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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, restore us to Your favor. You are our rock and salvation, our shelter in life's storms. Thank You that Your anger is only for a moment, but Your favor continues throughout the days of our lives. Though weeping may endure for a night, because of Your favor, joy comes in the morning.

Lord, surround our lawmakers with the shield of Your divine favor. May no weapon formed against them prosper. Bless them when they are on the road, when they are going to bed, and when they are getting up.

Hasten the day when, because of Your favor, justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

We pray in Your marvelous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 7, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

REMOVING EXTRANEANOUS LOOPHOLES INSURING EVERY VETERAN EMERGENCY ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 815, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 30, H.R. 815, to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

H.R. 815

Mr. SCHUMER. First, happy birthday, Mr. President. Have a good one. I hope we all have a good one today.

All right. Today, Mr. President, Senators face a decision several months in the making: Will Senate Republicans vote to start debate—just a debate—on bipartisan legislation to strengthen America's security, stand with Ukraine, and fix our border or will they cower to Donald Trump's orders to kill this bill? Will the Senate stand up to brutish thugs like Vladimir Putin and reassure our friends abroad that America will never abandon them in their hour of need? Will Republicans take "yes" for an answer and seize the best opportunity—the best opportunity—that Congress has seen in decades to secure our border? This is the choice Republicans face today. They can either choose what is good for the country's national interest or they can choose what is good, at least in their minds, for Donald Trump.

I have always believed the Senate works best when we take the bipartisan path. Not everything is perfect in this bill, but I see it as my job to let bipartisanship take hold whenever possible, and this bill reflects that. But all week long, Senate Republicans have looked more and more like their House counterparts and transformed themselves into the chaos caucus. Republicans have said they can't pass Ukraine without border. Now they say they can't pass Ukraine with border. So, today, I am giving them a choice. They can show America where they stand and what they stand for. Which way will it be?

Today, I have laid out both options for Republicans to do the right thing. Democrats certainly want to fix the border. It is extremely important, and we have shown our willingness time and time again to take big steps to secure the border, but we will move forward today with either option.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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First, I have scheduled a vote on the supplemental that includes strong bipartisan border reforms that Republicans have demanded for months. Negotiators on both sides worked themselves to the bone putting this border package together. I was heavily involved. I saw the work—the blood, the sweat, the tears—that went into it. Why did we do it? Because that is what Republicans wanted. They said: Can't do Ukraine, can't do Israel, can't do humanitarian aid without border.

I made sure negotiators had enough time to do their work. I gave them the space to keep going, even when it seemed like a deal was out of reach, because, again, Democrats want to secure the border because it is extremely important. It is urgent. It can't wait. We must act. We are ready to move forward on this bill now.

Today, when we vote, it will be clear as day who is serious about fixing the border and who is not. I urge Republicans to take "yes" for an answer.

If Republicans block this national security package with border legislation that they demanded, later today, I will give them the opportunity to move forward with a package without border reforms. This package will otherwise be largely the same. It will have strong funding for Ukraine, funding for Israel, help for innocent civilians in Gaza, and funding to the Indo-Pacific.

The legislation on the floor today is one of the most important security packages the Senate has considered in a very long time. So the onus is on Senate Republicans to finally take "yes" for an answer.

It would be an embarrassment for our country—an absolute nightmare for the Republican Party—if they reject national security funding twice in one day. Today is the day for Republicans to do the right thing when it comes to our national security.

Now, it must be—

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, would my friend from New York yield—

Mr. SCHUMER. No, I will not.

Mr. WICKER.—just for a question about—

Mr. SCHUMER. Not now. I am in the middle of my speech.

Now, Mr. President, it must be said that the 180-turn Republicans have done on border is one of the most stunning things I have seen Congress in a long, long time do. The damage Republicans have done this week to their credibility cannot be understated.

After all, how many times have we heard our Republicans colleagues give speeches here on the floor about the emergency at the border? How many times have we heard Republicans say, year after year, that Congress must act, that legislation is the only long-term solution? They have said that: Legislation is the way we have to go.

How many times have we seen Republicans take field trips down to the border, like Eagle Pass or Laredo, and take pictures with the fence towering behind them, while bemoaning that the

problem at the border is only getting worse?

Apparently, that was all for show. Apparently, Republicans aren't actually serious about fixing the border, because you cannot—you cannot—claim to be serious about fixing the border while voting against the kind of border package we have before us today. You cannot claim to truly care about fixing asylum if you are going to vote against the biggest updates to asylum law in decades.

You cannot claim to care about our Border Patrol agents while depriving them of the very tools and funding they are asking for. Remember, the union of Border Patrol agents—a very conservative, almost always pro-Republican group—wants us to pass this bill.

Why are we doing all of this? Why are they going to kill, in one fell swoop, this agreement that has taken months to piece together?

The answer—why are the Republicans doing all of this? Why have they backed off on border when they know it is the right thing to do? Two words: Donald Trump.

Donald Trump doesn't like that the Senate finally reached a real bipartisan border deal. So he has demanded Republicans kill it. Let me say that again because it is as plain as could be. Donald Trump doesn't like that the Senate finally reached a bipartisan border deal. So he has demanded Republicans kill it. He thinks it is far better to keep the border in chaos so he can exploit it for personal political great gains.

Senate Republicans—vertebrae nowhere to be found—are ready to blunder away our best chance of fixing the border in order to elevate what they see as the interests of Donald Trump above the interests of the country.

I expected this kind of cynical nonsense from the far-right House MAGA Republicans, but it is shameful and embarrassing to see MAGA radicalism take hold here in the Senate.

No matter how today shapes out, I hope Republicans end up doing the right thing when it comes to national security, before the day is done, and agree to move forward on those things they do support, because if there is one other person besides Donald Trump who is rooting for chaos in the Senate, it is Vladimir Putin.

If we fail in this moment, if we abandon our friends in Ukraine to Vladimir Putin, history will cast a shameful and permanent shadow on Senators who block funding. It is a matter of the highest national urgency that we get this right.

Remember what Putin said 2 months ago about American aid to Ukraine:

[The free stuff is going to run out some day, and it seems it already has.

That is Vladimir Putin taunting the Senate, taunting America. We have a chance today to make him regret those words.

Republicans of decades past would have never hesitated to support fund-

ing for nations like Ukraine. In previous generations, both parties would have bent Heaven and Earth to stand up to Russian dictators. I can hear Ronald Reagan giving a speech passionately asking the Senate to vote for aid to Ukraine. We spent half a century safeguarding the free world against the malicious spread of communism, against tyranny, against those who have tried to undermine our values.

Those very same issues—of Western democracy, of the sovereignty of free nations, of the safety of our troops and our citizens—are on the line yet again in the 21st century. They are the very things that stitch this supplemental together. It is why we are here with this bill before us in the first place.

There is only one right answer for the Senate today to address the great challenges we face. There is only one path forward to fulfill our obligations to the American people. There is only one way Senators—Democrats and Republicans, both sides of the aisle—should vote today, and that is for us to move forward on the package of national security.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I wonder if the majority leader would yield for a question on schedule?

Mr. SCHUMER. No questions.

Mr. WICKER. Well, may I say something on just this quick point, Mr. President? My question to the Democratic leader was about the way he intends to proceed.

Obviously, he has counted the votes, as we have on this side, and the package with the border provision will not pass. Then he intends to move to a package that does not contain the border provision.

My question to the distinguished leader would have been: Does he intend to negotiate an amendment process where Members from both sides of the aisle would be able to propose changes in the legislation? And how will that affect when we go forward and when we are able to deal with these important issues that he has advocated for so vigorously? Those would have been my questions, and I think the American people and the Senate deserve an answer on how we are going to proceed, and will there be an open process of amendments?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, after listening to the majority leader's comments, I think it is worth taking 5 minutes to recall how we got here.

You know, it is ironic to me that people give speeches here on the floor of the Senate about their support for Israel. And there is no doubt Israel is involved in an existential fight with Iran and Iranian proxies like Hamas and Hezbollah, the Houthis rebels, and the Shia militias in Syria and Iraq.

But the House passed an Israel aid package on November 2. Israel was attacked October 7. The House acted on

November 2, and the majority leader, who is the only one who can schedule a vote on anything here on the Senate floor, has done nothing to help our best ally and friend in the Middle East, the State of Israel—nothing.

He has insisted that we package together aid to Ukraine, aid to the Indo-Pacific. And there have been endless discussions about a border bill, which I will come to in a moment. But this problem that we are running into is one of his own creation.

He could decide to take up these bills individually, knowing that the House has already passed an Israel aid bill, and then have the Senate take it up and pass that bill. Then we can turn to the other issues that are vitally important to our national security and deserve fulsome debate and an open amendment process.

That is the question my friend from Mississippi was trying to ask the majority leader, but he decided to leave the floor without responding to that, giving me some doubt as to the sincerity of his commitment to have an open amendment process and actually restore the Senate to its previously held reputation as the world's greatest deliberative body. Nobody can call us that now with a straight face.

I understand that the majority leader is trying the best he can to help the Republican Party. He gives advice freely as to what Republicans should do. But the fact of the matter is, we have no confidence—zero confidence—that the Biden administration will enforce the law when it comes to the border. That has been the case for the last 3 years, resulting in historically high numbers—300,000 people a month—showing up at the border, only to be ushered into the interior by Biden open-border policies that either people claim asylum and are released into the interior, perhaps never to be heard from again, or they are released on parole.

Catch-and-release is the policy of the Biden administration and congressional Democrats. That has proven to be a powerful magnet for illegal immigration—people literally coming from all around the world because they know they can make it into the country because President Biden and Senate Democrats have laid out the welcome mat.

So you will have to forgive me when I note the fake outrage, the phony messaging that we hear from Democrats about this border negotiation. Yes, it is true that we hoped to come up with something credible. On our side of the aisle, Senator LANKFORD from Oklahoma has done a heroic and a thankless job of trying to come up with a negotiated package. But the fact of the matter is, the package includes catch-and-release still, providing additional or continued incentives for people to come to the country illegally, knowing they will be released into the interior; and it does nothing to stop the Biden administration from abusing some-

thing called parole, which means that, in order to avoid bad press, in order to avoid embarrassing TV pictures of an overwhelmed border, they simply just release people into the interior of the country for 2 years and give them a work permit.

Are you kidding me? They now claim to be the defenders of the border and for border security? What a joke. What a joke. And it is a bad joke.

We know, as a result, the Biden border policy, supported day in and day out by our Democratic colleagues for the entire time that President Biden has been in office, has resulted in roughly 7 million migrants being released into the interior of the United States, and 1.7 million “got-aways”—what the Border Patrol calls them, people evading law enforcement, for good reason, I suspect. Either they are transporting illegal drugs into the interior of the United States or, maybe, just maybe, out of that 1.7 million, there are a few people who are on the Terrorist Watchlist.

We know the Border Patrol has detained roughly 170—I think, at last count—people on the Terrorist Watchlist. That is the people they know about. But they can't tell us how many more people on the Terrorist Watchlist are among those “got-aways,” endangering the safety and security of the United States.

It took 19 people to kill 3,000 Americans on 9/11. What about 1.7 million “got-aways”? We don't know whether these are serial criminals. We don't know whether they are transporting drugs. We don't know whether they are terrorists. We don't know anything about them, and, frankly, President Biden doesn't care—and neither do our Senate colleagues who have done zero—nothing, nada—to deal with this problem. So you will have to forgive me if I find their fake outrage unconvincing.

And then there are the 108,000 Americans who died of drug overdoses last year. That is also part of the Biden open border policies. I have been wearing since April of last year a rubber bracelet given to me by a father of a young woman who lost her life because she took a pill that she thought was relatively innocuous but was laced with fentanyl. Her name was Sienna. Her father asked me to wear this rubber bracelet that says: “One pill can kill.”

Well, 71,000 Americans died last year as a result of fentanyl poisoning, including young women like Sienna, who took something they thought was relatively innocuous, which was a counterfeit pill laced with fentanyl—and not waking up the next morning.

And then perhaps the greatest untold story—we tried to tell the story, and the New York Times has written about this—is the hundreds of thousands of unaccompanied children who have been placed with sponsors in the interior of the United States who have come across the border. They have been attracted like a magnet to our border

and under Biden policy have been released to sponsors, many of whom aren't even immediate relatives.

And the Biden administration has simply lost track of them. They can't tell you whether the 300,000 children are going to school, whether they are getting the healthcare they need, whether they are being trafficked for sex, whether they are being forced into involuntary labor. The New York Times has written at least two times that I recall about forced labor conditions for these migrant children—forced into illegal, dangerous labor.

And the New York Times tried to call some of these sponsors to see if they knew about what these children were doing, these children who were turned over to the care of these sponsors by the Biden administration under their current policies. In 85,000 cases—85,000 cases—there was no answer.

So the truth is, under the Biden border policies, under the policies supported by all of our Democratic colleagues—now who are demonstrating fake outrage about the failure of the current border bill—they simply don't care. They don't care about these children. They don't care about the families grieving lost loved ones as a result of the illegal drugs that stream across the border, carried by the very criminal organizations that smuggle people from around the world who show up at our border and are released into the interior of the United States.

What greater incentive can you think of for attracting illegal immigration than the open border policies which, tragically, result in the death of innocent Americans, including innocent children, losing 300,000 children placed with sponsors? The Biden administration doesn't care.

So let me just say that when the majority leader takes off his hat as the majority leader of this great institution and puts on his hat as a Democratic partisan making political attacks against the very people he is hoping will support the legislation that he is advocating for—aid to Ukraine—this is not a good day for this institution. And it strikes me as a bizarre tactic when you know who the hundred people are who are going to be voting on the legislation that he is going to put on the floor.

And the fact that the majority leader walks away from a legitimate question by our colleague the Senator from Mississippi who asked whether there will be an opportunity for debate and votes on amendments—he won't even answer the question. This is the same majority leader who put this bill on the floor that we will be voting on at 1 o'clock and said, “OK, we released the text,” on Sunday night and that in 72 hours Senators are going to have to vote on it.

These are detailed, complex negotiations that have been taking place for months now, and the majority leader won't even give the Senate and Senators time to digest it and understand

it. I think that tells you all you need to know about his motives. This is all about partisan political attacks and posturing leading up to the November 2024 election.

President Biden is guilty of some of the same posturing. He said—this is rich—after Secretary Mayorkas, the Secretary of Homeland Security, has said time and time again under oath, “The border is secure”—well, we knew that was a lie because our eyes did not deceive us. We could see what was happening at the border. We could listen to Mayor Adams in New York City, the mayor of Chicago, Governors around the country, saying: We are being inundated by migrants coming across the border. And in the case of Mayor Adams, he said it is going to destroy New York City, even though they are a self-designated sanctuary city.

Well, all of that has fallen on deaf ears for the last 3 years, and the Senate majority leader and the President of the United States think that the American people are so dumb that they haven’t seen what has been going on the last 3 years. They have resisted every single effort on our part to secure the border, to halt this tsunami of illegal immigration and illegal drugs. They have resisted all of it.

And now the majority leader would have you believe that he has had a conversion. This is Saul on the road to Damascus. But I don’t believe it, and I don’t believe the American people will believe it because their common sense, their very eyes and ears tell them something different, and that is that the Biden administration, Democrats in the Senate, and the Senate majority leader who came out here crying crocodile tears over the failure of the border negotiation—they know it is not true. The American people will not be deceived by this transparent political pitch suggesting that now they are the champions of border security.

The President of the United States has every tool he needs—every tool he needs—to secure the border. The laws that are in effect now are the same laws that were in effect when President Trump was in office, and the numbers were dramatically different. In fact, President Biden’s numbers of people coming across the border have exceeded the number that came during the entire 8 years of the Obama administration and the entire 4 years of the Trump administration.

So, Mr. President, I know there are others here, including my friend the Republican leader, who are prepared to speak, so I will sit down. But I just couldn’t help myself, sitting here listening to what the majority leader was trying to sell, which is so patently ahistorical, false, and is clearly just partisan political rhetoric trying to improve what is a very, very damaged reputation when it comes to dealing with our national security and the border.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 4 months ago, Senate Republicans asked our colleague from Oklahoma Senator LANKFORD to take on a pretty tall order: negotiate serious border security policy with an administration that had shown no interest in actually securing the border. He put in an enormous amount of work, and I am very grateful for the persistence he has shown over many nights, weekends, and a few holidays.

The product he was able to secure earned the endorsement of the National Border Patrol Council, a sign that you are pointing in the right direction. But as our colleagues recognize, the agreement does not have a path to become law. The border crisis that President Biden invited through his rhetoric and his willful neglect will continue to challenge the brave men and women of the CPB and ICE and impact communities across the country, and its effects will follow his legacy forever.

I wish I could say that a record-setting border crisis was the only challenge that the President’s failures have laid before us, but our colleagues know as well as I do that that isn’t the case. There have always been aggressive forces seeking to harm America and to challenge our interests. The very existence of a Western order in which sovereign nations choose their own leaders has always been an affront to repressive and aggressive regimes around the world.

But even in the face of serious threats, for large portions of modern history, the United States has dictated the terms of engagement. For decades, the world’s foremost superpower has been the one doing the deterring. Not anymore. It is no longer a settled question that America will meet aggression with overwhelming force or even that we will back our allies 100 percent.

Take this headline about President Biden’s response to the attack that killed three U.S. soldiers last month:

U.S. Strikes Steer Clear of Iran’s Red Lines.

Here is the subhead of another one:

U.S. officials acknowledge that the militias targeted still retain the majority of their capability to carry out future attacks.

Oh, here is one more:

Pentagon says it’s not planning for a long-term campaign [against Iran’s proxies] in Iraq and Syria.

So, Mr. President, what can the American people—and the entire world—gather about the Biden administration’s approach to the threats that we face?

First, we know that Iran is deterring America, not the other way around.

Second, we know that the Commander in Chief has not yet directed the strongest military in the world

even to exercise sufficient force against expendable proxy terrorists, let alone their Iranian sponsors.

Finally, we know that the Biden administration lacks the resolve to defeat those who spill American blood.

The Pentagon conceded this week they were not aware that even a single IRGC officer had been eliminated by their response. Yet administration officials say this is what sending a message of deterrence looks like.

Let’s be honest here. Do our allies see in this behavior an America that is willing to impose decisive costs on our adversaries? Do our adversaries, in turn, see any reason to start changing their calculus?

In the Middle East, we already know the answer. Since the President’s telegraphed “response” to the deadly Tower 22 attack, Iran-backed terrorists have already launched more attacks—from Iraq and Syria to the Red Sea. Iran and its proxies are undeterred.

But beyond the region, is there any reason to expect that the President’s conduct of foreign policy is causing Putin or Xi to think again? Not a chance. No doubt, the Commander in Chief’s halting response to Tehran’s aggression emboldens Moscow. Russian forces, like Iran and its proxies, were direct beneficiaries of President Biden’s hesitation and self-deterrence as they escalated their invasion of Ukraine.

Beijing—after it watched us abandon allies in Afghanistan and second-guess Israel’s response to terrorism—has a reason to doubt that the United States is well-positioned to rally allies and partners to resist aggression in the Indo-Pacific. If America fails to stand with our partners on the frontlines of Europe and the Middle East, we will shred our credibility with friends in the Indo-Pacific.

So today’s strategic competition is more perilous. Support for our allies is more tenuous. And the security of U.S. personnel and interests is more questionable than it was 3 years ago.

These are the circumstances in which the Senate must consider some weighty responsibilities of our own: to invest in the hard power that the President instinctively shies away from exercising, to commit to allies that fear being abandoned, and to address the requirements of long-term competition that becomes more difficult the longer America neglects its leading role.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, after I complete my remarks, the following is going to be the schedule of speakers on the floor before the rollcall vote. It is a bipartisan agreement. I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled vote: Senator LANKFORD of Oklahoma for up to 30 minutes; Senator MURRAY

of Washington, up to 10 minutes; Senator SINEMA of Arizona, up to 15 minutes; and Senator SCHUMER for up to 5 minutes.

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

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened to the statements that were made this afternoon on the floor of the Senate, and there were some omissions of fact which need to be reminded to the people who are following.

It was 4 months ago when we faced a deadline to come up with assistance for Ukraine. You know what has been going on there for 2 years: a war fought by the most courageous people I know—the Ukrainians—against the invasion of Vladimir Putin.

The United States, NATO allies, and many others have been standing behind Ukrainians, and we knew that they needed additional resources to continue the battle this year.

Four months ago, the President put together a supplemental appropriations bill for that purpose. It also addressed the situation in the Middle East, the Far East, and the looming humanitarian crises around the world, including Gaza, that needed to be addressed.

We wanted to move on this on a timely basis, but there was an objection. The objection came from the other side of the aisle, Republican Senators who said: You need to include border security. What is happening on our southern border cannot be ignored.

We discussed it for a period of time and then agreed with them. We were going to work together on a bipartisan basis, Republicans and Democrats, to change what was happening on America's southern border to make us safe and to bring order to the situation.

Several of our colleagues were chosen to engage in the negotiations for this issue.

This is a tough issue. Any issue involving immigration is extremely difficult. That is why it has been over 30 years since Congress has passed immigration reform, when we know that the body of laws that governs our immigration and our border needed attention long ago.

Three Senators, very diverse Senators, were chosen to negotiate an agreement if they could. They were led by Senator LANKFORD, JAMES LANKFORD, Republican of Oklahoma, who was chosen by the Republican Senate caucus to be their negotiator. Several of my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle assured me that he had worked hard at it, understood the issue, and was prepared to accept this challenge and responsibility. So Senator LANKFORD led in that regard. Two other Senators—Senator SINEMA of Arizona, who is characterized as an Independent Senator at this point in her career, and Senator CHRIS MURPHY of Connecticut were the second and third Senators who sat down and started negotiating together.

They put together a package. It took them 4 months. We had to postpone the negotiations for Christmas and for other breaks that were normal in the Senate calendar. But they were given wide berth to come up with an agreement, a bipartisan agreement, and it was announced last Sunday.

Senator SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, released it on Sunday and said: I will heed the advice of Senators from both sides of the aisle that Members should have 72 hours to review this document before they have to vote on it.

The vote we are talking about this afternoon is that vote, more than 72 hours after this proposed bill was released.

What did this bill do that would gain the support of the Democratic and Republican Senators who were negotiating? What it did was to address many issues—primarily border issues—that related to security.

The current situation on our border is unsustainable. We are being overwhelmed by the number of people who are showing up in record numbers. That reflects several things—a refugee crisis around the world.

Those of you who watched “60 Minutes” this week noticed that there were people from China who are now coming to our southern border to come into the United States. No one anticipated that when we talked about the asylum laws several years ago, but that is a fact of life. People are coming from all around the world to come to our southern border, and they are overwhelming the resources of that border.

This bill—this agreed-to bill, this bipartisan bill—that is being considered here this afternoon was an effort by both sides to limit the number of people coming across the border at any given time. It gave new authority to the President of the United States to cap and limit the number of people crossing the border at a given time.

When those on the other side say we don't need this bill, that is legislative authority the President currently doesn't have, and it was included. There were billions of dollars of investment in technology to stop the flow of not only those who are undocumented and illegal but also the flow of fentanyl into the United States, just to name two major features of this bill. It had many provisions hammered out over months of negotiations.

Those of us who came back this week said we were finally going to do something on the border, and the good news is, it is bipartisan. Senator LANKFORD has signed off on it, and the other two Senators, representing the Democratic side of the aisle, signed off on it as well. We were prepared to see this pass and hope for the best in the House of Representatives.

Then the bottom dropped out. One thing happened that we didn't anticipate. One person in America came out against the proposal. One person said to the Republican Senators: Sorry, no

matter what you agreed to, it is unacceptable. Blame it on me, he said, but we are not going to have a bipartisan agreement on the border. This is unacceptable.

That one person is Donald Trump. He made that announcement at that point. Many of the Republicans who had indicated interest in this measure walked away from it, and today, I am afraid we are going to see that in the vote. It is really sad when you consider what is at stake, the lives that are at stake all across the United States. People who are trying to come to this country with good intentions and good purposes and would make us a better nation are being caught up in this political battle.

So when Senator SCHUMER comes to the floor and expresses his disappointment, he speaks for the entire Senate Democratic caucus. We are disappointed that we came up with a bipartisan bill with Senator LANKFORD, who has been a stalwart in this whole experience. He has shown principle and values and negotiated in good faith. He produced a bipartisan bill, and we are prepared to vote for it this afternoon.

The sad reality is that the assistance to Ukraine, which was one of the original reasons for this conversation, is still in doubt. I hope at the end of the day that the Democrats can lead the way, with the Republicans, and provide the survival assistance absolutely necessary for the people in Ukraine. They are watching carefully.

At the end of next week, a group of us will be going to the Munich Security Conference in Germany. It is held each year. It is a bipartisan delegation. We go to speak for the United States. What we have to say to our European allies will depend on the votes that will follow today, the first and the second vote. Will we stand by Ukraine or will we walk away from it and let Vladimir Putin have his dream of an expansion of the former Soviet system? I hope not.

The people in Ukraine deserve better. We need to stand together with them. There is much to be said as to what this means to the rest of the world, but we have been reminded by our NATO allies, who have been loyal to a fault so far—and I hope they continue to be—that we can't walk away from that situation without inviting disastrous consequences around the world.

I am afraid that if we walk away from Ukraine, they will struggle to survive. And I hope they do, but it will be a real struggle. In the meantime, it heartens Vladimir Putin and our adversaries around the world to see us waiver when it comes to staying with the Ukrainian people.

I hope that vote this afternoon—that both votes are in a positive way, that we can take that message to the rest of the world that we are still there.

I also want to say that it is hard to imagine that the party of Ronald Reagan and John McCain—the party that claimed to take a strong stand

against communism—just played right into the hands of former KGB apparatchik Vladimir Putin's hand. That is right—the same Putin who called the collapse of Soviet tyranny “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.”

Putin and his Iranian and North Korean enablers are trying to roll back Western democracy and restore Soviet glory, and the front of the line is Ukraine, where the United States and European allies have helped these heroic Ukrainians to repel the Russian invasion.

What is Putin's strategy after suffering staggering losses in equipment and personnel? To bet that the United States will allow partisanship to interfere with its support of Ukraine and hope that former President Trump returns to the White House. That is Putin's dream.

Just as we learned when it came to the agreement—the bipartisan agreement—on border security, Donald Trump has made it clear that he opposes this continuing assistance to Ukraine.

You may recall that in 2018, Trump stood next to Putin in Helsinki and said he believed Putin's denials about interfering in our election, while Putin smirked at the podium.

By failing to pass national security funding, we would be playing into Putin's hands.

Many congressional Republicans have spoken loudly about defending Ukraine and the NATO alliance. They have traveled to NATO summits and even Munich security conferences to support this mission. They have also visited Ukraine, followed by press conferences with belligerent claims that President Biden just wasn't doing enough. But today, the fate of Ukraine hangs in the balance on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

It seems too many of my colleagues have collectively cowered to Donald Trump, who wants to tank the supplemental funding agreement for his own cynical reasons. Is that who congressional Republicans are going to entrust with stopping Russian aggression? Make no mistake, it is not only Putin watching and savoring this failure to act; it is Iran, China, North Korea, and others.

I think of the late John McCain and how he would look at the situation on the Republican side of the aisle today. He was a fierce critic throughout his life of Russian tyranny, especially Putin's tyranny. He was the target of Putin's early sanctions, as many of us were as well. John McCain took that as a badge of pride, and I do too.

It is time we show the same courage here in Congress and make sure that we pass emergency national security funding. Last I checked, protecting democracy and safeguarding American security were bipartisan causes, and they should be still.

I would like to make one last point. It is hard for me to see us visit this

issue of immigration and not mention an issue that has been near and dear to me for more than two decades.

Today, I want to tell you the story of a Dreamer, Dr. Jacqueline Solis. Hers is the 139th Dreamer story I have told on the floor of the Senate. Jacqueline was born in Peru and immigrated to this country when she was 10. She wanted to become a doctor. She didn't think it was possible because she was undocumented.

Twelve years ago, in response to a bipartisan request from myself and the late Senator Richard Lugar, President Obama established DACA Program. It has protected more than 800,000 young people like Jacqueline. Thanks to DACA, she was able to attend medical school. I am proud to say that last year, she graduated from Loyola University Chicago's Stritch School of Medicine, the first medical school to accept DACA applicants. She is now completing her pediatrics residency at Emory University Hospital. DACA allowed her to come out of the shadows and give back to the country she grew up in, the country she loves: the United States of America. She hopes to be an agent of change in her community where she mentors medical students and first-generation, low-income students. One of her goals is to open a mobile clinic where she could drive to different communities and help patients.

Ask yourself: Would America be better off if Dr. Jacqueline Solis and Dreamers like her were unable to work in the United States? Still, 20 years later, we are trying our best to make sure these young people have a fighting chance to be part of America's future.

Last September, a Federal judge in Texas declared the DACA program illegal, though the decision left in place protections for current DACA recipients while the appeal is pending. These young people live in fear that the next court decision will upend their lives. That would be a disaster.

When we get on the subject of immigration, the border is critical. It is important. I want to be part of that conversation. Please, don't forget the Dreamers, and don't forget so many people who have proven over and over again that they are our future and our strength, if given that chance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to use a prop during this speech.

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

Mr. LANKFORD. In about an hour, this body will gather. There will be 100 Senators here to make a decision about what we are going to do to take a step on border security. It is an issue that has bedeviled, quite frankly, this body for decades. It has been three decades since we passed anything into law to be able to change border security.

In the meantime, administration after administration has pieced to-

gether broken pieces of law in the disjointing pieces and tried to make regulatory actions to see what they can do to be able to change the direction of the country.

We have seen just over the last 10 or 15 years what really happened to that. This is just an encounter number from CBP; and we can look back to 2009, and we can see the numbers stayed about half a million or so for multiple years.

This is through the Obama administration. They struggled because the numbers were lower than this even before. They struggled with half a million numbers. We see during the Trump administration how the numbers bump up and jump up here almost to a million in a single year, twice as many as it was during the Obama time period. Then we see COVID time period, it dives back down. Then right there is the transition in President Biden's time, and the numbers have skyrocketed. They doubled from the Biden administration to this year in the Trump administration, but then they tripled even from the highest year of the Trump administration during the Biden administration.

It wasn't a single bump year like it was under the Trump administration. It has been year after year after year. By the way, this little one is this fiscal year. That is just since October—which by the way, you will notice in the last 4 months is higher than any year under the Obama administration and almost as high as the peak year under the Trump administration, and that is 4 months so far this year.

Americans feel it. We feel it in our cities. We feel it in our schools and our communities. We see the television, and we see all of the chaos on our southern border. Cities around the country have said: Do something. Make this stop.

Americans, whether they are Republican, Democrat, or Independent, are all unanimous on this issue: This is a problem that needs to be solved; do what you can.

Today, we get to decide if we are going to do that or not; if we are going to do nothing or do something. The bill that has been put together has been a bipartisan effort. Welcome to the U.S. Senate. That is what we have to do. While I have people from around the country and back home that say: Do a Republican-only bill; just get all of our priorities and none of theirs. I smile at them and say: Welcome to governance. You can do a partisan bill in the House, but in the Senate, we have to look at each other across the aisle and then figure out a way to be able to solve this. Sometimes it is in committees; sometimes it is a gathering; sometimes it was like this time: Get Members together—Republican, Independent, Democratic—to be able to sit down and hash out the issues; to say this is a problem, we all agree. We are not going to agree on the solutions, necessarily, but we all agree this is a problem. But we have to figure out what the solutions might be.

That has been the process for the last 4 months—4 months—to sit down and hash through the very difficult, very technical issues of border security in our Nation with one goal: Let's make progress.

We understood from the beginning we are not going to solve everything. We are not. We knew from the beginning it is not going to be perfect. But we also knew the status quo is untenable. We have to do something to be able to make the status quo better. So that is what we worked towards—to be able to change where we are now.

The product we put out this past weekend allowed everybody to see it. Quite frankly, I had some of my colleagues that said: I will need weeks to evaluate it because it is so technical. And it is. But some, literally within minutes, said: No, I don't agree.

Fine. But after time to be able to review it, the National Border Patrol Council—the group that is actually on the ground trying to manage the chaos—they read through the bill and evaluated it. And the National Border Patrol Council gave this statement:

[The Border Patrol Act of 2024] will give U.S. Border Patrol agents authorities codified, in law, that we have not had in the past.

While not perfect—

And I will agree with them on that.

—the Border Patrol Act of 2024 is a step in the right direction and is far better than the current status quo. This is why the National Border Patrol Council endorses this bill and hopes for its quick passage.

I understand this: In this building and in the 202 area code that is Washington, DC, border security is a political issue. But if we leave the 202 area code, everywhere else in the country, this is not a political issue; it is a national security issue. And when you actually go to the Border Patrol Council, those that see the chaos day-to-day, they are saying: Send us some help; send us anything.

Quite frankly, Americans are frustrated and angry because our borders are open. They have seen the record numbers in the last 4 months. They know full well what is happening. The "60 Minutes" story from this last weekend was about Chinese nationals using TikTok to be able to find the holes in the fence and to be able to navigate it; how to be able to connect with Mexican cartel members to be able to navigate in through Mexico to be able to get through. Why is that such a big story? Because we used to rarely have Chinese nationals come across our border. But yet, last year, we had 37,000 Chinese nationals come across our border—37,000.

Americans watched the story of a group of migrants in New York City ruthlessly beating up a police officer this past week. And then see they were released again. They are angry. They are frustrated. The stories that have come out in the news recently of three child sex traffickers who had attempted reentry back into the United States make Americans go: Hold on.

Just a few days ago, there was a story coming out of an al-Shabaab—terrorists on our Terror Watchlist—that had come across our border and had been released just early last year. They then picked them up while they were in Minnesota just a few weeks ago.

We have had 50 people that have been identified on the Terror Watchlist that we did apprehend in just the last 4 months. We have had tens of thousands of people in the last year that were identified by this administration as individuals who were what they call special interest aliens. By definition, they are a national security risk. There are tens of thousands that we didn't know their name, in particular, but we know that where they live is in an area of high national security risk because the high terrorism rate is coming from that area. We have no criminal history on them to be able to identify them on our Terror Watchlist, but we know there is a high chance they are a national security risk.

Those individuals were released into the country. Americans feel it. They want something different. The Americans that I talk to, the Oklahomans that I talk to don't mind legal immigration. In fact, they celebrate legal immigration. They just don't want illegal immigration.

They want an orderly process. They want to know that the rule of law still matters in America. That is what they want to know. They want to know their American way of life is protected, and that should not be too much to demand.

This very divided Nation brings to us a very divided Congress. Currently, we have a Republican two-vote majority in the House of Representatives and a Democrat one-vote majority in the U.S. Senate. It doesn't get much closer than that to being equally divided in two bodies.

But that means, if we are going to solve something, we have to sit down together and solve it. That is how it works when you make law. You can do press conferences without the other side, but you can't make law without the other side in the U.S. Senate. So we have to sit down and work things out.

In October, when Israel was ruthlessly attacked with a terrorist attack by Hamas, the President of the United States came to Congress and said: We need additional funding to help Israel, to help Ukraine, to help with the threats in Taiwan, and additional money for our southern border.

Republicans responded by saying: We are not going to help give money to the southern border—by the way, especially for some of the funding that they asked for on the southern border, like safe migration offices to be able to help facilitate greater traffic to the United States.

We said: We are not going to do that. We are not going to give additional money to the southern border unless we get a change in law and policy.

That is not a radical concept, quite frankly. The House of Representatives, last year, passed a very comprehensive bill on border security that they call H.R. 2. It was one of their priorities. Do you know why? Because the House of Representatives, at that time, said: We need a change in law. So they brought a bill to change the law for that.

We said the same thing: We need a change in law because it is significant what has occurred, and we need to address it.

The frightening thing is, since we started meeting in a bipartisan way in October, October was the highest number of illegal crossings of any October in our history. November was the highest number of illegal crossings of any November in our history. December was the highest number of illegal crossings of any December in our history and the highest single month in history of illegal crossings, including having the highest single day ever in the history of our country in illegal crossings: Over 12,000 in a single day.

That is what has happened just since we have been negotiating this bill trying to be able to get to a solution. The problem has not gotten better. It has gotten worse during that time period. We need to solve this. The worst-case scenario is the status quo. We need to solve it.

So we came up with a bill. It doesn't have everything in it I wanted. It doesn't have everything in it my Democratic colleagues wanted. But it definitely makes a difference.

What is in this bill?

Well, here is what the bill includes. Let me just walk through some of the high points of it. It includes more border wall construction, under the 18-foot, 30-foot bollard-style definition, in locations, actually, that were set by President Trump in those locations to actually build a wall.

It has 50,000 detention beds. So it ends our catch-and-release issue. So especially single adults, as they are coming across, the vast majority end up being held while they are being screened there, rather than just released into the country as they are now.

We doubled the deportation flights. We added money for DNA testing. We added money for additional State, local, and private law enforcement that we are partnering with along the border to be able to help with the enforcement process there.

We have a tremendous increase in the number of ICE agents, the number of Border Patrol agents, more asylum officers, more immigration judges.

We added detection equipment at our ports of entry to interdict fentanyl, one of the biggest threats to our Nation right now.

And we increased the sanction authority for the U.S. Government to be able to sanction those ruthless cartels and members of cartels and those that facilitate them to be able to go after the fentanyl issue in the United States.

It has a pretty radical change in asylum law in it. It strengthens significantly the standard of evidence for declaring asylum. Today, people who are crossing the border can literally cross and say: "I have fear in my country." When they say those magic words, they are released into the country—the vast majority of them—for up to 10 years, while they await their screening or hearing. That would end under this bill.

We increase significantly the standard for evidence. We add three new eligibility bars at the beginning of it so we get to a faster screening process and, for those who are not eligible, a faster deportation.

It is somewhat of a "Where's Waldo?" game on a day-to-day basis on our southern border, as we have thousands of people coming through. Some of those individuals do qualify for asylum, but most of them do not. So our goal was to be able to filter through quickly, identify those who qualify, and deport all of them who do not.

We have a faster structure to process aliens when they cross the border, in detention or nondetained, either one, so they don't end up in the 10-year backlog awaiting their decision—both for those who qualify for asylum, so they don't wait 10 years, and those that everyone knows, from the beginning, they don't qualify for asylum, they are turned around and deported immediately.

This ends the abuse of parole that is happening on our southern border today. Today, the administration will identify 1,500 people, will give them parole authority at one of our ports of entry and a work permit the first day they come.

They don't have to qualify for asylum. They don't even have to apply for asylum. It is literally an open invitation for anyone anywhere in the world to get a work permit if you will just tell us in advance you are coming. It is not lawful. It is just happening. This bill would end that.

This bill also has a short-term, 3-year authority to quickly stop the flow of people coming into our country right now.

I had a lot of my colleagues on the Republican side that said: Whatever we pass will never be implemented by the Biden administration. We have got to do something, though, right now, to be able to get things to change, because everyone knows this is occurring not because of some migration trends around the world but because right there, President Biden announced, "I am not going to build any more wall," and he dropped all the authorities that had been used not just by President Trump but by Presidents Trump and Obama. He dropped them, and we saw this skyrocket.

So everyone said: Whatever we pass, President Biden will never use. So whatever you can put in there to be able to actually make sure this occurs, please do.

So we did. We included a border emergency authority that said if we ever exceed 5,000 people—which, by the way, is every day but 7 in the last 4 months—if we ever exceed 5,000 people and we are at chaos level, the border shuts down completely. It is not optional; it is mandatory.

And when I say "shut down," it is pretty simple. What happens for the first 5,000? Let me make it clear. For the first 5,000 people who are coming across, they are detained, they are screened, and then deported. If you get above 5,000, we are in such a chaotic moment that we don't have time. So we just detain and deport them. There is no screening at all because we have run out of time. We don't have the manpower to do it. That is the shift that occurs.

It is not that the first 5,000 are released. That is ridiculous. The first 5,000 we detain, we screen, and then we deport. The second, if we get above 5,000, we just detain and deport. And when the border is closed down, it is closed down for weeks, where we are not even screening for weeks until we get caught up. It was something that we could implement right now and to be able to make a difference.

We also changed the funding process on this. There are items that the President really wanted on some of the funding. So we said: We are fine on that funding, as long as you don't get that funding until you actually get more detention beds, get more deportation flights, hire more ICE officers, hire more Border Patrol, and actually implement the new policy. When you do that, then you get all of the money that you are actually looking for in the other areas.

We wanted to make sure that, actually, this was going to be implemented. So we included that in the bill today. That is what we have on the floor today, and I am afraid of what I have heard some people say: It is not enough.

So we will make a decision soon. Let me just say this. I have listened to a lot of my colleagues in the last several days, as well I should. I have listened for months. Some people legitimately want more time to read the bill. I will tell you it is 370 pages. It is incredibly technical. And I have had several colleagues say: I started to read it, and it makes my head hurt to read it because immigration law is very complicated.

So they are going through it, and they said: Hey, I am interested in supporting this. I just need more time.

Some of those folks are going to vote no today because they legitimately need more time. I completely understand that.

There are some folks who are voting no today because they have policy differences on the bill. We have asylum officers that are empowered to make decisions; they want immigration judges to make it. OK, that is a policy difference on it.

Some folks don't like that we have visas that are in this. That increases

legal immigration—not illegal, legal immigration—in the country. There are some folks that don't want any immigration of any type. Well, fine, we can have that policy difference. I don't mind legal immigration. I just don't want illegal immigration.

Some of them may have policy differences. Some of them have been very clear with me that they have political differences with the bill. They say it is the wrong time to solve the problem, or let the Presidential election solve this problem.

In fact, I had a popular commentator, 4 weeks ago, that I talked to, that told me flat out, before they knew any of the contents of the bill—any of the contents, nothing was out at that point—that told me flat out: If you try to move a bill that solves the border crisis during this Presidential year, I will do whatever I can to destroy you, because I do not want you to solve this during the Presidential election.

By the way, they have been faithful to their promise and have done everything they can to destroy me in the past several weeks.

There are other folks that read the Facebook posts and the Twitter posts and saw different facts that they thought might be true, but I have personally told them over and over again they are false. And it has been hard to overcome.

For some reason, we still believe everything we read on the internet, and it has been hard to be able to break through. A few weeks ago, I posted one of my favorite quotes from Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who was a preacher from England in the 1850s, where he once said:

A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth gets its boots on.

And it couldn't have proved to be more true than this. I have seen posts like, "There is amnesty in this bill," so that people are adamantly opposed that there is amnesty in the bill.

I would say that some of my Democratic colleagues wanted to have some amnesty in this bill, but there wasn't, and there is not anything on amnesty in this bill.

I have heard folks say it weakens our asylum laws, when it actually does the opposite. It far strengthens our asylum laws, so we can get to actual asylees faster, and those who are gaming the system are turned around.

I have had folks say it takes away the "Remain in Mexico" policy so they can never come back. It does nothing of that at all—nothing of that.

I have had folks say it gives away work permits the very first day, which will incentivize more people to come, when it actually does exactly the opposite. It actually removes the 1,500 work permits that are passed out every day and says we are not going to do that.

And my favorite one has been: It lets 5,000 aliens in every single day from here on out forever.

And I have just said that is completely absurd. Why would anyone—

anyone—sign a bill, approve a bill, or present a bill that locks us into this chaos. That is what we have now. The 5,000 piece was very simple. If we get to 5,000 a day, we can't process that many people anymore. It is a critical emergency. We break glass and say we are not even going to try to do hearings anymore. Everybody has got to turn around. Everything is shut down so we can make sure that we can actually legally process people. We are detaining, screening, and deporting until we get to a break-glass moment, and then we are not even screening anymore. We are just detaining and deporting because we can't manage the numbers.

But that is not what has been told. What has been told has been false day after day.

And then, as I have mentioned, I have had a few folks that have said: If I can't get everything, I want nothing.

I don't find most Americans are that way just in their day-to-day life. We have high goals and aspirations as Americans, and, quite frankly, I don't blame Americans for being really angry and frustrated about where we are at the border—really angry and frustrated.

But what I hear from most Oklahomans is: Do something. Don't just sit there. Do something. Make progress. But don't allow this to keep going. Stop it where you can. So that is what we worked do.

Now, to be clear, President Biden has authorities he could have used that he has chosen not to. Authorities that President Trump used, authorities that President Obama used, President Biden has chosen not to use. There are a lot of them. And for whatever reason, he has turned his head away from the chaos that America is focused on, and he needs to do what he can to solve this problem.

But we also need to make changes in law. Our asylum law is weak. Everyone knows this. In fact, when President Trump was President, he even made the statements about how weak our laws are on asylum. When President Trump was President, he said, "We do a very good job considering the laws are so bad. They are not archaic; they are incompetent. It is not that they are old; they are just bad."

Well, guess what this bill does. Fixes that because the laws have a gap, and we should actually fix those things.

What the President cannot do is change the asylum laws. He cannot change the faster deportations for people crossing. He cannot add an emergency authority like this. He cannot conduct faster hearings with limited appeals so we can get to deporting people who are not legal here and addressing those who are. We can't do that without a change in law, so we need to change the law.

I am going to vote yes to be able to move on to this bill. So we need a change in the law. I understand we have differences, but we have got to sit down together, figure out how we are

going to solve problems because the American people sent us here to do that.

This is the pen that I was handed at that desk when I was sworn into the U.S. Senate, and I signed a book that was at that desk with this pen because I was becoming a U.S. Senator because the people at home sent me here to get stuff done and to solve problems. There is no reason for me to have this pen if we are just going to do press conferences. I can do press conferences from anywhere, but we can only make law from this room. And to do that, you need one of these pens, and there are 100 of them in this room, and 60 of us have to agree to solve a problem.

And I am determined to sit down with anyone who wants to solve the problem, regardless of what side of the aisle that they are on, to figure out how we solve these things because Americans are ticked off that this is not resolved, and they expect us to get things done. So why don't we do that?

I have two staff members named Sarah Seitz and Jacob Stubbs, who have worked their tails off for 4 months. They gave up Thanksgiving; they gave up Christmas; they gave up New Year's to work on this. They are remarkable leaders. But it is not just about the time they gave up and the wisdom that they have as leaders, their focus on that was to solve a problem that at the end of this day, may still be a problem unsolved. And tomorrow, we will probably have 6,500 people illegally cross our border just like what is happening right now, today—6,500 people.

Americans want that stopped. So let's actually sit down and figure out how we are going to stop it together.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I come to speak before the vote today, but I do hope that all of my colleagues heard the Senator from Oklahoma, heard his powerful words, especially the last several minutes, and pause and think about it. They were critically important for each one of us to think about, and I thank the Senator for all of his work on this and for his powerful statement just now.

But if you want to understand why people can't stand politics, watch how many Republicans vote against this bill. Some of my colleagues do not seem to understand this is not a game. There is a war happening right now in Ukraine where our allies are being gunned down and Putin is rolling his tanks into their homeland. There is a war happening right now between Israel and Hamas. There are civilians at this very moment caught in the crossfire. There are partners in the Indo-Pacific wondering if they can count on us. And let's not forget, there is the border, the site of countless Republican photo ops, where we have a genuine need of reforms and resources.

That is the moment we are in. That is the moment that this package is

meant to address. And by voting it down, Republicans will be telling our allies, our word cannot be trusted; telling dictators like Putin that our threats are not serious; telling the world, American leadership has been hollowed out by Republican obstructionism. And let's be clear, they will be telling the American people they don't want to solve the crisis at the border; they want to campaign on it because if you genuinely believe something is a crisis, you take any step you can to address it. You don't let a fire burn because Donald Trump wants to campaign on ashes.

We have heard a lot of talk from Republicans about the border, about countering the Chinese Government, about supporting Israel and standing up to Putin. But governing is about action. Governing is about compromise. Governing is about standing behind your word in order to solve problems.

And I am sorry to say that despite the talks from many Republicans about continuing to support Ukraine, they have yet to join us in actually voting for serious aid for Ukraine since last Congress.

As the minority leader admitted yesterday, this was all because his side, Republicans, insisted—insisted—Ukraine aid be tied to border policies—a standard, by the way, that they have not applied to any of our other allies and one that tells every country who would partner with us that you better hope you don't become leverage for an unrelated, partisan demand.

It was an absurd request. I have said so from the start. But a lot hangs in the balance, so Democrats listened to them and took them at their word and have been glued to the negotiating table in order to address this problem, and I want to thank, from the bottom of my heart, my colleagues—to Senator SINEMA, to Senator LANKFORD, to Senator MURPHY—they worked so long and hard to hammer out a deal on border policies, one that is, quite frankly, more conservative than many of us would have liked, including myself.

But I worked tirelessly with my vice chair, the senior Senator from Maine, to ensure that the border resources were there to help address this problem. And through listening and compromising and working together in good faith, we reached a bipartisan agreement to fund the border policies that others negotiated.

And now after saying they had to have both of these in the package in order to support it, Republicans are now poised to kill it. Republicans went from "We demand border policy changes" to "No policy is needed." They went from "We need time to look at this bill" to "Dead on arrival" in less than 24 hours. They went from "The border is a crisis right now" to "It can wait until November," in the blink of an eye—and will not support the bipartisan policy nor the bipartisan funding.

What changed? What changed? Well, Donald Trump ordered Republicans to

kill the bipartisan border deal. Trump has not been subtle. He has literally said: "Please blame it on me," if this deal goes down in flames, and there is no action on the border.

And we are going to see today just how many Republicans fall in line, and it may well be most of them. But I would remind my colleagues, the American people are the ones who sent us here, not Donald Trump. They are the ones we should answer to, not Donald Trump. And I think we all know the folks back home sent us here to solve problems—to solve problems—not to block bipartisan solutions. They want us to work together. They want us to make progress, even when it isn't perfect.

And, frankly, if that doesn't convince you to support this bill, if you are still thinking about what is good politics, not good policy, I still don't know why you would listen to Donald Trump because solving problems, that is good politics. Maintaining America's national security, that is good politics.

So I hope all of my Republican colleagues will think about this vote carefully. How long will you give Donald Trump a permanent veto over whatever policy he decides he doesn't like or isn't helpful to him personally? I have to ask: What is the point of being a Senator if you let Donald Trump make all of the decisions for you?

It wasn't so long ago that Donald Trump incited an actual insurrection. We all had to flee or we barricaded ourselves into our offices. Did any of my colleagues on the other side think you would let that same man dictate what policy you could or couldn't even debate? It was just 3 short years ago that some of you, on the other side, voted—and many of us voted—to remove Trump from office.

So I ask my colleagues: Please listen when I say today is a critical vote. Today is a day to decide. Today is a vote about whether we, as U.S. Senators, will keep our word when we negotiate with each other. Today is a day we, as U.S. Senators, will vote to show we will work together to stand up for American interests and national security at home and abroad. And today is a day we, as Senators, show the world we are a country that stands behind our word and stands with our allies and works past politics to do what is right for this country and the people we were sent here to represent.

I hope my colleagues will think about that long and hard, and then I sincerely hope they will do the right thing and abandon the MAGA politics.

There is so much work we have left to do together moving forward, and you should all know me well enough to know I am always ready to work together, not against one another. So even if this vote fails, I am determined to not let partisanship win the day. We are going to try again to pass a package that gets our allies the aid they so desperately need, and I hope before we get to that, that every Senator in this

body listens to what the Senator from Oklahoma said and pauses and thinks about what their word means to the people who sent them here to do the right thing for our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Ms. SINEMA. I stand here today as the border crisis is devastating my State. Just last week, Nogales officers seized 2.1 million fentanyl pills at a port of entry. Just last week, Border Patrol agents recovered in the Tucson desert enough fentanyl to kill 340,000 Americans. Just last week, nearly 14,000 migrants crossed into Arizona—many of them are military-aged men coming from all across the globe.

Our broken border system is a national security crisis. Last September, when my Republican colleagues demanded, with a clear and unified voice, that border security must be included in Congress's national security package, I wholeheartedly agreed. Finally, it seemed, we had the opportunity to solve the nightmare my State has lived for over 40 years.

So I got to work. My Republican colleagues chose Senator JAMES LANKFORD, my partner on the Homeland Security Border Management Subcommittee. We have worked together for over 5 years on strong border policy. Senator LANKFORD has joined me at the Arizona border to see the crisis firsthand. Senator LANKFORD is an incredibly smart, earnest, conservative lawmaker. I know he was chosen by his conference because of his expertise and knowledge of border security policy and his reputation as a serious conservative lawmaker who cares deeply about getting policy right.

As we started the negotiation, Senator LANKFORD laid out four policy pillars the Republican conference needed to secure the border.

No. 1, asylum. Raise the asylum standard and close the loopholes so cartels and economic migrants can no longer exploit the system.

No. 2, safe third country. Ensure that people who have lived safely in another country don't backlog our system because they do not qualify for asylum.

No. 3, close the border. Create a title 42-like authority to shut down the border when our system is backlogged and overwhelmed.

No. 4, parole. Stop the administration from giving migrants at the border a free pass into our country.

Over the course of nearly 5 months, we worked every single day navigating the intricate and difficult policy decisions to meet these four pillars. And when we hit bumps, I reminded everyone at the table about what was happening on the ground at my border—what real life looks like in Arizona—because I knew that those four key pillars were necessary to secure the border and solve the crisis.

That is why, just yesterday when endorsing our bill, Yuma Mayor Doug Nicholls said:

Thank you . . . for incorporating many of the specific issues that border leaders have asked to be addressed.

So together with Senators LANKFORD and MURPHY and our incredibly talented staffs, including my staff director on the Border Management Subcommittee, Anthony Papiian, who is here today, we worked through weekends and through holidays to get these policies right. Senator MURPHY, Senator LANKFORD, and I—we all negotiated in good faith.

We delivered. We produced a bill many thought impossible. Our bill overhauls the broken system. It stops the misuse of parole, and it closes the border during surges, ensuring the quick detention and deportation of migrants who don't have a legal right to be here. We end catch-and-release. We add more detention beds. We increase deportation flights. We quickly decide asylum claims. We put Border Patrol back in the desert catching the bad guys and the drugs.

That is why the National Border Patrol Council endorses our bill, not H.R. 2. We produced a bill that finally, after decades of all talk and no action, secures the border and solves the border crisis.

Our bill was ready for prime time. We were ready to bring the bill to the floor, open it up for debate and amendments—you know, how the Senate is supposed to work—and then pass the bill.

But less than 24 hours after we released the bill, my Republican colleagues changed their minds. Turns out they want all talk and no action. It turns out border security is not actually a risk to our national security; it is just a talking point for the election.

After all of their cable news appearances, after all those campaign photo ops in the desert, after all those trips to the border, this crisis isn't actually much of a crisis after all.

Sunday morning, there was a real crisis at the border. Monday morning, that crisis magically disappeared.

Well, guess what, guys. The crisis is real.

It is real in Arizona. On Sunday, the day we released our bill, over 6,000 migrants crossed the border. On Monday, the day this body decided the border crisis was no longer a crisis, over 6,500 migrants crossed the border. And yesterday, the day the Republican conference Members said that we are not going to pass a border bill, the day my colleagues said no, nearly 7,000 migrants crossed the border.

The border emergency authority in our border bill would have shut the border down, literally, every single day this year.

Now, I have been sharing the facts of our bill to anyone who would listen. I have refuted the lie that says our bill allows 5,000 migrants to enter the country every day. In fact, our bill stops those migrants from coming into the country every day.

Meanwhile, by killing our bill, we have no title 42-like authority to shut

down the border. So, 5,000, 6,000, 7,000, 10,000, or even 14,000 migrants can cross into our country every single day.

Make no mistake—a vote against this bill is a vote for the status quo. It is a vote for continued chaos at our border.

Our current system lets migrants into the country with nothing but a piece of paper—a notice to appear for a court day years into the future and no accountability structure to ensure they actually show up.

In Arizona, this broken system is commonly called catch-and-release. It has been happening for years.

Our bill ends catch-and-release. But when this bill fails, catch-and-release will continue every single day.

Some people say the President has all the authority he needs to secure the border. Then, tell me why Arizona has lived the nightmare of our border crisis for over 40 years and through the past five administrations—Republican and Democratic? Before COVID, the last administration tried to shut down the border. The courts stopped it. After COVID, the courts struck down title 42.

It is clear: We need a law.

I have heard from some that the only solution is the House Republican bill, H.R. 2. To them, I'd point out that our bill, unlike H.R. 2, actually includes penalties for those who try to cross the border when it is shut down, creating a 1-year bar for anyone who tries to cross twice. H.R. 2? No consequences.

H.R. 2 continues the current flawed policy that allows migrants to get work permits without any asylum interview. Our bill ends that. That is why the conservative Wall Street Journal Editorial Board called our bill the most restrictive migrant legislation in decades.

We make sure only those actually fleeing violence and persecution can stay here and work, after they pass a new, faster, tougher screening.

And if someone doesn't finish the asylum process, their work permit gets taken away. H.R. 2? Silent.

H.R. 2 doesn't even fund new detention beds, guys. H.R. 2—another example of all talk and no action.

So 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. Take your political theater to Texas. Do not bring it to my State, because in Arizona, we are serious. We don't have time for your political games. We are not interested in you posing for the cameras.

In Arizona, we are busy. Just ask Cochise County ranchers David and Tina Thompson. They live in the reality of our broken border every time that migrants attempt to break into their home.

Ask Bisbee City Council member Leslie Johns, who had to open the doors of the town's city council building and clear out the chambers for migrants to sleep on the floor after they were released into a tiny town with no shelter and just one bus stop.

Or ask Yuma farmer John Boelts who does his best to manage his farm despite the lettuce crops constantly trampled by migrants crossing his produce fields.

Or ask Bernadette Nez, the manager of Why Not Travel convenience store in Why, AZ, who lost thousands of dollars every day before Christmas while the Lukeville port of entry was closed.

Or ask Sierra Vista Mayor Clea McCaa, who lays in bed at night scared that his teenage daughter could die in one of the daily, deadly high-speed chases of teenagers smuggling drugs and people from the border up to Phoenix and, next, into your State.

Or ask Bisbee Mayor Ken Budge, who is pleading with each and every one of you to understand how your political games hurt border towns like his. As he said yesterday:

I am saddened after all these months, now some Senators have second thoughts about this from both parties . . .

. . . I would like to ask any of them to reverse their roles and trade places with me. How they would like to live in my home as a helicopter circled my home at 6:30 in the morning for about an hour, as was the case today.

This is life in my border State. This is Arizona.

Earlier this week, it was noted that while facts on the border haven't changed, the politics in the country have changed.

I guess that is it. The politics changed.

Three weeks ago, everyone wanted to solve the border crisis. Yesterday, no one did.

For 4 months, we were stymied on action to support our allies and stand up to Putin's illegal war. For 4 months, we have been unable to move forward—unable to defend democracy overseas because of the urgent need to secure our border.

And then, suddenly, in the last 48 hours, the border no longer matters.

Some in this Chamber say: Let's just drop it. Hey, let's wait for the election. Let's sort this out in the next Congress. Let's move on.

Arizona can't move on.

You here can decide this crisis is over, but the crisis is still real in my State. And it will be tomorrow and the next day and the next day.

I usually end my speeches by calling on the better angels of our nature. When we work together, we can solve problems.

We did that here, and you decided no. You decided you don't even want to debate it. You don't want to amend it. You don't want to tackle the problem.

Partisanship won. The Senate has failed Arizona.

Shameful.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. First, I thank the Senator from Arizona for her strong, courageous, and heartfelt words.

Now, briefly, Madam President, Senators have a chance to show precisely where they stand: Are they for border security or are they not?

The choice is plain and simple, and this vote will show precisely who is serious about securing the border and who is not.

We hope our Republican colleagues, so many of whom know this is the right thing to do, will not bend to the wishes of Donald Trump, who only wants chaos.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Now, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 815 be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 30, H.R. 815, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Patty Murray, Benjamin L. Cardin, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Mark R. Warner, Michael F. Bennet, Catherine Cortez Masto, Margaret Wood Hassan, Richard J. Durbin, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Kyrsten Sinema, Jack Reed, Angus S. King, Jr., Richard Blumenthal, Christopher Murphy, Brian Schatz.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 815, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 49, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 39 Leg.]

YEAS—49

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Booker	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Butler	Kelly	Sinema
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Lankford	Tester
Casey	Lujan	Van Hollen
Collins	Manchin	Warner
Coons	Merkley	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Welch
Duckworth	Murphy	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Fetterman	Ossoff	
Gillibrand	Peters	

NAYS—50

Barrasso	Grassley	Risch
Blackburn	Hagerty	Rounds
Boozman	Hawley	Rubio
Braun	Hoeven	Sanders
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Budd	Johnson	Schumer
Capito	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Lee	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Markey	Sullivan
Cotton	Marshall	Thune
Cramer	McConnell	Tillis
Crapo	Menendez	Tuberville
Cruz	Moran	Vance
Daines	Mullin	Warren
Ernst	Padilla	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	Ricketts
Graham		Young

NOT VOTING—1

Lummis

(Ms. ROSEN assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 50.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to reconsider the vote whereby cloture was not invoked on the motion to proceed to H.R. 815, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

VOTE ON MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS).

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 40 Leg.]

YEAS—58

Baldwin	Fetterman	Menendez
Bennet	Gillibrand	Merkley
Blumenthal	Hassan	Moran
Booker	Heinrich	Murkowski
Brown	Hickenlooper	Murphy
Butler	Hirono	Murray
Cantwell	Kaine	Ossoff
Cardin	Kelly	Padilla
Carper	Kennedy	Peters
Casey	King	Reed
Collins	Klobuchar	Romney
Coons	Lujan	Rosen
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Schatz
Duckworth	Markey	Schumer
Durbin	McConnell	Shaheen

Sinema	Van Hollen	Whitehouse
Smith	Warner	Wyden
Stabenow	Warnock	Young
Tester	Warren	
Tillis	Welch	

NAYS—41

Barrasso	Ernst	Ricketts
Blackburn	Fischer	Risch
Boozman	Graham	Rounds
Braun	Grassley	Rubio
Britt	Hagerty	Sanders
Budd	Hawley	Schmitt
Capito	Hoeven	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Johnson	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Cramer	Lee	Tuberville
Crapo	Marshall	Vance
Cruz	Mullin	Wicker
Daines	Paul	

NOT VOTING—1

Lummis

The motion was agreed to. (Ms. BUTLER assumed the Chair.) (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. OSSOFF assumed the Chair.) The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, we have just finished the vote on the motion to reconsider. We will recess until tomorrow and give our Republican colleagues the night to figure themselves out. We will be coming back tomorrow at noon, and, hopefully, that will give the Republicans the time they need. We will have this vote tomorrow.

MORNING BUSINESS

REMEMBERING WILLIAM H. "BILL" NORTHEY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, this week, a dear friend of mine and the Grassley family passed away unexpectedly at age 64. A fourth-generation family farmer, Bill Northey was a son of the soil from Northwest Iowa, where Iowa Nice and a strong work ethic run through the bloodstreams in smalltown Iowa.

Bill graduated from Iowa State University in 1981 with an undergraduate degree in agricultural business. A quarter-century later, he earned a master of business administration from Southwest Minnesota State University. After graduating from Iowa State, Bill returned home to the family farm near Spirit Lake, IA, in Dickinson County. Here, Bill practiced what he preached. The Northey family farm implemented conservation-friendly farming practices, including reduced tillage, cover crops, and GPS on its corn and soybean acres.

At age 20, in the midst of the farm crisis in 1985, Bill was the only local farmer to show up at a meeting organized by the Iowa Corn Growers Association. Unbeknownst to Bill at the time, that meeting launched his public service career. He ran for the Iowa Corn Growers board and, later on, became president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association and the National Corn Growers Association.

His resume reflects his lifelong commitment to and champion for Iowa ag-

riculture. Bill cut his teeth in public service at the grassroots, where he served as a commissioner of the Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District and rose through the ranks of the Iowa Farm Bureau at the county and State levels. In 2006, he ran and won a statewide election to serve as Iowa Agriculture Secretary, where he served from 2007 to 2018. He served at the helm of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship for 11 years, winning reelection in 2010 and 2014. Under his leadership, Bill championed renewable fuels, a statewide voluntary water quality program and led Iowa producers through animal disease outbreaks, including the State's bird flu outbreak in 2014-2015 that has helped guide responses today to the highly contagious disease.

President Trump tapped Bill to serve as the first USDA Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation, where he served under Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue until 2021. Bill was caught in some crossfire over regional disputes related to the Renewable Fuel Standard. Without hesitation, I went toe-to-toe with Texas Senators in support of his nomination. Bill was highly qualified and deserving of the responsibility to serve in this leadership role for America's farmers. Bill never wavered in his patience and commitment to public service. He weathered the nomination storm with grace and self-sacrifice over an issue that is important to the farm economy, U.S. energy independence, national security, and the environment.

Once confirmed to the USDA post, Bill oversaw a division with 21,000 employees who worked across 3,000 locations. Traveling to 48 of 50 States, Bill expanded his agrarian horizons beyond the row crops of Middle America. But for Bill, there was no place like home. After leaving the USDA, Bill returned to Iowa and was hired to lead the Agribusiness Association of Iowa, an organization whose 1,100-plus membership supplies feed, seed, crop protection chemicals, grain, fertilizer, equipment, and more to support Iowa's agricultural supply chain across the State.

Bill was a natural leader. His decades of advocacy for Iowa agriculture came naturally. It was rooted bone-deep in his heritage as family farmer. A steward of the soil, Bill understood that a farmer's livelihood hinges on protecting natural resources and the whims of Mother Nature. He brought dirt-underneath-the-fingernails work experience to the policymaking table where his voice mattered. That was because Bill spoke with authority, with farm-calloused hands and the authenticity of a farmer's heart. He knew the challenges farmers faced from 1 year to the next. A soft-spoken leader, Bill had gravitational pull with the people he worked with and for the people he served. He was approachable, affable, and put in the work. A thoughtful leader, Bill was a problem-solver who led by example. As one of the architects of