

this weekend on Ukrainian infrastructure.

Meanwhile, in the Middle East, Hamas continues to hold hostages it seized in its attack on October 7 of last year, including Americans.

And Iran-backed proxies continue to menace both Israel and U.S. assets in the region. Iran has spent decades—decades—fomenting unrest in the Middle East, and the news that it intends to increase its military budget by a staggering 200 percent next year suggests the country has no plans to abandon its destabilizing activities.

I could go on. Each day's news is a reminder that we live in an increasingly dangerous world—and that while we never invite conflict, we have to be prepared for it.

The Democratic leader may have chosen to spend his time this year on show votes and Biden nominees. But next year, control of the Senate will be different. And I will tell my colleagues right now that in the 119th Congress, neither the NDAA nor military preparedness will be put on the back burner. Under Republican governance, providing for our Nation's defense and supporting our men and women in uniform will not only continue to be one of Congress's most important obligations, it will be treated as such.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. HELMY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with the Senator from Alabama.

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

#### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. HELMY. Mr. President, our nation's youth are facing an unprecedented mental health crisis, and we need to take immediate action to address the root causes and ensure adequate access to care. I stand here today with my friend and colleague, Senator KATIE BRITT, to implore continued action to solve this crisis.

This issue is one that is personal for me, as it is for Senator BRITT. We both have young children, and so we see what they and their peers experience firsthand. There is no issue more urgent, more critical to our Nation's future than the health and safety of our next generation.

The challenges are well-known; and, frankly, the data is shocking. Over the past decade, cases of severe depression among young adults have nearly doubled. In the 2010s, suicidal behaviors among high school students increased by more than 40 percent. And since 2017, the number of youth hospitalized for anxiety has increased by 50 percent; the proportion hospitalized for self-harm has nearly doubled.

I repeat: The proportion hospitalized for self-harm has nearly doubled.

Youth and young adults ages 10 to 24 account for 15 percent of all suicides—an increase of over 50 percent since 2000. It is the second leading cause of death among our young people.

We can point to numerous stressors feeding this crisis. And I have discussed on this floor with great honor before, social media lands at the very top of that list. Social media has altered not only the way our young people interact but the very way in which they see themselves and even the way their brains develop.

Senator BRITT understands this issue and has been a leading voice in this Chamber and throughout Congress. I turn to her and thank her for her leadership.

Mrs. BRITT. Senator HELMY, thank you so much for your leadership on this important issue from day one.

Mr. President, you, yourself, have led on this issue significantly.

I think it is important for our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come together and understand just how pressing America's mental health crisis really is.

I was honored when Senator HELMY came to me right after being sworn in and told me that he wanted to work together on mental health issues and social media. And that is what we are doing here today.

And all of the statistics that Senator HELMY mentioned are not only horrifying but really challenging to even wrap our head around.

The word "crisis" doesn't even begin to capture what we are up against. And while we should always be wary of pointing to just one culprit, there is one that stands out amongst the rest; and that is social media.

As a mom of two teenagers, I see firsthand—and I hear from other moms—about the effects of social media on our country's children. And at the same time, those incredibly distressing trends that Senator HELMY detailed took place, social media usage became pervasive among America's kids. And the numbers back it up.

So if you look, 54 percent of teenagers said it would be hard to give up social media. Half of all teens say that they are addicted to their phones.

That was in a 2016 survey. I can't imagine what it would say today.

And 35 percent say that they are almost constantly on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook.

And for those of you who can't see, we are getting some shaking heads from our pages down front.

Almost all of American teens have access to a smartphone. This near-constant use of social media platforms has consequences.

The U.S. Surgeon General wrote, this summer, that 3 hours of social media is 2 times the risk of anxiety and depression amongst our young people.

The average American teenager spends nearly 5 hours a day on social media, and it is clearly having an impact. The Department of Health and Human Services studies show almost half of adolescents say that social media makes them feel worse about their bodies.

Internal research on Instagram conducted itself showed that a third of

teenage girls who use the app report that it "made them feel worse," and they found themselves "unable to stop."

And results of studies like the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System and the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Monitoring the Future survey shows teens and tweens today get less sleep, less exercise, and less in-person time with their peers than previous generations.

It is long past time to do something about this crisis. And I would like to hand it back to Senator HELMY to talk about how this body is getting to work.

Mr. HELMY. Thank you, my friend.

The Senate, as divided as it may seem, can and has acted decisively. We have all witnessed this with the Kids Online Safety Act, led by my friends and Senators BLUMENTHAL, BLACKBURN, MARKEY, and CASSIDY, which sailed through the Senate unanimously. The bill protects both youth currently impacted by social media but also seeks to address the root causes of the danger: the addictive design of the algorithm. This decisive action shows me that this body can and will do big things together to protect our young people. This is proof that there is that hope.

And I now turn back to my colleague Senator BRITT for her leadership on yet another bipartisan bill that I hope will also pass through this Chamber.

Mrs. BRITT. Yes. And, listen, I am so glad that you brought this up before we moved to the next one. The Kids Online Safety and Privacy Act, I think, really represents the best among us. It was a true bipartisan product. It showed progress on the issue. I am proud to have been a cosponsor and working alongside the Senators that you mentioned, their leadership—BLACKBURN, BLUMENTHAL, CASSIDY, MARKEY—who were willing to step up and truly say: Look, here is a path forward, and let's build consensus and move it.

So thank you for the effort, all of them, that they put into this legislation. I wasn't surprised, like you, that it passed the Senate in overwhelming fashion because this is not a red or a blue issue. This is an American issue. And that is exactly how this must be tackled. And it is clear that this body understands that.

And I am looking forward to continuing to build more momentum, taking more steps on a bipartisan basis to move that ball even further down the field.

Senator HELMY, you are a parent, just like I am. We are raising kids in this environment. We are seeing how social media affects them. And it is really a struggle that I think unifies us in an unprecedented way.

I was proud to work along with Senator BRIAN SCHATZ and TED CRUZ and CHRIS MURPHY as we also reflected on this problem as parents.

That is why our bipartisan group introduced the Kids Off Social Media Act. It would prevent kids under 13 from

creating a social media account—something that social media companies say they do anyway, so that shouldn't be a problem. It would prohibit the use of algorithms—as the Senator mentioned these algorithms, really getting to the heart of that—it would prohibit the use of algorithms on all social media users who are under the age of 17. It would also require schools to block and filter social media on their Wi-Fi networks if they receive Federal funding.

I also worked alongside Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR, and we introduced the Youth Mental Health Research Act. It would create a national youth mental health research initiative to guide long-term mental health care efforts and better target preventive interventions for those at risk of developing mental health challenges.

These are many bipartisan pieces of legislation that are here right now. Unfortunately, we are in a place in this world where the media believes so often that it is their job to sell the news instead of to tell the news.

So, Senator HELMY, your putting this together today for us to tell of the work that is being done in this Chamber in a bipartisan way to address this issue I think is so critically important, and we must keep talking about it.

I want to mention one other piece of legislation that the Senator is a cosponsor of, and I am so grateful, and that is my work with Senator JOHN FETTERMAN.

Following the Surgeon General's calling for a warning label on social media, Senator FETTERMAN and I put our heads together to create a bill that did that and then a little bit more. Our bill, the Stop the Scroll Act, would require a warning label when people open up a social media platform—almost like a pop-up—that would also include links to mental health resources. We want to ensure that resources are at the fingertips of those who need it most.

Quickly after being sworn in, Senator HELMY joined our effort and our call to fulfill the Surgeon General's recommendation. I am thankful for Senator HELMY in joining Senator FETTERMAN's and my bill. His passion to help America's kids is truly inspiring. While he and I might not agree on every issue, at the end of the day, we both see the obvious, and that is that social media is harming our kids, and America faces a mental health crisis.

Senator HELMY, would you mind speaking about why you felt like it was so important to join Senator FETTERMAN's and my effort with the Stop the Scroll piece of legislation?

Mr. HELMY. I will, Senator BRITT, and thank you.

I just want to say that I applaud your leadership, and while I appreciate your mentioning our wanting us to come together, I would just make a point that all of the bills you have mentioned have one thing in common—not only the general thematic but that they are bipartisan. I think what that says—and

it is a tribute to your leadership, your thoughtfulness, and your doggedness on this issue—is that this Chamber reflects and recognizes that there is a serious crisis and is willing to come to hold Big Tech accountable but also make them a part of the solution in the resolution. So I applaud your leadership.

So why Stop the Scroll? I think this is also a tribute to the success of this Chamber with the Kids Online Safety Act. Senators like Senator BRITT and others were able to make the case for the issue and come up with real solutions that helped Americans understand the problem. It passed through this Chamber, and I hope it will pass through the other Chamber.

But like that bill, Stop the Scroll seeks in a bipartisan way to address issues we have heard from our great mental health and medical professionals.

Like the warning linking cigarettes to cancer and mortality, the Surgeon General issued a truly unprecedented warning last year confirming the serious risks to our youth from social media. In an effort to learn more, I reached out and spoke to him just last month, and the data and the science that I was presented and that he explained are clear. There is an urgent need to act now and raise awareness on the issues of social media use. Just like we have warning labels on cigarettes, we must also have them on social media, and that is why I was so proud to join Senator BRITT and other cosponsors to Stop the Scroll.

While I will leave the Senate in a few weeks at a time when partisan divisions may run high, when I go home, however, I will tell many doubters that despite what the partisanship is that they see on the news, there is indeed reason to be incredibly hopeful for our next generation and generations to come. This piece of bipartisan legislation is proof of that hope, as are the many other pieces of legislation that my friend Senator BRITT discussed. We must hold on to and continue fighting for a better future for all of our children.

Senator BRITT, I thank you again for your leadership here, and thank you for reaching out to me across the aisle, even before I was appointed, on this important issue.

I turn it back to you.

Mrs. BRITT. Well, to Senator HELMY, if I may say, I think Stop the Scroll is a great example of a small bill that can make a tremendous impact, and I am grateful for his support of it.

Overall, I hope what America sees today is that we have faith that we can do the right thing by America's kids. Here we are, two people quite far apart on several issues but willing to come together to address this urgent problem.

Senator HELMY, I am grateful that you came to me as soon as you were sworn in to say: Hey, how can we work on this particular issue? You hit the

ground running. I hope the people of New Jersey and America know that.

This man got to work before day one, and when he gave his address to this Chamber, his maiden speech, he said: I will tackle this issue. That is exactly what he did.

As a brandnew Senator, you immediately sprang into action, seeking out partners on both sides of the aisle to address something that you knew was critically important. You were willing to bring different opinions and a different perspective to the table in order to achieve a result.

Senator HELMY, I am proud to have worked with you on this critical topic and on so many other things during your tenure here in the U.S. Senate. It is truly an honor to have served with you, and I hope the people—the great people—of the State of New Jersey and the people of this Nation understand the leadership you have exhibited during your short tenure here and the impact you have made on colleagues like me who may sit across the aisle but who are given hope by our ability to come to the table and move important things forward.

It is an honor to serve with you, and I thank you for allowing me to be a part of this today in helping you tackle such a critical issue.

Mr. HELMY. Thank you so much for your kind words, my friend. I am honored, frankly, to be by your side—two former staffers uniting on an important issue here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. It is like “The Avengers” uniting. Working with you on this issue has been a highlight of my time here and foundational to the hope I feel being back in the institution.

I would be remiss if I didn't note the presence of a great leader of this institution, a storied Senator from Texas who is in the Chamber.

In my 100-day plan, I had vowed to spring toward progress with youth mental health, which, again, is an issue that I had seen firsthand with my own experience. In addition to speaking with the Surgeon General, I know Katie and I both spoke with key government leaders, nonprofit organizations, and youth leaders who truly told us what they were experiencing as young people and the experiences of their friends, which are vastly different than the experience I may have had as a child, growing up.

We worked across the aisle to cosponsor and lead legislation with not only Senator BRITT but with my mentor, senior Senator, and friend CORY BOOKER, and tremendous colleagues, like Senators CASEY, BUTLER, KLOBUCHAR, FETTERMAN, DURBIN, WYDEN, and COONS, to name a few.

I go back home, and I am working with these nonprofits and young activists to learn the issue better and understand both on the front and the root cause of the issues related to access to care when they do present with a problem, and what I have seen is incredible.

As a former staffer, I believe in this institution, and I believe in the U.S.

Senate. I have always believed in this country—especially now—but still there is obviously more work to do.

As I stand on this floor, asking for continued action, we need to pass Senator BRITT's and Senator FETTERMAN's Stop the Scroll Act, and their counterparts in the House should pass the Kids Online Safety Act, which, as mentioned, passed unanimously through this storied Chamber.

Finally, I note that just yesterday, I introduced a new piece of legislation—the Youth Revenue Transparency Act—to hold Big Tech accountable.

We know that technology companies are finding profit in this crisis. These companies can quantify how much their revenue is driven by minors, and they can certainly quantify how much marketing they are putting into targeting minors. We know the transparency in big corporations is critical for efficient markets, as it is critical for accountability, and I believe both investors and parents have the right to quantify this as well. They need to know how the investments and business decisions made by Big Tech are driving the youth mental health crisis. That is why, in my bill, the Youth Revenue Transparency Act, I am asking Big Tech to disclose data on the share of revenue driven by our kids and the amount they spend targeting our children with marketing.

Why, you ask, introduce legislation with just a few weeks left in this Congress? Because, as a former staffer, I believe in the role of this institution, and I believe in the role of a Senator and maybe in the role of all Americans to raise our voices for what is right—that one day these small acts will, I hope, rise to a crescendo of action and create meaningful and lasting change for this generation and the generations of Americans to come. We may start small, but we can do big things. We can hold these companies accountable for their actions and for their harm to the next generation. We can and we must.

I look forward in the coming years—maybe not in this institution but alongside the storied Senators in this Chamber—to working on this vital issue regardless of our politics, cheering you on and supporting these efforts. As John F. Kennedy powerfully said, children are the world's most valuable resource, and it is our only and best hope for the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes prior to the scheduled vote.

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

#### REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it was 2 weeks ago—I know it seems like a lifetime ago but 2 weeks ago—when folks across this country went to the polls, with some undoubtedly joining the political process for the first time, to elect Donald J. Trump as the 47th

President of the United States as well as to deliver a clear victory for Republicans in both Chambers of Congress.

I would like to extend my congratulations once again to President Trump and our colleague, Vice President JD VANCE, on their hard-fought and well-earned victory.

Congratulations, too, to my friend and colleague JOHN THUNE, who will be the next leader of the Senate Republican conference, the next majority leader, alongside the entire leadership team for the 119th Congress.

We will be seeing some new faces around here next year, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to some of them: my incoming Republican colleagues Senator McCormick from Pennsylvania, Senator Justice from West Virginia, Senator Moreno from Ohio, Senator Banks from Indiana, and Senator Curtis of Utah.

I would also like to congratulate my colleague from Texas, Senator CRUZ, on a well-deserved victory in our home State of Texas.

In the other Chamber, there are some new additions to the Texas delegation on the way: Representatives-elect Craig Goldman, who served for a long time in the statehouse, and Brandon Gill, who was elected in this last election. I look forward to working with all of these colleagues as we deliver needed solutions to the American people.

The American people said very clearly that they believed the Nation was on the wrong track. It is our job to get the Nation on the right track, and that is exactly what we intend to do. Voters made their voices heard, and the message was loud and clear: Americans are ready to turn the page on the last 4 years of failed policies.

The American people elected a trifecta of Republican leadership to address the major challenges we are facing as a nation, things like inflation, open borders, a \$35 trillion national debt, and the perception of American weakness and a lack of resolve abroad.

Families are ready for affordable groceries, gasoline, and homes once again under a Trump administration. They are certainly ready for secure borders, particularly in my State. They are ready for an end to the deadly fentanyl and human trafficking pouring across our southern border. They are ready to return to a world where our friends can trust us and our enemies fear us under President Trump.

The last 4 years under Democratic leadership have been marked by reckless spending, failed border policies, and a weak and dangerous presence on the world stage.

Texans have had to bear the brunt of historic levels of inflation not seen in 40 years. Since President Biden took office, rents have risen by more than 15 percent, the cost of groceries is up nearly 20 percent, and electricity prices have increased by nearly 25 percent. With higher interest rates, necessitated by the Federal Reserve's attempts to control inflation, Americans

are also paying more each month on their mortgages and their car payments.

But that is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the Biden-Harris administration's misguided priorities, far-left policies, and abysmal leadership. Just look at the administration's energy policies, which put the hysteria of climate activists ahead of Texans, who just want to be able to afford the gas to drive to work or to school, or consider that President Biden promised to undo the effective border policies of the Trump administration. This is one promise he has certainly delivered on, much to our chagrin.

My State has had to deal with huge influxes of migrants for a long time. This administration chose to roll out the welcome mat to people from all around the world as well as to the people who took advantage of those open borders, including the drug runners and the human traffickers and people generally up to no good—and all because they failed to enforce the laws on the books.

Under the Biden-Harris administration, Customs and Border Patrol has broken daily, monthly, and yearly records of encounters at the southern border. The history books will remember this Presidency for the open-border policies that have been simply devastating to our country. Mark my words, we will be paying the price for decades to come as a result of these disastrous policies.

Our country has been suffering from a deadly fentanyl epidemic. Fentanyl poisoning is now the leading cause of death of young people between the ages of 18 and 45. We know where it comes from. The precursors come from China, and they go to Mexico. They are combined to look like innocuous pharmaceuticals and sold to unwitting children and young people here in the United States.

The record number of unaccompanied minors who have entered the country at the southern border, only to be lost by this administration, is 500,000 unaccompanied children placed with sponsors. And largely, the administration takes the position they bear no responsibility for knowing where they are, what is happening to them, whether they are being trafficked for sex, or sold into involuntary servitude. They just don't know, and the truth is, they do not care.

This November, the American people had a choice. They knew that the next President and the next Congress would decide whether to continue down this path of economic hardship, open borders, and American weakness or turn a page. That was their choice. The American people voted not only to turn the page but to write an entirely new chapter written by Republicans in the majority.

No doubt, we have a lot of work to do, but we also have a mandate from the American people who are sick and tired of failed leadership and ready for change.