

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 471.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kirk Edward Sherriff, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 471, Kirk Edward Sherriff, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Mazie K. Hirono, Tina Smith, Gary C. Peters, Amy Klobuchar, Raphael G. Warnock, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Mark R. Warner, Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 459.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Joshua Paul Kolar, of Indiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented

under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 459, Joshua Paul Kolar, of Indiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Angus S. King, Jr., Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch, Mazie K. Hirono, Alex Padilla, Jeanne Shaheen, Jack Reed, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Chris Van Hollen, Richard Blumenthal, Gary C. Peters, Raphael G. Warnock, Christopher A. Coons, Jeff Merkley, Christopher Murphy.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, January 23, be waived.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

PREGNANCY CENTERS

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I rise to tell you the story of one of my constituents named Hannah. When faced with an unplanned pregnancy, Hannah chose life for her baby with the help of a pregnancy center. Despite coming from a long line of single mothers and from a family background plagued with alcoholism, drugs, and dysfunction, Hannah was able to overcome her circumstances and create a better life for herself and her daughter.

At 18 years old, Hannah learned she was pregnant. Her child's father drained her savings and spent it on drug abuse. Disgusted, alone, and hopeless just weeks into her pregnancy, Hannah went to her local pregnancy center, Women's Resource Center in Gulfport, MS, where she began to receive weekly parenting classes.

In November 2014, Hannah gave birth to a beautiful baby girl named Ava, a name which means "life."

As a single mother, bringing a child into her circumstances was not easy, and Hannah struggled to overcome severe postpartum depression in the early months after the birth of her daughter.

When she turned 21, Hannah got a job at a casino—an answer to her prayers. This job gave her a sense of pride and independence.

When Ava turned 3, Hannah met Nuno, the love of her life, and together they welcomed another daughter, Maisy. After Hannah and Nuno got married in 2020, Nuno legally adopted Ava before she started kindergarten, stepping in to be the father she never had before.

This year, Hannah felt God's call and now works as a volunteer at the same Women's Resource Center in Gulfport, MS, that helped her as a client nearly a decade ago. There, she uses her life

experiences to give hope and help to women facing unplanned pregnancies.

Hannah writes:

With God, we don't have to be victims of our circumstances; we can be victors who will rise up from anything.

Hannah's story is part of the untold story of the pro-life movement that goes on at many other pregnancy centers in Mississippi and across the Nation.

Last week, the good works conducted by pregnancy centers and maternity homes were recognized by the tens of thousands of pro-life Americans who came to Washington, DC, last Friday for the 51st annual March for Life. They marched not only for the protection of every unborn child from the moment of conception but also to support mothers. This year's March for Life theme—"With Every Woman, For Every Child"—highlighted the fact that no woman should ever feel alone in her pregnancy journey.

The life-affirming impact of pregnancy centers is considerable and growing following the Dobbs decision that allowed lifesaving laws to take effect in States across America.

In addition to having loved ones and communities to lean on, every woman should know of the lifesaving work of pregnancy centers and maternity homes across the country. A new Charlotte Lozier Institute study found that 2,750 pregnancy centers provided more than 16 million client sessions and over \$358 million in free, life-affirming goods and services in 2022. These included free sonograms, pregnancy tests, diapers, parenting classes, pregnancy counseling, adoption referrals, and other compassionate support and resources.

Despite what the radical, pro-abortion left wants us to believe, the pro-life movement is also a pro-women movement with a long history of empowering women during pregnancy and after. I believe Congress must build on that history by promoting policies that support pregnancy centers, maternity homes, and strong families so that more pregnant women will have the support they need as they embark on a beautiful and sacred chapter of their lives.

Every human life is a priceless gift, but the costs and challenges for new parents are very real. We need to start putting our money where our mouth is. To that end, I, along with Congresswoman CAROL MILLER of West Virginia in the House, introduced the Pregnancy Center Support Act. This legislation would create a first-ever Federal tax credit for pregnancy centers. It would reimburse 50 percent of up to \$10,000 in donations to these centers. This would empower pregnancy centers with much needed resources to meet the growing demands of supporting women and families in a post-Roe America.

My legislation would build on the work of my State of Mississippi. In

May 2020, a month before the Dobbs decision, the Mississippi Legislature enacted a groundbreaking State tax credit for donations for pregnancy centers. Mississippi currently spends \$10 million each year on its credit, and I am glad to see that other States are also considering similar credits to provide life-affirming support to pregnant women in need in their States.

At this very moment when pregnancy centers are needed the most, they have come under unprecedented attacks, including vandalism and firebombing. According to Catholic Vote, there have been over 88 violent attacks on pregnancy centers and pro-life groups documented since the leak of the Dobbs decision in 2022. Pregnancy centers have also come under attack from pro-abortion politicians, Big Tech, and state attorneys general, which have sought to fine, censor, or regulate them out of existence.

In particular, I am deeply concerned by the Biden administration's recently proposed rules targeting pregnancy centers, aiming to strip away millions of dollars through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF, Program that now supports these centers in several States.

We must fight back against this. Alongside Congressman CHRIS SMITH of New Jersey, I have introduced the Let Pregnancy Centers Serve Act. This bill would block the administration's proposed action and protect pregnancy centers that are serving countless women from discrimination. The Democrats' attacks on pregnancy centers are disgraceful, and we must do more to support their lifesaving work.

The pro-life movement believes that every life counts—every mother, every father, and every child—and that is why we strive for an end to abortion. We must also support families and come alongside pregnant women in need.

To all the Americans who marched for life last week and to women like Hannah, who has chosen life and now works at a pregnancy center to help others choose life, thank you for standing with every woman and for every child.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, America's students are failing. Reading and math scores are at historic lows nationwide. In places like Baltimore, 40 percent of high schools don't even have a single math-proficient student—not a single one. Forty percent of the schools in Baltimore can't find a single math-proficient student.

This must be a wake-up call because those school districts aren't alone. There are others that are failing. And yes, there is a wide array of performance outcomes in school districts across the country, but this kind of trend is being seen more and more seemingly every day. So it has to be a

wake-up call, and it is proof that our education system has lost its way. It has betrayed its charge and lost our trust.

Now, to be clear—to be perfectly clear—our students' failures are not of their own making. Those failures are the unintended yet undeniable consequences and the students the innocent victims of a one-size-fits-all education system that has ventured into the business of ideological conformity, forsaking our children's literacy for the pursuit of social engineering.

American classrooms have become arenas where history is rewritten, and parents—the rightful stewards of their children's futures—are marginalized or in some instances labeled as “domestic terrorists” just for questioning this new order. It comes as no surprise that parents are seeking alternative ways to educate their children.

In fact, the Washington Post found that since 2018, homeschooling has increased by 51 percent while public school enrollment is decreasing year after year.

So these parents are making a different decision. Who can blame them? Who can blame parents for wanting to shield their children from inappropriate school materials—inappropriate school materials that parents, understandably, are outraged upon discovering that these things are being shared with their students.

Sometimes they are sufficiently upset about it that they will show up to a school board meeting. And sometimes within that school board meeting they will just read the materials that are being given to their children in a public school and then be told that they have to stop; that they have to stop reading it because it is too inappropriate. It is making too many people uncomfortable.

Well, if it is inappropriate to be read at a school board meeting because it makes the school board or spectators uncomfortable, then it is inappropriate to be taught in the schools. In any event, it is the parents' decision as to whether it is inappropriate. And a parent who decides that their child is being subjected to this kind of material ought to have the opportunity, without excessive difficulty created by the government, to choose a different educational option for the parents' children.

Who can blame parents for taking education into their own hands when year after year they are not seeing improvement in their children's learning? Parents, you see, and not school boards and certainly not unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats are the fundamental drivers of their children's education. This is the way it always should be.

Now, I introduced a bill, a bill that I call the ACE Act. It is an acronym that stands for Achieving Choice in Education. I introduced the ACE Act because I believe that parents, endowed with innate and instinctive wisdom and

an unbreakable bond with their children, are the rightful navigators of their children's educational journey. The ACE Act would deliver on this belief by fortifying the rule of section 529 education savings accounts as vital tools for parents. Traditionally focused on college expenses, the ACE Act expands these boundaries to include homeschooling and a broader array of private school expenses, allowing families with students in public, private, religious, and at-home schools to spend their hard-earned money on materials, books, online resources, and therapies for students with disabilities.

Moreover, the ACE Act enriches these accounts by enhancing Federal tax exemptions for distributions, effectively doubling the annual distribution cap from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and introducing tax-exempt gifting provisions. These changes ensure that families can allocate more of their hard-earned money or even a generous gift toward their children's educational journeys and to do so without the unnecessary strain of an excessive tax burden to go along with it.

You have to remember that these are things parents are concerned about when they decide they need to do something different for their child's education, including these inappropriate materials to which they are being exposed in many instances. These are paid for by money that already came from the parents. It is built into their tax bill. They pay it. They are already paying for it. So they shouldn't be told again and again that they have no choice in it—that it is not their choice—and then be penalized with no recourse at all within the tax system when they decide a different educational approach is appropriate and necessary for their child. This ought to be their choice, and governments ought to do as little as possible to interfere with that. Governments shouldn't be punishing parents for making that choice.

So the ACE Act would encourage States to embrace more school choice policies and laws. Under the ACE Act, if States don't have qualifying school choice laws already enacted, they would lose the Federal income tax exemption on municipal bonds. This would encourage States to do the right thing, encourage more States to do what many States already have wisely done, which is to give parents more choice in public education.

The guardians of our future are not, in fact, distant bureaucrats but rather the parents and families who live, breathe, and dream of a better tomorrow for their children.

The ACE Act provides a rallying call to embrace school choice, to honor individual freedom, and to give the most responsibility to the ones who have the most at stake in it, which is families, to be driven primarily by parents. The lamentable state of our education system is a stark indication that America's educational status quo has faltered. To correct course, we have got

to trust parents to discern what is best for their children. They know what is best for the children, better than any government bureaucracy ever could or ever will. They care infinitely for their children. Their love for them knows no boundaries. We need to respect that and understand that parents are very much inclined and incentivized in so many ways that the government never could be to look out for the best educational interests of their children, to plot a brighter course for them, one that would inure to their benefit and not to their detriment.

So as they continue to be taxed by the State and then told by the State that they have got to send their child only to a particular institution, they need alternatives. Some of those alternatives we could make less burdensome, less onerous, and less punitive to the extent they are chosen by the parents.

By championing the principles of choice and freedom in education and ensuring that government doesn't stand in the way of this endeavor, we can foster an environment in which America's students can thrive, powered by an education system that truly serves them.

Opponents of efforts like these will sometimes build a rallying cry—a rallying cry—that talks about the importance of the public education system. Yes, the public education system is important, and this is part of it. This is not distinct from the public education system. School choice options are part of the public education system because when you take money from someone through the tax system with the understanding that you will educate their children with it, you owe it to them to give them options and to not pigeon-hole them into one school, one approach, dictated in many instances by a teachers union that may or may not have the best interests of their children at heart.

Sometimes this is an issue, sometimes it is not. For many parents, they are happy with their existing public school options, but more often than not it is not options, it is an option. It is just take it or leave it. Some parents can afford just fine making a different choice, but they need to be given more options that are less punitive because it is, after all, up to the parents to make sure that their children are educated, that they are treated well, are cared for well, and that they are not being fed things that the parents find abhorrent.

That is why this is about so much more than just the education system. This is about freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom within a family for parents to look out for the best interests of their children without having the State or the Federal Government unreasonably, unfairly intruding on them.

It is time to foster more school choice options, and it is time to pass the ACE Act.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE SURVIVORS WEEK

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, this week is National Gun Violence Survivors Week.

I wanted to come down to the floor today to share with my colleagues the meaning and the impact of this week and the meaning and the impact of a national network of gun violence survivors on the debate to change the Nation's gun laws.

I also wanted to share with my colleagues some good news about what has happened over the course of the last year since the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. That is the first significant change in our Nation's gun laws in 30 years.

I want to start by talking about survivors. I want to start by talking about two people whom I have referenced on the floor of the Senate in prior speeches, two of my great friends in Hartford, CT—Sam Saylor and Janet Rice. Sam and Janet shared a son, Shane. Shane was a pretty incredible young man, not without challenges, but he had risen up and met those challenges over the course of his life.

On October 20 of 2012—just a month before the shooting at Sandy Hook—he became the 20th victim of gun violence in Hartford that year in a typically random act of violence. He was fixing up cars and selling them for a small profit.

He was transferring one of those cars to an acquaintance. His girlfriend was with him. Some coarse words were exchanged between the two parties about his girlfriend. A physical altercation broke out, which caused Luis Rodriguez to go to his car where he had a gun—an illegal gun. He took it out, and he shot Shane Oliver, essentially after an exchange of words about Shane's girlfriend. Shane collapsed to the floor. When he reached the hospital, he was dead—20 years old with his whole life ahead of him. He left behind a network of survivors—his parents—but also a daughter, Se'Cret.

Both Sam and Janet went into the work of preventing gun violence. They joined advocates in Hartford to try to create a reality in which that kind of random death—that kind of random gun violence—wouldn't be a reality any longer in Hartford, and they devoted themselves to that work. Janet joined an organization that responded to shootings to try to interrupt the cycles of violence that often happened in Hartford. So she has spent much of the last several years responding—on a nightly basis often—to episodes of violence and to shootings.

In April of last year, she got a phone call to respond to a shooting that had

happened. She got in her car, and she headed for that scene. As she was driving there, she got a second call from her supervisor, who told her to pull over.

He said: Janet, you can't be driving when you hear this news. The young woman who was shot, who you are going to respond to, is your granddaughter—Shane's daughter.

Se'Cret died that night. A couple of days later, I went to her funeral.

That is what is going on out there in the world today, right? For Sam and Janet, they lost Shane, and then a decade later, they lost Shane's daughter. I wish that their story was the anomaly, but it is not. There are thousands of families in this country who have lost multiple loved ones—brothers and sisters, daughters and granddaughters—to this epidemic of gun violence.

So, in this week in which we commemorate the survivors, it is important to understand the depth of this tragedy; but it is also important to celebrate the work that these survivors have done, because over the past 10 years, in particular, through a number of organizations in this country, survivors like Sam and Janet and many others have come together to demand that Congress and State legislators and mayors and city councils do something to stop this reality in which parents and grandparents have to lose sons and granddaughters to gun violence.

Last year, we finally stepped up to the plate and did something, in part because of the advocacy of all of those survivors. We passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Our theory was that, if we make a big change in the Nation's gun laws to make it a little bit harder for dangerous people to get their hands on dangerous weapons, well, then, we can try to make a dent in the epidemic levels of gun homicide in this country.

Now, I have said all of this while standing next to this chart so you know of the success story that I am about to tell you. Last year, urban homicides in this Nation fell by 12.1 percent. That is the biggest 1-year reduction in urban homicides in the history of the United States of America.

Now, is that a cause for celebration? No, because there are still far too many people in this country who are dying at the hands of gun violence, but we should appreciate the fact that a 1-year 12-percent reduction in urban homicides is proof that, when you change the laws of the country, our communities get safer.

So I want to talk to you, just for a moment, about what happened over the past year. Urban homicides fell by 12 percent. Gun-related injuries and deaths all across the country have fallen by 10 percent—again, just an absolutely remarkable 1-year reduction: a 10-percent reduction in gun injuries and gun deaths in a 1-year period of time. The reason that this is happening is, in part, because we have changed the law.

One of the things that happened over the course of this last year is we have started to get a lot more careful about selling guns to young buyers. So we have had a number of young buyers in this country who have been disqualified from buying an assault weapon. Often, those young buyers are in crisis, and by stopping hundreds of young people from buying assault weapons—because we found out through the provisions of this bill that they were in crisis—we have likely interrupted many mass shootings.

Second, we have a lot more prosecutions of gun traffickers because we made gun trafficking a Federal crime. So hundreds of prosecutions have been successfully completed over the last year against gun trafficking rings. That means there are less guns in our city that are being trafficked on the black market.

We have more red flag laws in this country and stronger red flag laws, in part because we put money into the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act to encourage States to adopt and strengthen their red flag laws. These are the laws that take guns away temporarily from people who are in crisis or who are making threats against other community members. Those red flag laws have become more important.

We have put out the door \$438 million for community anti-gun violence work, like the work that Janet Rice and Sam Saylor do. So there are dozens of anti-gun violence organizations in our cities that are receiving money to help them interrupt violence.

We have sent billions of dollars out the door for additional mental health services, particularly targeted at young people, who are often the primary victims and the primary perpetrators of gun crime in this country.

I can't tell you that this 12 percent reduction in urban homicides is completely due to the implementation of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. I can't tell you that. But what I know is that if you look at the trajectory of violence in this country over time, the biggest drops have always happened right after Congress does a better job of regulating firearms. The two biggest drops in violence in this country's history are right after the 1930s gun control act and right after the 1990s Brady bill and assault weapons ban.

Whether this trend continues, I don't know, but if it does or even if we get a 6-percent reduction next year and an 8-percent reduction the next year, this could represent the third giant reduction in violence rates in this country's history. If that is the trajectory, then a piece of that story is the bipartisan legislation we passed.

As we commemorate Gun Violence Survivors Week, it is important to remember that when you lose a loved one, especially in that sudden violent way, to gun violence, there is no repair; there is no recovery; your life never returns to normal.

After Janet lost Shane, she didn't leave her house for months, wouldn't

leave her house for months. When she finally did start leaving her house, often she would do it in this manner: Often late at night, when the streets of Hartford were quiet, she would get in her car, and she would drive from her home to the site that Shane was shot. She actually got to see Shane alive after he was shot; she held him in her arms as he bled out. She would go to that site, which is just two blocks away from where I live today in Hartford, and she would turn on her high beams, and she would wait.

When she told me the story, I asked her: What are you waiting for? What were you waiting for?

She said: I was waiting for Shane to come back.

She would go to the site where he was shot, where he bled to death in her arms, and she would turn on her high beams in hopes that maybe Shane would come back.

That just gives you one single window into what life is like for a mother when she loses a son or a daughter to gun violence.

Survivors of gun violence—those who have lived through a shooting or those who have lost loved ones in a shooting—their lives are changed forever. This week, we pay tribute to them by recognizing the work they have done to rattle the conscience of this country, to change the gun laws of this country in a historic way, leading to the largest ever 1-year drop in urban homicides in this country's history.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today are two of my colleagues from my office: DJ Sandoval, who is to my right; and Mr. Wesley Davis, who is in the back. They do an extraordinary job for the people of Louisiana and the American people.

You can cut the irony—the cynical might say “the hypocrisy”; I would rather say “the irony”—you can cut the irony with a knife. After years of presenting themselves as “sanctuary cities,” officials—many of them well-intentioned—throughout our country learned in 2023 that the crisis at our southern border is not just a crisis for Southern States like Texas and Arizona and even my State; it is an American crisis.

Today, President Biden's failed border policies have wreaked havoc in every single corner of the United States, including my State, Louisiana. According to one estimate—and it is not the only estimate, but I think this is a very telling estimate—Louisianans pay an additional \$4,613 a migrant. That is about \$604 million a year in State taxes because of illegal immigration.

People in Louisiana support legal immigration, just like they support the rule of law, but they do not support illegal immigration. It is not just the money. It is a moral issue for them. It

is a constitutional issue—as I said, the rule of law—but it is a money issue as well. My people pay 4,613 bucks per illegal migrant. My people have to come out of pocket \$604 million a year to deal with President Biden's illegal immigration. That is happening at a time when Louisiana families are also having to come out of pocket an extra \$800 a month to deal with inflation—\$840 a month just to deal with inflation. So that \$604 million that we spend to deal with illegal immigration—not legal but illegal immigration—could provide a lot of relief to the families in my State who have to sell blood plasma in order to go to the grocery store.

Sanctuary cities, to their credit, are finally starting to understand what Louisianans have figured out for a long time.

In New York City, for example—and I love New York City. I think it is one of the most extraordinary cities in the world, maybe the most extraordinary. I love it. It breaks my heart to see what is happening there. In New York City, elected officials just recently had to force thousands of students to stay home—they couldn't go to school—so that thousands of migrants, illegal migrants the Biden administration allowed into the country, could have a place to stay. I mean, what have we come to? We are having to send kids home—so they can't learn—so that folks who have come to our country illegally can have a place to stay.

In Massachusetts, Governor Healey asked residents to “consider hosting” migrant families in their homes because many shelters have reached capacity.

Several suburban cities—Chicago recently voted to restrict buses from unloading illegal migrants in their cities. These suburban areas are outside of Chicago.

Because the American people are compassionate people, we don't want people to starve to death or to die in the snow from hyperthermia, but at the same time, you don't get a free lunch. There is no free lunch, and you don't get one now. All of this costs money.

We have, as you know, Mr. President, as many as 12,000 migrants arriving at the southern border each day. Secretary Mayorkas confirmed that the Biden administration admits more than 85 percent of these migrants into our country. Since President Biden has been President, we have had 8.6 million people that we know of come into our country illegally. That is four Nebraskas—four Nebraskas.

No city in America—I don't care how well run or how mismanaged—can handle the massive influx of illegal migrants the Biden administration continues to release into America. That is just a fact. Taxpayers, students, shelter providers, hotel customers, and law enforcement officials in America are suffering because of these bad policies. They have to deal it. The White House doesn't have to deal with it; the people on our frontlines do.

As you can tell, I am very concerned about the burden President Biden's policies have placed on cities throughout the country, but I want to focus today on a subset of that really terrible problem, and that is the national security threat—the national security threat—that this problem poses to every American, including my people in Louisiana.

President Biden's border policies are not just a human rights disaster, although they certainly are, but his policies have also provided the perfect cover—the perfect cover—for terrorist sympathizers, for child sex offenders, and for cartel associates to enter the country illegally. All you have to do is mix in because nobody is checking anybody.

The numbers that I am about to give you will make you throw up. Border Patrol apprehended 169 members on the FBI's Terrorist Watchlist attempting to cross the southern border illegally in 2023 alone—169. It only takes one terrorist. That is more than 10 times the number of potential terrorists Border Patrol detained in the 4 years before President Biden took office. That is just a fact.

The men and women who earn their spot on the FBI's Terror List do so by associating with groups that hate America. They hate our values. They hate our country. They hate our people. Many of them want to kill us and drink our blood out of a boot. Yet they are coming across the southern border.

These terrorist sympathizers—in some cases, terrorists—they may be evil, but they are not stupid. They know they can blend into the masses at the border and come in unnoticed.

For example, CNN reported a few months ago that someone who had worked as an “independent contractor” for ISIS helped smuggle more than a dozen people from Uzbekistan to our border. Overwhelmed officials at our border process each migrant's asylum claim without triggering a single red flag, not a single red flag, and then they release the whole group—every one of them—into the United States to live among innocent American citizens while they wait for their immigration court dates, which takes 4 years. Do you think even after 4 years they are going to show up for their court date?

The FBI finally uncovered the problem. They finally uncovered the ties to ISIS after border officials released the group into the country. Thank the Lord that the FBI caught the mistake and caught what happened. It set off a mad search, of course, trying to track down all these individuals.

The men and women of ISIS, I don't need to tell you, Mr. President, are some of the most dangerous people on Earth. I am not sure they are human. They have bloodstains under their fingernails. Americans, unfortunately, will remember that ISIS gleefully—gleefully—beheaded our citizens.

The terrorist sympathizers on the FBI Watchlist certainly pose a threat

to innocent Americans in Louisiana and other States, but at least we know a little bit about them. We know they hope to bring Americans harm, and we have some tools to track them. Thank goodness for that. My stomach turns, though, when I consider the thousands of migrants we know nothing about—we don't even know they have come in—who hail from countries with millions of people who hate us. Customs and Border Protection calls these people “special interest aliens.” That is not my term; that is the term that CPB uses.

In the past 2 years, Border Patrol has encountered 6,386 Afghans, 659 Iranians, and 538 Syrians, all trying to enter the country illegally. Border Patrol also apprehended more than 24,000 Chinese nationals in fiscal year 2023 alone. That is more Chinese immigrants than they caught in the past 10 years combined.

(Mr. MARKEY assumed the Chair.)

I am not saying these are all bad people. I am not saying that. I don't doubt that some of these “special interest aliens,” as the authorities call them, may have good intentions, may want to live the American dream. But you would be a fool—you would be a fool—to think that men like President Xi Jinping of China and the Ayatollah of Iran wouldn't exploit—happily, enthusiastically—President Biden's catch-and-release playbook to bring pain and terror to the American people.

I mean, after all, we know what Mexico's cartels have done. They have been exploiting our open border to terrorize Americans for years. Their weapon of choice is fentanyl. The cartels kill tens of thousands of U.S. citizens per year by working with China to flood our communities with fentanyl. That fentanyl comes from China, and it comes from Mexico.

Louisiana lost more than 1,300 people—1,300 loved ones—to fentanyl poisoning in 2022 alone. The narco-terrorists flood our communities with poison and fill their coffers with as much as \$1 billion a year. And that fentanyl comes—the precursor chemicals come from China, and the fentanyl comes from Mexico.

And the Mexican politicians know it is going on, and they let it happen. If you took Mexico's cartels and turned them upside down and shook them, hundreds of Mexican politicians would fall out of their pockets. And President Biden does nothing—zero, zilch, nada.

In addition to fentanyl, the cartels make billions running—they run human trafficking rings. They steer the unvetted migrants to America, including many of the caravans we have seen in recent months, right into the United States.

And don't think these cartels are social workers. Don't think these cartels are small businesspeople who want to make sure people get a good service for their money. These cartels—these members—they put the migrants through hell as they march them across the southern border.

Predators sexually assault an estimated four out of five women. It is unsurprising, then, that many of the male migrants the cartels usher to the border are also known sex offenders. In just 2 months—just 2 months—Border Patrol agents in Texas caught 21 known child predators. In 2 months, in one State, Border Patrol caught 21 known child predators attempting to enter this country illegally. Imagine how many we don't know about. And Border Patrol apprehended 284 sex offenders in fiscal year 2023 alone.

The southern border is an open, bleeding wound. Everyone suffers except the cartels. They make billions. And that is why I helped introduce the NARCOS Act earlier this year. Our bill, the NARCOS Act, would designate the Mexican drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations and allow U.S. prosecutors to arrest those in charge.

President Biden's border policies have already contributed to the deaths of too many Americans and too many Louisianans. It gives me no joy to say that. There are some things beyond politics. We can do better. We deserve better. The American people ask for better, but they keep getting worse.

In March, for example, a cartel smuggler struck and killed a 71-year-old American grandmother and her 7-year-old granddaughter after he crashed his vehicle while trying to evade law enforcement in Texas. This illegal migrant also killed 2 of the 11 migrants he was smuggling in the back of his truck.

Just last week, an illegal migrant with four prior deportations—that is right, four. Four times he came in, he got caught, he was sent back. He came in, got caught, and was sent back four times, and somehow reentered the United States only to drive drunk and kill a mother and her son in Colorado. This man had a very lengthy criminal record of not just deportations but also alcohol abuse and reckless driving.

An official with Immigration and Customs Enforcement said this man had “no regard for immigration law”—none. Yet he was able to get back into our country, drive drunk, and kill two innocent people. I am not surprised he has no regard for immigration law. “Legal immigration and legal immigration laws are for suckers” is the attitude of the people coming across the border. Why be vetted? Why wait? Why fill out the paperwork when President Biden and Vice President HARRIS will just let you walk across?

I mean, how is this possible? Why can't this administration see the threat that the southern border—an open, bleeding wound—poses to the American people?

I sure don't blame our overworked Border Patrol agents. I have been down there to the southern border. I have talked to them. I know that our agents are doing the very best they possibly can. But their work goes to waste, folks, when President Biden refuses to address the failed policies that have created this mess.

The southern border is a cesspool of human suffering. That is just the fact. It is a national embarrassment. It is the biggest national security threat our country faces, and that is saying something. People in my State do not understand the President's commitment to keeping the border open to criminals, to sex traffickers, to drug dealers; but they do suffer because of his decisions.

Now, I want to end this way, Mr. President. I think I have made my point. The American people support legal immigration. I do. I know the Presiding Officer does. I don't know this year's numbers, but last year we admitted about a million people into our country legally, our world's neighbors. This is the greatest country in all of human history, and the whole world knows it.

When is the last time you heard of somebody trying to sneak into China? They want to come to America because we are the land of opportunity and we care about our fellow human beings, whether they are born in the United States or not.

Sometimes people say: Oh, the American people are selfish. I get a little angry when they say that. In other countries, they will let their neighbors die in a ditch—not in America. In our country, when you are homeless, we will house you. When you are hungry, we will feed you. When you are too poor to be sick, we will pay for your doctor.

And we do welcome our world's neighbors to come in legally, and I get upset when some of my colleagues—not all of them, but some people—say: Well, Kennedy, you are racist because vetting people at the border is racist.

No, it is not, Mr. President. It is prudent.

I read this somewhere once—and I will end on this point—and it made great sense to me: The American people are not racist, and they are not xenophobic, and they are proud that people want to come to their country. But they want to know who is coming in and going out.

The American people see the southern border like they see the front door of their home. Most Americans lock their front door at night. They don't do that because they hate everybody on the outside. Most Americans lock their front door at night because they love the people on the inside, and they just want to know who is coming in and out of their home.

And that is all the American people want in terms of immigration. They support legal immigration, but they want people to be properly vetted, and they want to know who is coming in and out of their country.

And, for the life of me, I don't—I don't hate anybody, Mr. President. I don't. I certainly don't hate the President, but I do not understand his policy on the border. I just don't. I hear him talk to us a lot about democracy and the rule of law. And, boy, that is im-

portant. There is not a single person in this body who doesn't believe in democracy and have respect for the rule of law. But the legal immigration laws don't just have an asterisk by them.

Now, we could secure this border. We could secure it, I think, in 6 weeks. Here is what we need to do. I am not even sure it would take legislation. There are laws on the books right now; it is a fact. If you try to sneak into our country illegally and you get caught, you are supposed to be immediately deported. We need to enforce the law.

No. 2, if you claim asylum under the 1951 U.N. resolution that we agreed to, you are entitled to have your asylum claim heard. But 70 percent of asylum claims fail. Once your asylum claim fails, you are supposed to be immediately deported. President Biden is deporting none of those people.

No. 3, we need the "Remain in Mexico" program. It doesn't mean that people claiming asylum won't get their day in court. They just need to remain at home or remain in Mexico until their day in court comes.

No. 4, the whole purpose of our asylum policy is to keep people from being persecuted politically. That means, if you feel unsafe in your country, you can go to another country. But the law says—the U.N. resolution and treaty to which we agreed says—if you feel like you will be prosecuted illegally in your own country, then you have to seek safety in the first safe country that you go into. That is not, for about 90 percent of our migrants, the United States.

If we had a safe third country policy, which President Biden can do like that—he could do it; he could do it by 6 o'clock—that would solve about 70 to 90 percent of our problem. And for the life of me, Mr. President, I don't understand why.

But I know this: We don't have the slightest idea who these millions and millions of people are, and it only takes one. It only takes one terrorist.

I appreciate your patience.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

INFLATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I appreciate so much hearing my colleague talk about the issues at the border, and I want to touch on some of those today, also. But I want to talk some about inflation and what we are hearing at home in Tennessee.

And as I talked this weekend—you know, we have had a terrible cold snap in Tennessee. We have had a lot of snow. We have had single-digit temperatures, even subzero temperatures. And people have talked a lot about the priorities of this administration when it comes to energy and about how President Biden said: We are going to do this transition; we are going to have the Green New Deal. And he spent \$6 trillion on this Green New Deal concept.

Well, that, with the inflation, has caused higher prices, lower wages, and

really has inserted uncertainty into our economy.

Now, the President has really ignored the chaos that has come about from his failed Bidenomics and failed Green New Deal agendas. He keeps trying to say, and he has been out giving speeches saying, that we are a—and I am quoting him—story of progress.

Well, let me tell you something. If he is talking about progress, it is the wrong direction because, as I said, people are facing higher prices; they are facing wage stagnation; and they are looking at uncertainty when it comes to job security, when it comes to economic security.

The President also likes to say that he is "growing [the] economy from the middle out and the bottom up."

But let me tell you, when I talk to Tennesseans, that is not happening. They talk about how the economy is shrinking. And they also talk about how costs are just hammering them every single month.

Now, I think that when we talk about inflation and the state of the Nation's economy, we have to look at where President Biden started. When he took the oath of office, the inflation rate in this country was at 1.4 percent. What he did was to run that inflation up to a 40-year high, at 9.1 percent. And now they run around saying: Oh, we have gotten inflation back down to 3.4 percent.

But, still, you have to look collectively at what has happened.

Now, under President Biden, I have got some of the headlines here that show you what is happening. Here is the reason why prices across the board—it is not 3.4 percent that people are seeing; it is 17.3 percent. The cost of clothing is up 7 percent. Rent prices are up 19 percent. Food prices are up 20 percent. Gas prices, when you go to the pump, is up 30 percent, and home heating and cooling, 31 percent. And mortgage rates are at a two-decade high. That has led to Bidenflation. And it has led to some of these headlines: Analysis finds Americans need an extra \$11,400 a year to afford the basics—the basics. That means just treading water, doing nothing extra. Sixty-two percent of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck as holiday spending and credit card debt rise. People are pulling the plastic out in order to try to make ends meet. And then you have another one from Yahoo Finance: "Why a record number of Americans are struggling to pay rent."

CBS: "Millions of older workers are nearing retirement with nothing saved."

You have CNN Business: "Inflation isn't beaten yet and the risk of a new price shock are rising."

And we also know that according to the Joint Economic Committee, families in Tennessee spent \$10,344 more last year than they did in 2021 just to meet the purchasing of the same basket of goods.

That is what Joe Biden's economic policies have done to our pocketbooks.

It is what it is doing to hard-working taxpayers. And at the same time, our Nation's debt has now reached a record \$34 trillion.

Now, if any of my colleagues have a grandchild or a baby who was born this year, they can welcome that baby with \$100,000 worth of Federal debt. That is their share of this Nation's debt.

Now, President Biden's out-of-control inflationary spending would be bad enough for the American people, but to make matters worse, his administration has tried to regulate every single part of your life: the car you drive, the stove that you use, the washing machine for washing clothes, the type dishwasher, even what you are wanting to do with the fireplace.

This is what they are doing with regulations. And these regulations are estimated to cost families another \$10,000 each year because of added cost. It is not sustainable. And Congress absolutely cannot keep kicking the can down the road on this. Dealing with this out-of-control spending and this debt is an imperative.

Now, there are some things that we could do. We could return to regular order and pass spending bills that would get this house in order. That means no more massive omnibus bills that saddle future generations with an unsustainable debt.

Each year, in order to address this problem, I have introduced legislation that would make 1 percent, 2 percent, or 5 percent across-the-board spending cuts. That would target nondefense, nonhomeland security, and non-veterans affairs discretionary spending for the next fiscal year.

We also need to cut down on the size of the Federal bureaucracy. We have 2.2 million Federal bureaucrats who cost Americans billions of dollars in taxes and overbearing regulations. Addressing the rising salaries and the size of the Federal Government workforce should be a top priority when considering how to rein in Federal Government and how to control spending. This would begin the process of draining the swamp of unelected bureaucrats who are not accountable to anyone and would change the decisions that they are making about Americans' lives.

HOUTHIS

Mr. President, last week—after weeks of attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea—President Biden designated the Iran-backed Houthis as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” group.

Now, the Houthis should never have been taken off the list of terrorist organizations. They had been placed on that list by President Trump, and then President Biden decided to take them off. He was trying to appease Iran. But in doing this, he only emboldened the Ayatollah's terror proxies. And we all know that Hamas and Hezbollah, the Houthis, ISIS in Syria, ISIS in Iraq—they are all proxy groups for Iran. Yet the national security spokesman, John

Kirby, is still defending the decision to take the Houthis off the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

It is difficult to unravel all the catastrophic mistakes that this administration has made on this very issue.

Now, we have had over 150 missile attacks from Iran-backed proxies against our Armed Forces and also against commercial vessels. President Biden has redesignated the Houthis only as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” group.

As I said, he didn't go all the way and designate them a “Foreign Terrorist Organization,” which is what President Trump had done.

Now, here is the difference in that designation and why it is significant. This means that the Houthis can still obtain U.S. visas; there is not a criminal penalty to support them; and U.S. banks are not required to seize their funds. So the Houthis can still get a visa to come to the United States. U.S. banks cannot freeze the funds that the Houthis have and prohibit them from getting to those funds.

Now, who gives them most of their money? It comes from Iran, which gives them about \$100 million a year; plus, trains them; plus, equips them; plus, arms them and allows them to carry out their bad deeds.

Now, the White House also admitted this, which I think is rather stunning when you consider the fact that Iran, through the Houthis—you have had 150 attacks on U.S. ships and commercial vessels. So the White House said: OK, Houthis, if you will stop your attacks and stop attacking us in the Red Sea, in the Gulf of Aden, then the United States will immediately reevaluate your designation—again, practicing appeasement. Terrorists only understand one thing, and that is strength. And they know that this administration is weak.

In 2021, the Biden administration moved Patriot missile systems out of CENTCOM to reduce our military presence in the Middle East. But in October, the President was forced to return them over growing attacks from Iran's terror proxy groups.

Our military needs to continue attacking these threats until they no longer pose a danger to the American people, to our ships and commercial vessels.

One thing is clear: We can only achieve peace through strength, and our adversaries are watching a very weak administration.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I am here to speak about the extension of the Affordable Connectivity Program. COVID was brutal, but something good came out of it. And that was a recognition by the U.S. Congress—Republicans and Democrats—that access to high-speed internet was absolutely essential all across America.

Before COVID, there were many of us who represented rural States—Republicans and Democrats—who were making the case, when people were arguing for high-speed internet, that we had no-speed internet. And our concerns were really dismissed by many of our urban colleagues.

With the effect of COVID, it was apparent: You couldn't go to work if you didn't have internet. Your kids couldn't do homework without internet. You couldn't get a doctor's appointment unless you could do it online. And we had come to the conclusion as a Congress that high-speed internet was as essential to all of America today as electricity was in the 1930s.

And in the 1930s, when the debate was whether we build out electricity, there wasn't an economic argument that was made, although that was important; it was a commitment to the social cohesion of this country that we are all in it together. And whether you lived on a dirt road on a farm in Iowa or you lived in Manhattan on Fifth Avenue, you needed electricity. We made the same decision during COVID in the U.S. Congress, and we allocated billions of dollars to start building out high-speed internet across the entire country.

There is another matter, though, that is important if we are going have access to the internet. It is affordability. And the Affordable Connectivity Program was a lifeline for many low-income people in the State of Vermont and States, in counties, and in cities and towns all across this country.

If you were a Vermont family with 200 percent of poverty level income and you lived in a rural area, you made \$15,000 a year and you had two kids, you could have internet going right by your house, but you had to make a really tough decision about whether you could afford it. The Affordable Connectivity Program helped that family with \$30 toward the cost of the monthly bill for the high-speed internet. That doesn't sound like a lot. It is a lot to a family that is making \$15,000 or \$11,000 and has kids.

You know, it is tough to be poor. It is hard work to be poor. A lot of parents were making enormously difficult decisions about whether they could get access to internet, and they were able to make that choice because they cared about their kids and knew how important it was to their future. That was the only chance they had to look for jobs.

That program has been tremendously beneficial to folks you represent and I represent and to my colleagues who are my cosponsors on the extension bill, because this program will expire in months, and notices will be going out to families that that rebate they have depended upon is expiring.

But that is why the bipartisan nature of this reflects how this internet program is so essential to everybody who wants and needs to have access to

internet—whether they are in a Republican district or not; whether they are Democratic or not.

I am proud to partner with J.D. VANCE of Ohio; JACKY ROSEN of Nevada; KEVIN CRAMER of South Dakota; and colleagues in the House, YVETTE CLARKE and BRIAN FITZPATRICK. All of us have constituents and all our constituents need this access to high-speed internet; so we cannot allow this program to expire.

In the State of Vermont, what we have done in order to do the hard work of taking the money that the Federal Government has provided to build out high-speed internet is we created community union districts where towns have gotten together and used funds to contract to build out that internet and where that community union district has a commitment, not so much to shareholders or investors, but to the people in the community. The goal in Vermont is to make sure that farmer at the last mile on the dirt road in our most remote town has access to internet.

It has really worked because there has been really serious community engagement. Our local community union districts have done an enormous amount to let folks know—those who are eligible, very low-income folks, hard-working folks—let them know about this program where that \$30 is really going to make the difference on whether they can hook up or they can't.

We are really proud in Vermont, too, of one of our first internet providers that was local called ECFiber. They set up their own program even before the affordable connectivity program was established.

We have a decision we have to make as a Congress. Will we maintain this bipartisan commitment we have had to the citizens of this country to make certain that everybody, regardless of income, has the best possible opportunity to have access to that high-speed internet that is as essential to our well-being, our social connection, our sense of working together, as electricity was in the thirties?

It is very popular among Republicans, at least 62 percent; among Democrats, 90 percent. But most importantly, among rural Americans, 80 percent of rural Americans are in favor of this, and they know how vital this program is.

Mr. President, 25,000 Vermont families have benefited by it, and 22.5 million American families have benefited by it. Let us continue the program. Find the \$7 billion that is necessary to maintain this, and make sure that the progress we made working together to build out high-speed internet to make it accessible to all our citizens continues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

GAZA

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, the October 7 slaughter of at least 1,200 innocent Israeli citizens and the abduction of 240 hostages was a monumental atrocity. The cruelty and depravity of that massacre, especially the torture and killings of women and girls, has shocked our collective conscience. Like others here, I have consistently supported Israel's right and responsibility to respond. We would all like to see Hamas disappear. But people with decades of experience in the Middle East say that is almost certainly not going to happen. To the contrary, they warn that the Netanyahu government's wholesale destruction of Gaza, which has caused the death of more than 24,000 of its citizens and displaced more than 1.5 million who had nothing to do with the crimes of October 7, will increase the terrorist threat by Hamas and other violent extremist groups who share a common hatred of Israel and the United States.

As horrifying as the October 7 attack was, neither the atrocities committed that day, nor Gaza's dense population and Hamas's insidious use of civilian infrastructure, justify the appalling scale of death and destruction in Gaza directed by Prime Minister Netanyahu that has ignited global condemnation. It has also failed to free the hostages whose survival becomes more precarious every minute of every day.

The inescapable conclusion is that the Netanyahu government is not listening to either the White House or to key Arab governments that are imploring Israel to change course. Their belief, which I share, is that the way to begin to build a safer and ultimately more stable and secure Middle East is to stop killing and otherwise mistreating innocent Palestinians. Yet Prime Minister Netanyahu, who has rejected out of hand the right of Palestinians to have a state of their own, is stubbornly pursuing the opposite approach with no political endgame. It is difficult not to conclude that his enemy is not only Hamas but also the Palestinian people. To make matters worse, he reportedly denies there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Last week, Netanyahu said he "needs to be able to say no, even to our best friends." Well, American taxpayers provided the planes and bombs and tanks, and the United States needs to

be able to say no to him. How much worse does the situation have to get in Gaza, and how much wider of a war in the Middle East, before we use this country's considerable leverage—including withholding additional lethal aid—to get Israel to stop its bombing campaign, negotiate a ceasefire and the release of the remaining hostages, and allow the dramatic increase in food, water, and other humanitarian aid needed to prevent the widespread starvation, death, and disease the UN and other relief organizations warn is imminent?

What is happening in Gaza is intolerable and we share responsibility. In a January 17, 2024, op-ed in the New York Times entitled "Team Biden Needs a Reset on Israel," David Levy, with whom I had the privilege of traveling to the Middle East some years ago, makes the case more effectively than I could. I hope President Biden and his top advisers read it.

I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Jan. 17, 2024]

TEAM BIDEN NEEDS A RESET ON ISRAEL

(By Daniel Levy)

Back in 2001, in a visit to the illegal West Bank settlement of Ofra, an out-of-office Benjamin Netanyahu, apparently unaware he was being recorded, boasted to his hosts that "America is a thing you can move very easily—move it in the right direction."

At the time, Mr. Netanyahu was talking about his experience with the Clinton White House; he had undermined Washington-led peace efforts during his first stint as Israel's prime minister. But more than 20 years later, Mr. Netanyahu's assessment feels uncomfortably familiar.

Since the Biden administration pledged its early and unwavering support to Israel following Hamas's Oct. 7 attacks, Mr. Netanyahu has repeatedly slow-walked Washington's behind-the-scenes requests regarding the war, including that Israel use greater restraint in prosecuting its war in Gaza, avoid provoking a broader regional conflagration and work to forge a postwar path toward peace.

As a result, as the war has entered its fourth month, the Biden administration has achieved almost none of its goals regarding Israeli policies and actions. More than 23,000 Palestinians, including over 10,000 children, have been killed so far, according to the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry, and the threat of mass starvation and disease looms. Israel's government has rejected any horizon for peace, and, after an initial pause in fighting and a hostage/prisoner exchange, such talks seem now to be at an impasse. The only "success" the United States can claim is in its steadfast support for Israel. And yet the unconditional nature of that backing stands in the way of any prospect of achieving its other policy goals and finding a path out of this horror.

It's true that in recent days, Israel has signaled a certain shift in its war strategy, using fewer troops and focusing more on central and southern Gaza. These steps appear partly driven by the need to keep down Israeli losses in the close quarters of urban combat, to offer some relief to Israel's suffering economy—and possibly in preparation for an escalation on Israel's northern border.