

under the rug by immediately dismissing the charges. It is not particularly surprising given Democrats' history of minimizing the crisis at our southern border, but it is disappointing nonetheless.

The House of Representatives has put forward serious charges, along with evidence to support those charges, and it is not too much to ask that the Senate take this matter seriously and explore these charges before dismissing them.

In a courtroom, a case is not dismissed without the court taking the time to examine the facts, and the Senate, sitting as a Court of Impeachment, should be no different. The Senate should have a full trial and take the time to examine whether Secretary Mayorkas's actions warrant a conviction. Then the Senate should be able to vote guilty or not guilty.

One thing is absolutely clear, and that is that Secretary Mayorkas and President Biden have presided over the worst border crisis on record. We have had 3 successive years of record-breaking illegal immigration under President Biden. Now, let that just sink in for a minute. We have had 3 successive years of recordbreaking illegal immigration under President Biden. Fiscal year 2021 saw a record-breaking 1,734,686 migrant encounters at our southern border. Then fiscal year 2022 broke that record, and then fiscal year 2023 broke that record. If the current trajectory continues, it is likely that fiscal year 2024 will break the record yet again.

While there are always various factors that affect the flow of migration, there is a reason that President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas have presided over 3 successive years of record-breaking illegal immigration, and that reason is the weak border security policies of the Biden administration.

From the day he took office, when he rescinded the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border, President Biden made it clear that border security was at the bottom of his priority list. Over the 3 years since, he and Secretary Mayorkas have turned our southern border into a magnet for illegal migration, from repealing effective border security policies from the Trump administration to abusing our asylum and parole systems, which are now providing temporary amnesty to hundreds of thousands of individuals here illegally.

Under U.S. immigration law, parole, which is the temporary release into the country of an individual for an extenuating reason, is meant to be used on a case-by-case basis only for "significant public benefit," like appearing as a witness in a trial, or "urgent humanitarian reasons," like a medical emergency. But under Secretary Mayorkas, the Biden administration has created a system of mass parole, with groups being approved en masse for release into the country. In fiscal year 2023, the Biden administration paroled 22

times—22 times—as many individuals per month from southwest border ports of entry as did the Trump administration.

Meanwhile, on the asylum front, President Biden's decision to implement a mobile app, CBP One, for filing asylum claims has helped result in hundreds of thousands of individuals taking up residence in our country, often for years, many of whom are unlikely ever to be approved for asylum.

Needless to say, the number of individuals flooding across our southern border under President Biden and Senator Mayorkas is a logistical nightmare. The Border Patrol is stretched thin, and U.S. cities at the border and across the country are being overwhelmed by the number of migrants. But even more than that—even more than that—this is a national security crisis.

Our country cannot be secure while we have 2½ million individuals a year pouring across our southern border. And that is not even counting the hundreds of thousands of known "got-aways"—individuals the Border Patrol saw but were unable to apprehend—the number of which, the Chief of the Border Patrol recently noted, is keeping him up at night.

Even some Democrat Senators here in the Senate have acknowledged that the crisis at our southern border has to be addressed, so I don't think it is too much to ask that we look seriously at the charges the House has brought against one of the chief architects of the Biden administration's lax border security regime, an individual so disconnected from the reality of the situation we face that he has repeatedly publicly asserted that the border is secure in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Unfortunately, I suspect the Democrat leader will continue his plan to sweep these charges under the rug. And with the President and Senator Mayorkas's demonstrated unwillingness to use the power of their offices to stem the flow of illegal migration, year four of the Biden-Mayorkas crisis will continue.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The Senator from Mississippi.

VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, time is running out. Time is running out for Vladimir Kara-Murza.

I was just at an event across the street with Vladimir Kara-Murza's wife Evgenia and their children. It was a bipartisan meeting of House and Senate Members and interested citizens. We all agree Secretary of State Blinken must secure the release of this U.S. permanent resident and Russian political prisoner, Vladimir Kara-Murza, before it is too late because, as I said, time is running out.

In the spring of 2022, Mr. Kara-Murza spoke the truth about Russia's evil invasion of Ukraine. The Putin regime

responded by arresting Mr. Kara-Murza and sentencing him to 25 years in jail for speaking the truth.

Only a corrupt regime would make it a crime to express an opinion to speak the truth. But that is what Vladimir Putin has done. He has arrested an innocent person and put him in jail for speaking the truth.

It has been a year since I led a bipartisan group of 81 lawmakers in an appeal to the Secretary of State—this same Secretary of State Blinken. It was the first anniversary of Mr. Kara-Murza's imprisonment. We urged the administration, on a bipartisan, bicameral basis, to label Vladimir "unlawfully and wrongfully detained."

We asked for that designation because that title is more than just words under the statute. It would prioritize Mr. Kara-Murza's case at the State Department, and it would unlock new tools for our negotiators to act with speed and success to get him released. And he needs that speed.

Since we last wrote the Secretary about Mr. Kara-Murza, nothing has changed; nothing has changed, that is, except his decreasing health and increasing danger.

Mr. Kara-Murza's family has grave concerns that he may not survive much longer. So we are talking about the life of this permanent U.S. resident. Before this prison term, the Russian dictator, Putin, had tried twice to assassinate Mr. Kara-Murza by poisoning him. He was indeed poisoned. And although Vladimir survived each attempt, the efforts succeeded in weakening his body.

And then when Alexei Navalny recently died mysteriously in a Russian prison, Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza became the most prominent imprisoned democracy advocate still alive in Russia. The target on his back has now grown bigger, so it is all the more important that Vladimir be freed.

This week we reach the second anniversary of Mr. Kara-Murza's incarceration. This week, I am leading dozens and dozens of my congressional colleagues in another bipartisan, bicameral request to Secretary of State Antony Blinken. I encourage even more Members to sign on to this letter before we send it to the Secretary later this week.

For 2 years, despite the danger, despite the imprisonment, Mr. Kara-Murza has not been silenced. He refuses to be silenced. Every so often, from behind prison bars, he is able to tell the world his thoughts through newspaper columns, for example.

The world has benefited from his words. No jail cell or word limit has been able to stifle Vladimir Kara-Murza's advocacy. He put it well recently. Last month, from prison colony No. 7 in Siberia, he wrote, "Sometimes the most powerful tool of all is simply telling the truth."

Telling the truth in Russia apparently gets you a 25-year sentence. It

takes courage to tell the truth in Russia. Let's stand with Mr. Kara-Murza as he tells the truth.

Many of us have worked with him. I consider him a friend. I admire him. He is certainly a friend of this body and of this free Republic. Let's stand with Kara-Murza now.

We have come to know his wife and children who are U.S. citizens. Let's stand with them now as they work for his freedom.

For the second year in a row, we call on Secretary of State Antony Blinken to designate Mr. Vladimir Kara-Murza as "wrongfully detained." We call on Secretary Blinken to secure his release, reunite him with his family, keep his freedom-loving voice from being extinguished. Save his voice while we still can.

I yield the floor.

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.

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

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

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, Senator STABENOW be permitted to speak for 5 minutes prior to the scheduled vote.

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

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to address the urgent need to support the people of Baltimore in the wake of the tragic Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse.

This is near and dear to my heart because of the 35W bridge collapse, and I am well-aware of the response of Congress at that moment many years ago, and I think it is relevant to some of the discussions that have come out of the Baltimore bridge collapse. I thought I would share them with my colleagues today.

First, my heart is with the entire city of Baltimore, especially the families and loved ones of the six workers who died and the workers still trapped on the boat that struck the bridge. I know our colleagues Senator CARDIN and Senator VAN HOLLEN are working around the clock to support the victims' families. President Biden was just at the bridge and has pledged his support to get this rebuilt and to open the port and to do everything necessary. And we must stand with them.

I thank the heroic first responders, the Coast Guard, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the Maryland officials, including, of course, Governor Moore, who acted swiftly and made sure that lives were saved. Yes, you think about the story of the immediate response to the mayday and the first responders in the middle of the night who made sure other cars didn't get on that bridge. You also think of

the Governor there the next day making sure people knew what had happened and what their plans were.

I am thankful for the efforts of brave workers leading the cleanup process, which we know poses serious risks to their safety. The Key Bridge wasn't just a way to get from Hawkins Point to Sparrows Point. It was a unifying force for the people of Baltimore from all walks of life. As one longtime resident, a doctor and son of immigrants, put it:

Every single Baltimorean felt that bridge fall down. That's our London Bridge. That's our Golden Gate Bridge. It was like a friend constantly saying hello to me in the morning . . . The bridge was a lifeline to schools and work . . . It was a bridge to the American Dream.

In addition to the devastating human tragedy of the collapse, the lack of a bridge that carried over 31,000 vehicles across the river every day will have economic repercussions, and we know it now. It is a major artery for the city and critical point of access for the Port of Baltimore, which handles more cars and trucks than any other port in our country, supporting more than 15,000 jobs and indirectly supporting 140,000 more. Every day that port is closed could cost our economy up to \$15 million. That is why we have no time to waste. Baltimore's recovery and our entire economy depend on us stepping up and working together.

Here is our story in Minnesota and why it is relevant. On August 1, 2007, in the middle of the most beautiful day both here in Washington and in Minnesota, the eight-lane I-35W bridge collapsed into the Mississippi River. It took the lives of 13 people and injured many more. Just like in Baltimore, it would have been so much worse if those first responders had fled away from danger but fled to it. They literally didn't know in Minnesota what had happened.

In Baltimore, you could see a ship had hit it. But in Minnesota, we didn't know what had happened. But they ran into those waters of the Mississippi River and got survivors out and helped people. Our bridge actually carried more traffic than Baltimore—over 140,000 vehicles a day. It was eight blocks from my house. It was a bridge that I would take all of the time to bring our daughter to visit her friend. As I said that day when it happened, a bridge just shouldn't fall down in the middle of America; but when it does, we rebuild it.

Here are the heroes very similar to what you see in Baltimore: Shannon Hanson, the off-duty Mississippi firefighter diving in and out of the water searching for survivors up and down the river; Paul Eickstadt, the Taystee truck driver who veered off the bridge to save a schoolbus full of kids and then burned to death in his truck, which caught fire because of how he avoided that schoolbus; Jeremy Hernandez, the worker on that schoolbus. It was a bus of kids that were at a sum-

mer program. That bus, which they call the "miracle bus," was just hanging on the edge of the bridge. Instead of running off that bridge, he got every single kid off that bridge to safety by kicking open the emergency door and, one by one, getting those 52 kids off the bus.

Our job in Washington was, yes, to go there and stand with our first responders. And the minute we got there, the next morning, former Senator Coleman, Republican Senator, and I saw the emergency work. We had big billboards up everywhere within 12 hours telling people where to drive and how the traffic was diverted. But our job was to rebuild the bridge, to get the funding immediately to get it done. We worked together.

And within 2 days after that bridge collapsed, I came here and got a waiver of the cap of how much money could be spent on a bridge like that. It was a record. We got the waiver done. Everyone joined with us in the Senate. As I look at what was my chair over there as a freshman Senator, I remember the procedural hiccups involved in all of this, and I remember deciding my best bet was sit in my chair and say I wouldn't leave until it got done. And when the Senate started one morning, Senator DURBIN came over to me and said as they were saying the prayer: Somehow, I think you are here to do more than pray. And I said: Yes, I am not going to get up from this chair until we get this done.

He helped me to get that bridge done and include it in a major bill we had pending at the time, which was fortunate. So we got the funding immediately.

President Bush went back to the bridge several times. We were able to get it done. Not one Senator in this Chamber or one House member in this Congress played a blame game. Everyone saw it as the tragedy it was. They knew there would be investigations. They didn't mess around just because it was in a purple State—our State—or a blue State or a red State. We all came together to get it done.

And that bridge got built in record time—339 days from start to finish. Thirteen months later, an eight-lane highway, a humongous bridge—the most traveled-on bridge in the State of Minnesota—got done.

Rebuilding and recovering from the Key Bridge collapse demands that same bipartisan collaboration. The day of the collapse, President Biden said he would "move Heaven and Earth" to reopen the port and rebuild the bridge as soon as humanly possible. It is on Congress to help.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Commerce Committee to get to the bottom of what caused this collapse, but I also stand ready to support Senators CARDIN and VAN HOLLEN as they work to secure the funding to rebuild the bridge. I call on all of our colleagues to join us and not mess around.