

America's leadership role in the world. Whether it is in Europe, whether it is in Asia, whether it is in the Middle East, the threats and the challenges go on and on.

What emboldens our adversaries is when they believe that we lack the resolve and commitment to do what is necessary to preserve the peace. The way you preserve the peace is to make sure none of your adversaries want to take a chance to engage with you militarily because they know they will lose. That is what deterrence is all about.

I think the Senator from Mississippi has hopefully started a really critical discussion at a critical time when we sort of lurch back and forth between continuing resolutions and an appropriations process that is fundamentally broken; when, in fact, the money we appropriate through that process is only about one-third of the money the Federal Government spends. The Federal Government spends trillions of dollars more on mandatory programs and through the Tax Code. We need to look at all of that spending, and we need to rightsize our commitment to what should be our No. 1 priority, which is the safety and security of the American people and our way of life, and to figure out what that means in terms of where the Federal Government spends money elsewhere.

And it is a very, very important debate. We shouldn't be afraid of it. Nobody is talking about touching Social Security or Medicare.

Both President Biden and President Trump has said no matter what the outcome of the election is, neither one of them want to touch it. We could argue the merits of that. Certainly, those debates won't occur without bipartisan leadership, like Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan, but in the absence of our addressing those challenges, certainly there are other mandatory spending programs, which are essentially on autopilot, that grow at 7 or 8 percent a year that we can look at and say: Does this still make sense?

Maybe it made sense 10 or 20 years ago when that program was created, but maybe we ought to look at indexing the amount of money that we spend to inflation, rather than just have an open-ended entitlement.

And then there is the Tax Code. I know next year we are going to be looking at the expiration of the individual tax rates of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

President Biden has said that he is happy to have those expire, which would result in a tax increase for 62 percent of American taxpayers and a \$3 trillion tax increase. I know his staff came back later and said: No, no, no. He is not for raising taxes on anybody who makes less than \$400,000 a year, but that is not what would happen if you let these tax rates expire next year.

So we are on the precipice, I hope, of having a fundamental debate and deci-

sion about the future of our country, and it starts with a discussion about America's leadership role in maintaining the peace because there is no other country in the world that can fill that gap. And we know that if that gap is created, that it will be filled likely by the Vladimir Putins, the President Xis in China, or the mullahs in Tehran, and people like Kim Jong Un in North Korea.

So I will just conclude now by saying I am really profoundly grateful to our friend from Mississippi for having the courage and demonstrating the leadership to initiate this discussion. It could not be more important, and it could not be more urgent.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. President, let me turn to another crisis, and that is the one on our southern border. Since President Biden took office, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has recorded 7.8 million illegal crossings at the southern border—7.8 million souls.

Now, just to provide some context, in over 3 years, we have logged twice as many illegal border crossings as we did during the full 8 years of the Obama administration. President Biden has been there about 3½ years; President Obama was there 8 years, but President Biden has racked up double the number of illegal crossings in 3½ years that occurred during President Obama's term in office.

President Biden has neglected the border for so long, it is now much more than just a question about our immigration system; it is a serious national security threat. The southern border has become an open gateway for drug traffickers, terrorists, and criminals of all stripes to enter the United States and disperse through our communities, all across this great land.

And there is no question that this crisis was able to grow and expand because of the conscious policies of the Biden administration. In other words, this isn't an accident. This is not the result of negligence. This is intentional.

In his first 100 days in office, President Biden issued more than 94 Executive actions related to immigration, many of which were designed to overturn each one of President Trump's effective border policies, and we all see how that turned out.

In the 3 years since, the Biden administration has taken hundreds of other Executive actions that have made it easier—not harder—easier for people to cross the border illegally and remain in the United States.

Now, with election day 5 months away, President Biden has taken a look at the polls and realized that the American people aren't happy with his open border policies. His poll numbers are in the tank.

So the President did what I presume any politician would do is launch a last-ditch effort to show that, no, that is not where I am; that is not what I believe; that is not what we should do.

But the fact is, nobody is going to be fooled by the actions the President took yesterday. It is a ploy. It is an election-year stunt. It is a shell game. You pick your metaphor.

Yesterday, President Biden issued a proclamation that would shut off access to the asylum system if the daily number of illegal border crossings reaches an average of 2,500. Well, if that makes sense, why wouldn't you do it with the first person coming across the border? Why would you say 2,500 a day are welcome to come into the country no questions asked?

But there are a few points the American people need to understand: One, as I said, the President is effectively saying it is OK for 2,499 border crossings per day. That is OK; you got the green light on that. The green light is not just to the migrants; it is also to the criminal organizations that smuggle these people for millions and millions or rather billions and billions of dollars.

And that 2,499 that are being waved across the border, that amounts to more than 900,000 per year. Now, 2,499 may not seem like a big number, but 900,000 per year seems like a lot, and it is. For some reason, the 2,500th person to cross the border is a bridge too far for this administration now, 5 months before the general election.

In my view, one illegal border crossing is one too many. Now, don't get me wrong. I believe legal immigration has been essential to America and remains so—legal, humane, and orderly immigration policy. Very few of us and our forebearers were born here. Most came from somewhere else in hope of a better life and became Americans and embraced our values and our way of life. But President Biden has outsourced his immigration policy to criminal cartels. It is madness.

Secondly, the Biden administration won't likely be able to enforce these caps anyway. In other words, they are just artificial. In order to waive migrants back to Mexico or return them to their home countries, those countries have to be willing to accept them. That is what President Trump negotiated with his "Remain in Mexico" policy. What did President Biden do? He basically wiped it off the books.

Now, it is no guarantee Mexico is going to be willing to accept these folks. What happens if Mexico says, "We are at capacity"?

My guess is, those individuals will be released into the United States, which is what has happened to this point, and many will never be heard from again, unless they have the bad judgment and misfortune to commit some crime and happen to be encountering U.S. law enforcement.

The final point I want to make is this: The administration had been claiming for years that it doesn't have the authority to restrict illegal border crossings. Well, apparently President Biden woke up yesterday and realized he did.

In fact, the President has consistently blamed Republicans or anybody else, for that fact, for lack of progress on the border issue. But by issuing this Executive action, President Biden has acknowledged that he does have authority to address this crisis on its own, even though this proclamation looks like a piece of Swiss cheese.

So he could have taken action at any point in the last 3½ years with no further action required by the Congress. There has not been a single month during the Biden administration where we saw an average of less than 2,500 illegal crossings per day. We have seen some, as many as 13,000 a day. And where I come from in Texas, we are the front door through which these migrants enter, 1,200 miles of border with Mexico. Some go to Arizona, some go to California, but most of them come through Texas.

During the slowest month, which was the President's first full month in office, we saw an average of 3,500 illegal crossings a day. President Biden could have stopped the wave of illegal immigration at any point in the last 3½ years, but he simply ignored the crisis until 5 months before an election. It sounds like an election-eve conversion to me.

The President's latest proclamation is not an honest or serious attempt to address the border crisis. It is nothing more than a last-ditch effort to deceive voters into thinking he has gotten religion; that he is serious about it this time. It is just not credible.

The American people have seen how President Biden has handled the crisis for more than 3 years, and they won't be fooled by this eleventh-hour gambit.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, finally, let me say a word about how we are conducting business here in the U.S. Senate. When our colleagues on the other side of the aisle took the majority 3 years ago, the majority leader, the Senator from New York promised a new way of legislating.

In his maiden speech as majority leader, he stood here on the Senate floor and he said, "As the majority in the Senate changes hands, the Senate will do business differently."

Well, he was absolutely right about that, but I don't think it is exactly what any of us envisioned. Under Democratic control, the Senate has turned into an unproductive body that follows a schedule that most American workers would envy.

Look at the calendar this month as an example. Under the leadership of Senator SCHUMER, the Senate will be in session 2½ days a week, not 40 hours, not a 40-hour workweek but 2½ days a week: 2½ days next week and 2½ days the week after that and that is it. Then we wrap up the Senate's work for the month of June.

July is just as bad when it comes to the Senate's lack of work ethic. When the Senate returns after the Fourth of July, we will be in session 1 week. We

will then take a break for a week—I guess we will be exhausted from that 1 full week back—and then we will come back for a 2-week work period. Then, yes, you guessed it, the Senate will gavel out until after Labor Day.

We will be exhausted by those 2½-day workweeks and then the sprint to the August recess. Including this week, which is almost finished, the Senate is only scheduled to be in session for 9 weeks before the election. That is 5 months off. We will be in session 9 weeks. Election day is exactly 5 months away, and the Senate is not breaking any records for our productivity or our willingness to take on hard problems that seem to surround us everywhere.

Given the fact that we are only working a maximum of 4 weeks—that is on the rare occasion where we actually are not working 4 days a week, on the rare occasion we are not working 2½ days—we now—my staff calls these "miracle Mondays" where we don't actually come back and start voting until Tuesday evening, and then we are out of here Thursday afternoon. But on the rare occasion we are working 4 days a week, that doesn't leave much time to get the American people's work done. And trust me, we have a lot of work to do.

One of the things that I think is an insult to the American people is, given the lack of productivity or the lack of willingness to deal with the challenges that face us, Senator SCHUMER schedules a vote on contraception this afternoon, as if this were somehow controversial. Contraception is legal, to my knowledge. It is not in any jeopardy. And yet Senator SCHUMER wants to schedule a show vote that suggests that somehow it is, maybe striking fear or anxiety in the minds of some people that that is in jeopardy? It is just absurd; and it is a waste of time; and it is a distraction from doing the other things that we should be doing that are so important.

We need to pass all 12 government funding bills before the end of September. We need to pass the defense authorization bills—something we have done more than 60 years in a row—and then the farm bill. That is 14 separate bills that need to pass in the next 9 weeks. So will we do it? No.

So with this lengthy to-do list, why is the Senate wasting its time, the time we are actually in session? Well, like most weeks, we spent the majority of this time voting on more of President Biden's nominees.

Before the Senate gavels out this evening, we will take another partisan show vote, as I said, that was teed up by the majority leader. This is just the latest example of a show vote. Last month, the majority leader teed up a vote on a border bill that was already rejected by the Senate. When it came up for a second vote, it received even fewer votes. Democrats who voted for the bill, now voted against it. What was that all about? The majority lead-

er knew the bill would fail a second time but wasted the Senate's valuable and limited time voting on it anyway.

So here we go again, having another useless, nonproductive show vote, this time on contraception, which is not in doubt. As the American people know, the right to contraception is not in jeopardy. I don't think that is breaking news. Apparently, it is to the majority leader. Contraception is available in every State in America, and there is no legitimate effort to change that. Democrats are using their power as the majority party to engage in fearmongering—that is a mouthful—fearmongering to further their own political agenda.

The bill before the Senate goes far beyond protecting access to contraception, and this is where there will be some bona fide differences of opinion. It would force healthcare providers to provide abortion drugs, regardless of any religious objections.

The Supreme Court has made very clear that as a matter of conscience or religious beliefs, people who do not believe they should participate in this, they cannot be required to do so.

Well, this bill is a wolf in sheep's clothing. It is actually a pro-abortion bill designed as a pro-women's health bill, and it is designed to keep the issue of reproductive rights top of mind so you forget about the crisis at the border, so you forget about the threats to our national security around the world.

Given the Senate's long to-do list, I think there is a better way to spend the Chamber's time. Two and-a-half day work weeks, truncated work periods, the time we have wasted here on nominees and political show votes—this is no way to run the Senate, and it is certainly not the way Republicans will do things if we regain control of the Chamber next year.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

REMEMBERING ALICE STEWART

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of a dear friend, Alice Stewart. Her sudden passing last month was a profound loss to all who knew her. Alice was far too young with so much more to give in the world.

Alice began her career as a reporter in Georgia and eventually moved to Little Rock, AR, where she was an anchor for the NBC affiliate there. In 2008, she served as Mike Huckabee's communications director during his Presidential run. Then she later advised Michelle Bachmann and Rick Santorum during their Presidential runs. In 2016, Alice came to work for me during my run for President. I was very lucky to have her on my team.

Alice fought passionately for me on the campaign trail. She was a joy to be around, always smiling, both personally and professionally. Politics can be a harsh arena, but Alice engaged with a light touch. She never lost her southern charm, her class, or her respect for others. She was one of the last few old-