

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-

school political operators who believed you can get along with anyone, regardless of political differences.

It is telling that many, many former colleagues and friends of Alice's have echoed the very same sentiment about her, that she was unfailingly kind and a rare gem in the tumultuous world of politics.

Alice and I remained friends after the Presidential run. This is a photo of the two of us when she came to my second swearing in here in the Senate in 2019.

Not only was Alice a talented communicator, she also served as Deputy Secretary of State in Arkansas and became a resident fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics, where she became a mentor for many students.

In 2016, Alice became a CNN commentator. Now, CNN isn't always known as a friendly place for conservatives, to put it mildly. But Alice never backed down from what she believed in. Instead, she navigated disagreements with kindness, whether it was at CNN or in her role as a political contributor on NPR.

If you knew Alice, you knew she was an avid runner. Another former communications director of mine and good friend, Cat Frazier, remembers the day that she met Alice on my Presidential campaign. Alice and my friend David Polyansky pulled her out into the freezing Iowa snow to go on a run with the two of them. That is how Cat got to know Alice, on a run in the bitter Iowa cold and snow. They also asked me to come on a run with them that morning. But it will not surprise you, Mr. President, I turned down that invitation. Alice and I had a lot in common, but running marathons was not one of them.

As a runner, it was fitting that Alice also loved Hebrews 12, especially the verse:

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Alice showed what it means to run the race well as a good and faithful servant. She has now finished her race, and she is today in the loving arms of her Creator.

I was immensely proud to have Alice on my team. She was wonderful and talented and a good friend. She loved America fiercely. She lived every day to the fullest, and she will be deeply, deeply missed.

Her absence is deeply felt by me, by Heidi, and by the entire Cruz team. I pray for God's comfort and His peace on her loved ones. May God bless the memory of Alice Stewart. She will be missed. I will miss her. God bless you, Alice.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes and Senator CARDIN be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

RIGHT TO CONTRACEPTION ACT

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*, it was a wake-up call for all Americans. It demonstrated that a fundamental right, the right of women to make decisions over their own bodies, could be taken away in the blink of an eye—the blink of an eye—by anti-choice extremists.

And since that decision nearly 2 years ago, we have seen countless attacks on women's reproductive freedoms across our Nation. We are seeing anti-choice States enact rigid abortion bans without exceptions for rape or incest. States that are forcing—forcing—emergency room doctors to call their lawyers before treating women who are going through a miscarriage, one of the most awful days of their lives. States like Alabama, they have even threatened IVF.

These restrictive attacks are meant to control what women can and can't do with their bodies. I am going to repeat that. These restrictive attacks are meant to control women, what they can and can't do with their bodies. They are meant to dictate to women their family planning decisions, and they want to put extreme politicians between women and their doctors.

The last 2 years have made it crystal clear: We cannot—we cannot—rely on the Supreme Court alone to protect our access to care. We know overturning *Roe* was just the beginning. If extreme anti-choice politicians and activists, well, if they have their way, access to birth control is next.

Contraception has been safely used by millions of women for decades. It has allowed women to take control over their own bodies, to decide when they want to start a family, how many kids they want to have, who they want to start a family with. And for these very same reasons, the right to contraception has been a target of anti-choice extremists for years.

So let me be clear: Overturning the right to contraception would be catastrophic in a post-*Roe* world. It would mean that women in States with the most restrictive abortions bans would have zero ability—zero ability—at all to make any decisions over their own bodies. They would have no ability to prevent an unplanned pregnancy or get the care they need. Women would have zero ability to get the care they need or prevent a pregnancy.

And this isn't just hypothetical. The Supreme Court has clearly demonstrated that it will not hesitate—they will not hesitate—to reverse landmark decisions and take away women's reproductive freedoms.

That is why my colleagues and I introduced the Right to Contraception Act, to codify women's constitutional right to make family planning decisions.

And this bill will do exactly what is in the name. It will just guarantee the

right for women to access and to use birth control. It will guarantee the right for women to have access to contraception.

Later today, we are going to have an opportunity to pass this important legislation. And I urge everyone in this Chamber to allow this bill to move forward and prevent extreme politicians from getting in the way of women's reproductive choices, to prevent extreme politicians from taking control over women's bodies, to prevent extreme politicians from being in your doctor's office.

And if we fail to act, the Supreme Court could roll our rights back once again, and every woman across this country will suffer from our inaction today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NOMINATION OF STEPHANIE SANDERS SULLIVAN

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, we shortly will be voting on the nomination of Stephanie Sanders Sullivan to be the U.S. Representative to the African Union, and I take this time, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to urge my colleagues to support that nomination.

The African Union is the only continent-wide multilateral organization for diplomatic engagement and the advancement of peace and security in Africa. The U.S. Ambassador to the African Union plays a key role in representing the United States and advancing our national interests within this international body.

The AU is critically important to helping find a diplomatic solution to conflicts on the continent, such as the ongoing war in Sudan. That conflict has led to the impending famine and what credible organizations have called genocide. It will not be resolved without AU participation. We should be there to support the AU's vital efforts, but we have been absent.

The AU is also an essential voice in articulating continent-wide values related to democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, and gender equality—all values that we share.

The alarming trend of democratic backsliding in the Sahel cannot be reversed without AU involvement. We should be there to support its efforts in this area, but we have not been.

No, Mr. President, we have not been there, while the Chinese have been very active.

It is critically important that we have confirmed representatives to represent our national security interests. When we don't have Senate-confirmed representatives, it gives openings for our adversaries.

China is there. We are not because we have not confirmed this Ambassador position. It is against our national security interest to leave these positions unfilled because of a lack of Senate action.

This nomination has languished since February of 2023. For nearly a year and