 12 hours per shift, and, for migrant children, many are under pressure to send money back home or to pay back the criminals who smuggled them across the border.

Often, these children go to school in the morning because they are trying to learn to speak English and get an education. How can you learn when you are running on no sleep?

Mr. President, I have some personal familiarity with some of these working conditions. When I was a college student, I worked two or three summers to pay my way through college. One of the jobs was on the railroad, a tradition in my family. Fortunately for me, I only have a minor scar to show for my time in the switchyard, but many others were not so lucky.

The other job I had while I worked my way through college was in a meatpacking facility. I spent four summers there. I saw almost every aspect of that type of environment. I cannot imagine a 12-year-old in that dangerous environment. So when I hear young children are working long hours in meatpacking plants and slaughterhouses, it is beyond horrifying. It is beyond unconscionable, and it has to end.

These accounts of children working in slaughterhouses and factories are not only shocking; they are blatantly unlawful in America. Our Nation outlawed oppressive child labor almost 100 years ago. This is a problem that should be relegated to history books or novels by Dickens, but it is not.

In fact, since 2018, there has been a nearly 70-percent increase in illegally employed children. When the number of children being forced to work dangerous and potentially deadly jobs is on the rise, it is clear that our child labor laws are not up to speed.

Let me add the obvious. This is another condemnation of the failure of our immigration policy in America. Consider the fact that people desperately need workers—desperately. In every corner of my State of Illinois, they tell me one after the other: We need more police. We need more firefighters. We need more ambulance drivers. We need more healthcare workers. We need more workers in our nursing home—and on and on and on.

And why are we facing these shortages? We are facing them because, for 4

years under President Trump, we stopped allowing legal migration into the United States, as we had in previous years, so fewer and fewer of these immigrant workers who are available to take on jobs that Americans are not waiting in line to fill.

Behind the swinging doors of most of the restaurants and at some of the hotels in the city of Chicago were undocumented workers filling jobs which no one on the other side of that door would be interested in. So when we don't have a legal system to allow migration to come to this country and to fill the jobs, this is what happens.

Yesterday, I had a meeting with the Illinois Farm Bureau. I meet with them every year. There were about a dozen farmers from all across my State. I know politically who they are. They are great people. They are not necessarily of my political party or my political faith. But they all said the same thing: Senator, we need workers on our farms. Dairy farms, livestock operations, orchards—farms that need workers every single day, and they don't have them.

They said: Don't tell us that we ought to go into town and get the kids in high school to be our next generation of workers. They are just not interested, and they are not filling the jobs.

And if we don't fill these jobs, these conservative, politically, farmers are going to find their farming operations paying a heavy price for it.

Why in the world can't we acknowledge the obvious? The obvious is that, if we have an orderly process to screen people to come work into the United States from various countries, we can stop seeing the onslaught of thousands coming to our border. We have already seen this happening in specific instances through the Department of Homeland Security. We ought to be enhancing it and increasing it.

I joined Senator SCHATZ last week when it came to this issue of child exploitation. He introduced a bill that would significantly expand and strengthen penalties for companies violating child labor laws.

Let the word go out as clearly as it can from the floor of the U.S. Senate: If you have a business and you are exploiting children, you are in trouble. You are breaking the law, and you are going to pay a price for it. It is just not acceptable. So don't use the excuse that you didn't know. Find out.

It would also apply these penalties to independent contractors. That is really important because some employers have managed to exploit children by hiring them through staffing agencies in an effort to avoid fines. Our bill would end this despicable practice.

When a company hires little kids to work on a fast-paced assembly line, where these kids can be injured and even have their lives endangered, or when a company hires children to debone chickens or inhale toxic chemicals in an auto factory, a small fine

and a slap on the wrist just won't do. We need to impose serious penalties on these companies so they will never hire exploited children ever again. That is what this bill wants to do.

Importantly, the investigation from the New York Times illustrates that the humanitarian crisis in this country is rooted in the failure of this broken immigration system. From migrant children to farm workers, to families living under the threat of deportation, there are millions of people living in the shadows in this country and being exploited right under our noses.

For those who entered the United States and are allowed to legally stay until their hearing date, there is a loophole in the law which makes life for them, in a legal way, almost impossible. Many of these people, though legally in the United States waiting for their asylum hearing, cannot legally work in the United States, depending on their circumstances, for 6 months to a year. What are they supposed to do? They want to work. There are jobs that need to be filled. We should find a way to do this in an orderly fashion.

The Times reporting made it clear that unaccompanied migrant children are extremely vulnerable to exploitation. That just stands to reason. Our Federal Agencies have to do more to protect them.

Finally, I want to acknowledge a broader truth about the State of our economy. It is no secret that employers throughout the country are struggling to find workers in Illinois, New Mexico—everywhere. There are 11 million job openings in America and not nearly enough workers to fill them.

It is disturbing that some Republican State lawmakers have suggested loosening the child labor laws to fill these openings. To them, I suggest they read that New York Times piece and imagine if it was your child or grandchild. Do we want kids skipping school to sit in a factory for 12 hours sewing socks or shivering in an industrial freezer? Is that any way to care for kids, whoever they may be, or to prepare the next generation of leaders in our country—the doctors, the educators, the citizens? Of course not.

The fact is, the quickest and most sensible way to address the labor shortage in our country is to fix the broken immigration system. Let's stop dancing around it. Let's face the music. We need to give undocumented immigrants living in the shadows a chance to be legal, and we should increase the number of working-age immigrants in this country by establishing new, thoughtful pathways for workers to legally enter America. We should pair this effort with new funding to bring order to the border. That is a priority. I share it with our Republican colleagues who talk about that almost exclusively.

The fact that American companies are turning to children to address our Nation's labor shortage is a national disgrace. We bear responsibility right here in the U.S. Senate. We were elect-

ed to solve problems just like this. How many years have we been sitting back and saying the immigration system is broken; we have to change the laws? I will tell you: More than 30 years.

Employers are counting on us to fix the immigration laws from both parties so workers can enter the markets in a legal and safe way. Unless Congress finally comes together to reform immigration in a bipartisan manner, these human rights abuses and embarrassment to our Nation will continue. What are we waiting for? Let's get it done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, I just want to say that along with all of my colleagues, my thoughts and prayers are with Leader McCONNELL this morning, with his family, with his team.

Along with our colleagues, I look forward to his speedy return to the U.S. Senate.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, later today, the President of the United States will release his budget. We haven't seen the details of it yet so I am not prepared. I will have more to say about that next week when I have an opportunity to drill down.

But I think what we do know about it—and I can predict this because it is pretty easy to predict that the President's budget will include a lot more spending, a lot more taxing and that after the last 2 years here where, through a budget reconciliation process, the President and the Democrats here in Congress passed almost another \$3 trillion in spending and taxing and debt outside of the normal appropriations process at a time when revenue—last year's revenue—was at a 20-year high. In fact, the revenue coming to the Federal Government in the last fiscal year, as a percentage of our entire economy, was higher than it has been with three exceptions in history. One was in the late nineties at the end of the dot-com bubble and two times in World War II.

It is a record level of revenue as a percentage of GDP, and yet the President in his budget is going to propose a whole lot more spending and a whole lot more taxing and a whole lot more government—expanding, growing government.

That is what we expect his budget to do, and like I said, I will have more to say about that next week.

(The remarks of Mr. THUNE pertaining to the introduction of S. 734 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled rollcall vote: Senator LEE for up to 5 minutes, Senator CORNYN for up to 15 minutes, and Senator WYDEN for up to 5 minutes.