

want to promote a sound border security policy, and we want to put an end to this crisis. We want to put an end to this crisis for the well-being of the people of the United States of America and my constituents at home in Kansas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to display photos of Gad Haggai and Judih Weinstein.

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

ISRAEL

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, as people around the world gathered last week to ring in the new year, it was a heartbreaking moment for families of the remaining Israeli hostages, whose loved ones have been forced to begin a new year in Hamas captivity.

Over the past month, I was devastated to learn that two of the hostages whom I have spoken about have since died. Israeli-American Judih Weinstein and Gad, her husband, both died from injuries they sustained on October 7. Their bodies are still being held in Gaza.

Gad was a retired chef, a jazz musician, and a gifted flautist. A father of four and a grandfather of seven, he was a man full of humor who knew how to make other people laugh.

Gad's wife Judih was a person of peace. A New York native, she loved making puppets and teaching English to children with special needs. She was a wellness expert who used meditation and mindfulness techniques to help those traumatized by years of rocket fire. She was also a pacifist who advocated for Palestinian rights. In one of the poems she wrote and shared on social media, Judih described herself as a "lone pilgrim, enveloped by ancestors"—listening to a "flute's homage beckoning [her] on."

The deaths of Judih and Gad are a sad conclusion to a long and horrifying saga. It is also a disturbing reminder of the perils faced by other hostages.

I recently returned from a congressional delegation trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, and I can tell you that the suffering and the grief the Jewish people and innocent Palestinian people have faced daily are truly devastating. The collective anguish, fear, and horror is palpable.

The path to peace—with all hostages being returned, the rebuilding of a Palestinian state without Hamas, and with the support and investment of the Arab and Muslim world—is now more urgent than ever.

When meeting the families of the hostages, the urgency and anguish in their eyes was devastating. To know that your loved one could be suffering unspeakable horrors and that they may be on the edge of death and feel powerless to stop it is a pain that no family member should ever be forced to bear.

They have spent every living day and moment since October 7 fighting to get their loved ones home. This nightmare must end now.

One of the families I met with told me about their loved one, Doron. A 30-year-old veterinary nurse, she hid under the bed in her apartment as Hamas terrorists rampaged her kibbutz. The last her family heard from her was from a voice message in which she said:

They've arrived, they have me.

Doron has a stomach condition, and her family worries her health will deteriorate without her daily medication. They worry about rape and sexual violence and sexual torture. They worry she will not survive the horrors of her captivity.

I also met again with the families of Itay Chen and Omer Neutra—two New Yorkers who are being held hostage by Hamas.

Itay is a 19-year-old boy who was born in New York City and is now serving with the IDF. He was supposed to return home to his family shortly after October 7 to celebrate his brother's bar mitzvah.

Omer Neutra is also a New Yorker, the grandson of Holocaust survivors, and an avid athlete. He loves the New York Knicks. He deferred his acceptance to Binghamton University to spend a gap year in Israel before he joined the IDF. On the day of the attack, he was working as a tank commander while defending the Gaza border. He was last seen on a video as being forcibly removed at the hands of Hamas terrorists.

In addition to these two New Yorkers, I also met with the family of another American hostage, Hersh Goldberg-Polin. He had his lower arm blown off by a hand grenade. His mother says his injuries could easily have resulted in his bleeding to death and wonders: Is he alive? Is he suffering? Does he ever have a chance of coming home?

These are just a few of the roughly 130 people still being held hostage by Hamas, including 8 Americans. With every day that goes by, the danger to them only grows. I hope that in this new year we can secure their safe return, their release, and their coming home to their families before it is too late.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, as we begin our new year, I rise to continue our discussion on one of the most pressing matters that has been so hard on our country. That is our open southern border and the responsibility for this Senate to take meaningful action.

Since this Chamber last was in session, each of us has traveled back to our respective States and has had the opportunity to talk with our constituents about what they are thinking and what they are seeing. Hands down, I can tell you that the crisis on our southern border is on the tip of everybody's tongue in terms of asking questions. It is the No. 1 issue for my State of West Virginia. Time and time again, across a multitude of conversations, West Virginians have asked me pretty logical questions: When will enough be enough? When will President Biden finally wake up and realize that this is a crisis? What can Congress do to stop this? What are you—meaning me as a Member of the Senate—going to do about it?

They see the numbers in the news—we saw them all through December, the mass humanitarian costs broadcasted on our TV sets daily—and the destruction that the flow of illicit drugs is doing and causing in our communities. So I share their frustration, and I have voiced it many times here on the floor. The crisis of our southern border is a topic that I have addressed repeatedly.

The chronic failure of this President to act has led to the point where even my colleagues across the aisle—everyone—have begun to raise alarm as the consequences of the administration's bad border policy have become undeniable.

One of my colleagues referred to the border as "porous." That is kind of a nice way of saying it is open and very, very easy to get through. I am not sure what finally led to this universal recognition, but I do have some ideas. It could have been the 2.4 million migrant encounters this past fiscal year—2.4 million. I live in a State of a little less than 1.8 million. My entire State came through that border, and more. Or the month after month of record illegal crossings with the largest month being just this past December of 302,000 encounters. That is this past December. Or the over 10,000 illegal encounters that we are experiencing daily, which is the size of many of the small towns in my State, with the record being 12,600, again, in December—12,600 crossings in December. Or the record 169 encounters with individuals on our Terror Watchlist just this past fiscal year, with an additional 30 encounters the first 2 months of fiscal year 2024. These are people whom we know have terrorist ties; whom we know could be a danger to us. Yet we are catching them as they are joining this brigade of millions coming across our southern border.

This is just an untenable national security crisis, one where we have no way of knowing how many terrorists have evaded apprehension and are now in the heartland of our country. This is a risk that we cannot take—not now, not ever. Yet very little, if any—and I would say none—has been taken by this administration to really remedy the situation.

There has been a lapse in this border security under the President, and a subsequent mass flow of immigration is creating a real-life humanitarian crisis of drug smuggling and human trafficking.

In fact, there is somebody who is thriving during this. The cartels are thriving with this billion dollars of business with our wide-open southern border.

It is important to remember that, really, I believe, this catastrophe is entirely the making of our President. And while congressional Republicans did not cause this, we are now taking the responsibility, along with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, of trying to address it and make meaningful progression.

This is why we need substantive policy changes to address our broken border. It has become increasingly obvious that now is the time to act.

Doing nothing will result in what? A continuation of 10,000 people a day, encounters per day, on our southern border and cover for the cartels to smuggle drugs and traffic people.

Doing nothing will result in the news, like we got just, I think, yesterday or maybe earlier today. A New York City high school is being overtaken and housing migrants for shelter, and the students are being told that they should engage in remote learning. In other words, don't come to school; we are using the school to house illegal migrants, and you do remote learning in school.

Well, what did we learn during COVID about remote learning? It is not good for our students. With a consistent remote learning program that we tried during COVID, you could see our falling test scores and a lot of mental health issues at the same time. So doing nothing will only increase the national security threats that our country is facing; therefore, doing nothing is unacceptable.

In a moment as critical as this, we cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We are currently in a historically narrowly divided Congress, making bipartisanship an essential component in getting legislation across the finish line. That is what our Senate negotiators are engaged in.

We all talk about how bad the situation is at the southern border, but it is irresponsible to talk about the problem while refusing to solve it unless you get 100 percent of what you want. I have been here several years. I can honestly say there are very few times I get 100 percent of everything I want in a bill.

If we do not take this opportunity to make serious reforms, then the current crisis will continue with no end in sight. We cannot do that. As negotiations continue, we await the text of a final agreement.

The question that will soon be before us will not be whether this is a bill that each of us would have personally written—because it won't be—but,

rather, if we will take this opportunity and make serious reforms—the most serious reforms in decades—to help stop the overwhelming number of encounters that our Border Patrol agents see every day and take back control of our southern border. We must bring order and process back to our immigration policies.

I admire the steadfast and particular dedication of my colleague from Oklahoma, Senator LANKFORD, who has personally called many of us. He called me three times over Christmas. I know he didn't get much of a break with his family. He has displayed incredible strength throughout this process.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to recognize the importance of this moment and the urgent need to respond to the challenges that we have in front of us.

As always, I maintain my optimism—I am hoping next week we will get the text, and we can work that bill through this body—and remain confident in this Chamber's ability to deliver. We must take advantage of this opportunity.

I have never been at the cusp of an opportunity like this in the last 20 years on immigration that we have right now—something that will make a difference. So we have to take advantage of this, and we have to make sure that we are making meaningful changes as we are moving through this process.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, there has been a big conversation in this body that actually matches the conversation that is happening around the country right now. If you ask any random person on the street what are the key issues that they are thinking about right now, almost every poll that I have seen for the past several months has said people are concerned about the economy and they are concerned about border security. Just about every poll you have seen everywhere, that has been the one and two. Sometimes border security has been the top issue, sometimes it has been the second issue, but it has been in those top two over and over and over again. It is not just border States, and it is not just Republicans; it is Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike.

They see what is happening on the border, and they just want to know: What is the plan? Because the news came out that last September was the highest number of border crossings ever in the history of the country for any September. Then October was the highest number of illegal crossings of any October. Then November was the

highest number of crossings of any November in our Nation's history. Then December came, and it was not only the highest number of illegal crossings of any December in our history; it was the highest single month ever, for any month in our history. Typically, December is a lower month, but instead, it was the highest month in our history, with the highest single day in our history and an average of 10,000 people a day who illegally crossed the border—right at 300,000 people in a single month.

Just to put that in perspective, if I go—during the Obama administration, what we had in December and November exceeded any single year in the Obama administration—just those 2 months. During the early days of the Obama administration, we had 21,000 people a year who requested asylum—21,000 people a year who requested asylum on our southern border. We had that in 2 days in December. That is how things have shifted.

That is why this is not a partisan issue; this is a national issue. People understand the national security implications of this, that we literally have thousands of people crossing the border every day, and we have no idea where they are. They cross the border, and I can tell you quickly how. They cross somewhere in the desert in Arizona, either through a gap that has been cut in the fence or in areas where there is a gap in the fence and they just go around it.

They are given a couple different options. One is a parole authority. It is called 236 parole. You are just released in the country—take off. There is another one called a notice to appear. You will hear the common term “NTA.” There are just so many people crossing right now, we don't have time to be able to go through all the paperwork, so we are going to give you a piece of paper that says show up at an ICE office—and you can literally go anywhere you want to go in the country to do this—go anywhere you want to be able to go in the country, hand them this piece of paper and turn yourself in, and then get a hearing date set after that.

It may be shocking to everyone: Not many people are actually showing up at ICE offices and turning themselves in. They are just disappearing into the country by the hundreds of thousands, month after month.

In addition to that, if you come to our ports of entry and you are going to do an orderly entry, well, that has shifted, actually. Since earlier this year, this administration has started using a parole authority that is termed “humanitarian parole,” but they are using it in a way that no administration has ever used humanitarian parole in the history of the country. You see, earlier this year—actually, I should say “last year” now that it is January. Earlier last year, this administration announced to the world that if you will tell us ahead of time that you are coming, when you come to a port of entry,

we will give you a work permit when you arrive—that day. So 1,500 people a day come to their appointment at the port of entry, from all over the world. They show up. They are given a parole document called 212(d), and they are given a work permit that day and released into the country.

We just ask the question: How does that slow down immigration across the country? Because parole is actually not a status. Parole is actually listed in our law as a nonstatus. It is that you are actually here, but humanitarian parole was designed for a situation like what we had in Ukraine or it was designed for a situation where an individual has a funeral that they have to get to, but in their country, it takes too long to get a visa, and they couldn't get to the funeral, so they get humanitarian parole to be able to come in and get to that funeral. It is not designed to say "You all come." It is not designed to be "Anyone from anywhere in the world just show up, and I am going to hand you a work permit when you get here and release you into the country at 1,500 people a day."

Americans see this. This doesn't make sense to people. They just want to know what we are going to do to get order where there is chaos. They are not asking for a political solution; they are just asking for a solution.

This shouldn't be something that we don't address here. For 2½ months now, my colleague Senator MURPHY, my colleague Senator SINEMA, and a whole bunch of folks around the three of us—our other colleagues in this body and their staff—have worked together to try to get to a solution on how we can address this in a bipartisan way. This body requires bipartisan solutions. We have to have 60. So we have to work on hard issues.

I would tell you, the House of Representatives did a very good bill called H.R. 2 that addressed a lot of issues dealing with immigration, but unfortunately the House didn't have any Democrats on board. In fact, they didn't even have all the Republicans on board that particular bill.

They passed a very comprehensive set of solutions to be able to deal with border security. That is what they passed. This body has not passed anything to be able to respond. The House noticed a long time ago that this is something that needs to be addressed. This body has been allergic to working on how to be able to solve the border crisis.

So for the last 2½ months, we have met in a bipartisan way to hammer out how do we solve this because it can't be ignored. The worst-case scenario is for Americans to say, "Who is going to do something?" and for this body to say, "Not it." We have to come to some solutions.

Some of the issues are obvious. The vast majority of people coming in across the border will say, "I have fear in my country" because the cartels have told them, "If you say the magic

words, you will be released into the country because that puts you on a track for asylum," when actually what it does is it puts you into a 10-year backlog of claims that are out there. And people know, if I cross the border and just make a statement, I can be in the United States for the next 10 years.

It is the greatest country in the world. There are billions of people who would like to be able to be here. That is a pretty easy entry—to be able to just come across, say the secret word, and you are in. We have to be able to resolve that.

We as a nation should be able to filter through the people who are coming and to identify who actually qualifies for asylum and who is just wanting to come to be a part of the greatest Nation in the world. If you want to just come for economic reasons, there is a way to be able to do that, to go through the legal process.

We allow about a million people a year to legally naturalize into our country. We are one of the most generous countries in the world in our legal naturalization process. We should continue to be able to do that, as we have for decades and decades.

But for people who want to game the system, we are lawmakers. Why would we ignore people who are abusing the law? If we ignore the abuse of the law, what are we doing making law if it is not going to actually be enforced?

So let's get back to identifying those who actually qualify for asylum. And those who are just gaming the system—turn them back around and say: Go through the legal processes. Don't run through the desert. Don't swim across the river. Don't come to a border agent and lie to them.

Let's figure out a legal way to be able to address legal immigration and turn around illegal migration. We should be able to solve this issue. It is obvious to everybody. We should be able to bring immediate consequences when someone has actually violated our law.

Currently, if someone crosses the border, it may be 10 years before it is addressed. If we can't deal with immediate consequences—as I have heard over and over again from parents and from every individual, a delayed consequence is a nonconsequence. So if the consequence is delayed 10 years, that is not really a consequence, and everyone knows it. So we have to be able to have immediate consequences, and we have to have solutions to this issue about just paroling 1,500 random people from anywhere in the world.

If the standard to get into America is literally just fill out a form and tell them that you are coming first, and you are released into the country with a work permit in a nonstatus of parole, literally, that is an executive authority that could be taken away at any moment—literally. The next President comes in, they can waive every single parolee on the first day, and it would be entirely legal because parole is not

a status; it is just a release into the country.

If we can't figure out how to be able to solve that when the mayors of Chicago and of New York and of Denver are saying: Why is this administration releasing people into the country between ports of entry and this other parole process or an NTA with no work permit and just releasing them by the hundreds of thousands, why is this happening—if we can't answer that question, then we need to be able to sit down at the table until we do.

The Senate is where hard things get worked out. This is a hard thing. This is something that has not been resolved in more than 30 years. I understand we have differences of opinion. So does America—except in this one issue. They want this solved. America wants a resolution on this. So I encourage us, as a body, to keep negotiating, keep working at it. We are not going to solve everything; we never do. But we need to solve as much as we can because this is one of the biggest issues in the country. And I will tell you, this is one of our greatest threats.

In the past year in the flood of people crossing our border, tens of thousands of people who came across our border, this administration declared as a national security risk. The term they use is "special interest alien." Tens of thousands of people who crossed were given that designation, "special interest alien," and then released into the country.

We have no idea where they are. These were identified at the border as a national security risk. But because we are not managing our border and we are overrun with capacity, the option they have is releasing them.

For the sake of our Nation's national security and our future, let's actually go back to following the law. Let's actually create a process where when we pass law, we expect it to actually be enforced and to be done. We can do a hard thing. That is our job.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, before the Senator from Oklahoma leaves, I was wondering if he would yield for a question.

Mr. LANKFORD. Yes, I would.

Mr. TILLIS. Senator LANKFORD, you have done an extraordinary job of negotiating what I think is going to be a successful compromise that is going to get support from Republicans and Democrats. But as you were going through this work, in the years that you spent studying this issue as a ranking member and chair in a committee of jurisdiction, I have got to believe you have looked at, let's say, Canada, for example. There are a lot of people who think that Senator LANKFORD and those of us who are trying to support Senator LANKFORD are being draconian and being out of step with the Western World.

But, Senator LANKFORD, could you just briefly describe how what we are

trying do compares to, say, our partner to the north, Canada, their laws?

Mr. LANKFORD. I don't run into many people who call the Canadians extreme. Not a derogatory statement towards the Canadians, but they have a pretty consistent system on it. If you crossed from the United States into Canada and ask for asylum, they would first ask you: Did you cross through the United States of America before you came into Canada? And if your answer was yes, they would turn you around and immediately return you back to the United States and say you can't request asylum here in Canada if you haven't requested asylum in the places you have already traveled through. That is the law in Canada.

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, may I ask one followup?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Senator LANKFORD, isn't it true that tens of thousands of people who cross our borders today—and who may, ultimately, request asylum—have looked past an opportunity to safely relocate in the country they are seeking asylum from, likely transited to another country where they could have declared asylum, and, in some cases, passed through four or five or six different safe jurisdictions before they made the dangerous trip through Mexico, across the Rio Grande border, and present themselves at the border? Is that an accurate assessment of what hundreds of thousands of people have done during the Trump administration?

Mr. LANKFORD. Senator TILLIS, that is correct that during the past several administrations, we had millions of people who have actually crossed our border, have either never requested asylum—at the border, they declared they were going to ask for asylum but, literally, never did, never filled out the paperwork, never even tried because they knew they weren't eligible—or they travelled through multiple countries on the way, never requested asylum because they wanted to come to America, which I don't blame them. It is the greatest country in the world. But that is not what asylum is. "Asylum" means I have fear in my entire country. There is no safe place in my country, so I fled to the next safe place. That is what the international definition of "asylum" is.

Mr. TILLIS. I thank Senator LANKFORD through the Chair.

Madam President, I want to spend a few minutes on this subject as well.

We are reaching a milestone that I think is critically important. Since President Biden has entered office, the number of encounters at the border, 8 million—8 million—since President Biden entered office—that population exceeds the population of 30 U.S. States—the population of 30 individual U.S. States. That is the number we are talking about here.

And, ladies and gentlemen, a lot of them are the people who we just de-

scribed. Of course, the United States wants to be a haven for people who are fearing for their lives, suffering from oppression. But the goal of asylum is to get them immediately out of that dangerous situation—not to suddenly decide that I want to go through two or three or four other jurisdictions because what, ultimately, I want to do is get to the United States.

They are demeaning and devaluing the concept of asylum. And the problem is, they are getting those who want to come here—and we should take it as a compliment that they want to come to the United States—but they are elbowing out and sapping the capacity for the United States to make absolutely certain that people who have a legitimate case for asylum are even being heard. I wonder about how many thousands of people who desperately need to get to the United States—it is their only option—are not getting there because we are focused on this population.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have to do something. This is dangerous. You know, for a time, conservatives were really in the wilderness, being viewed as inhumane, insensitive, saying we have to have an orderly border process. I have been saying that. I am also somebody who thinks we should probably legally immigrate another 250,000 to a half million more than we do already. We immigrate about a million.

Let me tell you the other problem we have here that is inherently unfair. I already talked about people who legitimately should be given asylum—probably not, because we don't know who they are. We are dealing with a flood of 300,000 in the month of December alone. Of course, they are going to be collateral damage in the form of people who want asylum.

But now the American people are waking up to it. There was a time when it was purely a shirts and skins—blue jersey Democrat, red jersey Republican—argument. It is not the case anymore. The American people expect this administration to do something. And I am glad.

I am also glad we have JAMES LANKFORD at the tip of the spear negotiating on behalf of Republicans. He has negotiated—I am part of the working group; I have seen progress. He has negotiated something that I think is important.

We cannot miss this opportunity. The stakes are too high, and the American people agree. Nearly half of those who responded to this poll—which was an even distribution, ideologically speaking—nearly half of them think we have an emergency at the border. They are right. I have been there several times. They are right. People are dying.

Cartels are making nearly \$1 billion a year charging tolls to come across the border. If you try to cross the border without an armband or recognition you paid a cartel, you are likely going to die or you are going to get one more

chance before you get beaten up. That happens every day at the border, ladies and gentlemen. I am not exaggerating. I have been there. I have seen it. I have heard the stories.

Fortunately, now we have a majority of Americans that expect this administration to come to the table and negotiate in good faith with conservatives and people like me who have negotiated several bipartisan deals to solve this problem. If any Democrats are concerned with how far the negotiations are going, I don't think that they need to. This is not a political loser for people who are concerned with voting on a bipartisan compromise. In fact, it is politically smart.

At the end of the day, I hope political advisers and everybody that is up for election next year know: You know what, you don't even need political courage to do the right thing here, because the good policy of border security is also good politics for the overwhelming majority of people that need a vote for this bill.

We are going to have 30 or 40 people on this side—not 30 or 40—I think we will probably have 25 or 30 Members in this body that won't vote for it. Some will be because it didn't go too far; the others will be, it didn't go far enough; some of them are closer in cycle. It is very difficult to explain; I get that. But we need about 70 votes coming out of this Chamber to create a momentum to get it done in the House. I am going to be one of those 70 votes.

I also want the American people to not only wake up to the reality that people are abusing our system—they are taking our attention away from people we should desperately find a path to getting to the United States—and they are also jumping line. That is what I will leave with you. How angry do you all get—I love going to a good sporting event or a good comedy show. You get there early sometimes because you want to get a good seat if there is general admission. How angry do you get if you are standing in line for hours and, all of a sudden, somebody jumps in front of you? Well, imagine if you have been waiting years—more than a decade—to legally follow the process to be one of those million people a year that gets citizenship, when you see millions of them coming across the border every year breaking line. These people that are working hard, obeying our laws, respecting it, doing it by the book—they are breaking line, and it is actually elongating the time for them to get into this country. It is unfair at every level, and it is unsafe.

The only people who are loving the stalemate that we have in this Nation today are the cartels who are charging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 a person to get you across the border. Not everybody has \$5,000, though. So you know what they do? They say, well, you don't have to pay. But once you get across the border, you are going to participate in criminal enterprises until we think

your debt is done. That is not an exaggeration either. Talk to law enforcement. Talk to people in these communities. These cartels are like a cancer metastasizing through illegally present communities, exploiting them, and causing some people who may not have had a criminal record in the country of their origin to become criminals here.

There are a million different reasons why we need to get this border compromise done. I hope this Congress is the Congress where people set aside politics, do the right thing, make this country safer, and show respect for people trying to come to this country legally by making sure that their place in line is reserved.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Louisiana.

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Mr. KENNEDY. Two minutes, two points, Madam President.

No. 1, imagine if you are a typical Louisiana middle-class family. Mom is making, let's say, \$40,000 a year; Dad is making \$40,000 a year. They have two children. You have a house note. You have a car note—probably two car notes because both Mom and Dad have to get to work. You have to pay for health insurance. You have to eat. You try to save a little bit for retirement, and you try to save for your children's college education. But, basically, you are living on \$80,000 a year for a family of four.

All of a sudden, prices start rising, as they have. Since President Biden has been President, we have experienced 17-percent inflation. That is how much prices have gone up on average. What does that mean? We cite that number a lot. By the way, I know inflation is coming down and that is a very good thing and I am glad. I hope it stays down. But all that means is that prices are rising less quickly. It doesn't mean prices are dropping.

These high prices caused by the President's inflation are going to be permanent. They are. I wish I didn't have to report that. And as a result of Bidenomics and inflation, in my State, the average family making \$80,000 a year is going to have to pay an extra \$800 a month because of inflation. That is an extra \$10,000 a year. You are on a fixed income of \$80,000 and you have to find an extra \$10,000.

That is happening right now to millions of Louisianians and millions of Americans. What are you going to do? Well, the first thing you are going to do is ask for a pay raise from your employer. And some of our employers have granted pay raises; and I thank them for that. But it is not how much of a pay raise you have been given that is relevant. What is relevant is how much of a pay raise you have been given vis-a-vis the inflation rate. That is why, when we look at wages, we talk about real wages. That is the amount that wages have gone up after accounting for inflation.

Well, here is what they look like. Since President Biden has been Presi-

dent, this chart represents wages after inflation. We started up here. We are down here. They have been a little bit better lately. So most Americans who have gotten a pay raise after inflation, it doesn't count. It doesn't count. Pay raise doesn't work. It is great to have, but inflation eats it up and then some.

Well, OK. That family still has to find \$10,000. What do you do? You are going to borrow the money. And that is what is happening. Credit card debt—buy now, pay later—and other types of loans. Don't just take my word for it. On the last numbers we have in the third quarter of this year, credit card spending was up 9 percent at Chase Bank. It was up 15 percent at Wells Fargo. It is not just putting more money on the card that is relevant; it is also paying down the amount on the card.

People are not only borrowing more on this credit card, but they are not able to pay the amount on their credit card off as quickly as they were. Unpaid loan balances have gone through the roof—16 percent at Chase Bank, up 14 percent at Wells Fargo, up 11 percent at Citigroup. People are using credit cards. They are charging more and more, and they are paying less and less on those credit cards. And they are getting deeper and deeper into the hole.

What else are people doing in my State and every other State? They are raiding their savings. If you look at the numbers, personal deposits are down 3 percent year over year at Chase Bank. What does that mean? That means people are raiding their savings accounts to deal with this inflation. Personal deposits are down 5 percent at Citigroup. Personal deposits are down 10 percent at Wells Fargo and 31 percent—31 percent—in the wealth management division of Wells Fargo.

My point, Madam President, is that these actions that are taken in Washington, DC, have real-life consequences for average, everyday American families on fixed incomes.

As a result of this inflation, which is coming down—but the high prices are permanent—people are having to borrow and people are having to raid their savings. And it is clearly a cancer on the American journey.

Point 2, Madam President. A month or so ago, the Congress passed a resolution. It passed here in the Senate—for us, overwhelmingly—53 to 43. We passed that resolution on the Congressional Review Act. What did we do? Well, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—we call it the CFPB—it is where common sense is illegal. Common sense, I think—I know—is illegal at the CFPB. CFPB comes up with these nuggets every week.

If you ever want to understand why the American people hate the Federal Government, just look at the output of the CFPB. I mean it. Common sense is illegal there. One of their last nuggets, they put out a resolution. The title of it was called "Small Business Lending Under the Equal Credit Opportunity

Act, Resolution B." And the Senate said no to this resolution. We said, no, can't do it, 53 to 43. And the House followed it by saying no to the CFPB, 221 to 202.

I am very proud of the Senate. Thank you, colleagues. I am very proud of the House. Unfortunately, President Biden has vetoed it. If I didn't know better, I would think that the President is auditioning to become the President of an Ivy League university, because let me tell you what this resolution will do unless we override the President's veto. Once again, you are a small business woman or small business man. You need a loan. Maybe you need a loan to grow your business; maybe you need a loan to sustain your business.

You go to your community bank. You say, I need to borrow some money. You submit your financials. The bank does its job. It does accurate underwriting, but before the bank can make a decision under this new CFPB rule, where common sense is illegal, the small banker has got to turn to that applicant and say: Look, I have to ask you a bunch of questions. I don't want to, but CFPB says I have to before I can grant your loan, so please bear with me.

Now, the small business woman or small business man is sitting there, things have been going pretty well. That small business person is feeling warm and toasty, thinking, I am going to get my loan, and I am going to be able to keep my business going and keep my people employed. But all it sounds like to me, there is a hitch here because my banker is being very apologetic, and I can tell he is upset about this, but I am going to try to help him and comply.

So the small banker says: OK. Let's get going. I have got to ask you 81 questions.

And the banker from the small bank starts with this small business person. First question: Are you female? Next: Are you male? Are you Black? Are you White? Are you mixed race? Are you another race? Are you Hispanic? Are you a homosexual? Are you a lesbian? Are you gay?

Now, remember, this is probably a small town in a community bank with a small business woman and a small business man applying for a loan. And the CFPB, our Federal Government, is telling the small banker, You have got to ask these questions.

The questions continue. The small banker looks the small business woman in the eye and says: Are you bisexual? Are you transgender? Are you queer? Are you intersex? And on and on and on.

Now, that small business woman—it could be a small business man—is going to have a couple of reactions. First, she is going to be thinking, What in God's name has happened to my country? What in God's name has happened to the Federal Government?

And the second emotion she is probably going to feel is anger. What business is it of the CFPB—what business