

groundbreaking piece of legislation: to stop people from dying.

One year later, the assault weapons ban is fulfilling its promise.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it reflects the fact that Illinois decided to change its law a little over a year ago. We decided to finally come to grips with the assault weapons scourge that hit Highland Park and continues to threaten America.

This is an article that was written by the CEO of Gun Violence Prevention PAC, Kathleen Sances. In it, she makes note of the fact that the new law in Illinois is being measured as to whether it has been successful on its 1-year anniversary.

The analysis and data from the Gun Violence Archive shows 10 percent fewer mass shootings in Illinois between 2022 and 2023. She writes:

Gun dealers haven't sold assault weapons in Illinois in the past 12 months, and there isn't any evidence of violations by dealers.

Gun dealers are complying with the ban, and that's evidenced by their complaints about the loss of sales, collectively costing dealers millions of dollars, and saving an untold number of lives. In fact, when assault weapons or high-capacity magazines are used in shootings, 155 percent more people are shot, and 47 percent more people are killed.

That simple, commonsense effort to put an end to gun violence is working in Illinois, thank goodness, but we must do more.

We cannot lose hope. Instead, we should focus on what we can do to address the gun violence crisis. In cities like Chicago, dealing with the drumbeat of gun violence has turned public health professionals into battlefield experts. I heard from doctors in Chicago who were sick of treating gunshot victims on the operating table, 50 percent of whom, if they survive, would leave the hospital and return as gunshot victims again.

They wanted to prevent this gruesome injury scenario from happening in the first place and then repeating. So, in 2018, I brought together the CEOs of the 10 largest hospitals serving in Chicago to talk about how we could help. We formed a group known as the Chicago HEAL Initiative, which has emerged as a national example of how hospitals can collaborate and reach outside their walls to prevent gun violence. Most importantly, they aren't just stitching up physical injuries; they are addressing the emotional scars of their patients.

We must do more for survivors. That means providing resources like the HEAL Initiative to help those who have experienced trauma and preventing weapons of war from causing bloodshed in the first place.

It is time for us to build on the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and come together to create real change. Congress must pass commonsense legislation to help keep America's children and communities safe.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to turn briefly to another urgent topic. We must restore order at our southern border and enforce our immigration laws in a fair and humane way. That is why the Senate has been engaged in bipartisan talks on a path forward for weeks.

The Republican Governor of Texas takes a much different view. He has implemented cruel—even deadly—and ineffective immigration policies that sow chaos, risk lives, and prevent Federal border officials from doing their jobs.

Last week, a woman and two children tragically died in the Rio Grande River while Mexican authorities rescued other migrants in distress. The U.S. Border Patrol could not reach these migrants in need because the Texas National Guard actively blocked access to the Rio Grande River. This is just the latest tragedy resulting from Governor Abbott's policies.

As part of its so-called Operation Lone Star, Texas has strung razor wire along the border which has seriously injured migrants, and it has dropped migrant children off at truck stops in Illinois in subzero temperatures. We warned him. The Governor of Illinois warned Governor Abbott of Texas that if you haphazardly drop these migrants off in Chicago at this time of year, terrible things can occur. A few weeks ago, a little boy died. God knows who others were in danger because of the Governor of Texas and his strategy.

Texas passed a new law that makes it a State crime to cross the border without inspection and recently began arresting immigrants who crossed the border, placing them into State custody. Governor Abbott defends these policies, even though there is zero evidence they deter migrants from crossing the border.

We must discourage migrants from risking their lives by approaching the United States between ports of entry, but we cannot stand by while Governor Abbott increases the likelihood of injury or death. Despite their desperation to reach safety, most migrants wish to enter the United States lawfully. Many wait months at our border for appointments to make asylum claims.

In defending his policies, the Governor of Texas recently bragged:

[T]he only thing that we're not doing is we're not shooting people who come across the border, because of course the Biden Administration would charge us with murder.

This is a direct quote from Governor Abbott.

His actions are not only dangerous and cruel, they are unconstitutional. Under our Constitution, States do not have the right to pass their own laws preempting Federal laws on immigration.

Just yesterday, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Federal Government, allowing Border Patrol agents to cut through or remove razor wire that

the Governor of Texas installed on the border.

As former Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in his opinion in *Arizona v. United States*, which found parts of Arizona's anti-immigration law unconstitutional:

[T]he history of the United States is in part made of the stories, talents, and lasting contributions of those who crossed oceans and deserts to come here.

With that sentiment in mind, Congress must do its job and pass immigration laws that honor our history as a nation of immigrants and provide the critical resources necessary to address the challenges at our border.

I guess I pretty well know, as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee in favor of immigration—legal immigration—to this country, I believe immigration is a critical element of who we are and what we will become. It is part of our past, and it should be part of our future.

My mother was an immigrant to this country, and I have never forgotten it. I am lucky to be standing here today as a U.S. Senator, because her parents had the courage to come to a country where they didn't speak the language in the hopes of a better life for her and her children. One of her children is now standing in the U.S. Senate.

I believe that is part of America's history, but there are certain elements which we must acknowledge. No. 1, the United States cannot absorb all of the people who want to come to this country at this moment. We have to have an orderly process that makes sense not only for the migrants but that also makes sense for America, first and foremost. We have to be cognizant and sensitive to our Nation's safety and security. That is No. 1. We should never knowingly allow anyone to come to this country who would cause us harm.

Secondly, we have to make sure that those who come will add to America, and I believe most will. If given a chance, they will become part of our economy, even starting at the lowest levels and working their way up. It is the story of immigration in America.

In addition to that, we need to work with other countries to regulate the flow of refugees. The refugee crisis in the world today is the worst it has ever been, and we are seeing it evidenced in the fact that those who present themselves at our southern border are often from places like China and Asia and Africa, and they find their way to the Mexican border with the United States in the hopes of a future. We need an orderly process.

We also need to make sure that we have the legal authorization of people to come to this country to work. I can't tell you how many people in Illinois have come to me and said: We are desperate for workers. Americans won't fill these jobs, and we need people who will. All the way up from farming to industry, that is the story, and that is the reality.

What we need to do is come to an agreement that is sensible here, a bipartisan agreement, and do it quickly. The numbers approaching our border are so overwhelming, we have no choice but to do that.

I want to work on a bipartisan basis with those in good faith and good will who will recognize that immigration is not only our history but our future, but it must be in an orderly fashion. That is what I am looking for, and I think America is as well.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this past Saturday marked 3 years of the Biden administration. After 3 full years under President Biden, the question naturally arises, Is America better off? Are Americans better off? For a whole lot of Americans, the answer is no.

In a December poll, 55 percent of voters said they are worse off under President Biden. In a January poll, 46 percent of voters said their personal financial situation is getting worse compared to just 28 percent who said it is improving.

A recent ABC News article noted:

In a dispiriting sign of the times, barely more than a quarter of Americans say the American dream still holds true.

It is no wonder because perhaps the biggest legacy of the President's first 3 years in office is a massive inflation crisis that has still—still—not gone away.

Inflation may have descended from the stratospheric heights it reached earlier in the President's term, but we are still stuck with an inflation rate well above the Federal Reserve's target rate of 2 percent. And inflation actually ticked up again in December by a not insignificant margin. The practical effect has been that a whole lot of Americans have seen their breathing room disappear under President Biden.

According to a recent analysis from the members of the Joint Economic Committee here in Congress, a typical household has to spend over \$11,000 more each year to maintain the same standard of living it had at the beginning of the Biden administration—\$11,000 more each year. That is a staggering amount of money. It is money that a lot of families don't have.

So it is not surprising that 55 percent of voters say they are worse off under President Biden. It turns out that when you are spending 20 percent more on groceries, 18 percent more on shelter, 35 percent more on gasoline, and 25 per-

cent more on electricity—and on and on—over the course of just 3 years, you don't feel very prosperous. And I haven't even mentioned how difficult it has gotten for many Americans to achieve the dream of homeownership, thanks in part to rate hikes that the Federal Reserve has had to implement to deal with President Biden's inflation crisis.

Suffice it to say that the inflation crisis President Biden helped create with his so-called American Rescue Plan has resulted in economic misery for a lot of Americans.

The President will unquestionably be remembered for his massive inflation crisis, but he will also be remembered for presiding over a border crisis of staggering proportions, a crisis that, like the inflation crisis, he had a large hand in creating.

From the day he took office, when he rescinded the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border, President Biden made it clear that border security was at the bottom of his priority list. And over the 3 years since, he has turned our southern border into a magnet for illegal migration, from repealing border policies of his predecessor to misusing our asylum and parole systems, which are now providing temporary amnesty to hundreds of thousands of individuals who are here in our country illegally.

We have had 3 recordbreaking years of illegal immigration at our southern border on President Biden's watch. Fiscal year 2021 saw a recordbreaking 1,734,686 migrant encounters at our southern border. Then fiscal year 2022 broke that record. Then fiscal year 2023 broke that record. And if fiscal year 2024 continues on its current trajectory, we will end up breaking the record yet again. December reportedly saw a staggering 302,000 migrant encounters at our southern border, the highest monthly number ever recorded.

To borrow an analogy from our colleague from Pennsylvania, that is like having the entire city of Pittsburgh show up at our southern border in just 1 month. And that doesn't count the "got-aways."

Of course, the overwhelming numbers we are seeing make it easier for dangerous individuals to make their way into our country.

Between October and November alone, 30 individuals on the Terrorist Watch List were apprehended attempting to cross our southern border; in other words, roughly 1 every other day. Those are just, again, the individuals who were actually apprehended.

Since October 1, there have been more than 83,000 known "got-aways." Those are individuals the Border Patrol saw but were unable to apprehend. How many of them were criminals, terrorists, or other dangerous individuals?

The truth of the matter is, we just don't know. But what we do know is that the crisis at our southern border is leaving a gaping hole in our national security, one that the President has

spent a majority of the past 3 years essentially ignoring.

His border crisis and his inflation crisis might be the two most notable features of the President's first 3 years in office, but the President is also leaving some other troubling legacies.

His hostility to conventional energy production and his devotion to Green New Deal policies have put us on a dangerous trajectory when it comes to our Nation's energy security. We are already seeing weaknesses in our electric grid, and the President's energy policies are putting us at risk of significant disruptions to our supply.

On the trade front, the President's almost complete lack of action on meaningful trade agreements has meant declining market access for American farmers and ranchers and threatens America's competitiveness in the global market.

The weakness the President has frequently demonstrated on the national security front, from his disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan to his attempt to revive President Obama's dangerous nuclear deal with Iran, has compromised America's ability to deter hostile actors on the world stage.

I could go on, but I will end it here. Suffice it to say that it has been a rough 3 years for our country under President Biden, and it is not over yet.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Christopher Koos, of Illinois, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on an issue. I spoke about this on the floor, but the issue, once again, came to a head last week with another continuing resolution, another effort to sort of just kick this can down the road, and our inability, as a Senate, unfortunately, to spend the time necessary to pass appropriations bills.