

the Senate and pending in the House but appears to be mired with no hope of passage over there. It is not the whole bill, but it is something, and it takes care of our three States. And it is not just because our three States are important and the others aren't. No, it is because the claims arising in our three respective States are materially different than those pending in other jurisdictions.

In most of those other jurisdictions, the scientific data isn't of the same caliber, drawing the same causal link between radiation exposure and liability on the part of the U.S. Government, and, ultimately, the conditions at issue, the types of cancers and related ailments that go along with it. They are materially different.

And so until such time as the science catches up, I think it is going to continue to have difficulty passing in the House. I could be wrong. That is how I see it. That is what I have heard from everyone I trust as to diagnosing the ability of that bill, or lack thereof, to pass in the House.

With respect to the Post-1971 uranium miners and millers, there is a distinction here. It is not a distinction that is necessarily impossible to overcome in every circumstance. But the Congressional Research Service looked at this for us, and we asked them to examine it. They concluded that the Post-1971 uranium millers and miners covered by the Hawley legislation now pending in the House were from the commercial sector. They were not doing this as contractors or as employees or otherwise as agents of the U.S. Government, but rather for private sector industry. And in those circumstances—in many of those circumstances, if not most or all—those can be addressed through tort law and/or through workmen's compensation law.

Now, for those that can't, there may well be an appropriate use of RECA. But if we are going to start expanding this into purely private sector activities, that changes the nature of this bill, and I suspect will continue to make it more difficult to pass in the House of Representatives.

So as to what we have got in Guam, the Marshall Islands, Idaho, Kentucky, Ohio, and Alaska, there may well be worthy beneficiaries there as to whom there exists adequate scientific research to justify the expansion of RECA and as to whom there is no other adequate recourse provided for by some other government program or through State tort law, workers' compensation law, or something else.

As to those, I would be happy to expand RECA, but we have to overcome those two issues. Those haven't been overcome. But they have been overcome as to Utah, as to New Mexico, and as to Missouri.

It is unfortunate that my friend and colleague from Missouri chose, rather than to allow the victims in his State and in New Mexico and the yet-uncov-

ered victims in the State of Utah to be taken within the protective boundaries of RECA today—we could have gotten this done today. I am confident we could have gotten it passed in the House right away. He chose to object to it.

In other words, unless you can have all of his bill passed, including the parts that are not scientifically backed—making it unpassable in the House—he is not going to let even the victims in Missouri or the victims in New Mexico get covered. That is most unfortunate.

We have got to deal with this. I will be back. We have to get this done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

BORDER ACT OF 2024

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, three Senators started, about 8 months ago now, working to try to get some solutions on border security. It is for obvious reasons, because we have record high numbers over and over and over again at our southern border. We had a record high number in October, record high number in November, and record high number in December. In fact, December had the highest number of illegal crossings ever in the history of the country in a single day.

As of yesterday, we had about 5,200 people that illegally crossed yesterday. In fact, almost every day this year, we have had more than 5,000 illegally crossing day after day after day.

This is a very big issue that the American people want solved. It is a frustrating issue that we have not been able to get to a resolution on. It is an issue that people have been frustrated with President Biden because President Biden has not enforced the border the same way President Trump did or the same way President Obama did.

To be clear, this year we will have 2½ million people illegally cross the border. With the same law in place under President Obama, we had half a million people that illegally crossed that year.

And as I have raised over and over again with this administration, if they would just enforce the border the same way President Obama did, things would be very different. But they have chosen not to. They have chosen not to enforce it the same way President Trump did.

Instead, we have absolutely been overrun with people from literally all over the world. To put this in perspective, in the last 3 months, we have had more people illegally cross than any full year under President Obama.

They need to do what they can do. But Congress needs to do what we can do. We have got to change the definition of asylum. We have to change the appeals process. We have got to be able to speed up the process. We have got to provide more clarity so that we don't have people waiting around 8 years for a hearing. We can't just release people at the border, as what has happened day after day after day for years now. We can't have a brandnew parole pro-

gram that the Biden administration literally invented that no President has ever used to release thousands of people a day. We can't have that.

We need to solve this in the administration. We need to solve this in Congress. I wish that is what we were doing today, but we are not.

When Senator MURPHY and Senator SINEMA and I started working on this months ago, we were working to solve it. We were not able to get that done.

But today is not a bill. Today is a prop. Today is a political messaging exercise. Today is an opportunity to be able to have a vote that is sitting out there so people can send fundraising emails out later tonight and say, "Look, I tried to do something," when no work was actually done to try to get something done and completed and passed today.

In fact, I anticipate there will be fewer votes today than there were 2 months ago when this came up—on both sides of the aisle—because everyone sees this for what it is. It is not an effort to actually make law. It is an effort to do political messaging.

That doesn't help us as a country. We still have people that are illegally present here that need attention, and we are not getting it.

Now, we can say—Democrats can bring this bill up and say: Look, we tried to do something.

Well, so what. Republicans can do the same thing. We brought H.R. 2 twice. That has passed the House with a broad, sweeping piece of approval in the House to come over here to be able to change the way that actually asylum is done, the entire process. That has been voted down twice on a strictly partisan vote.

So we can have this vote today, and people can say: Well, Republicans voted against this; so it didn't pass.

Republicans can say: Democrats didn't vote for H.R. 2; so it didn't pass.

That still doesn't solve the problem. At the end of the day, the people in my State say: There is another 5,000 people that illegally crossed the border. Why aren't we sitting down and resolving this?

So, today, I am going to vote no on a bill that I think should pass, but there has been no effort to really get this to pass. Let's get us back to the table. Let's actually resolve this issue as we need to get done.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. President, I stand here today, yet again, as the border crisis continues to devastate my State.

On February 7, I stood here, angry that rank partisanship tanked the single most important piece of border security and immigration legislation produced in decades.

As we all remember, last October, I joined with Senators JAMES LANKFORD of Oklahoma and CHRIS MURPHY of Connecticut to craft this legislation. We worked every single day for over 4

months, navigating difficult policy positions, working carefully to get it right.

After months of tireless negotiations, we delivered a strong product. We produced a bill many thought impossible. We ended catch-and-release. We added more detention beds. We increased deportation flights. We quickly decided asylum claims, and we put Border Patrol back in the field where they belong—securing the border, not stuck inside processing paperwork.

Yet, less than 24 hours after we released the bill, my Republican colleagues blocked it, despite the fact that this is the most restrictive migrant legislation in decades.

My Democratic colleagues blamed Republican political theater for blocking action. So did I. They were right.

I spoke here on the Senate floor twice in defense of our legislation. It turns out that my Republican colleagues were all talk and no action.

Today, though, my Democratic colleagues have chosen more political theater instead of real efforts to solve this crisis.

All talk and no actions goes both ways. Today, the Senate will hold a show vote whose sole purpose is to point the finger back at the other party—yet another cynical political game.

These games demonstrate exactly why Americans have lost faith in their elected leaders: a Congress bickering and fighting for power instead of solving problems and making progress—any kind of progress—for regular people. Today's vote is not an attempt to solve the problem or provide relief to Arizona border communities. Today's vote is to send a message.

But Arizona doesn't need your message. Arizona needs your help. Arizona needs action.

These games of tit for tat, caving to the political messaging game, force both parties further to the fringes and further away from real solutions. Today, the Senate is proving what many Americans already think about Congress: that Senators come here for political games, not to deliver results.

Today's vote won't deliver lasting results for Americans, but the impact of today's vote is actually worse than simply being a useless message, because this vote does send an important message, but it is a message to us as lawmakers.

I have often asked my colleagues in the interest of our Nation to step out of partisan boxes and work with me to find real solutions to real problems. We have done it time and time again. This time it didn't work.

Nearly 4 months later, I am still deeply disappointed that we didn't solve the border crisis for my State and for our country. But to use this failure as a political punching bag only punishes those who were courageous enough to do the hard work of finding compromise in the first place.

So who will be courageous next time? Who will stand up and do the hard

work? Who will take the risks? Who will say: Yes, I will help solve this big challenge our country faces. Why would anyone?

We don't leave today with a political victory. No one wins. No one gets the higher grounds. Instead, we are saying to each other: Don't step out. Don't try to solve big problems. Stay in your partisan corner. Yell some more. Blame the other side.

Today, yet again, the Senate has chosen politics, but my State is still suffering. As I said on the floor back on February 7, if you want to spin the border crisis for your own political agendas, go right ahead. If you want to continue to use the southern border as a backdrop for your political campaign, that is fine; good luck to you. But I have a very clear message for anyone using the southern border for staged political events: Don't come to Arizona for your political theater. Do not bring it to my State.

In Arizona, we are serious. We don't have time for your political games. There are big challenges facing the Senate and our country, and evidently this is not a Senate interested in solving those challenges. Americans deserve better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I am deeply grateful to Senator SINEMA, Senator LANKFORD, Senator MCCONNELL, Senator SCHUMER, and others who worked with us over the course of 4 months to craft this landmark, unprecedented, bipartisan border security bill that, if enacted, would take the biggest step that we have taken in decades to bring order to our southwest border. It would give a shot of confidence to our constituents that we can find agreement on even the toughest of issues.

I may be coming to a slightly different conclusion, though, on the reason that we are here today than my very good friend Senator SINEMA and my great friend Senator LANKFORD.

I think one of the most important, enduring values in politics is the value of persistence. If you believe something is important, you don't give up the first time.

We worked very hard to achieve this compromise. It is a good-faith compromise. You will see that it is a compromise because there will be Democratic Members who will vote against it today.

We solved some big problems in this bill—reducing the amount of time it takes to process an asylum claim from 10 years down to a handful of weeks or months, giving the President new powers to shut down the border when crossings get too high, giving new legal rights to migrants, allowing for more visas so that folks can come to the United States in a planned way to work or to be reunited with families.

I think that compromise was so important that we shouldn't give up after

failing once. I think the American people have told us that solving the problem at the border is so important that we shouldn't put away that compromise simply because the first time, politics won out.

Maybe I am naive, but I had some degree of hope, some degree of faith that maybe the second time we could come together and vote to proceed to a debate, because, remember, that is all this vote is—not a vote on final passage, a vote to bring this bill before the Senate, to litigate the outstanding issues that Republicans may have about the reforms in this bill.

So I deeply appreciate all of the work that Senator LANKFORD and Senator SINEMA did that went into this bill. I just come to a slightly different conclusion. This does not make me less eager to engage in bipartisan compromise in the future. This doesn't dissuade me from trying to reach future compromises.

Frankly, I think our decision to not give up when we have reached this really important product—I think it may, frankly, put wind behind the wings of those in the future who decide to do something really important on something big and work across the aisle to get it done.

We have a chance right now to come together, to put politics and campaigns aside, to vote to proceed on this landmark bipartisan border security reform bill, and I hope my colleagues do it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I will be very brief.

For years, we have heard that if you want to fix the border, then Congress needs to act. Today, we have a chance to act on the strongest border bill Congress has seen in generations.

To those who have said for years that Congress needs to act on the border, this bipartisan bill is the answer, and it is time to show we are serious about fixing the problem.

It is our chance to hire more Border Patrol agents and asylum officers and immigration judges. It is a chance to stop the flow of fentanyl and give law enforcement the tools they need to scan 100 percent of what is coming into the country. It is our chance to give the President emergency powers to close the border, to update asylum laws, and improve vetting. It is a chance to show the American people we are listening, we are acting, we can still reach across the aisle and work on one of the most vexing problems facing the Nation.

I implore my colleagues, do not let this moment pass.

I yield the floor.

QUORUM CALL

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair now directs the clerk to call the roll to ascertain the presence of a quorum.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the quorum call.