

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

□ 1530

BORDER CRISIS IS KILLING OUR COUNTRY

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Madam Speaker, for the new year, I have done a survey with my constituents and asked what the issues are that they want to be focused on in 2024. The top answer they submitted in my northern California district was the border crisis, a Biden and Democratic Party-created crisis.

Republicans and Democrats agree there is a crisis at our border, and it is President Joe Biden's fault. During his first 100 days in office, he took 94 executive actions on immigration, including halting the construction of the border fence.

Under his administration, there have been 8 million illegal border crossings nationwide and over 6.7 million encounters at our southern border. The Biden administration's continuous open border policies are to blame for this historic crisis.

We need action now. We need it yesterday. We must pass, over in the Senate, H.R. 2, the strongest border security bill in congressional history, immediately. We must complete the wall, change the asylum rules to not be such a joke and prevent millions of illegals from being attracted here by a magnet, streamline deportations, and end parole in the United States.

We cannot continue to allow this to stand any longer. It is killing our country and our economy.

POLICY SOLUTIONS TO THE BORDER CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BEAN of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MOORE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, before I yield time to my colleague from Utah, I want to quickly highlight and reiterate the importance of what we are doing here as the House GOP.

House Republicans, during the holiday break, took the time, over 60 of us,

to go down to the border to be able to share what is truly going on. We get to hear, hopefully, today a little bit more about this.

At no point in our Nation's history has the situation on the southern border reached the levels of policy failure, humanitarian disaster, and security threat that it has under the Biden administration.

Many of my House Republican colleagues witnessed firsthand the tragedy at our border last week. It is out of control, and the Biden administration has completely dropped the ball on this issue and threatened the safety of every American community in the process. The issue is, it is more simple than this.

To President Biden, the gig is up. You took office and thought: Let's just reverse everything that the Trump administration had been doing. Let's not necessarily evaluate whether it was successful, whether it was the right policy. Let's just kind of use our executive pen to reverse everything.

It is very simple to consider Migrant Protection Protocols, the remain in Mexico policy, catch and release. These are simple policy changes that would have an immediate positive impact.

Many of my colleagues were able to see this, to witness this, again, firsthand this past week, and I look forward to hearing from Representative BURGESS OWENS from the great State of Utah for more on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. OWENS).

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I recently joined Speaker JOHNSON and more than 60 colleagues to visit the southern border at Eagle Pass, Texas, one of the busiest Border Patrol entry points. What I witnessed was nothing short of an invasion, an invasion facilitated by the purposeful policies of the Biden administration.

It was my second trip to the border since the spring of 2021, and regrettably, the situation has only gotten worse.

Two years ago, I encountered a heart-wrenching tragedy of an unaccompanied autistic 7-year-old child, a little girl who was trafficked by the Mexican cartel. My guess is the Biden administration is clueless as to the status of this vulnerable young lady. My guess also is that she is now 1 of the over 100,000 unaccompanied children who have been trafficked through the Biden administration's open border and now lost. The 100,000 innocent children lost to our system highlight the heartless administration that does not care about the innocents.

The crisis doesn't end here. Over 100,000 Americans, primarily aged between 19 and 48, have fallen victim to fentanyl, a deadly weapon shipped from China to Mexico, processed, and then smuggled across our borders. More Americans have lost their lives in a single year than the two 20-year wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan combined.

As these Americans are being poisoned across our country—by the

way, this is across party lines. It doesn't matter what our race, creed, or color might be. Take one, and we have lost another child.

As we are losing Americans, over 100,000, at this one port of entry, Eagle Pass, they are making over \$34 million per week through this trafficking of fentanyl.

President Biden did not inherit this crisis at our southern border. He purposely created it by rolling back the successful Trump policies and then refusing to enforce U.S. immigration laws. In his first 100 days, he took 94 executive actions on immigration, resulting in 1.8 million illegal crossings since January 2021.

That is why I joined my House Republican colleagues to pass the Secure the Border Act of 2023 7 months ago, which offers commonsense solutions to the Biden border crisis. This legislation demands the completion of the border wall, an end to catch and release, an increase in Border Patrol agents, a halt to the flow of deadly fentanyl, and protection of our innocent children from human traffickers. It places the safety of the American people first, a sentiment shared by citizens throughout our country who are tired of Washington's inaction. However, the Senate Democrats refuse to bring it to the floor for a vote.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Senate to immediately pass H.R. 2, send it to the President's desk, and stand up for the safety, security, and sacred laws of our great Nation.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative OWENS for his firsthand look.

I spent time at the border—I believe it was in the late spring—and the same situation continues on. The solutions are right in front of us, and we just need the Biden administration to recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA).

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time to be able to weigh in on these issues in a little more relaxed manner here and spend some time.

I want to talk a little bit about legislation we are working on here known as S.J. Res. 38. In this case, it would ensure our taxpayer dollars are used to buy American-made products, something that has had bipartisan support, nonpartisan support, in the past around here.

Certainly, when we are talking about having something domestically produced or buying it from a foreign competitor or ally, one thing we shouldn't be doing is buying more and more things from China.

What is the sense of exporting so many of our dollars over to somebody who is such an adversary in so many things on the world front, with the funding of countries that are helping to sponsor terrorism and the unrest they are helping fund in the Middle East? There are constant threats to Taiwan and the other islands in the South

China Sea that are possessions of Japan and others, constant aggression on that. They sink many other smaller countries into huge debt by dangling out loans they know they can't repay, and pretty soon, they can take over the resources of that country.

As the United States of America, we can produce anything we want here. We can produce it well, usually of the best quality, using the best practices, by far, yet what are we doing? We are hamstringing our own ability to strengthen our own economy with the energy we need to produce in order to do that, with environmental policies that 50 years ago were well intentioned but have been completely weaponized against industries and farming, mining, and timber. The West burns each year massively. In California and Utah, it is endless.

A lot of this currently comes from Biden administration policies, and I jump back 3 years to 8 years to the Obama-era policies that have put us in this spot.

Currently, President Biden wants to shoot down the waiver to eliminate the buy in America requirements for, in this case, electric vehicle chargers. That is what this bill, S.J. Res. 38, is about, which would be purchased under the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, another boondoggle itself.

If the money is going to be forced to be spent, and we have to buy these electric chargers for electric cars, at least can we have them be American produced, American made.

Don't get me mixed up with the electric car crowd. I don't think we should be forcing that on anybody. At the same time, they are tearing down the California power grid with the dams they are removing on the Klamath River up in the north part of my district and one across the border, and then threatening the Snake River farther up and one down in Mendocino County.

It is just one thing after another, getting rid of hydroelectric power and also the ability to store water and for the water to be retained during flood control season and for some recreation—yes, even water available to let out for fish when they need to. When they tear these dams out, we lose that green, renewable, clean, CO₂-free power by these policies.

An addendum to that, CO₂ is not a problem. It is only 0.04 percent of our atmosphere. The left wants to keep playing these games like we are talking about here. They want to export jobs to China to build these electric car chargers. They want to tear down the dams that produce CO₂-free, green, renewable power and try and build even more batteries and more windmills that chop up the birds and only run when there is a little bit of wind and the solar plants that only run during the daytime when it is not a cloudy or rainy or snow-covered day. It is amazing how dumb these ideas are.

In 2021, the Democrats included \$7.5 billion of taxpayer money for electric

vehicle charging stations in their pie-in-the-sky idea that we are going to electrify everything in the next few years. This is the Infrastructure and Jobs Act.

I don't support the forced purchase and proliferation of electric vehicles, but doggone it, if we are going to do this, we need to buy American.

Why do we have to steamroll our own laws? Why is the administration backstabbing our American manufacturers and sending billions over to China and other Asian markets?

In the process, it also destroys our immigration laws and fosters more chaos at the border when we have this continued policy by the Biden administration of basically ignoring the border.

As mentioned earlier, 64 of my colleagues went to the border. I have paid a couple of visits myself in Arizona and California and such. It is indeed chaos. They are just walking right past you when you go visit the border. Some of these are nice folks from Central America, families and such. We keep putting out the magnet, the green light to come across.

We have talked many times about the numbers coming across the border, like 10,000 per day just in the month of December, 300,000 for a month.

The burden is being borne even by our Democrat-run cities, even they are starting to cry uncle. We have the Governor of New Jersey saying we need to check with these bus companies and see where they are all coming from. No, you need to check over here at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. That is where the policy is coming from. It isn't bus companies from Texas or Florida or something. That is who you need to be talking to because that is where the problem is.

Indeed, the administration is shifting from pushing our jobs overseas to then having our jobs here filled by people who are coming here illegally. It is the chaos they have had at the border coupled with these other policies and fentanyl coming across the border.

Who knows what kind of terror cells are being built by people coming across the border illegally and the gunrunning and everything else that can happen? It has even resulted in the housing of illegal immigrants in our National Park System, including a national park right there in New York City, so people can't use it.

Now, you have seen the stories more and more recently that they are going to be housing them in schools. Kids are getting kicked out of schools in New York right now because they have a supposedly temporary problem where they have to house them in the gym. The kids can go online, back to Zoom learning, like during the height of COVID, which was manipulated in my own home State of California, which took an extra year to allow kids back into school.

□ 1545

What a mess. Why are these people entrusted with power?

When you talk to the American public, this is all preventable. We don't have to live like this, when we are talking energy, when we are talking domestic production. No, we would rather export it, I guess, and have kids in Africa mine the products in order to have your electric car and electric gadgetry.

The National Park Police have testified that these encampments on our National Park lands endanger the people that would normally enjoy and use them. Also, in the wintertime, these areas can end up being a floodplain, like the one in New York City, endangering the illegal immigrants that are being attracted—until recently, when it seems maybe the light is starting to turn around for the Governor of New York and the mayor of New York City and such.

I don't know. I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, we have a porous border. We have a massive problem with the encounters that we have at the border here that are overwhelming our demoralized Border Patrol folks. How are they supposed to do their job?

On my visit down to Arizona, they actually had, and still have today, government-provided vans go over and just pick people up at the gaps in the border and get them to the processing center sooner. We know that 85 percent of them are not going to be heard at their asylum trial any time soon.

One thing after another is wrecking our economy, wrecking people's confidence in government, and the ability just to conduct their own lives. There is no reason we need to have such costly ways of doing business with energy, with procuring food; everything else that is happening under this Biden administration.

Mr. Speaker, just 3 years ago, things were looking pretty good on the cost of fuel, cost of groceries, and employment until they used COVID as a weapon to attack our economy at that time and tried to make it look bad in order to win the 2020 election.

We have a lot of complex issues, but the solutions really aren't that tough when you get down to it: enforce the border laws that we have.

We don't need comprehensive immigration reform. We already know what we are supposed to do about the border. We just need to enforce the laws that we have and have common sense applied to asylum.

At the same time, let's not exploit American jobs that we could be doing if we have to produce these electric vehicle charging stations. At least let Americans produce them instead of sending them to China.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for speaking very plainly and very simply. These solutions are right in front of us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MURPHY).

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the CMS' proposed Medicare cut of 3.37 percent.

Just to put this in perspective, when a physician sees a Medicare patient, they do it because they care about patients. They do not do it for money, because it doesn't make financial sense.

Let me give an example here.

You own a hardware store and you want to sell hammers. It costs you \$1 for each hammer. Say, the hammer is on Medicare, or you have to buy the Medicare, and you have to sell it for 60 cents.

How long do you stay in business? It doesn't make sense.

So as we move time and time and time again, the number of physicians who are able to take Medicare patients, out of the goodness of their heart, is falling and falling. You actually lose money on Medicare or Medicare patients that has to be taken up through cost shifting for regular insurance.

When I ran a private practice, I stayed up many, many nights, Saturday nights, searching for paper clips, making sure that I knew where every penny went. I just had to make sure that my staff and the bills got paid before I ever got paid.

My practice was heavily Medicare, so I did not take a salary many, many times because the numbers did not work. In fact, adjusted for overinflation for the last 20 years, Medicare physician fee schedules have dropped 20 percent, and this is in light of the massive inflation we have had over the last 2 years; even worse.

Mr. Speaker, what other profession expects to get a pay cut every year?

This has to stop.

These are the people who are actually up in the middle of the night taking care of your grandmother who has appendicitis, taking care of your daughter, taking care of your child with a broken arm. They are the ones doing this, and here we are rewarding them because they basically have to take government pay patients by cutting and cutting and cutting.

One of ObamaCare's directives was to starve private practices to force physicians to work in hospitals or big conglomerations.

How did they do this? They cut their pay every year while hospitals, although not as much so, got raises every year.

So what does this do? It pushes physicians out of private practice because they can't pay the bills.

Mr. Speaker, I left my private practice when my partner said: We can't do this anymore. We are going to be acquired by a hospital.

Mr. MURPHY: We can't provide the care to the patients that they need.

Why is it a bad model? Private-practice physicians are different birds than employed physicians. It is just very simple. It is a well-known fact in medicine. Those employed physicians tend to be less efficient, cost more, and tend to work more on the clock.

Those who are in private practice put a taproot down in a community. They have stayed there, and they are some-

one's doctor for 20, 30 years or more. This is not happening now. They have made transitory medicine the rule, not the exception.

The cuts that are going to the Medicare fee schedule absolutely need to stop. This is why I introduced H.R. 6683, the Preserving Seniors' Access to Physicians Act.

This legislation will stop this year's cuts while we work on a permanent solution. This is not something that needs to happen year after year after year where we are cutting and cutting the people who actually take care of patients.

Mr. Speaker, I came to Congress to help work with my colleagues to help fix Medicare. We are facing an absolute calamity with the shortage of doctors, especially surgeons, in the next 3 to 5 years. Those who are reaching retirement age, instead of working like most physicians do, are finally throwing up their hands and saying, we are done.

Sadly enough, the ones coming out of medical school now—because of some of the processes now were not working hard enough—are not nearly coming out in the numbers and the efficiency to take the place of those retiring.

Every day, we now add 10,000 new patients to the Medicare rolls. You are expecting doctors to continue to take more and more Medicare, earning less and less and less. They are going to go out of business or have to go into employment, which we all know is a worse way of taking care of patients.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 6683 and help us try to keep medicine back on track.

Thank you.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, Dr. Murphy and I sit on the same committee, Health in the Ways and Means Committee, and if his remarks seem personal, it is because they are. He has had such a close experience with this, and no one makes the point better that all of our providers' costs continue to go up because of bad the monetary policy that we have seen, particularly in the last few years. When we constantly tell these providers, You are going to have to do more with less, they have to make decisions, and this is ultimately the worst possible thing for our patients.

The crowding-out effect that we have going on in our economy right now, particularly with things related to government funding, there is no situation where it is worse than this. The inability for us to get after our true debt and deficit drivers will continue to crowd out, so these types of cuts are forced on providers, and we have to be willing and adult enough to be able to figure that out.

So thank you for that, Dr. Murphy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUCSHON).

Mr. BUCSHON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I am rising today to advocate for America's patients and their physicians.

Over the past 3 years, doctors across the Nation have more than stepped up to the challenges that they have encountered, COVID, often risking their own health and safety to protect our communities. That not only includes the physicians; that includes the nurses, the technicians, and everyone in America's hospitals. However, when Congress left town in December, we once again let down America's doctors by allowing a 3.37 percent Medicare payment cut to hit January 1.

As a cardiothoracic surgeon for 15 years, I have seen firsthand the consequences of cuts like these. What are the consequences? Access to quality healthcare for rural America that I represent, underserved urban America, the American people.

The payment cut to physicians will impede patients' access to care while increasing the gap between physician expenses and reimbursement rates.

I want to associate myself with Dr. Murphy's comments. Costs are dramatically going up, and, if that continues, more and more of America's physicians will not take Medicare. I didn't say Medicaid. I said Medicare.

Given the existing shortage of physicians in the United States, the combination of declining reimbursement and rapidly rising costs threatens to drive more doctors out of the profession, particularly, as I mentioned, in rural and underserved urban America.

It has led to a lot of consolidation, as Dr. Murphy mentioned—physicians being consolidated into a large medical practice or employed by large hospital systems.

Fortunately, we have a window of opportunity to right this wrong and support the thousands of hardworking men and women serving millions of Medicare beneficiaries. We must stop the bleeding and eliminate the full 3.37 cut by January 19.

Congress must also implement a permanent solution that will halt the downward spiral of physician reimbursement and provide much-needed and deserved stability for America's doctors. Again, if we want access for America's seniors to the Medicare program, we have to act. We have to act soon.

Again, it is not just physicians out there not taking Medicaid. They are not taking Medicare. I have elderly in-laws and an elderly mother. They have experienced this.

In fact, we had a hearing in the Committee on Energy and Commerce a couple of weeks ago. There was an economist there. He couched it in a way that was positive. He said, Well, 60 percent of America's seniors are not having trouble finding a primary care physician.

When it came around time for my questioning, I said, Well, I want to rephrase that. Forty percent of America's seniors are struggling to find a primary care doctor. That is a big number, folks. Forty percent of America's seniors are struggling. Their physician retires. Their physician moves.

Trying to find a new primary care doctor is a big challenge. We cannot let this continue—again, urban America and underserved areas, rural America that I represent.

In 2023, for a more permanent solution, I introduced the bipartisan Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act, which would tie the annual physician fee schedule updates to inflationary measurements, the Medicare Economic Index, or MEI. That is both fair and efficient. It has been promoted. Almost every medical society in America thinks this is a good idea.

I don't have the graph in front of me but let me just tell you what it shows. Outpatient and inpatient hospital care gets an update based on inflation every year. Providers do not. As Dr. MURPHY outlined, it has been at least a 20 percent cut just based on that in the most recent history, and even more if you factor in the massive inflation—which thankfully is down—that we had last year and the year before.

The current path toward further consolidation, physician burnout, closure of medical practices must be corrected. If we don't correct this, the problems I outlined are going to continue.

I urge congressional leadership to address this critical issue, and I will continue to advance patient-centered solutions that empower patients and support innovation to ensure that all Americans have access to quality, affordable healthcare.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, Dr. BUCSHON, for another incredible perspective on this looming issue that seems to just be year over year over year, and we cannot continue to put our medical providers in this situation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROSE).

Mr. ROSE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah, Vice Chairman MOORE, for yielding and for claiming this time this afternoon to discuss these important issues facing our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, as the music note dropped in Nashville and Americans rang in the new year on January 1, we woke up in the morning to horrifying news. 302,000 illegal immigrant encounters had occurred at our southern border, the most in any single month ever, in December 2023. To put this number into perspective, that is more than the entire population of Knoxville, Tennessee, which is the third largest city in my home State of Tennessee.

□ 1600

Keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that out of the 302,000 illegal immigrants encountered at the southern border, none of these includes the illegal immigrants who successfully evaded our Customs and Border Patrol agents.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, it is actually much worse. In fact, in fiscal year 2023 which ended on September 30, so it doesn't include the record-breaking

month of December, Customs and Border Protection reported 2.48 million illegal immigrant encounters, and there were over 1.1 million known got-aways. That includes 169 people who were stopped trying to cross the border in fiscal year 2023 whose names appear on the terrorist watch list, which is more than in fiscal years '17, '18, '19, '20, '21, and '22 combined. Or to put it another way, the entire Trump Presidency plus Biden's first 2 years.

Additionally, border officials seized 27,293 pounds of fentanyl in fiscal year 2023. That is a whopping 464 percent increase from 2020 and, obviously, points out the failure of the White House and the Department of Homeland Security to enforce our Nation's laws.

Their desire for open border policies is wreaking havoc on an entire generation of young people in my home State and across our country who are dying from fentanyl overdose at an alarming rate.

From halting border wall construction to ending the successful remain in Mexico program implemented during the Trump administration to ending title 42 powers that kept illegals out of the country, the White House continues to send a message to the world that our borders are wide open.

Thankfully, there is a solution that would make for a great new year's resolution. The House Republicans passed H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act of 2023. It would end the catch-and-release policy, pay more for Border Patrol agents, restart important border wall construction, and strengthen and streamline the asylum process.

The bottom line is we must enforce the laws already on the books and pass new ones that put an end to the skyrocketing illegal immigration disrupting every corner of America, including my home State of Tennessee. Unfortunately, until then, every town in President Biden's America will be a border town.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for his remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I echo the gentleman's sentiments, and I will continue to speak on it today. The solutions at the border are simple. We have got actual data that can just be reimplemented and we can get rid of the politics involved and just do something right by our Nation. We look forward to an opportunity to leverage this moment to get this border policy through. The things in H.R. 2 make absolute sense.

I am looking forward now to the remarks of my colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. JOYCE).

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the vice chairman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, last week, I joined the largest congressional delegation in history to visit our southern border. What we saw is absolutely alarming. It is alarming to me personally and will be alarming to every American. We saw a Border Patrol station that has been

under constant siege for months. We saw a community in Eagle Pass dealing with the strain of over 300,000 migrants crossing the border in the past 30 days. We saw an emboldened cartel that continues to smuggle drugs and human trafficking into every community in America.

Speaking to Border Patrol agents and local sheriffs, it is clear that President Biden's open border policies have led to this national security crisis.

In the past 3 years, we have seen the number of attempted entries by individuals on the terrorist watch list skyrocket to over 100 a year with 1.5 million got-aways reported by the Border Patrol. That number is surely larger. We have seen an increase in drug smuggling with substances like fentanyl, methamphetamine, and heroin entering our Nation at record levels.

Moreover, we have seen reports of public schools being used as holding facilities for migrants instead of being used for American students who are already suffering from historic learning losses after the COVID pandemic.

All of this amounts to a pattern of failure brought on by the Biden administration's refusal to address the border crisis head-on.

Half measures will not keep Americans safe. It is time for the Senate to pass H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act, and begin working in good faith to protect our communities.

For far too long, my constituents have been poisoned by fentanyl analogs that are created in China, made into pills in Mexico, and brought into the United States through an open southern border.

It is time to enforce our laws. It is time to reinstate the remain in Mexico policy. It is time to give Border Patrol agents the tools and the resources that they need to protect our border and to protect the sovereignty of our country. It is time to secure our Nation.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank Dr. JOYCE for coming down over the holiday break.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER).

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank him for hosting this Special Order.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss CMS' Medicare physician fee schedule which threatens seniors' access to healthcare, exacerbates vertical consolidation within the market, and will further drive patients toward higher cost sites of service.

Physician costs are growing, but their reimbursements are shrinking yet again.

In America, we all want the same thing when it comes to healthcare. Whether you are a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or whatever, you want accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare. Everyone wants that.

This is causing all three to suffer. Accessibility is decreasing. More physicians and more physicians are no

longer accepting Medicaid and are no longer accepting Medicare.

The issues are accessibility, affordability, driving patients to higher cost sites, and, of course, quality.

Quality goes down when we lose quality physicians, and we are losing them. They are getting out of the practices because they can't afford to stay in the practices. In fact, Medicare doctor payments have been cut by almost 10 percent over the last 4 years. This is simply unsustainable.

Fortunately, we have a window of opportunity to right this wrong and support the thousands of hardworking men and women serving millions of Medicare beneficiaries. Over the holidays, I spoke with doctors in my district who are preparing to make painful decisions including service reductions and hiring freezes.

For patients, this means an inability to get even basic healthcare services close to their homes or longer wait times as overwhelmed staff race to keep up.

That is why I am working closely with my bipartisan colleagues on a permanent solution, but we need to stop the full 3.37 percent cut and ensure that physicians have the financial support necessary to care for our seniors.

This is the United States of America. We have the greatest healthcare system in the world, and we are ruining it.

Again, I don't care if you are a Republican, Democrat, Independent, red, blue, or green. I don't care. We all want the same thing. We want accessible, affordable, quality healthcare. This is ruining it. We have got to compensate our physicians.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his remarks emphasizing the need for good healthcare.

I hear this from several of my friends, family, and constituents back home. I think one of the most alarming things that we are seeing right now in the healthcare provider world is that—when I grew up, a lot of my friends' parents were physicians. They would always encourage their child to go into medical school and pursue a career that they loved so much. This may just be an anecdote, but I am literally seeing that next generation of current providers saying: Try something different.

Again, that may just be my experience. I don't think it is because I have heard a lot of it from other colleagues of mine. We can't look back at this time and say we didn't address this issue of not doing right by our providers, by our rural healthcare and making sure that they have what they need to be able to navigate the costs that are continually increasing and being able to provide for their patients.

As Dr. Murphy also talked about, we have to have private practices being able to stay nimble and focused on their specific community and not just build big conglomerates. Small business is the backbone of our Nation, and

that needs to exist also in our healthcare market.

As I close here, let me just turn to the other topic that we talked heavily about today which is the border. I spent some time at home the last few weeks, and as I met with and had different forums back home with constituents, I explained to them that one of the biggest problems is the way that policy works in Washington, D.C.

It is in a very partisan and difficult circumstance back here. I don't think anybody on either side of the aisle would disagree with me that it becomes very difficult. When we factor in the Senate that requires a 60-vote threshold—every bill needs to be bipartisan in the Senate—that requirement isn't here in the majoritarian rule House, but that is what we live with. Particularly when there is split government, then we have difficult decisions and difficult things to navigate.

The point that I made to them was that with my Democratic colleagues, we often can find the first three or four provisions of a particular issue that we agree with, but then that is when it becomes difficult because if Democrats want the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh item, then they will say, no, we are not going to vote on any of the things we agree on until we get some of these things we want, even though we agree on the baseline.

We do it too. We have certain things that we want to make sure we get so we are going to leverage that so we don't get the basics done.

I can't think of a scenario where this applies more than our border crisis right now. I don't want to make this political. I remember a little while ago when there were 34-odd migrants that suffocated in the back of a truck. It was like a blip on the news feed. It was so quick. It came out as a news cycle. That is the danger of what is going on right now. We have empowered the cartel networks that we should be united against. We have empowered the cartel networks to own the border.

I heard a staggering statistic—I don't have the number in front of me—on what we have calculated on how much money those cartels are making on a weekly to monthly basis. It is terrifying because that number is going directly into the drug trade.

The fentanyl crisis is one of the biggest impacts this has on our community. I held this huge roundtable back in Utah with the caretakers, law enforcement, and advocacy groups. It was a very nonpartisan conversation, and it was so, so concerning on what was going on.

This is what I want to tell the American people: We actually agree that we should do a lot of the elements in H.R. 2. We should shore up that protection and border security. However, then we need to make sure we streamline the visa process, and we need to make sure we get a stronger workforce here.

I am here to tell you, Mr. Speaker, we actually largely will agree on that

aspect of a comprehensive immigration reform.

□ 1615

My biggest criticism of President Biden and his administration has been that he immediately removed or reversed the Migrant Protection Protocols, the remain in Mexico policy that the Trump-Pence administration had done. "Well, we are a new administration. We have to reverse all those things."

A lot of the energy things were done by executive order. It was also this border policy. I think we are seeing now it is okay to have made a mistake if you are willing to be the adult and say: "Look, we actually should reimplement some of this stuff."

It is what the American people need. It is what the polling will tell us. It is what we largely agree, that there are some basic things that we can get done.

I think not telling the cartels: "Hey, if you just get folks to the border and get them across, they are going to get lost in the system. You are going to be in there, and you are going to be fine." That is what they are telling them. The immigrants who are coming here, it is not the experience they are having because they get lost in the system and then are forced to go into the drug trade or forced to be part of the workforce of the Sinaloa cartel once they rush the product through the borders however they get it, whether it is a port or nonport. I don't care how it comes through.

Once that product gets here, then these individuals get leveraged to do that because they have no other options because they were lied to by the cartels.

If we can agree on some basic stuff, let's implement it. If we shore up and get back to times that we saw in previous Presidencies, we can then go and actually work on some of the other immigration policies that also need reform.

I am committed to doing that, and I hope that we can address that. If we leave the border with this type of policy that we have seen create a beacon for these cartels, then we will not be able to accomplish anything.

If it has to be done all in one bill, that is unrealistic because it is just a bigger beacon. It is just more opportunity for the cartels to try to get more people through, and it is nonsensical.

I hope for every opportunity to tell the Biden administration that this is actually better for you politically. I hate to say it, but this is what the American people need.

That is what my colleagues are trying to emphasize. That is why over 64 of my colleagues last week spent time down there. The same things that I saw months ago when I visited Eagle Pass are continuing. They are not getting better. There has to be policy change.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleagues for attending today's Special

Order and sharing their thoughts on these very important issues, and I yield back the balance of my time.

PROTECT AND ENHANCE SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, we are here this afternoon to discuss America's number one anti-poverty program for the elderly and the number one antipoverty program for children. It is Social Security.

I commend my colleague from the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. MOORE, for his work on the committee, but here is the issue, Mr. Speaker: This Congress that we are all a part of has not enhanced Social Security now going on 53 years. 1971 was the last time the United States Congress, which has the responsibility, enhanced Social Security for any of its recipients. Mr. Speaker, 10,000 baby boomers a day become eligible for Social Security, and since 1971, Congress has not taken any action.

I am joined by my colleagues today as we come to this floor and beseech our fellow colleagues to do one simple thing: Vote. That is our responsibility.

We have a very specific plan that we have put forward. There is also this other plan that is out there, some sort of debt commission that is going to go behind closed doors and decide what they will cut with respect to Social Security.

The American public overwhelmingly—Democrat, Republican, and Independents—all say we do not need cuts to the very essential programs that we rely on as a country. For more than 40 percent, Mr. Speaker, of all Americans, Social Security is the only pension that they have, and Congress hasn't acted in more than 53 years.

We need to enhance the program. We need to enhance it in a way that makes sure that everyone gets an across-the-board increase, especially for 5 million of our fellow Americans, mostly women, who get below-poverty-level checks from the government of the wealthiest nation in the world because Congress has not taken the time or the effort.

Who are these people? They are your brothers, your sisters, your aunts, your uncles, your neighbors, the people you go to church with.

Where does this money go? Right back into every single Member's district.

Mr. MOORE of Utah has 110,000 Social Security recipients in his district. Every single Member of Congress is getting a card that tells them how many recipients they have in their district, what they receive, whether they are dependents, spouses, or disabled.

That is what we are focused on. We want a vote, Mr. Speaker, because the

American people demand it. That is why I am joined here for this Special Order hour on this floor by so many of our colleagues. There are so many of us that we hope everyone will recognize their time and have consideration for their colleagues, but I will also point out the more than 350 groups across the Nation that support the Social Security 2100 Act, including the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, Social Security Works, the NAACP, the AFL-CIO, Paralyzed Veterans of America, the National Education Association, and I could go on. Instead, I am going to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL), a leader on the Subcommittee on Social Security.

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my brothers and sisters on behalf of more than 124,000 of my constituents in north Jersey in the Ninth District who rely on Social Security each and every month. They rely on it.

To some, as in the entire country, that is their only means of income, of survival. That is how Social Security was established in the 1930s and implemented a few years later.

Social Security is one of America's greatest success stories. I remember the first time I ran for Congress in 1996. I walked into a room prepared to deal with housing codes and public housing, but the only questions folks asked me: "Where do you stand on Social Security?" "Do you want to privatize Social Security?"

Social Security is a success story. After nearly 90 years, it still stands as a monument to decency and dignity and the birthright of hardworking Americans, yet throughout its storied history, Mr. LARSON, it has been under attack. Even in 1935, it was the subject of attacks and lies from day one.

The Republican Study Committee, which represents three-quarters of House Republicans, proposed slashing Social Security benefits by \$718 billion. The GOP leadership wants to create a so-called fiscal commission in our government funding bill. That is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

I am proud to join my friend and colleague, Congressman JOHN LARSON, in a letter opposing this cynical ploy to slash Social Security and Medicare.

Without aggressive action, Social Security lurches toward insolvency. Congress has a sacred responsibility to fight for its future. The same question asked 26 years ago is asked of me today. That is why I am standing with Mr. LARSON on his Social Security 2100 Act, to ensure the long-term strength and solvency of Social Security.

The Social Security 2100 Act provides paid-for benefit enhancements while not raising taxes on middle-class families. It is a no-brainer.

Our bill ends the painful 5-month disability waiting period. Who can justify that in this day and age?

It would ensure Americans suffering with permanent disorders like Huntington's disease get the help they need without red tape or delay.

The bill eliminates the windfall elimination provisions so that firefighters, police officers, teachers, and others get the full benefits that they have earned.

With the Social Security 2100 Act, we are fighting for our seniors who have worked their entire lives and rely on Social Security to make ends meet. We are fighting for working families so that no one who pays into the system over a lifetime ever retires in poverty.

We must get this done for the American people, Mr. Speaker. There are no excuses.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, there is no person on the committee who has fought harder for the repeal of WEP and GPO and who understands the significance and impact that Social Security has on so many of her constituents and constituents all across this country than Ms. SÁNCHEZ.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Ms. SÁNCHEZ).

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman JOHN LARSON for being the chief advocate for reforming our Social Security system. It is high time that Congress acted to preserve those benefits for people who have earned those benefits by paying into the system over their working lives.

I want to touch on another issue that concerns me with respect to Social Security, and that is that we see an increasing number of people who rely on those benefits. Since 2010, the number of individuals who rely on Social Security has increased over 21 percent. Over that same period of time, Social Security's administrative funding for basic operations has fallen by 17 percent after you account for inflation.

Those shortages—that is, more people needing services but the budget being cut—have caused a significant delay across Social Security for our most vulnerable populations, including those who are awaiting disability benefits.

I have a constituent from my district who has been working with my case-work team in my district office for more than a year and a half. This individual had a stroke and applied for disability benefits with Social Security in August 2022 after becoming paralyzed. He was denied those benefits in June 2023.

□ 1630

He appealed his decision that same month and didn't receive a response from Social Security until November of 2023, stating that his application needed additional review. After 17 months without any form of income, his case was finally approved just this week. Americans should not have to wait this long to see these necessary earned benefits.

Instead of working with Democrats to ensure that Social Security has a better capability to serve constituents like that one, my Republican colleagues proposed devastating cuts to Social Security. Additional cuts to an