

conflicts even more costly than the interconnected wars in Ukraine and across the Middle East.

Of course, General McMaster was the National Security Advisor to President Trump.

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in the Trump administration, put it this way, after his recent visit to Ukraine:

It will be far more costly and dangerous if Putin wins.

Another former National Security Advisor, Robert O'Brien, also with the previous administration, expressed his support for supplemental security assistance to Israel, Taiwan, and Ukraine, saying simply:

The free world has been attacked, and we're the arsenal of democracy.

It is in America's direct interest to take growing threats seriously, to invest even more urgently in our capabilities to meet them, and to support our allies and partners on the frontlines.

The reality of hard power competition simply does not wait for the President or Congress to take it seriously. Either we confront challenges we face with clear strategic and firm resolve or we lose. Around the world, 21st-century autocrats and medieval theocrats will continue to challenge the U.S.-led order that has underpinned global peace and prosperity for generations, and their proxies will continue to target American personnel and American interests with lethal force.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, the Sun may be shining outside, but today is a gloomy day here in the U.S. Senate.

Last night, Members of the other side of the aisle met to decide whether they were going to side with the American people or obey the wishes of former President Trump and his friend Vladimir Putin.

While I was not party to that meeting, the reports that came out of it were disturbing, to say the least. After months of good-faith negotiations, after months of giving Republicans many of the things they asked for, Leader McConnell and the Republican conference are ready to kill the national security supplemental package, even with the border provisions they so fervently demanded.

Those reports are disturbing because this is a good bill, a bipartisan bill that will address the problems at the border directly, expeditiously, seriously.

And don't take my word for it, just ask the conservative editorial page of the Wall Street Journal that called this "a border bill worth passing" or the president of the National Border Patrol Council—who rarely sides with Democrats—who called this bill "far better than the status quo" or the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which called this package "a commonsense measure" and warned that "Congress cannot afford to ignore these problems any longer."

So last night's reports coming from the Republican conference meeting are alarming because they represent a dramatic transformation in Republican thought. In October, Republicans objected to President Biden's national security supplemental request, telling the world they could not consider it without, in Leader McConnell's words, "something credible on the border." He said his conference would give "this supplemental request a serious look and probably recommend some changes as well." That was October 22, 2023.

Since then, Senators on both sides of the aisle have conducted intense, good-faith negotiations to try and find a way forward on the border. We thought we were close in December, but some on the other side did not want to be "jammed" by the Christmas holiday so we gave them more time.

Senator GRAHAM reasoned that a delay was necessary and thought that President Biden "should get involved in border/immigration negotiations." Well, President Biden did get involved, and he gave Senator GRAHAM more time that he asked for. And yet again yesterday, he asked for more time once again.

In December, Senator FISCHER accused Democrats of not wanting to address border security, saying that "my democratic colleagues support [border] security for Taiwan, they support [border] security for Ukraine, and they support [border] security for Israel. But what they won't support is basic border security for the United States of America. We are told that our own border security is not related to the national security supplemental? That's absurd."

That is what she said. "That's absurd" not to have border security in the bill, in December. Well, yesterday, she said she would refuse to even debate a bill that addressed our national security and border security—not even a debate.

The entire process has been quite a roller coaster. And it is not just my Senate colleagues who keep moving the goalposts. In November, Speaker JOHNSON said that "with our appropriations bills for Ukraine funding, for example, we're going to marry that with border security. These two things are going to be handled together because we believe it's a top priority."

But when former President Trump said he didn't want Republicans to solve the border problem, that he wanted it as a campaign issue, Speaker

Johnson did a 180-degree about-face and obediently and obeisantly changed his tune.

Now, I understand politics. I understand electoral strategy. But for more than a year, Members on the other side of the aisle have been wailing that the border was an emergency situation; that the country was in urgent crisis.

As the senior Senator from Wyoming said, "This crisis requires swift, serious, and substantive action," or like the senior Senator from Texas said, "This current crisis cries out for a solution" and "nobody believes the status quo is acceptable."

How about the words of Speaker JOHNSON just 1 month ago. Just 1 month ago, he said that the time to act on the border is yesterday.

This morning, Republicans are singing a new tune. Suddenly, this crisis is not so urgent. Suddenly, we need to take even more time before we address this crisis. One hard-right Republican Member of the House even ridiculously suggested that we wait until after November. This morning, a member of the Republican leadership who had recently called for swift action now says that action must wait until after the next election.

Give me a break.

Today, this is the new Republican line on the border: It is an emergency, but it can wait 12 months or until the end of time.

What utter bunk.

A cynic might suggest that this request for more time was a political ploy. But maybe we should take the Republicans at their word. Maybe we should take them at their word when they say: There is absolutely no reason to agree to policies that will further enable Joe Biden. Or when they say: Let me tell you, I am not willing to do too damn much right now to help a Democrat.

That is why this is a gloomy day. That is why the Republican Party is being thrown into disrepute by many of its own members back in their States.

Some Republicans will claim they have not had enough time to read the bill. Some Republicans will claim that they want an amendment process. Some will claim that they want guarantees their amendments will be accepted. Some Republicans will claim we need more time for debate and consideration. My guess is, they will ultimately want 10 to 12 months.

Finally, some Republicans will claim that we should separate—new tune—separate border solutions from funding for Ukraine.

I would like to address each of those claims right here, right now. For those who claim they have not had enough time to read the bill, on January 25, 10 Republican Senators wrote me a letter.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, January 25, 2024.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER SCHUMER: On January 18, 2023, you stated on the Senate floor that “we need to do something to fix the situation at the border.” We agree. The crisis at our nation’s southern border is unprecedented. It’s the worst it’s ever been in our country’s history.

You also said that “it is my goal for the Senate to move forward to the national security supplemental as soon as possible.” We anticipate that legislation to address the crisis at our southern border will be in that supplemental.

It is crucial that we ensure border legislation is passed correctly, not just quickly. We must fully understand what is in the bill, how the Biden administration will implement the bill, and how it will impact our states and local communities. Therefore, we request the following:

Seventy-two hours to elapse between the text of the full national security supplemental bill being made public and the first vote on the legislation in the Senate. This will allow Senators to review the legislation fully.

Cabinet Secretaries and other administration officials charged with the bill’s implementation be made available to answer questions in an all-Senators meeting. This will allow all Senators to ask questions and learn how this will impact their state.

We believe this legislative effort can lead to a secure, safe, and operational border. For that to happen, however, we must have the opportunity to ensure the legislation does just that.

Sincerely,

PETE RICKETTS,
BILL CASSIDY, M.D.,
JOHN BARRASSO,
TOM COTTON,
JONI K. ERNST,
MARKWAYNE MULLIN,
JAMES E. RISCH,
LINDSEY O. GRAHAM,
DAN SULLIVAN,
ROGER F. WICKER,
U.S. Senators.

Mr. SCHUMER. In that letter Senators RICKETTS, BARRASSO, CASSIDY, COTTON, ERNST, GRAHAM, MULLIN, SULLIVAN, RISCH, and WICKER asked one thing of me before the first vote on legislation. They asked for 72 hours to read the bill. We met that request. The bill was posted at 6:45 p.m. Sunday, February 4. If they want until 6:45 tomorrow evening, that is fine with me. Actually, I will even offer to delay that vote until sometime on Thursday to give even more time for Senators to make up their minds.

But I suspect they won’t accept even that offer because they really don’t want more time. They are just using it as an excuse. In fact, it will surprise no one that some of the signers of that letter actually did not wait 72 hours before they rejected the bill. Senator COTTON declared his opposition after 16 hours and 48 minutes, less than 25 percent of the requested time. Senator RISCH took a little longer—an additional 15 minutes—to read the bill before announcing his opposition. Clearly, this wasn’t about having 72 hours. That is OK. I can recognize when Senators grandstand. But this—this—is no time for grandstanding. This is a time for serious people to work together to solve serious problems.

Mr. President, Senators are elected to vote, not to be afraid, run away, make excuses, when it comes to voting on the tough issues. Senators are elected to debate and deliberate, not just to say no when a former President instructs them to. We were sent here to make laws, not just to make speeches.

If my colleagues want more time, fine—fine. All they have to do is vote yes tomorrow. That will mean the Senate will have up to 30 hours of debate before we lay down the motion to proceed. Again, I want to be clear. The vote tomorrow is not about the substance of the bill. No one is being asked to take a position on the supplemental tomorrow. The only thing a “yes” vote would allow is for the Senate simply to begin to consider, discuss, and debate the vitally important issues before us now. And we will have plenty of time to do so because we will stay here in session as long as it takes.

That brings me to the Republican’s second claim. They want an amendment process. Well, during my time as majority leader, I presided over more amendment votes than the Senate held in all 4 years of the Trump administration. I would like to remind my colleagues about Senate procedure. If you want a chance to amend a bill, it turns out you actually need to get on the bill first. Voting no says no amendments. Further, once we are on the bill, you still possess the power to kill the entire bill if the amendment process is not to your liking. You can hold out for your amendments. You can hold out if you want to reread the bill again and again. And you can hold out if your amendments fail.

But our Republican colleagues—we know this—really don’t want any of those things. And when they won’t, they forfeit their ability to address the border situation at all. When they vote no, they forfeit their ability to address the border situation at all.

So I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote yes on the bill so we can discuss amendments, timing, and any other issues. The issues in Ukraine, in Israel, humanitarian aid, the South Pacific, and the border are urgent. So many of my colleagues have said they are urgent. Well, let’s vote. It is urgent. We spent months talking and debating. It is time to vote. Make no mistake about it. A “no” vote says: I never want to move forward on the border, not with amendments, not without amendments, not now, not later. We must move forward. We cannot wait any longer. We have waited long enough.

Now, for my Republican colleagues who say that we need more time to debate and consider the bill and “I don’t want to be jammed,” I have a question. In September, you told us we cannot provide support to the people in Ukraine without addressing the border crisis. In December, you told us that leaving for Christmas break was more important than solving the border crisis. Now, in February, you are telling

us you need more time. So the question I would like answered and that the American people want an answer to is this: What date would work, my Republican friends? If you don’t want to solve the border crisis and fight Putin today or tomorrow, when do you want it? Would Saturday the 24th of February be a good day for you, the day that marks the second anniversary of Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, so it can have symbolic value? And since that falls on a weekend, maybe we could vote on Monday the 26. Just let me know. We can schedule it. We have other options. You just have to tell us what day would work.

We can change the schedule, but we are voting to move to proceed Wednesday night or if you want the extra day, Thursday. Would you be willing to address those tough issues in March, in April, in June, in July?

Mr. President, I suppose I won’t get a response because it seems the only date Republicans seem to care about is November 5, election day. We all know what is going on here. Donald Trump would rather keep the chaos at the border so he can exploit it on the campaign trail instead of letting the Senate do the right thing and fix it. He would rather let Ukraine suffer on the battlefield instead of being tough on Putin. And instead of standing up to Donald Trump, Senate Republicans are ready to kill our best chance at fixing the border and ready to vote down this aid package for Ukraine in order to put what they think is their party’s political interest above the interest of the country.

It is my hope, but not my expectation, that my friends across the aisle will resist the former President’s exhortations and do what is right. That is why the Senate will move forward with our vote tomorrow. If Senators vote yes, we have options—more time to debate, an opportunity to consider amendments. If Senators vote no, those Senators should have to explain why they are ready to let the border emergency—which they so decried—why would they let it continue? We have had 4 months—4 months—of dithering and delay. Tomorrow, the American people will find out whether Senators seek border security and oppose Russian expansionism or whether they stand with former President Trump in support of the chaos and Vladimir Putin.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Republican whip.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, an early report suggests that the Biden administration may have set yet another record at our southern border—and not the good kind. If this early report is accurate, the number of migrant encounters at our southern border in January is the highest January number ever recorded. That, of course, would follow December's recordbreaking number of migrant encounters, which was a staggering 309,034. That is not only the highest December number ever recorded but the highest number for any month ever recorded. Before that, of course, there was September's record-breaking number, and the list goes on.

The Biden administration has presided over a truly unprecedented crisis at our Nation's border. We have had 3 years of recordbreaking illegal immigration under the Biden administration. 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. They didn't break that 2021 record by a small margin, either. Fiscal year 2023 exceeded fiscal year 2021 by a staggering 740,000-plus encounters. If the current trajectory continues, it is likely that fiscal year 2024 will break the record yet again.

All told, since President Biden took office, there have been more than 7 million—million—migrant encounters at our southwest border, and that is just counting the individuals who were stopped by Customs and Border Protection. Since January 2021, when President Biden took office, there have been more than 1.7 million known “got-aways,” and those are individuals the Border Patrol saw but was unable to apprehend. We have no idea how many unknown—unknown—“got-aways” there have been over the same period.

I could keep throwing out numbers all day, but needless to say, my point is this: The situation at our southern border is a disaster, it is unprecedented, and it is untenable. We have to get this crisis under control.

I am thankful for Senator LANKFORD's efforts to address the chaos at our southern border. Senator LANKFORD has spent months now working to develop serious border security reform, and his work has further highlighted the ways the Biden administration has invited illegal immigration and undermined security at our Nation's border.

The worst border crisis on record will be a defining feature of President Biden's legacy, in addition to the high cost of inflation imposed on American families and the weakening of America's standing on the world's stage.

IRAN

Mr. President, I also want to take a moment to comment on Friday's strikes against the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran's proxies in Iraq and Syria.

Last week, I called on the President to take decisive action in response to

the more than 165 attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and in the Red Sea, including the tragic death of three soldiers in Jordan. The President's half-measures had failed, with deadly consequences, and a forceful response was overdue. The President must continue to take the necessary measures to protect our troops abroad and to maintain freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

I specifically would like to commend the men and women of the 28th Bomb Wing, which is based in South Dakota at Ellsworth Air Force Base but now has a contingent of about 250 airmen operating out of Dyess Air Force Base while our airfield is closed.

The 28th Bomb Wing not only participated in Friday's strike against 85 targets, but it did so flying what is known as a CONUS-to-CONUS mission—that is, taking off from American soil, hitting overseas targets, and returning to base in a single, marathon flight.

This ability to generate combat power that can strike anywhere on the map is a testament to the professionalism of the 28th Bomb Wing's aircrews and maintainers, and it also underscores the importance of preserving this capability now and well into the future so that we can deter threats and hold adversaries accountable. Global reach anytime, anyplace.

The B-21 bomber, which was unveiled last year and is set to make Ellsworth its first home for Main Operating Base 1 later this decade, will begin a new era of American airpower, but until that sixth-generation bomber is fielded, we need to continue full support for programs like the B-1 bomber. I will continue to do everything I can here in Congress to support both the B-21 and the B-1 missions and the men and women who are behind their success.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we recently released the text of the supplemental. This bill is about our national security, it is about our national credibility, and it is about our future. That is why Democrats have been glued to the table, negotiating in good faith every step of the way, because the stakes could not be higher.

On Sunday, we rolled out a bipartisan, compromise package with \$60 billion in aid for Ukraine, \$14.1 billion in security assistance for Israel, \$4.8 billion to support our allies in the Indo-Pacific, \$10 billion for humanitarian assistance, \$20 billion for operational needs at the border, and more.

Now, I want to be clear, this is not the bill I would have written on my own. It is compromise legislation that came out of negotiations between Senate Democrats and Senate Republicans. As I have said before, I never believed that we should condition emergency aid for our allies on unrelated partisan priorities, but Republicans demanded that. They insisted we needed not just Executive action at the border or new resources but policy changes. So my colleagues—the junior Senator from Connecticut and the senior Senator from Arizona—worked around the clock, and now we have a bipartisan set of proposals, just as our Republican colleagues demanded.

Now, before I say anything else, this will not be the last word on immigration reform. I will keep fighting—and I know many of us will—day in and day out until we deliver on comprehensive immigration reform that creates a pathway to citizenship for the more than 11 million undocumented immigrants living in America and makes our system work better and more fairly. I know we need to finally pass the Dream Act. We need an immigration system that creates new pathways for legal status, eliminates dysfunction and backlogs, and recognizes that immigrants do make America great.

Immigrants are not just crucial to our economy—although they absolutely are—they enrich our communities and strengthen the fabric of our country in countless ways. And we should, of course, be inviting the world's brightest minds and hardest workers to make America home. That will always remain a North Star for me as we push to make our system work better and meet new needs as more folks come to our country, fleeing persecution and seeking opportunity.

We also have to address the root causes of migration in a way that promotes stability and mutual economic prosperity for everyone.

The bipartisan compromise before us does not accomplish all of that. Border policy and immigration reform is a very tough issue, and in a divided government, compromise is required. So what we have in front of us is a tailored package aimed at addressing some of the challenges before us and one that can win passage in both Chambers.

I am not thrilled with several of the provisions, but there are some important steps forward in it, like a quarter of a million new family and work visas over the next 5 years and pathways to citizenship for the brave Afghans who worked alongside our servicemembers during the war in Afghanistan.

The bill would help speed up the processing of asylum claims, ensure for the very first time that everyone gets a written explanation of their asylum decision, and provide an important downpayment on new resources to clear the backlog.

It would provide immediate work permits for folks who pass through the