

are going to have extradited removal when they get there. Except, when we ran the numbers to be able to look at it, at how many people are actually removed who get expedited removal, the number came back 7 percent.

So expedited removal doesn't actually mean removal. It is just a title that is being placed on individuals. So nothing is really changing there.

And as I mentioned before, these are not just individuals from Central America or from Mexico. These are individuals coming from all over the world.

When our bipartisan codel was down on the border a few weeks ago, we watched two individuals who had just been picked up by mounted patrol as they were running across the border. But they were not running faster than the mounted patrol, which was able to catch up with them, and they were able to arrest them. Those two individuals were Chinese nationals who were making their way across the border illegally at night, running from the Border Patrol.

People from all over the world are coming because there is an invitation to illegally cross the border. People are coming right now because it is actually easier to get a job in America. If you are living in another country and you want to work in America, it is easier to get a job in America if you illegally cross.

That is not just me saying that. That is the data saying that. If you are outside the United States and you apply for a work visa and want to be able to come in in a legal, normal process, to be able to go through, currently it is 6½ months to be able to get that work visa—6½ months. But if you illegally cross our border and you are labeled with "parole"—and the mass number of people are labeled with "parole" when they illegally cross our border—you get a work permit within 3 to 4 weeks. So you could legally do this and wait 6½ months or you could illegally do this and you get it in 3 to 4 weeks. Literally, this administration is incentivizing illegal activity with how they are setting up the work permits.

Listen, there are a lot of things this Congress needs to do to be able to deal with illegal immigration. I have stated over and over and over again that the asylum laws need to change. We have got to do a real fix. This is the issue, and it has been multiple administrations that have said that this is the problem. In fact, this administration, just in the last month, has floated the idea of changing the regulation on how they actually handle asylum, and I have affirmed them for that. That has got to change in the way it is being implemented. It also needs to change in law in the way we handle it here.

But there is also the legal process of actually enforcing our laws on the southern border that will make a significant difference not incentivizing individuals to be able to illegally cross our border. There are things the ad-

ministration can do, and they are not doing currently. There are things that this body needs to do that we have not taken up.

Two hundred and fifty thousand people illegally crossed our southwest border last month. When are we going to act on this problem? It needs to be now.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Madam President, I started the new year by joining Senator BLACKBURN of Tennessee and our new colleague Senator BRITT of Alabama on a recent tour of the Del Rio Border Sector in Texas.

We traveled to the border to gain more firsthand knowledge of the ongoing mass migration of illegal immigrants into our Nation, to hear from Border Patrol agents about how they are handling this crisis, and to, perhaps more powerfully, hear from young women and girls who are victims of President Biden's careless border and immigration policies.

We learned more how States are taking action to protect their citizens and their borders when the administration won't. Few States are affected more than Texas, which instituted Operation Lone Star in March of 2021 to counter illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

We looked on as a family led by a coyote crossed the Rio Grande in dangerously cold waters and witnessed the family's struggle to help their grandmother wade through rushing waters to enter our Nation illegally. She made it safely across, but, sadly, that is not always the case for many people, including children who have drowned making the same trek under the misguided belief that our borders are open.

We visited a massive migrant processing center where illegal immigrants were taken upon arrival. An astonishing fact about this processing center is that it costs U.S. taxpayers \$16 million a month to operate, and that is just one of five on the southern border. Let me say that again. It is costing American taxpayers \$16 million per month to process illegal immigrants at just one of these five centers.

What was especially gut-wrenching to me was hearing directly from human trafficking victims. We heard from one young lady who was trafficked from the age of 12 to the age of 16. She told a story I will never forget, and there are thousands of stories just like hers.

Yes, we learned about the true severity of the crisis. We learned how Border Patrol agents simply cannot carry out their jobs. We learned how States are forced to use up resources on border security and migrants—resources meant for U.S. citizens. We learned how ranchers and U.S. property owners are being overwhelmed and in constant fear of being robbed and assaulted by

smugglers. We learned how all of this affects our entire Nation—not just the unbelievable pricetag, but in the incidences of human trafficking across the country and tens of thousands of overdose deaths linked to fentanyl smuggled across our border.

And, heartbreakingly, we learned of the wickedness of the cartels. They are thriving, thanks to President Biden's apathetic attitude toward his own country's border.

This should not be a political debate. People and children are dying in an attempt to enter our country illegally. Drug cartels are taking control of not just the border towns on the Mexican side of the border but on the American side too. Human trafficking is now a \$13 billion industry.

How did we get here? Why do they come? Well, because our President basically invited them. Immediately after President Biden was sworn in, he started dismantling vital policies like "Remain in Mexico" and restarted catch-and-release, halted construction on the border, and, essentially, set up a big neon sign on the southwest border that read "Vacant."

The rest is history: 4.5 million border apprehensions with an estimated 1.5 million undetected got-aways, a staggering increase in the number of women and children who are being subject to assault and domestic violence, fentanyl flowing into our communities and skyrocketing deaths.

I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to go and listen to Border Patrol agents. Hear the stories of the cartel victims. See for yourself the heartbreaking scenarios the greatest country in the world is allowing to unfold.

I learned much from my visit to the border, but perhaps the worst thing I learned is this: The Biden administration is not lacking any resources or authority to address this crisis. No, it can support our Border Patrol and border States. It can secure our border. It can save children from dying and drowning in the Rio Grande or 14-year-old girls from being sold. But it won't, either through incompetence or, worse, by design.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I want to thank my friend and colleague from Mississippi for her comments on this subject.

I am down here on the floor to also talk about the crisis at the border—the humanitarian crisis, the Homeland Security crisis, and a crisis that is resulting in cartels making \$800 million a year in human trafficking.

I joined a bipartisan delegation 2 weeks ago. We visited the border. It was very productive. It was one of the first bipartisan delegations in quite some time. The reason that was important is, if you go down there with a

partisan delegation, you are only going to actually talk about one side of the issue. If you go down there with a bipartisan delegation, you can talk about what we need to do on a bipartisan basis to solve the crisis at the border.

I want to start where Senator HYDE-SMITH finished—the humanitarian crisis. I am one of the Members who has been trying to negotiate a bipartisan immigration reform bill that has border security and asylum reform in it. I had a lot of my staff ask me: Why would you do that? You know it is going to be unpopular. You are going to get criticized from the left for going too far. You are going to get criticized from the right for having any discussion about immigration reform.

I have been down to the border several times. I told my staff that it is hard for me to forget border security telling me that they just transported an 11-year-old girl who had been repeatedly raped, so much so, she screamed so long she couldn't even speak anymore before she crossed the border.

I told them I can't forget going down the Rio Grande River and seeing a corpse taken out of the river, real time, while I was down there. It wasn't staged because it is happening repeatedly every year.

When you hear stories of truckloads of people being bused across the border—53 of them dying through suffocation and heat exposure on American soil—I can't forget that. That is a humanitarian crisis that has to be solved.

Then I went to the border last week and I started at the Rio Grande Sector and then I went over to the Yuma sector. At night, at the Rio Grande Sector, we saw two Chinese nationals who had been apprehended.

Chinese nationals pay, on average, about \$35,000 to cross the border. In many cases, they don't have the money to do it. They have somebody invest in them, and then they become indentured servants in the United States to pay off that debt.

You have people pay \$5,000, \$6,000, \$10,000 who have an expectation from the cartel that they have a debt to be repaid. That may be an honest job that they could get or that could be an illegal activity that helps the cartels.

Now we go over to the Yuma Sector. The Yuma Sector is in Western Arizona. There is a section of border there that hasn't been completed. It is about 7 miles wide. But the most important part of that 7 miles is about a 12-foot gate. Three years ago, 8,000 people crossed through that gate; 2 years ago, 200,000 people crossed through that same 12-foot gate; and over the last 12 months, 300,000 people have. Five thousand of them were Russian nationals; another 5,000 were Chinese nationals.

Look, I understand why people want to get out of Russia, and I understand why people want to get out of China. What I don't understand is why on Earth in transit to that border—that dangerous crossing that you are paying

tens of thousands of dollars to a cartel, a transnational criminal organization—why on Earth wouldn't you stop in a nation that is safe, the first safe country that you can get to out of the country that you are trying to flee from?

That is how international asylum treaties work. You get out of the dangerous country. You go to a country that has international agreements on asylum. You claim asylum. And then you may even want to seek asylum in the United States.

We had reports in the Yuma Sector of people who are flying into Mexicali. They are flying in, not making the trek as many people think of caravans coming from Central America through Mexico—flying into Mexicali with suitcases and bags and taking a cab to the border, making sure their toll is paid and then crossing the border. There is no way on Earth that people coming from many of these nations could not have sought asylum somewhere closer to home and then give us a chance for orderly entry.

In total, it is estimated that the transnational criminal organizations, the cartels, are being paid almost \$800 million a year. What are they doing with that? If you go down to the border—particularly if you go down there around midnight—they play the same play every night, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. They will take innocent people who are going to come across the border, and they tell them: Once you get across the border, present yourself to a Border Patrol agent, and you will be processed, which is exactly what happens.

Under the Biden administration, you are likely to be released within a few days or not more than about a week. The disturbing trend is the one that Senator HYDE-SMITH talked about, the disturbing number of people who are evading Border Patrol. Why on Earth would you not opt to go into a facility that is heated in the winter and cooled in the summer and spend a week of being fed three times a day, to have access to facilities, to have changing tables for babies, to have play areas while they are being detained and processed? Why on Earth would you avoid all that and take the dangerous step of evading detection, unless, at least for some of them, there is a nefarious purpose.

Then they are moving into communities where we have already seen—in North Carolina, an illegal immigrant murdered a young lady just a couple of years ago. We have seen this crime, and it tracks back almost invariably to the people who are the so-called got-aways.

Now I want to go to the Yuma Sector and talk about those 300,000 Border Patrol. I am wearing a "Back the Blue" flag. But as you all know, if it is Border Patrol, they wear green uniforms, so I say, "Back Law Enforcement."

Right now, Border Patrol only has less than half of the people who are sworn to protect the border doing those

jobs. They are in processing facilities. They are driving buses. They are providing support for daycare. Literally, I am not exaggerating.

So that means that we have half as many people protecting a border that has wide-open spaces. There are no structures whatsoever. Come across. Walk through the Rio Grande. In most cases, you can. You don't have to swim. But when those 300,000 people get there—this is the most amazing thing about this country—they are going through that 12-foot gate. If Border Patrol goes there, then the rest of the border is open for the got-aways. Our country is so extraordinary that they say: I know that it is only about a 10-minute ride from that 12-foot gate to the processing facility, but they won't transport a child unless they have a car seat for them. If somebody has disabilities, they have to make special accommodations. Imagine 300,000—300,000—people coming across the border in a 12-month period, what Border Patrol has to do to conform to our laws and treat these people humanely and safely.

They need time. Time can only come when Congress recognizes that we have to secure the border. We have to fill the gaps. We have to insist that if you want to come to this country, present yourself at a legal port of entry, present a request for asylum, you will be processed.

We need to send the message: If you want to come to the United States, thank you for the compliment you are willing to risk your life to come to the United States, but respect our laws and don't pay cartels \$800 million a year so that they can create a conduit for fentanyl and other drugs that are poisoning almost 100,000 Americans a year.

Now let's talk about immigration reform. I think that one of the ways that we can provide a future flow—a downward pressure on future flow—is to simply say to people who want to respect our laws and apply for citizenship, for work visas, or other forms of being in this country legally, we need to actually fix the immigration laws that we have on the books to do that.

If we do that, I am not going to have to worry about those memories of that little girl. I am not going to have to worry about the corpses that we are picking up in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. I believe we will have fewer people dying from fentanyl because less of it will come here, for a couple reasons: We will have better security at the border, and we will bankrupt the cartels that are making, over the last 2 years, almost \$2 billion.

We need people in Congress to recognize that a bipartisan solution is possible. We have a crisis at the border that needs to be solved, and we have to have an administration that spends more than four hours in 2 years at the border recognizing it is on them to help us fix it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from Tennessee.

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I had the opportunity this month to make a trip down to the southern border. And this was not my first trip down to that southern border. And I will have to say that I found our Border Patrol more discouraged than ever before. And I looked at it, and I really kind of used it as a basis for comparison every time I go down there, whether I am in California or Arizona or Texas, just talking with them and hearing where they are and what they are seeing and what their experiences are on the border every single day. And many of them feel like their job is an impossible task.

And this trip, I was in the Del Rio sector in Texas and had the opportunity to also talk with the Texas military that is down there on the border with the Texas DPS. They are down there on the border working. And there at Eagle Pass is where so many people are crossing into the country. And one of the things that they pointed out was they really can't stop this flow because, basically, the Biden administration has told them they can't stop this flow.

So we did a little checking into what has actually transpired since Joe Biden went into office. And, according to the Migration Policy Institute—which is not a conservative group, by any means; it is a more liberal policy think tank—in Joe Biden's first 100 days, he took 94 Executive actions that undermined the job that the Border Patrol is trying to do on that southern border.

So think about this. You are in service to your country, and the Commander in Chief is taking actions that make your job—the job that you have taken an oath to do—making that job harder to do, harder to execute your job.

Well, now, those who believe in open border policy, they think that taking 94 Executive actions to make it easier for people to illegally enter the country—they would see that as a good thing. But those of us who are constitutionalists, those of us who really believe in the rule of law, those of us who want our Nation to have an immigration policy that honors the rule of law, we look at that and we say: 94 Executive actions take a branch of this government, an Agency of this government, and makes it more difficult for them to do their job.

Now, many of my colleagues across the aisle have been no help in getting this situation at the border under control. They have voted to keep sending checks, basically, to those who illegally enter the country. They have approved a payday—a massive payday—a lot of funding going out to many of these sanctuary cities.

And, in 2022, Democrats voted to expand the Biden administration's catch-

and-release policy. This is people who are apprehended at the border and then they kind of get a checkmark. They get a plane ticket or a bus ticket to somewhere in the country and are told to show up on a date, maybe 2 years in the future, and have their asylum claim heard.

What they have also done—my Democratic friends across the aisle—is they have voted against giving Border Patrol the funding that they need to control the chaos that that policy has created.

So to many of us, it seems like things are backward; they are upside down. There should be agreement that we are going to honor the rule of law. There should be agreement that we are going to protect our sovereignty. There should be agreement that our border will be closed. There should be agreement that we are going to fund the Border Patrol. There should be agreement that we are going to fund ICE. There should be agreement that we are going to fund title 42, that we are going to fund building the border wall, and that we are going to fund additional screening for dangerous narcotics like fentanyl. But that has not been the case.

So open border, yes. But also, according to Border Patrol, what we have in this country with this administration is a lawless border policy. That is right—a lawless border policy.

And here is the reason for that. That was not said lightly. But it has become the reality because of the intentionality of this administration to leave that border open, to pass those Executive actions—a President, 94 Executive actions—that make it more difficult for Border Patrol to do their job—94. That is what you call intentional. That is what you call undermining what should be the policy and the support on the southern border for our Border Patrol.

Now, if you want to look at it on a month by month basis—December. Let's take just the month of December. Traditionally, you don't have as many people crossing in December, but because we have seen the border open and the "You all come" sign hanging out on that border, you have people coming across that border in record numbers.

In Yuma, AZ, they said they had people from 176 different countries speaking 200 different languages coming across that border.

In the month of December alone, there were 250,000—a quarter million—illegal encounters. These are the ones that the Border Patrol was able to apprehend. They are the ones who touch U.S. soil, raise their hands, and say: We claim asylum—250,000.

And over the past 2 years, there have been more than 4.1 million illegal border crossings. This is a record.

And you have the got-aways—the known got-aways—that you can see on surveillance but you can't get to them.

And as Border Patrol will tell you, the really bad guys—the really, really

bad guys—the unknown got-aways, they are the ones they don't see, but they are slipping into the country.

How do they know they are here? They find what they drop when they come across the river. They find clothes and shoes—carpet shoes. They see tracks. They see cars that come and pick these individuals up.

Do we have criminals coming into this country? Absolutely, we do.

In Eagle Pass, they told us that in the first 3 months of this fiscal year, in fiscal 2023, they apprehended 143 convicted criminals. Now, these are people who had committed felonies, whether it is rape or armed robbery or manslaughter. These are people with a criminal record.

Last year, in 2022, they apprehended 98 terrorists. They have apprehended dozens of gang members, MS-13 gang members.

And the thing that is so critical about this is that these individuals don't stay in Yuma or El Paso or Eagle Pass. That is where they come across, and they are ending up in your towns. They are ending up in Wisconsin. They are ending up in Tennessee, my beloved State.

I was talking with a police chief from Tennessee before I came over here. In rural Tennessee, the vast majority of the drugs they apprehend are either fentanyl or fentanyl-laced. They are using Narcan more than they ever thought they would need to use Narcan. TBI told us last month that the cartel is active in Tennessee.

Last week, I was visiting with a police chief from another city there in my State, and he said: Oh, it is not only active in the State; it is active right here in our town. He talked about some of the loss of life.

So as we discuss what is happening at the border, we have to look at the humanitarian crisis there.

Yes, everybody coming across that border, they will pay the cartel. Now, think about that. They paid \$5,000, \$7,000, \$10,000, whatever is the going rate. They are flying into places like Mexicali, Mexico, and then they are coming across the border.

Cartels are global organizations now. They are Big Business. Human trafficking is a \$13 billion-a-year business. It has grown in the last few years from a \$500 million-a-year business to a \$13 billion-a-year business. All of this ends up in our communities.

Indeed, every town is a border town. Every State is a border State right now because of this lawless border policy that is taking place at our southern border.

When you talk to the Border Patrol, they will tell you that there is a way to get this under control.

Was it better under the previous administration? Yes. The numbers were down. They did not see as many crossings because people understood that we were going to do some basic things. We were going to enforce the law. We were going to eliminate and we did eliminate the incentives for people to come.