

Laken Riley's death and the death of every other American caused by this border crisis rests with President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas. I hope they can't sleep at night, because this could have been prevented. We need to go back to the policies that work, stop playing these dang games, and stop playing politics. Otherwise, this will keep happening.

We are here, and we took an oath of office to say we are going to watch over the citizens of this country. If we don't do something, more Americans will die, more Americans like Laken Riley. More parents will be forever scarred for what happened last week. We have to do something. We can't forget about this.

Every time we have somebody who has lost their life in this country because of an illegal alien, I am coming back up here and I am going to rub it in the faces of the Democratic Party, Secretary Mayorkas, Senator SCHUMER, and Joe Biden. It is 100 percent their fault.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, earlier this month, House Republicans impeached Secretary Mayorkas because the Homeland Security Secretary refuses to carry out his constitutional duty of securing the homeland.

More than 9 million illegal immigrants, including 1.7 million known "got-aways," have entered our country under the Biden administration. Now, this number is larger than the population of 39 States. At the same time, hundreds of individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist have been caught on the southern border, including 58 since the start of fiscal year 2024. Just in January, there were more than 176,000 illegal crossings along the southern border. This is the worst January on record. Yet, under Secretary Mayorkas and President Biden, Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported just 142,000 people in all of 2023. That is less than 5 percent of illegal crossings.

There is no doubt that this administration has abused both our asylum and our parole systems, but unlike asylum—you have parole, which is granted by DHS for different reasons, and President Biden has abused his parole authority to usher in millions of migrants who are unknown to us and who receive both public benefits and work authorizations.

One thing is clear: The parole system is just another way for the Biden administration to circumvent congressional authority and make illegal immigrants legal.

Over the course of four Presidents—go back and look at the years from 1983 to 2003—the average yearly total for all paroles was no more than 150,000, and on average, the Obama and Trump administrations paroled just 5,600 migrants per year. There is a contrast here. In 2022, Joe Biden paroled nearly

800,000 migrants into the country, and in fiscal year 2023, the Biden administration paroled approximately 1.2 million migrants. That is more than 200 times the number that President Obama and President Trump paroled into this country. This administration is abusing the parole system and that authority.

This administration's open border agenda is already having tragic consequences. Last week, an illegal immigrant in Georgia was arrested for allegedly murdering Laken Riley, a 22-year-old nursing student, while she went for a jog on the University of Georgia's campus. The suspect should never have been allowed to set foot in America. Yet the Biden administration paroled him. They paroled him into this country after he illegally crossed our border in 2022.

There is no doubt that Secretary Mayorkas has breached the public trust by making illegal immigration legal, but according to recent reports, Majority Leader SCHUMER is looking for any way he can to prevent a Senate trial when the House transmits the Articles of Impeachment on Secretary Mayorkas to this Chamber. By tabling the Articles of Impeachment, Democrats would be abandoning our core constitutional duty to hold an impeachment trial.

The American people suffer through this administration's border crisis every single day, and they deserve an open debate about whether Secretary Mayorkas, who has done so much to cause this national security and humanitarian catastrophe, is fit to hold public office. Based on everything we have seen over the last 3 years, Secretary Mayorkas is not fit for office, and if this Chamber upholds its constitutional duty, I will vote to convict him.

#### KIDS ONLINE SAFETY ACT

Madam President, late last month, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing with the CEOs of five big tech companies—Meta, TikTok, X, Snap, and Discord. We did it for a simple reason: Big Tech needs to be held accountable for putting profit over children's safety.

When our children are online on these platforms, they are the product. With addictive algorithms, infinite scroll, and endless push notifications, social media sites are keeping teenagers on their platforms for an average of 8½ hours a day. It is a disaster for the mental health of young Americans.

But the more time minors spend on these platforms, the more data Big Tech can collect, allowing them to rake in billions of dollars in revenue. Discord's 2022 revenue, the latest available, was \$445 million. X—their revenue for 2023 is estimated to be \$3.4 billion. Snap—their 2023 revenue was \$4.6 billion. The 2023 revenue for ByteDance, TikTok's Chinese Communist Party-affiliated owner, was \$110 billion. Meta's 2023 revenue was \$134.9 billion.

At the same time, big tech companies have turned a blind eye to how their

platforms are exposing minors to harmful content, drug dealers, and predators. But when provided the opportunity to explain themselves, the CEOs continued to make excuses for their platforms' failures to protect our children online on their platforms.

During this hearing, Meta's Mark Zuckerberg said he would absolutely work with lawmakers to address these problems, but for years, Meta and other Big Tech platforms have funded an army of lawyers and lobbyists who have fought us on this issue every single day in every single possible way. Many of these groups argue that the free market can solve this problem, but even though the free market is an incredible force for good, it can't stop Meta from putting a lifetime value of \$270 per teenager who is on their site during their teenage years.

Still, Zuckerberg claimed that Meta is "on the side of parents everywhere working hard to raise their kids," and he wants "everyone who uses [their] services to have safe and positive experiences." Yet, when questioned about this issue—and it is a vast pedophile network. That is not how I termed it; it is how the Wall Street Journal termed it in a report. So I questioned him about how this vast pedophile network was allowed to grow on Instagram, including content showing teenagers for sale to older men. The tech CEO was unable to explain how this content does not violate Meta's terms of service and their community standards.

Now, we would think that building out what the Wall Street Journal called a "vast pedophile network" and having postings showing teenagers for sale to older men would indeed violate community standards or terms of service, but he could not answer that question. Instead, he insisted that his company is not "perfect"—his choice of word. I have to tell you that is a huge understatement.

Just last month, newly released internal documents revealed that Meta executives refused to take action after learning that their algorithms connected children with potential child predators. According to the documents, which were revealed through a lawsuit brought by the New Mexico attorney general against Meta, Meta executives refused to act even though they knew about this and knew that 100,000 minors were receiving sexually abusive content from adults on their platform every single day. Think about those numbers.

Last week, the Wall Street Journal reported that, last year, Meta employees warned executives that Facebook and Instagram's paid subscription service enabled child exploitation by likely pedophiles, but the company pushed ahead with this feature anyway even though they knew it was endangering children.

These are stunning revelations. They corroborate the testimony from Facebook whistleblower Arturo Bejar,

who testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee last November. Bejar is a former engineering director at Facebook. He told us that Meta executives knew that millions of teens face bullying, eating disorder content, the solicitation of lethal drugs, and sexual exploitation on their platforms while they are using those platforms, but rather than raise the alarm that their platforms were endangering children, company executives withheld this damaging information from congressional oversight, rolled back safety tools, and dismantled teams responsible for children's safety. In other words, they chose to make the problem worse instead of fixing it.

Why did they do that? Because when our children are on their platforms, our children are the product. They are the product. They need money. Remember that \$270 per-teen amount that they subscribed? That is of value.

So to parents, think about this next time your child is on Instagram. Meta sees them as a \$270 profit—profit. They put the profit before the kids.

Unfortunately, this isn't just limited to Facebook and Meta. Across the board, we have seen social media platforms, including Snapchat and the Chinese-owned TikTok, become open drug markets where dealers connect with children and sell illicit drugs, including fentanyl.

We have heard from countless families from across the country who have seen their children die from suicide after facing relentless bullying on social media. And we have seen digital platforms become havens for sex traffickers and child predators who use social media to prey on the most vulnerable among us.

For years, Big Tech companies have made empty promises about how they will address the rampant abuse, the malicious content, criminal activity on their platforms. But do you know what? Nothing has changed.

Big Tech has proven they can't police themselves. They won't act. So it is imperative that Congress steps in.

Over the last 3 years, Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have crafted the bipartisan Kids Online Safety Act, which would provide parents and children with the tools, safeguards, and transparency they need to protect against these online harms. This legislation, which has reached a total of 64 cosponsors, includes crucial provisions to hold Big Tech companies accountable; mandatory audits to ensure that platforms are mitigating harms to children; new tools for parents to identify harmful behavior and report abuse directly to these social media platforms; new controls for families to support their children, including to opt out of algorithmic recommendations. Perhaps most importantly, the legislation would create a duty of care for online platforms to prevent and mitigate specific dangers to minors, including the promotion of suicide, eating disorders, substance abuse, and sexual exploitation.

Without real and enforceable reforms, social media companies will only continue to pay lipservice to the issue of protecting children while continuing to put profits above their safety. Yes, they need that \$270 per kid. That is what our children are worth to them.

Now is the time to bring about some real change. Now is the time—it is past time—to hold Big Tech accountable. We have to make certain, we have to ensure, our children can be free to be children again.

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. CARDIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

VLADIMIR PUTIN

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, when Alexei Navalny died 2 weeks ago, he had been in solitary confinement for almost 300 days. Outside his window, the Russian dissident and anti-corruption campaigner could only see a tall fence and no light.

Far above the Arctic Circle, the prison was built on the site of a Soviet gulag, a place the Kremlin has sent generations of Russian citizens to break their spirit. But despite the sub-zero temperatures, despite the months of darkness, despite the violence, Alexei Navalny never gave up. He never lost his sense of humor. He never wavered in his commitment to fight for a better Russia. And what really bothered the Kremlin: He never gave up on telling the truth about Putin. After all, he is the one who aptly described Putin's United Russia party as "the party of crooks and thieves." He saw that Putin is still the KGB agent who never turned away from the Soviet legacy that crushed rebellion in Hungary in 1956, that suppressed reforms in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and that declared martial law in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to crush Solidarity in Poland in 1981.

There was a chance for Russia to take a different path in the 1990s. Many Russians leapt at the opportunity after the collapse of the USSR. There were independent political parties. There were open elections. There was a free press. Civil society emerged. Russians connected with counterparts in Europe and around the world.

But since his rise to power at the turn of the century, Putin has turned Russia in a very different direction, ruling with a regime as repressive and corrupt as anything under Brezhnev or Khrushchev. He is old-school Soviet. Today, Putin wraps himself in an ideology of White Christian nationalism. He has cracked down on ethnic and religious minorities. He has persecuted the gay and lesbian community. He has

shut down independent media and jailed journalists like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, a Russian-born American citizen who went to visit her ailing mother, and even Americans like Evan Gershkovich of the Wall Street Journal, who was imprisoned for doing his job as a reporter.

Vaclav Havel would have recognized these Soviet tactics. He was a playwright, a dissident, and of course, later, President of the democratic Czech Republic. He wrote in the Washington Post:

I come from a country where, as late as mid-1989, while all around us totalitarian icebergs were cracking and thawing . . . I was in prison. Yet by the end of that same year, I was elected the president of a free Czechoslovakia.

Long before that, Havel wrote a famous essay, "The Power of the Powerless." In it, he explained that dictatorial regimes are mortally afraid of the courageous individual who speaks up for their rights, who tells the truth when the regime is telling lies. Havel could have been writing about Alexei Navalny.

The Putin regime is a house of cards built on corruption and violence.

I was in Germany earlier this month at the Munich Security Conference when the news of Navalny's death broke. I met with his widow, Yulia, who spoke movingly about her husband's death. I wanted to convey condolences and demonstrate solidarity with her at a painful time.

Despite Putin's continuing threats, she is not afraid, and she is committed to continuing her husband's mission. His team at the Anti-Corruption Foundation is not afraid. They still have their list of "bribe-takers and war-mongers." Navalny himself was not afraid. Even after they poisoned him and left him in critical condition, he still went back to Russia. Courage only begets more courage. That is what scares Putin: Navalny was not alone.

I want to speak briefly about another brave Russian democrat who is unjustly imprisoned in Putin's gulag. Only a few weeks after appearing before a Helsinki Commission hearing I chaired, they also poisoned Vladimir Kara-Murza. Like Navalny, he refused to be intimidated. He refused to be exiled from his homeland and returned to Russia time and again. They threw him in jail almost 2 years ago for his criticism of Putin's unjust war in Ukraine. There are others, too, like Ilya Yashin, who was sentenced to 8 years after publishing reports about the war crimes by Putin's forces in Ukraine in 2022.

We in the free world must do everything we can to lift up their voices. We must give material support to activists, both inside Russia and across the diaspora.

I was pleased to see the Biden administration levy more sanctions against Putin's regime last week, including against the warden of the prison, whom Putin promoted to the rank of colonel general 3 days after Navalny's death.