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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at 12 p.m.

Senate

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2024

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, we thank You for the security You provide those who trust in You. We believe that You can do more than we can ask or imagine. Throughout our history, You have not failed us, and You continue to provide us with strength for today and bright hopes for tomorrow.

Lord, surround our Senators with Your mercy, peace, and grace as they come confidently to Your throne, using the power of persevering prayer. Give them a faith that will not shrink though pressed by many a foe.

We pray in Your omnipotent Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today, the Senate resumes consideration of the emergency national security supplemental package.

Last night, after we agreed to the motion to proceed, I laid down the substitute amendment, which has the text of the supplemental, and then I filed cloture on both the substitute and the underlying bill.

We are still hoping to reach an agreement with Republicans on a reasonable list of amendments so we can speed this process up. Democrats have always been willing to have a fair and reasonable amendment process on the floor, as we have shown on many occasions in the last 3 years; but if no further agreement is reached, the next vote is scheduled to take place tomorrow, Sunday, at approximately 1 p.m.

As I have said all week, we will keep working on this bill until the job is done.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

REMOVING EXTRANEOUS LOOP-HOLES INSURING EVERY VETERAN EMERGENCY ACT—Resumed

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (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.

Pending:

Schumer (for Murray) amendment No. 1388, in the nature of a substitute.

Schumer amendment No. 1577 (to amendment No. 1388), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1578 (to amendment No. 1577), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1579 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 1388), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1580 (to amendment No. 1579), to add an effective date.

Schumer motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Veterans Affairs, with instructions to report back forthwith Schumer amendment No. 1581, to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1582 (the instructions (amendment No. 1581) of the motion to commit), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1583 (to amendment No. 1582), to add an effective date.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

H.R. 815

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, many people who follow the Senate

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



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may be asking a basic question: What are you doing? Why is it that the Senate is only voting once every other day or why does it seem like it is every other day? Why aren't you in business? If you are here this weekend, can't you have something to do of a positive nature for this country?

It is a reasonable question. I would like to describe where we are at this moment and where I hope we will be soon.

It started with the President of the United States asking for a defense supplemental bill—a supplemental bill for military spending. There were several major priorities in that major ask by the President. One, of course, was the war in Ukraine and our continued support of the Ukrainian effort to stop the ruthless invasion of Vladimir Putin and the Russians. This has been going on for 2 years. We have been standing by the Ukrainians, and they were running out of money, equipment, and ammunition. President Biden stepped up and said: We are going to provide assistance to Ukraine as part of this emergency supplemental.

The same thing is true when it comes to the Israelis fighting the terrorist Hamas after the invasion of their country on October 7. There is money to provide assistance to them in their effort to end that terrorism that had such a dramatic, negative impact on Israel.

The third provision relates to Taiwan and the Asian theater. They, too, are our friends and allies and need assistance from the United States.

Equally important is a substantial humanitarian aid package needed in many places around the world, including Gaza, that is part of this package.

These are four critical priorities that, in the usual course of business, would be approved on a bipartisan basis—but not this time. This time, many of the Republican leaders in the Senate said: We will not consider these important subjects without some provision dealing with America's border security.

It is true—I think it is obvious—that the situation on our southern border is currently unsustainable and needed to be changed. The Republicans insisted this would be part of the package, and there was no argument on our side of the aisle.

We sat down to find a solution. Now, solutions relating to immigration are illusive. I know that as well as anybody. We have spent three decades trying to come up with immigration reform legislation. Virtually, both parties concede that our immigration system in its entirety is a shambles and needs to be rewritten. So the suggestion was made that we put together a bipartisan committee to put together an alternative on border security to be added to this package that I just described.

The Republicans said that they wanted JAMES LANKFORD of Oklahoma to speak for them. Several of them came

to me and said that he has worked on this long and hard; he is prepared to accept the task of brokering a bipartisan solution to the border; and we trust him. We want him to be the spokesman for the Republican side.

No objection on this side of the table.

Two Senators joined him in that bipartisan effort—Senator CHRIS MURPHY of Connecticut and KYRSTEN SINEMA of Arizona. They worked for weeks and weeks and weeks to put together a bipartisan border security package, and they finally succeeded.

The Republicans said: We don't want to move on that type of a package unless we have 72 hours to carefully review it before we take the first vote. Senator SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, said that is a reasonable request, and he filed the original version of this bill last Sunday, if I am not mistaken.

Then, on the following Wednesday of this week we are closing, we brought this matter to the floor. To our surprise, the Republicans reversed their position on border security and, despite the best efforts of JAMES LANKFORD on behalf of the Republicans, decided that, overwhelmingly, they were going to reject any border security measure.

Why the change of heart on the Republicans' side? The cause is very obvious and very public. Donald Trump, the punitive Republican nominee for President, announced that he was opposed to the package. Republican Senators who were open to it or in support of it walked away from it and, in walking away from it, did not produce enough votes for us to bring the border security measure up as part of this package.

Think about that for a second. We were told for months that we couldn't move on the underlying bill because we didn't have a border security proposal. We put together a bipartisan proposal, and we brought it to the floor. The same Republicans who were insisting on border security as part of this package turned on it and opposed it.

We took the vote, which told the story. At that point, Senator SCHUMER said: We will move forward with the rest of the package.

Those measures are now pending before the U.S. Senate and do not include border security, at least in the package produced by the bipartisan group.

I think what I have just given you is a rough summary of where we stand at this moment. So we are going through the labored process, under the Senate rules, of burning hours off of the clock—30 hours at a time—until we can reach these seminal rollcalls to determine whether we move forward. As Senator SCHUMER said just a few minutes ago, we face the next one of those rollcalls tomorrow, at around 1 o'clock in the afternoon. That is 30 hours after the last vote.

But there is a way to avoid this kind of inactivity on the floor of the Senate and to really get to the questions at hand, and that is what we normally do,

that being a unanimous consent—both sides of the aisle, Democrat and Republican—to take up certain amendments or measures. We are at that point. We should be moving forward so that we can finish our work on this important legislation and go home for a break over the Presidents' holidays.

We don't know what is going to happen today. If we follow the book and don't reach a unanimous consent agreement, there may be little or nothing happening on the floor today, but if we can reach a bipartisan agreement on a list of acceptable amendments on both sides of the aisle, we can move forward, and the Senate can be the Senate as it should be. That is what is pending.

So that is a rough summary of where we stand. I am disappointed that a good-faith effort by these three Senators that produced a measure—and I don't agree with it in every detail—which is a reasonable step forward, has been summarily rejected by most Senate Republicans.

As for Senator LANKFORD, I listened to him on the floor. He spent 30 minutes explaining what was in this package. There are some things that are absolutely necessary: resources at the border that we know that we need; people—professional people—to deal with the onslaught of refugees and asylees who are coming to our border; in addition to that, money for technology.

Doesn't everyone concede, on both sides of the aisle, that we need to do everything humanly possible to stop the flow of narcotics, particularly fentanyl, into the United States? I don't think that is even debatable. The bill that LANKFORD and the others proposed had provisions in there and resources to accomplish that goal.

The same thing is true when it comes to resolving the status of people who present themselves at the border. There are people who are desperate and fearful for their lives, who are staying in certain countries and escaping to the United States in the hopes that they will be safe. For more than 50 years, we have honored that pursuit and given a means for people to reach their goal. Now the standards are going to be tougher under the Lankford legislation, and it means that people are going to be held to a higher standard.

Also, there are provisions that those who are at the border will have their cases ultimately resolved in a much more expeditious way. I think we all agree that waiting 1 year, 2 years, 5 years or more really creates a hardship on the system and an uncertainty that needs to be resolved. It takes more immigration judges and people at the administrative level for processing, and the Lankford bill did that.

What I have just described in the provisions of the Lankford bipartisan bill was rejected by the majority of Republicans because Donald Trump announced that he was against it. He went so far as to say: Blame me if we do nothing on border security.

Well, I certainly think he is deserving of blame. He stopped Republicans who were positive of the subject from moving forward and helping us to do something positive on the immigration front.

There is another part of this story that I want to speak to very quickly this morning, and it relates to a measure that I introduced in the Senate almost 20 years ago. It is called the DREAM Act.

Yesterday, Senators PADILLA, CORTEZ MASTO, others, and I filed an amendment to offer the Dream Act as an amendment to this bill as part of the package if we are going to have a bipartisan package of amendments. I introduced this legislation, as I said, more than 20 years ago. It provides a path to citizenship for young immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and allows them to remain in the United States—their home.

These are kids brought here by their parents. There wasn't a family vote or a family decision; they were kids, and they did what their mom and dad told them to. They end up in the United States undocumented. They went to school here. They stood up each morning in the classroom and pledged allegiance to that same flag we just pledged allegiance to. They believed they were part of this country. It wasn't until they were usually 10 or 12 years old that their parents leveled with them and told them: Your legal status is uncertain. You are undocumented. We don't know what your future holds. Be careful. If you are not careful, you could be deported, and we could be deported with you.

That terrible circumstance prevailed for hundreds of thousands of young people in this country. The DREAM Act said: Give them a chance. Give them a chance to earn their pathway to citizenship. That is what the bill said when it was introduced. They have known no other home. Yet, without congressional action, they spend every day in fear of deportation.

Let me tell you about one of these Dreamers. Her name is Tatiana Vasquez Lopez. She attends college in my home State of Illinois.

This is the 140th time that I have told the story of a Dreamer here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. I can make speeches about the subject, but if you meet these young people and hear their life story, it is a much more convincing experience.

Tatiana was born in Guatemala. She came to the United States when she was 11 months old. She grew up in Alabama and became an important part of her community. She volunteered at her local church during the COVID pandemic to help families in need. She also completed a teaching internship, during which she visited schools across the school system to support teachers and students. She did all of this while she was in high school.

Tatiana is currently studying at Dominican University in River Forest in

my home State of Illinois. She is a leader in the Chicagoland community as president of the Organization of Latin American Students. What is her goal? A Ph.D. in psychiatry so she can work as a trauma therapist helping families and children. She wants to continue giving back to communities in need and helping provide lifesaving resources to others—resources she wishes her family had received when they came to the United States.

She is currently protected from deportation thanks to the DACA Program. DACA stands for “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.” The DACA Program was an outgrowth of the DREAM Act. When we couldn't pass the DREAM Act on the floor of the Senate, former Senator Barack Obama from Illinois, as President of the United States, was impertuned to consider doing it by Executive action.

I wrote a letter—the first letter—to President Obama, cosigned by Richard Lugar, the late Republican Senator from Indiana, asking Barack Obama to consider Executive action to protect young people like Tatiana. Then I sent another letter with about 23 Democratic Senators supporting the same goal. Fortunately for us, Obama was a cosponsor of the DREAM Act and agreed with our goal in this legislation, and he went to work to create DACA.

That program he established has changed hundreds of thousands of young lives like Tatiana's. DACA has protected more than 800,000 young people in America from deportation, and it has allowed them to pursue higher education and enter our workforce.

Unfortunately, since President Obama established the program, Republicans have waged a relentless campaign to overturn it and deport these young Dreamers back to countries they may not even remember.

Last September, a Federal judge in Texas declared the DACA Program was illegal, but the decision left in place protections for current DACA recipients like Tatiana while the appeal is pending. All of them live in fear that the next court decision will dramatically change their lives.

Until a permanent solution is written into law, Tatiana's service to her community is at risk, as is the service of Dreamers who work as doctors, teachers, engineers, and so much more across America.

I introduced the DREAM Act, as I said, more than 20 years ago to provide a solution, a path to citizenship for Dreamers. That solution is long overdue and should be acted on as quickly as possible.

We should all be able to agree that Dreamers only make America better, and we in Congress must do better by them. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Dreamers and to work with me to provide them with a path to be part of America's future. This amendment would do just that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I rise today because Senate Republicans made a commitment last fall, not so very long ago, a commitment that we made to each other and that we made to the American people.

That commitment was simple. It was one that said: Before we send another dollar, another dime, another penny to Ukraine, let's do what we can, even if it means harnessing the drive that some in this body feel toward sending more money to Ukraine. And let's harness that to make sure we can force the will within the administration to actually enforce the border.

In truth, we have all made commitments sort of like this. We have all made other commitments that should lead us to this conclusion, should have gotten us there long ago, with or without Ukraine funding on the mind, with or without anything compelling us to do it, because every single Senator—every man, every woman—serving in this body is committed to this sacred duty and did so implicitly when we raised our hands, as required under article 6 in the Constitution, to take an oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; [and] bear true faith and allegiance to the same.”

Well, through time and through the efforts of a faithless few, we are now poised to treat that commitment that we made to each other, to Senate Republicans, and to Americans, sort of the same way that President Biden has treated his own solemn oath to protect this country's borders, treating them as somehow expedient, expendable, and now, apparently, expired.

We cannot send billions of dollars to Ukraine, while America's own borders are bleeding. This betrayal is all the more loathsome because it occurs at a time when the eyes of the Nation are turned to sport and family and fun, as well they should be. Heaven help us, the people of America should not have to watch us every hour of every day lest their own government stab them in the back. What, after all, have they done to deserve such untrustworthy public service? What grudge does this body hold against the very people who elected us and pay our salaries?

Today we witness the tragic dominance of what President Eisenhower—one of our Nation's great patriots and great generals who later became President—called “the military industrial complex.”

This machine, to be clear, was not built by our brave men and women in uniform who pledge their very lives

every day for safety and independence, nor was it built by every contractor, every person or entity out there that supplies our men and women in uniform with weapons and cutting-edge technology that they need to protect the United States against our adversaries.

Now, many of them are not at all part of the military industrial complex, regardless of what they may do for a living, but I speak of a subset of those individuals and entities when I speak of a machine forged by the unhealthy union between their businesses and politicians in Washington, DC, specifically to make business out of bloodshed and do so in concert with politicians in Washington and across the world who make bloodshed their business.

All of this is at the expense of our freedom, our honor, and our self-determination, to say nothing that the time that Americans have to spend paying to fund the military industrial complex. Now, make no mistake, I am under no illusion that my time here today will itself somehow be sufficient to jam the gears of this machine, nor is it likely to stifle the anthems of those who worship it, but I intend to give an account of how, in this instance, sadly, like so many others, its acolytes have consumed resources meant for the security and welfare of our own people to continue violence among people far away with whom we are not at war and from whose suffering we, the American people, will gain no victory.

And perhaps if I can sketch a blueprint of how this infernal engine functions today, future generations may well succeed in loosening its screws, cutting off its stolen fuel, and letting the whole corrupt bargain come crashing, finally, to the ground.

As I do so, I need to go back for a moment and describe the conditions last fall in which Republicans made the commitment I described moments ago, a commitment to each other and to the American people.

What we saw last fall was that there was yet another call from President Biden and from many at the Pentagon and the military industrial complex for yet another round of Ukraine funding, this after we had already sent some \$113 billion to Ukraine, a sum of money that, last time I checked, was roughly double what Russia spends on national defense in an average year and is perhaps 20, 25 times what Ukraine spends on defense in a typical year.

It is a sum of money that exceeds what any other nation has spent on Ukraine. These are phenomenal sums as a percentage of GDP by pretty much any metric. And when we talk about the defense specifically, to my knowledge, it is significantly higher than every other nation's security assistance to Ukraine combined since the start of this war.

It is a large sum of money. Now, this request came at a time when the American people were starting to realize, in-

creasingly, the extent to which excessive spending in Washington, DC, has affected their day-to-day lives. They started to sense what we have long been warning of, what was predictable, foreseeable, and, in fact, foreseen and warned of since the outset of this administration; that when we spend too much money, everything gets more expensive. And by "everything," I mean literally everything, including and especially basic living expenses.

If you take a look at what it costs to sustain a family, to sustain a household for the average American household since the day President Biden took office, just over 3 years ago, it costs about a thousand dollars per month, per household, more than it did on January 20, 2021. This is no small sum. It adds up to about \$12,000 a year, this per the average household in America.

Now, of course, it affects different people differently, but for America's middle class and certainly for its poor, this can mean the difference between living paycheck to paycheck and making it and living paycheck to paycheck and then not making it.

This is felt by families throughout the middle class, throughout America, in ways that leave no room for anything. This comes right off of their bottom line. This, for many, means nothing other than what is the bare minimum to live can be justified, can be afforded. Family vacations for countless Americans, a thing of the past now. If they were just getting by before Bidenomics, it wreaked havoc on their paycheck and on what little savings they may have had. That cushion is no longer there, if it was even there to begin with.

This is, to be sure, not just something that occurs out of nowhere; this occurs because Washington spent too much money. Milton Friedman warned of this many decades ago when, among other things, he explained that the true cost of government is reflected less accurately in the rate of taxation and more accurately in the rate of government spending relative to the economy because, as he explained, the way our system works, the way the Federal Reserve Bank and the Treasury interact with our system in which the U.S. dollar, the world's reserve currency—all of these things combine in such a way that when the U.S. Government borrows more money, when it engages in more deficit spending, it has a very similar effect as to what we would see if we just printed more money—which, effectively, we are doing.

I have warned of this for many years over periods of time that have spanned three different Presidential administrations, under two different political parties, both as they have been in charge of the White House, have been in charge of the Senate and the House of Representatives. And I have warned of these consequences under Senates, House of Representatives, and White Houses of every conceivable partisan combination.

And each time the warning is something like this; that as we continue to do this, it will make each dollar spend less money, and we will get closer and closer to that day when our interests and our national debt will start to eclipse other priorities.

When I started warning of this, I think our annual interest payment on national debt was more in the range of 250 to 300 billion a year. It is now more than double that. Some have expected that by the end of this year will see interest on the national debt accruing at a rate of a trillion or more a year. The difference between where we were just a few years ago and where we could well be within the next 6, 8 months, maybe the next year or two, could well exceed what we spend on national defense.

This isn't sustainable. And in any event, as Milton Friedman explained, the true rate of taxation is explained best by total government spending as a percentage of GDP, even more than it is by the rate of taxation. His explanation for this makes a lot of sense once you fully consider what he is saying; that part of the rate of taxation, as you have to imagine, ends up being the inflationary impact of the government just printing more money when it refuses defiantly, as it has been over the last few years, to acknowledge that there is any limit on its ability to spend more.

Now, in the last 3 or 4 years, we seem to have taken that to a true extreme with multitrillion-dollar deficits every single year. For the last 3 or 4 years prior to that, we had been on a pattern of roughly a trillion-dollar-a-year deficits.

And each moment before we turned down that ugly corridor, I noted that this was happening and is happening today at the peak of the economic cycle with really low unemployment. It is not one of these circumstances where we are forced into this simply because, contrary to all expectations, there isn't enough money for government to run, to perform its basic functions, things that only a government can perform. No, it is just this body can't control itself. It can't control its ability to spend to the tune of trillions of dollars a year more than we have. And it has gotten so much worse during this administration. It was bad enough before then, but it has gotten so much worse since then with trillions upon trillions of dollars a year being spent in excess of what we bring in. So it shouldn't come as any shock that the American dollar today buys a whole lot less than it did just a few short years ago and that the average American family has to shell out an additional \$1,000 a month just to live—just to live. From gas to groceries, from housing to healthcare and everything else—everything costs more today because the government has flooded the market with new cash.

So what does that do to ordinary people? You know, most Americans live on

a relatively fixed set of money. They are living on a salary; perhaps on a pension; perhaps they are living off of wages or payments, if they are independent contractors, that don't vary a lot from one year to the next. And even if they are lucky enough to have gotten a raise since January 20, 2021, nearly all of the time it is not nearly enough to cover the difference in what they are having to shell out because of Bidenomics and because of this chronic pattern of overspending that, of course, predated Bidenomics but has become significantly worse since President Biden took office.

The American people are suffering, and they are suffering badly. Perversely, America's wealthiest don't suffer from this in the same way—not at all, in fact. Quite the contrary, many of them get far wealthier during periods of great inflation. Wall Street, you will notice, has been elated, has reason to rejoice recently, but those rejoices are not felt up and down the economic ladder, no. Quite to the contrary, they are felt in ways that should not make this body or anyone that has anything to do with dramatic, unjustifiable increases in Federal spending feel ashamed.

And so the American people have understandably become more and more leery of spending that isn't deemed essential and isn't deemed something that goes directly to the benefit of the American people, any spending that is not necessarily ours to have to be responsible for.

Not to say that there aren't plenty of Americans who are understandably and justifiably concerned about Vladimir Putin. He is not a nice man. He has not behaved well, especially with regard to Ukraine.

At the same time, remember, we have sent over \$113 billion already to that country. Meanwhile, we continue to receive pressure from our European allies, our NATO partners, who increasingly love to say things like: All eyes are turning to the United States. We are relying on the United States to solve this, to fix this; you have to spend more money—apparently, feeling no sense of irony or responsibility on their part as they say this. They just want us to turn on our printing presses yet again, send more money over there yet again.

Well, why? Why is this? Why shouldn't they have to, at least, first, match or exceed in not all dollars and a percentage of their combined GDP, what we have sent? In fact, why shouldn't they have to far exceed that? This is in their backyard, not ours. They have more at stake. They have greater familiarity with the area, the region, than we do, and it is closer to where they are than we are, and we have already spent a whole lot more than any of them or all of them combined. So why is this ours to do and not theirs? Why are all eyes turning to America?

Well, they are turning to America because America has, in the past—espe-

cially the recent past—been far more willing to open its wallet. And as long as you have got one party at the dinner table who is perceived as the one most likely to pick up the check, sometimes the eyes turn to that party. And, clearly, they are here.

But let's think about this for a minute. Separate and apart from the fact that they are closer to the action and have more at stake, they have also been the beneficiaries of a security umbrella funded disproportionately by the American people, not just for years, but for decades. In fact, for the entirety of my lifetime, we have been the largest backstop, by far, of the security umbrella that our NATO partners and allies in Europe enjoy.

There has been an understanding in recent years that everyone in NATO should spend at least 2 percent of their GDP on defense, and some have tried to honor it. Most of them have not been consistent in honoring it. Many, if not most, are not honoring it as we speak.

And so here again, it is understandable why their eyes would all turn to us. We provided them security backstop for decades, disproportionately providing the funds, the resources, the human resources, the technological resources and otherwise to help ensure their security.

Now, we have done this for decades in part because, you know, we have seen it as a partnership. We have seen this as something that can benefit the American people, but we always have to have that discussion as Americans. We can't just continue to be that backstop unflinchingly, without continuing to ask the question year after year, month after month: What are we getting out of this, and are they also doing their fair share?

The Senate, when looking at this, could credibly argue that the American taxpayer has been not only making them more secure, more safe by providing a significant portion of their defense umbrella but that, by so doing, the American taxpayer has also funded all kinds of other things in Europe that have nothing to do with European or American national security. You see, those countries, buoyed up by our generous support, consistent support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have freed up budgetary resources within those member states to do other things. So the Senate could argue: We have helped them not only with their own national security needs, but also even with all kinds of social programs. Whatever it is that they are spending money on over there to do through their government, we made it easier. And it is really hard for the American taxpayer to look at that, to see that, to see that has been happening for decades; and their eyes are still turned to us, their hands are still outstretched for us to do more than they have been willing to do to protect themselves in their own backyard.

The American people have seen this, and they have started to get the sense

that maybe, just maybe, their hands are still outstretched because we have established this pattern, this expectation, that we will do more than they will do in this war, that we will do more than they would otherwise have to do simply because we are there and they rely on us.

But the American people started asking: Why are we continuing to do this when they are not pulling their share, and when their share is—and properly should be—a lot more than ours, given their proximity to the action and given their longtime reluctance to fund their own security needs in their own nations. It is a reasonable question a lot of Americans are asking.

This question becomes even more poignant and the answers to those questions more important to address carefully and thoroughly when you consider that as we are trying to help secure the border integrity of Ukraine, our own border is in a state of absolute pandemonium, utter chaos, and utter free fall. This is added to their concerns.

So this is part of that backdrop against the commitment Republicans in the Senate made to each other and to the public just a few short months ago, last fall, as we started talking about this Ukraine aid package. Here are some of the factors that have been unfolding, factors that have caused the American people concern.

Now, just a few short weeks ago, the House Judiciary Committee released a report containing new data showing the severity of the Biden border crisis. These numbers are shocking, and they also confirm the numbers that Americans were seeing in smaller pieces, bit by bit last fall, causing them, understandably, to feel real concern about this.

It was in—there was an article, I believe, in Time magazine just a few months ago talking about the fact that between May or June of last year and October or November of last year, support for additional aid to Ukraine had plummeted dramatically to a point where it was what—most Americans, at one point, supported it, a minority of Americans that did by November, in part because they were aware of this phenomenon unfolding on our border, the phenomenon that is laid out in great detail in this report issued just a few weeks ago by the House Judiciary Committee.

Since January 20, 2021, the day that Joe Biden was sworn in, the 46th President of the United States, the Biden administration has released into the United States more than 3.3 million illegal aliens. In fact, in a January 2024 interview, Secretary Mayorkas, who runs the Department of Homeland Security who is in charge of the Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement—protecting the American homeland, as his departmental name implies—he admitted as much, stating

that the Biden administration has released, in his words, more than a million illegal aliens each year—each year.

Those are just the ones that they released. These are not encounters or known “got-aways,” which are at least another 1.7 million, probably a lot more than that. And these are people they caught and then released into your hometown, my hometown, into every hometown in America.

Why? Why would they do this? We have an elaborate body of laws that is designed to protect us against this. We have an elaborate array of law enforcement entities whose job it is not to facilitate this mass invasion but rather to oppose it, to slow it, to deter it, to halt it, to reverse it, whenever, wherever possible in a myriad of ways.

By the way, who exactly are these people they are just catching and releasing? Here is how the House report describes it: People from all over the planet are taking advantage of the turmoil at the southwest border. In fiscal year 2023, Border Patrol encountered illegal aliens from roughly 170 countries, including—this is interesting—24,048 from China; 15,429 from Turkey; 15,000 from Mauritania; 10,368 from Uzbekistan; 7,390 from Russia; 5,604 from Afghanistan; 3,087 from Egypt; 1,270 from Pakistan; 1,122 from Kyrgyzstan; 457 from Iran; 375 from Syria; 81 from Iraq; and 74 from Yemen.

That was a quote from a report. Those are actual numbers.

We have countries that are not exactly friendly to the United States—quite to the contrary—country after country whose own people have entered our country, entered our borders without documentation, and then have been released into our own country by our own government. Why?

We have them coming in in numbers from some specific countries that are larger than the towns and entire cities of voters in each of our States. In each of our States, we have people living in cities, in towns, and in communities that are much smaller than these numbers—than the more than 24,000 from China, 15,500 from Turkey, and 15,263 from Mauritania. Why do we have that many coming in from Iran, that many from Syria and Iraq and Yemen, that many coming in from Afghanistan?

The numbers are concerning, and it should concern everyone. Why is this happening? More importantly, why is our own administration and why is our own President and his administration so determined to facilitate this and to not stop it?

Those numbers are just from fiscal year 2023, by the way. They don't take into account people who have come in since then, and we know that since then—the fiscal year 2023 ended at midnight at the end of September 30, and we know that since September 30 of last year, we have seen record after record after record broken for daily migrant encounters. One can imagine that it has only gotten much worse since then.

Think about all that at the same time that we are handing over our weapons reserves to Ukraine—reserves that could take a decade or more to replace—just allowing people into our country, catching and releasing military-age males from China, from Russia, from Afghanistan, from Iran, from Syria. Why? What sane, nonsuicidal nation would do this? America as a nation wouldn't. The American people wouldn't.

The American people are not the same as those who administer their government. They should be. They should be accountable. The one should be accountable to the other, but lately they are not. Lately, they are doing things that I think, if you randomly selected people from the phonebook—I don't even know if phonebooks exist anymore. If you randomly selected them from, say, voter rolls and called them and said: What do you think? Should we release 24,000 Chinese nationals who have crossed into our border without documentation, having paid, each of them, many, many thousands of dollars?

In the case of Chinese nationals, it is probably well into the tens of thousands of dollars per person to be smuggled into the United States.

Should we release them?

Well, I can't imagine that many randomly selected Americans would do this, so why is our own government doing it? It is baffling. Why would it do this and at the same time say: This is nothing to worry about, and let's give a lot of our weapons stockpiles to another sovereign nation to fight yet another nation half a world away.

Those two things coming at the same time seem rather dangerous. It is analogous, you might say, to drinking and driving. If one drinks and remains in one's home and doesn't handle any dangerous equipment, one might be relatively safe. If one drives without drinking, then driving can be done safely, especially if the person is not inebriated. But if you put those things together, you drink and then you drive, you can have some real problems.

Here, I don't think either of these things would be safe to do. I don't think it is safe to release many tens of thousands of foreign nationals even if you just limit it to these countries, to say nothing of the millions of total foreign nationals who have been released into the United States after crossing our borders without documentation.

When you take into account the many tens of thousands of people coming from countries where we have a lot of enemies, where in many cases the regime in power in those countries is itself our sworn enemy and may well be behind efforts to get these people into the United States for purposes that are hostile to our interests, I can't imagine why we would want to do this.

Why would we want to do this at all, and then why would we want to do this at the same time we are depleting our own weapons reserves, including re-

serves of some very sophisticated weaponry that could take us years, if not a decade or more, to replace? It is baffling.

In January, U.S. Customs and Border Protection watered down the screening process for Chinese asylum seekers amidst a record surge of such cases. The Biden administration, for its part, “streamlined”—word in quotes, “streamlined”—the process by slashing the number of questions officials are required to ask of Chinese nationals from almost 40 until just a few weeks ago down to 5.

So the Biden administration is giving away reserves of our weapons to be used for our own self-defense while simultaneously making it easier for bad actors from countries like China to embed themselves into our country, contrary to our laws. This does not sound like national security. This sounds like the exact opposite of national security.

Of the nearly 6 million illegal encounters that have occurred from January 20, 2021, through September 30, 2023, which was the end of fiscal year 2023, at least 3,095,577 illegal aliens had no confirmed departure from the United States as of the end of September. In fact, according to the House report, Immigration and Customs Enforcement—ICE, as it is known—ICE's nondetained docket swelled to a record of nearly 6.2 million illegal aliens as of the end of the last fiscal year.

There are at least 617,607 aliens on ICE's nondetained docket who have criminal convictions or pending criminal charges, meaning more than half a million criminal aliens are on the streets of the United States and therefore free and somewhat likely to reoffend in U.S. communities.

This is not hypothetical. It happens every day. This is not paranoid fantasy. This is the sad, tragic reality of America in 2024.

Let me say that again. Over half a million people, over 500,000 criminal aliens are in our communities.

As of December 10, 2023, there were 1,323,264 illegal aliens with final orders of removal who remain in the United States. The Department of Homeland Security placed only 6.8 percent of illegal aliens encountered at the southwest border into proceedings to even be screened for asylum eligibility.

Remember, one of the ways this thing started, one of the ways it began—it has mushroomed into something much bigger than that—but at the end of the Trump administration, we had secured our southern border. Sure, there were still a few people trickling across, but it was in numbers low enough that they were able to catch them, apprehend them, and deport them with sufficient regularity that the numbers were slowing month after month.

Once that happened, the international drug cartels that, between them, make many tens of billions of dollars every single year off of this

human smuggling, human trafficking, and in many instances human sex slavery operations, all connected to these caravans of people migrating into the United States—they were able to see that this was becoming a less profitable business. Why? Because people won't pay many thousands of dollars, in some cases.

People from some countries, particularly high-risk individuals, might end up paying many tens of thousands of dollars, but the ones who pay the least I believe are paying \$5, \$6, \$7,000 to be brought across.

People will stop paying that when they see that their chances of getting across the border are relatively low. Their chances of being detected, apprehended, detained, and deported are relatively high. That business is going to dry up, and this self-licking ice cream cone, this self-perpetuating machine suddenly stops having success at one's hand.

That is where we were as of the end of 2020, but as of January 20, 2021, the Biden administration made it clear that these things were going to change. He made clear among other things that the Biden administration would be abandoning, ultimately ending the so-called "Remain in Mexico" program under the official title of the migrant protection program, as well as safe-third-country agreements entered into with other Latin American nations.

The idea behind these programs was that if you crossed into the United States on land on the southern border—obviously crossing in from Mexico—the idea was that if you crossed in, you would be sent back to Mexico. If you applied for asylum, as many illegal immigrants do—many who show up without papers, without documentation, therefore illegally in the United States—historically, many of them have filed immediate applications for asylum.

Now, the numbers vary, but estimates out there are that at least 90 percent, and some have said it is more like 98 percent—I don't know what the true figure is, but it is fairly overwhelming—that if you apply for asylum, you are probably not going to get it after crossing illegally into our country. There are certain statutory criteria that they have to meet. They have to establish that they are eligible for a grant of asylum, and it has to do with establishing a credible fear of persecution within and by their home country pertaining to one of the protected classes identified in the statute.

Historically, a lot of the people who come into our country without documentation—illegally, in other words—have applied for asylum, but at least 9 out of 10 of them—sometimes the numbers, depending on whose statistics you put the most faith in, say it is closer to 10 out of 10 of those individuals—will, on average, be denied asylum. They won't be able to stay here.

Problems arose, though, when this administration took control. It ended

the "Remain in Mexico" program. That program, again, said that if you cross into the United States by land from Mexico without documentation and, thereafter, claim asylum, you will have to remain in Mexico. You will have to be deported back to Mexico where you will wait regardless of where you are from. In some cases, you might be able to be deported to your home country. Regardless, at most, you will be sent back to Mexico, where you will have to wait and wait and wait to see whether your asylum application has been adjudicated by an immigration judge as meritorious. Then and only then could you enter the United States.

When the Trump administration put this program in place, waves of illegal migrants and these caravans, once a torrent, once a raging river, slowed down to a trickle. Why? Well, because people knew it wasn't worth spending the time and the money, to say nothing of the risk to life and limb, to say nothing of the fact that—by some accounts, it is 30 percent; by other accounts, it is 60-some-odd percent—women and girls and, in some cases, also men and boys were trafficked on these caravans. They were sexually assaulted along the way. Countless of them were subjected to human sex trafficking, to sex slavery.

During my most recent visit to the U.S.-Mexico border at the McAllen, TX, area, an area where I spent 2 years—2 wonderful years—as a missionary 30-some-odd years ago in the early 1990s, during my most recent visit there just a few weeks ago, I was told something stunning by the Border Patrol personnel there, who said: You know, for the first time since the 1860s, for the first time since the end of the Civil War and then the ratification of the 13th Amendment which prohibits slavery and indentured servitude, we now have significant numbers of people—for the first time since the Civil War—who are living in indentured servitude, many of those in sex slavery. It was ground to a halt once "Remain in Mexico" was instituted, but one of the first things President Biden did when he came into office was to get rid of it.

Now, a number of court battles have erupted since then. They have been boiling, simmering, boiling over, and coming back again at times. President Biden lost multiple rounds of that litigation. He is still dragging his feet, doing everything he can, kicking and screaming to make sure he doesn't have to put it in place. Why? Why? Why would he want to do that?

Well, for reasons that I cannot fathom, he has decided he wants kind of an open borders environment. It is not what our laws say. It is not what the American people want or accept. It is not what any sane nation would do. Part of what makes a country a country is that we know what the country is and what the country is not. It is defined by its outer bound limits, sort of as the saying goes, "If everyone is family, no one is."

If everyone is an American, what is America, after all—to say nothing of the lawlessness that you invite when you bring in people who are not vetted, whom we know nothing about, who overwhelmingly not only don't speak English but aren't familiar with our customs, our culture, our laws?

That is why many people have said that this is tantamount to an invasion when you have millions of people crossing another country's borders contrary to the laws of that country. That is an invasion. Whether they are an armed, organized military force or not, it is still an invasion. Throughout history, there have been countless instances of things like this that were an invasion regardless of whether there was a single state organizer of that activity, whether they were armed, whether they were organized as a military force. Why would he want to make it easier? But he did.

You know, I remember the first week or two of the Biden administration. Secretary Mayorkas, who, I believe, had just been confirmed or, maybe, was about to be confirmed, said this when some reporter asked him what he would say to the migrants and the migrant caravans that were then making their way through Guatemala and into Mexico and across southern Mexico, heading north. What would you say to them? I don't remember the exact words, but I think he uttered words to the effect that we probably won't be quite ready for them for another 2 or 3 weeks. We need a little bit more time to get ready.

What is this? What does that mean? Why would you be that welcoming? Why not send the signal right then: "Don't do it"? It is not worth the risk to life and limb. It is not worth being indentured servants or sex slaves. It is not worth coming into this country contrary to our laws, and if you do that, we are going to send you back to Mexico, through which you will have crossed, to await an adjudication of your asylum claims. Why? Why do that? Why make that statement that he made?

One can only conclude that this is what they wanted to do. They wanted to invite this invasion. They have nurtured it. They have fostered it. Over time, not only have they abandoned these safe third country programs and the "Remain in Mexico" program, they have adopted a particularly odd practice that, years ago, if somebody had predicted it, would have said: That is absolutely crazy. That would never happen.

They are given airplane tickets after they spend a few days being processed. They are told: OK. Yes, you came into our country in violation of our laws, but you have applied for asylum. You have applied for asylum, so we are going to let you in anyway, and we are going to give you an airplane ticket. We will fly you to the U.S. city of your choice. By the way, you can get on that airplane. Even though every American

citizen has to show ID in order to get on one, you don't have to worry about that as far as we are concerned. Just get on the plane and have fun.

Eventually, they started saying: By the way, within 6 months, we will send you a work permit. You can use that work permit while you are here. All we ask is, when you get a notification that it is time for your immigration hearing before an immigration judge to adjudicate the validity of your asylum claim, that you report to that; that you show up to that in person. We are asking nicely, so we ask that you do that. Oh, by the way, many of you won't even have an immigration hearing before an immigration judge until the 2030s, possibly 2035.

That is how insane this is. Why are we doing that? Once we started doing that, things really started heating up. The drug cartels realized: This is the season; we are going to make a ton of money on this. And they have. As anyone could have predicted, the border surges have increased dramatically.

By the way, it bears noting here that our asylum laws don't give any one of these people—not a single one—a right to be here. There is not a statutory right; there is not a constitutional right that any particular immigrant has to receive asylum. It is not a right. It is a grant of authority to the executive branch of the U.S. Government. It uses "may" language. If the following criteria for asylum are met—I referred to those a minute ago—then the Secretary of Homeland Security may grant asylum to such a person as meets those criteria. There is no language that says he shall, he must—only that he may.

There are other laws that contemplate—as I read them, require—that people be detained while their asylum applications are pending. They are detained; but these days, it is for a few days. Then they are released with a plane ticket, with the promise of a work permit, as I described a moment ago.

But there isn't a right—not a statutory right, not a constitutional right—that any one of them has to be here. So, you know, I would imagine that, if Secretary Mayorkas were here, he would say: Yes, we don't detain them because we can't detain them because we ran out of bedspace a long time ago. We are so full. We are always so full. We don't really have the ability to detain them for more than just a few short days while we process them. At least we know who they are. Then we release them.

Why is that the solution? Why just release them and then give them a work permit and then tell them we hope that they will act in good faith and go to their immigration hearings, which may be more than a decade from now? Why? That makes no sense when, all along, the Secretary has the authority to shut down the asylum application process and say: We are not taking any more asylees. If you want asy-

lum in the United States, apply from somewhere else. Go to a U.S. Embassy in a foreign country. Submit an application there. Remain in that country or in some other country until such time as your asylum application can be adjudicated. But, if you come across our southern border, you will not be admitted. If we find you, we will deport you; and if you return again, that is a Federal felony offense, and you will be imprisoned for years.

Why isn't that the solution? These things would come to an abrupt halt if you did that, but he didn't.

What did he do?

Well, as things heated up, he started looking for more and more creative ways to let people into the country. I won't bore you with all the details, but he relied, among other things, on a feature of U.S. immigration law—a statutory provision—known as parole authority. The context of immigration parole authority is that it is there to be used on a case-by-case basis only and is never to be used on a categorical basis for a broad category of persons but only case-specific needs that fall into one of two categories, either humanitarian compassionate relief or public purpose.

On the humanitarian and compassionate front, an individual can be admitted for a short duration. For example, if he or she is coming in to attend the funeral of a family member, it is with the expectation they will go to the funeral and then they will go back out or if it is to attend to the needs of an acutely ill relative or something like that.

On the public use front, that can be used for things like—I don't know—if some government entity has the need for, for example, interpreter services for an obscure language and can't find a suitable interpreter in the United States, so they look outside the United States. They can bring them in for that public use, for some purpose relating to things like the aiding and assisting in government operations here.

But the statutory framework makes it very clear that those are never to be used on a categorical basis. You can't just bring in large swaths of aliens simply by virtue of a common characteristic they have of being from this country or that country. The Biden administration—to make a long story short—has, I think, in the last year or two alone, brought in about 3 million people under this parole authority. They have used that a lot. They have also resorted to withheld removal.

All these things are discretionary, by the way. There is nothing requiring the Department of Homeland Security to let these people in, but they do it anyway because they want to. And this problem becomes self-propelling, self-perpetuating, and self-magnifying. And our government's efforts to not enforce our border become self-defeating of the very purposes for which the Department of Homeland Security and its various Agencies—a number of its

Agencies, at least—were created in the first place.

So make no mistake, this is part of a deliberate choice. This is not something that was just out of our control, that the U.S. Government had no involvement in.

There are people out there who come up with all kinds of crazy theories to explain why this was inevitable, that this had nothing to do with the Biden administration or any of its policies. If you believe that, I have got a bridge to sell you. It is just not plausible.

There are those who are even claiming that this is somehow about climate change, that climate change forced them into our hands. Whatever caused them to want to make the dangerous journey north and to pay many thousands of dollars and, in many cases, subject themselves to forms of indentured servitude or slavery or sex trade, it doesn't mean that our country had to aid and abet in that.

By the way, another of my colleagues just returned in the last few days from our southern border and was told something really alarming by the Border Patrol personnel there. As I understand it, they told them the average time for those women and girls who can't afford the \$5, \$6, \$7, \$8,000—sometimes a lot more—they have to work it off. Both men and women are subjected to this indentured servitude, but they can't pay it. A lot of these people can't pay it. These people are dirt poor.

The drug cartels are taking advantage of those who are already vulnerable. They can't just go take out a line of credit somewhere, or they can't just dip into their savings that they don't have. Even if they are paying drug cartels at the very lowest rates, they still don't have that kind of money. So they have to work it off.

My colleague was informed that the average period of time it takes for women and girls subjected to sex slavery as part of their indentured servitude, how they pay off the journey, is like 7 or 8 years, and that one of the reasons it takes this long is that they are charged for everything while they are kept in these conditions against their will, held as captives.

They are forced to pay room and board, for their food, their housing, their clothing. They have got everything worked out to a fee schedule. There is even an established fee of, I believe, \$30 that the cartels charge for the removal of an ankle-monitoring bracelet. That is why it takes so long for them to work off this debt of a few thousand dollars that they pay for the cartels to smuggle them in.

The work of these cartels and the human smuggling operations extend, of course, beyond human trafficking and those humans whom they traffic and whom they subject to these horrific conditions—conditions that we haven't seen, and should never see in this country again, since the Civil War.

A lot of these conditions would never exist in this country but for the fact

that we have a government that is facilitating it. It is not humane. It is not compassionate. It is not nice to invite and allow and perpetuate this kind of trade. It is corrupt. It is immoral. It is evil. But people do it because they are desperate, and they believe that this gives them a chance. They are preying on vulnerable populations.

As of December 10 of just this last year, there were still 1,323,264 illegal aliens with final orders of removal who remained in the United States—think about that one for a minute—in addition to the fact that we now have millions of people—many millions—who have been released into the United States by our own government and told: We hope you will show up to your immigration hearing before the immigration judge. By the way, that may not—probably won't—occur until the mid-2030s. But you can have a work permit between now and then, which you will have within 180 days of your arrival at your destination, or at least that is when you can apply for it, and it will be granted.

On top of all of those people, we are so busy processing those and getting them to their destinations in the United States that, apparently, we are not doing the removal. We are not executing on those who have been deemed deportable, removable, and therefore need to be removed from the country because we have got almost a million and a half people who have been ordered deported who are just out there on the streets. They are not doing that.

That is why the failure to enforce the law begets more lawlessness, and that makes it harder and harder to enforce the law. That is why our whole system is built on what is supposed to be a never-ending succession of good men and women throughout each generation, across one generation to another, regardless of the political party of the President in charge, of people enforcing the law, because, once you stop enforcing it, especially in an area that involves immigration and illegal immigration—and criminal activity accompanying illegal immigration, in particular—it is very difficult. You can't just walk in and turn on a switch, turn it all around, because the backlog itself makes it so daunting.

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security placed only 6.8 percent of the illegal aliens encountered at the southwest border into proceedings to even be screened for asylum eligibility. So, as I said a few minutes ago, what started out as a predominantly asylum-application-centered illegal immigration crisis, has expanded into something very different, where they are not even doing the initial screening to find out whether they are going to claim asylum. They have stopped bothering with that, and they are sort of just letting them in on other bases, like immigration parole without removal or something else.

Of the at least 3.3 million illegal aliens released into the United States

since January 20, 2021, the Biden administration failed to remove through immigration court removal proceedings roughly 99.7 percent of those illegal aliens.

Now, look, for our system of laws to be enforced and to be followed widely, there needs to be some—you know, you don't always have to catch, apprehend, charge. In the case of illegal aliens, remove them or charge them if they have committed a crime. You don't have to get every single person who violated the law, but there does have to be a significant possibility of detention, of apprehension, and of consequence.

But when you are looking at numbers like that—99.7 percent don't have any consequence like that—well, of course, it is going to continue.

As of December 10, 2023, there were 1,323,264 aliens with final orders of removal—that is, deportation—who remained in the United States. And even though they were barely deporting anyone—apparently, about 0.3 percent of illegal entrants—the Biden White House has threatened to stop all deportations if we don't pass the supplemental aid package for Ukraine.

I don't even have words for that, and if I could think of words for that, it probably wouldn't be appropriate in my hometown of Provo, UT. This is staggering—that President Biden would use this kind of threat.

Well, according to the Supreme Court of the United States, the term is a legal matter. It doesn't apply against the Federal Government. If this were anything outside of the U.S. Government, we would call this—there is a word for this, and the word is "extortion." Extortion occurs whenever somebody tries to get something out of you. They try to get something out of you by saying what they will or won't do that will end up being harmful to you. Others would describe it as blackmail.

Either way, they are trying to—"extortion" is the word I would use because they are trying to get out of Congress something that Congress is reluctant to do by leveling a threat, and the threat is: I will enforce the border even less than I have been. I will make this even more chaotic if you don't pass the Ukraine supplemental aid package.

The Biden administration has removed only 1 illegal alien for every 26 illegal aliens it allows to enter into the United States. As of August 31, 2023, the Department of Homeland Security had removed only 2 percent of illegal aliens who failed to appear—just those who failed to appear—at their immigration court hearings, after successfully establishing a fear of persecution at the border, which is the standard for claiming eligibility for asylum. Ninety-eight percent of those illegal aliens remained in the United States as of the end of August of last year, August of 2023.

In fact, in early December 2023, the Department of Homeland Security officials admitted that "an average of 5,000

illegal aliens are currently being released into the United States each day at the border." And then, throughout the month of December, we saw daily record after daily record being broken for those apprehensions, migrant encounters.

These are not the kinds of records we want to be breaking. We want to break records in the Olympics. We want to break records in areas that are signals that America is doing well, that it is healthy, that our government is serving its people well, or that Americans are able to thrive and succeed. This is not the kind of record to which we should aspire.

Yet the Biden administration seems to want more of those records. It wants to spike the football and celebrate those, although, interspersed into all of this, are some contradictory, eyebrow-raising expressions of momentary awareness that something is terribly wrong. Even Secretary Mayorkas has acknowledged the high rate of releases, telling the Border Patrol:

The current rate of release for illegal immigrants apprehended at the southern border is above 85 percent.

I want to think that that is an acknowledgement that something is terribly wrong, but, these days, I don't know. His actions, since we started breaking those records, almost seem to suggest that maybe he was bragging about that.

Let's back up for a minute. We have talked about the circumstances when, last fall, some early discussions began after President Biden asked for another \$60 billion or so to be sent to Ukraine.

(Ms. SMITH assumed the Chair.)

Those discussions among Senate Republicans, in particular, on something like this, many of us are hearing from our constituents—and we ourselves share those concerns—that it seems wrong, vindictive toward our own citizens, whom we are asking to pay for this—our own citizens who are increasingly living paycheck to paycheck.

The cost of living increases that have been inevitable, foreseeable—in fact, foreseen—and warned of consequences of Bidenomics, coupled with Americans' understandable fear about who is coming across our borders illegally, from what countries and with what purposes in mind, with apparently not just the tacit acquiescence of our own government but with the assistance of our own government, causes us to feel uneasy about this.

Many Senate Republicans expressed legitimate concern that their own voters would be very unhappy with them if they just, under those circumstances, voted to support another \$60 billion or so to support Ukraine when we spent more on Ukraine than anybody else, on military aid than everybody else combined. And at the same time, as we are doing all that to help Ukraine shore up its own border integrity, we are not doing anything for ours.

So discussions ensued back and forth. Republicans came up with a nascent

idea, more or less a plan. The idea was, say, look, there is pretty uniform support among Senate Democrats for more Ukraine aid. We have got a Democratic President in the White House. He really wants this. They tend to support him, and they do appear to support him on this.

This is an issue that definitely unites Democrats, probably all 51 Democrats in the Senate—at least as we perceived it at the time, at least as it related to Ukraine aid. I still think that is true as to Ukraine aid, but it sharply divides Republicans. Some Senate Republicans—a minority of Senate Republicans—would have, at the time, perhaps been OK passing a Ukraine aid package without doing anything for our border, but most members of the Senate Republican conference didn't want to do that.

Among House Republicans who—only a third of us are up for reelection every year, but every Member of the House of Representatives is up for reelection every 2 years. The sentiment among House Republicans was, I believe, also one that included a lot of skepticism, a lot of skeptics such that it was unclear that you could get a Ukraine aid package passed through either House of Congress, much less both, given that in the Senate, even though Democrats have the majority and even though the Democrats uniformly support more aid to Ukraine, while only some Republicans do, at least without qualification, without restriction, there was, in short, overwhelming support among Democrats for Ukraine aid, not among Republicans.

But what Republicans do want, rather uniformly, is more border security. So we came up with this idea. Why not see if we can come up with a bill that would harness the appetite on the left for more Ukraine aid in order to adopt legislative text that would, in effect, force an end to the border crisis that would tie the Biden administration's hands to the point that the Biden administration would have no choice but to enforce the border.

And so the idea was hatched. Not everybody loved it, but most people thought it was a sensible approach to at least undertake. In theory, I think it would get—if you wrote that bill right, you could get a whole lot of Republicans on board, possibly even most of the Senate Republican conference.

What ensued over the next 2, 3, 4 months—depending on where you measure it as having started—was a series of negotiations, negotiations from which nearly all Senate Republicans were excluded. We weren't permitted into that. I still don't entirely understand why. I mean, I do know that sometimes for a few days at a time, you have to have a chance for negotiators to negotiate and figure things out before they are ready to share language, but whenever someone is negotiating on behalf of 49 people, it is imperative to give them at least regular updates and share with them such statu-

tory text as you are able to share as a draft of the bill.

Unfortunately, we didn't see that. We didn't see anything beyond being told regularly: We are trying come up with a deal to get the best deal we can. We will give you details as soon as we can.

Finally, in the second week of January, we were given a few bullet points—just a few bullet points—no legislative text. Based on those bullet points, a number of us expressed our concern, that unless there was more meat on the bones of this legislation, it wouldn't do what we as Senate Republicans thought we were committing to, what I think most of us thought we were committing to, which is—it is not enough to go and negotiate a Ukraine aid package with an immigration bill tacked onto it, just a few immigration reforms. Even if those immigration reforms include a few provisions that might help, it doesn't solve the issue here. They have to be sufficiently strong and unambiguous that it would more or less force the issue to the point where the President would no longer just facilitate the drug cartels and their business that makes them many tens of billions of dollars every year human trafficking into the United States.

And, by the way, we know it is not just human trafficking because those humans they are trafficking are also carrying other things, most notably enough fentanyl to kill every American, distributed in the right doses to the right number of people; that have, in fact, killed more than 100,000 Americans for the last 2 or 3 years in a row.

So, yes, when those details leaked out but still without the benefit of seeing text, a number of us started to express concern. We started not at that point trying to kill the deal because there was no deal that we had seen. We had no ability to ascertain the full impact of it. We hoped that maybe—just maybe—there was something in there we weren't seeing. Maybe it was better than how it had been described to us, at least the few details we got in the second week of January.

The first time Senate Republicans were able to see the package was this past Sunday, almost a week ago. This past Sunday, at 7 p.m., eastern time, we received it, not from our colleagues who have been in the negotiations, but from a reporter who apparently got to see it before we did and released it to the entire public.

By the way, for weeks leading up to this moment, before the bill we were told even existed, we did have a number of people in the media who had made up their minds. I don't know how they made up their minds on a bill that didn't yet exist. But, for example, the Wall Street Journal, in the second week of January—it could have been the third, but I think it was the second—published an editorial, an editorial backed by the whole editorial board, basically saying that any Republican who didn't support this deal,

this border security deal, coupled with Ukraine aid, was just trying to score cheap political points at the expense of border security and, thus, national security.

I was shocked, dismayed, and, yes, even offended by this because on the one hand, we were being told by our own Senate Republican leadership the bill didn't yet exist. That is why we couldn't see it, because it didn't exist yet. Nobody else got to see it, so we didn't either.

If that were true, then the Wall Street Journal's editorial board—ordinarily cautious, careful, thorough, insightful—was just operating on rank speculation as to what might be in the bill. That is offensive to insult us for not supporting a bill that we hadn't seen yet because it didn't exist yet and we wouldn't see for weeks.

On the other hand, equally offensive—perhaps even more so—would have been the possibility that they had seen the bill, they were permitted an inside glimpse into what we would be forbidden from seeing for weeks to come.

Either way, this is offensive. And it is not like the Wall Street Journal was the only source in the media. It is not like the Wall Street Journal was the only voice publicly clamoring for this, publicly chastising Republicans who had expressed concerns with it based on what few breadcrumbs they were allowed to receive about its contents—just bullet points, summaries of what might be in it.

We finally did see it at 7 p.m., eastern time, this last Sunday. I immediately devoted hours upon hours to reading it, as did members of my staff. It was 370 pages long. And in that 370 pages, there is a lot of detail, a lot of statutory cross references.

And while I respect and consider as friends those who have negotiated it, including and especially my friend JAMES LANKFORD from Oklahoma—a good man, a dear friend—we agree on most things. I appreciate his work on this. It is not easy. I think he did the best job he could with the cards he was dealt. Nonetheless, it became increasingly apparent to me, the more I read in this bill, that it didn't live up certainly to my expectations about what we had I agreed to, what I thought we had agreed to among Senate Republicans last fall, which was that if we were going to send another dime to Ukraine, we really should do something that would force the end to the current border crisis.

Now, sure, there were provisions in there, in that part of the bill, dealing with border security that I can fairly characterize as an improvement, that I can certainly fairly characterize as tools that could be used in future administrations, by future Presidents and future Homeland Security Secretaries and the Agencies operating within that Department to bring about a more secure border. But in each instance, I could find myriad ways in which this

administration could—and I believe inevitably would—exploit loopholes within that legislative text, were it to be passed into law, to not only avoid the more restrictive text but in some cases even possibly to make it worse. It wasn't nearly enough.

Much has been said about what those provisions would do. Less has been said about what they would not do. There is nothing in there that would have required a return to the "Remain in Mexico" program. There is nothing in there that would have prohibited the Biden administration from just putting people on planes to the destination of their choice within the United States and telling them: We hope you will show up to your yet-to-be scheduled, yet-to-be-dreamed-of immigration judge hearing, which may not occur until 2025 or later, and, by the way, you will be eligible for a work permit within 180 days.

It didn't contain anything like that. It didn't contain anything reinforcing the authority of the President at any moment to go back to the "Remain in Mexico" program. In fact, he should have done it all along. That is why he litigated. He lost that litigation. Nothing required that. In fact, under certain circumstances, it allowed some aliens crossing into our borders without documentation—they are applying for asylum—to get work permits under the right circumstances without even having to wait the 180 days that they currently have to wait.

It is things like this that may well have increased the draw, increased the allure for those willing to subject themselves to grave risks of life, liberty, and property, to pay the drug cartels, put themselves at the mercy of those vicious monsters who engage in human trafficking and trafficking of controlled substances across multiple international borders. If anything, this would have increased the appeal of that because they could have gotten more permits without having to wait the 180-day period for this—at least for certain classes of individuals coming in this way.

So a number of us, after reading it, said: This is not what we agreed to. This was not part of the plan. This isn't what we wanted.

While we appreciate the hard work that Senator JAMES LANKFORD put into it on our behalf, and I believe he was acting selflessly and, again, dealing with a really tough hand he had been dealt, this is the inevitable, foreseeable, and avoidable consequence, what happens whenever you are forced to negotiate something on behalf of 49 people without what would ordinarily be assumed would be customary, would be just a matter of collegiality—to keep them updated and informed as to what you were negotiating on their behalf. Again, I don't mean to suggest any bad faith on his part. I think he was acting within very, very tough parameters.

I raise that only to explain that it is not surprising that over a 2-, 3-, 4-

month period from concept to proposal, when people are not informed, and there is not able to be the more or less continual feedback between the negotiator and those on whose behalf he is negotiating, and they are not able to communicate regularly about the contents of the deal, you run a grave risk that that deal is going to be pretty far apart from what people are expecting.

So a lot of us came out right away and said: I have concerns with this.

The Senate Republican conference met less than 24 hours after that bill was released at 6 p.m. on Monday. By the end of this meeting, we were starting to surmise that this bill wasn't going to make it, that there wasn't support for it.

At the end, there were only four Republican Senators who supported that iteration of the Ukraine aid bill—that is, the Ukraine aid bill with the border security immigration provisions tacked on to it. Just 4 out of 49 Senate Republicans voted to even end debate on the narrow question of proceeding to that bill. So, yes, that is itself proof positive that something had gone dangerously wrong between the moment we first discussed and negotiated the understanding or the agreement that we had among Senate Republicans as to what we wanted to accomplish and as to what was accomplished.

But in no way, shape, or form did that failure to satisfy expectations—that pretty significant departure from expectations—overtake, supersede, obviate the need for, much less erase the concerns of Senate Republicans and those we represent and the many hundreds of millions of Americans who are concerned about the full-scale invasion being carried out, unfolding across our southern border with massive, dire ramifications or the humanitarian needs of those individuals. It didn't undo our concerns. It didn't undo the whole reason we had reached this agreement. Therefore, many, if not most, of us who had these concerns started saying: Look, the fact that this won't do the job, that this won't secure the border, that this doesn't make it sufficiently more likely that the border will be enforced and this crisis will come to an end during this administration—the fact that we don't feel good about this bill doing that doesn't mean that we are enthusiastic about simply providing our votes to fund Ukraine to the tune of another \$55 or \$60 billion. It shouldn't do that. It doesn't do that.

For the same reasons that we decided months ago—I believe it was all 49 of us—to oppose cloture on the motion to proceed to an earlier version of this bill—actually, a shell of an earlier version of this bill, one that involved only these foreign military aid and nonmilitary aid issues—the same reasons are still alive today. So a lot of us started suggesting that we should deny cloture on the motion to proceed not only to that bill but also to what was put forward as the text of the original bill or what was to become the original

bill, which was just the foreign supplemental aid package without the border security.

For those of us who in the first instance said that we don't want to fund Ukraine again without securing our own border and then said—all but 4 of the 49 Senate Republicans said that border security package added to the Ukraine deal doesn't satisfy our concerns. It shouldn't have meant, OK, let's just have Republicans supply the votes now to get this passed. No.

Something we all have to remind ourselves about Senate procedure: Legislation, absent unusual circumstances, like a veto override or ratification of a treaty, for example, involving two-thirds supermajority vote, as required by the Constitution—absent special circumstances like that, passage of legislation in the Senate is by a simple majority, 51 votes out of 100. It could be less than that depending on who is here, how many Senators we have.

But in order to get to final passage, in all but a very narrow set of circumstances that are seldom at play, circumstances involving a rarely used procedure known as budget reconciliation—not present here—all legislation, before it can be passed into law, has to endure multiple cloture votes.

"Cloture" is an old-fashioned, Senate-specific word that we use that involves bringing debate to a close. It takes 60 votes to bring debate to a close. It takes 60 votes to bring debate to a close regardless of how many people are present at the moment. It requires the support of three out of every five Senators who are in place at the time. We have 100 Senators; that means 60 votes regardless of how many are here. That is what you have to do in order to bring debate to a close.

You have to bring debate to a close on multiple occasions. Normally, you will see this in multiple respects—at least two, sometimes more, depending on whether you are dealing with a substitute amendment or something like that—but at a minimum, you will have, in most circumstances, to bring debate to a close prior to the motion to proceed to the bill before you formally consider it. Then you have cloture on the bill, bringing debate to a close at the end of that process. Either way, it takes 60 votes.

What that means is that the whole reason this bill—the version of the bill that included the border security language—the whole reason that failed is because they couldn't get to 60. They couldn't get to 60 votes on that one.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the Ukraine aid I think was intended in the past to unify all 51 Democratic votes in the Senate. As this was brought forward, I think they had one dissenting Democrat earlier this week on the combined foreign aid supplemental package and this border security provision—one dissenting Democrat, as I recall. So that means, with 50 Democrats supporting it, you would have to get 10 Republicans, or this thing couldn't go

anywhere. You received four Republicans who supported cloture on the motion to proceed to that bill, with one Democrat also opposing cloture. So you had 54 votes—6 shy of the 60 you needed—so that part was finished.

Then they had another cloture vote, a vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to the supplemental aid package without the border security language.

Interestingly, they had—I believe it was 17 Republicans who voted for that, the same people—most of whom had just voted against the border security language being included. As I recall, there were 17 of those.

As I recall, last fall when we made this decision, I thought we were united on this point that we needed to try to force through legislation that would compel the President—leaving him no easy out—to actually secure the border. I thought that is what the plan was. Maybe some were never on board with that altogether.

It just makes no sense to me that what we were as a whole conference against just a few months ago, they voted for this week even though there is now nothing in there to secure the border.

Now, we could have—should have—instead come up with a simple set of things—maybe we should have done that last fall, but the need for it has become even more pronounced ever since then—to just say: OK, we know a border security deal will pass the House of Representatives because it has passed the House of Representatives, and we know that I believe all 49 Republicans have been supportive of another context of this bill passed by the House of Representatives in the border security context called H.R. 2—or at least the essential elements of it. We could have added that to it, maybe added a couple of other provisions or maybe not—just put that forward.

H.R. 2 would make a big difference. It would really tie the administration's hands and make it much more difficult for the administration to continue being an active accomplice in this full-scale invasion taking place across our southern border that, according to many, has let in 10 million people or so, maybe more, just since January 20, 2021.

Why didn't we do that? I suggested again even this week and I have been suggesting from the beginning that we add language there.

Then a number of my colleagues made another suggestion at the time: In addition to H.R. 2, why don't we add something—just to make sure that this actually happens—that would require the Biden administration to achieve certain border security measures, to achieve a secure border, to achieve actual operational control of the border as defined by law, before all the Ukraine aid could be released?

Many, if not most, Republican Senators ended up echoing that belief. I believe I first heard it suggested by my friend and colleague from North Da-

kota, Senator JOHN HOEVEN, himself a former Governor—a Governor of a border State, albeit a northern border State. The dynamics up there are a little bit different.

Had we done something like that, I think that could have and should have been able to unite, at least, nearly all Senate Republicans. To my knowledge, it would have. We would be in a much better position if we had a package supported by Republicans—that was supported by most Republicans. Instead, what we have gotten is something that has become far too common these days. I take no joy in describing it this way: circumstances in which our own Senate Republican leadership has tragically chosen to support legislation that unites all or nearly all Senate Democrats, while sharply dividing Republicans.

That almost doesn't even capture not just sharply dividing Republican Senators but securing the, you know, anywhere from 9 to sometimes 19 or 20 Republican votes to join with Democrats to advance Democratic policy overwhelmingly favored and championed by Democrats that most Republicans in the Senate and in America overwhelmingly oppose.

This is far from the only example of this happening—far from the only example of this happening even throughout the duration of the Biden Presidency, far from the only example of this happening then or in the prior administration or in other administrations, since I have been a U.S. Senator, since I became a U.S. Senator in 2011.

Why does the Senate Republican leadership sometimes try so hard to get a handful of Republicans—a minority of Republican Senators—to join in an effort that unites most or, in many cases, all Senate Democrats on an issue so aggressively opposed by most Republicans in the Senate and in America, if not most Americans themselves?

I don't know that I can fully answer that question, but I don't know that I need to here because what I do know is that it is happening here. When you saw 17 Republicans at the urging of Senate Republican leadership joining with a near-unanimous Senate Democratic caucus to advance a bill important to President Biden that overwhelmingly is supported by Democrats—and, yes, some Republicans do support it, but it is a slim minority of them among Americans, and even more of a slim minority among Republicans at large than it is among Senate Republicans. But it is still a slim minority among Senate Republicans. Why do we do this?

We shouldn't. We certainly shouldn't here, not where our own border security presents such a clear and present threat to American national security.

One of the things that I find so galling and so difficult to accept, much less understand, is the fact that we are told by our few Republican colleagues who aggressively support this bill that we have to support it, and that they

support it, because our own national security depends on it. That is hard for me to understand, and I genuinely do like to understand other people's arguments when addressing them. And, as a lawyer, it was my job to thoroughly understand my opponent's argument. Nothing works as well if you don't understand your opponent's argument, and, when you understand it, the debate can become crystallized; it can become clearer.

It is hard to understand it here because it is hard to understand a coherent defense of it, especially when they are telling us that the war in Ukraine and our ability to fund it is kind of a “without which not” component of our national security, even though we would have the ability, if we held off for a while and if we said to our Democratic colleagues: With all due respect, we do need to present you with another option, and we present something that would actually secure the border in meaningful ways. You will get enough Republican votes to move forward if you do this; you won't get those votes if you don't.

It seems a much better way forward than for us to claim that we are going to do that, only to not do that at the end of the day.

And at the first sign of trouble of a border security deal that failed to secure the border to our satisfaction, 17 of our Republican colleagues joined with the Democrats and abandoned the commitment that I thought we had made a few months ago to each other and to our voters and to the American people generally.

It is baffling. It is troubling. But, more importantly, it is not too late. It still isn't done. We haven't passed the bill. And still, tomorrow—at 1 p.m. tomorrow—we are scheduled to vote on cloture on the bill; that is, bringing debate to a close on the bill. If enough of those Senate Republicans changed their position between now and then, and voted against cloture on the bill, then we could have a chance, again, to say: Let us take another shot at it. We can come up with language.

Probably in a few days, we could propose—I think we could unite at least nearly every Republican in the Senate—maybe not everyone, but probably 80 or 90 percent of us easily—as opposed to a bill that they seem inclined to support that most Republicans in the Senate and in the country strongly oppose. I hope that they will reconsider, especially when they learn or are apprised of the feelings of their constituents about this and especially as their constituents learn about some of the details of this bill.

So let's talk about a few of those details now, considering, as we now have a backdrop of this legislation, how we got here, and why it is that Senate Republicans overwhelmingly oppose this bill and why it is that, quite arguably, inconsistent with the commitment that Senate Republicans made to each other and to the public, that 17 of them

now seem to have indicated that they are not supportive of.

So what remains in the bill? Let's talk about that for a moment. Among its many other features, among the many tens of billions of dollars that it sends to Ukraine, there are a few provisions that I feel the need to highlight here. One provision gives \$238 million—so close to a quarter of a billion dollars—for increased U.S. troop deployments to Europe.

What does that mean? Well, I am not sure, but I am pretty sure it has a lot to do with the conflict in Ukraine and other things surrounding it.

Does this mean—could this mean—that we are preparing to involve ourselves more directly, more kinetically, in the war between Ukraine and Russia, whereas, up to this point, we have been acting through a proxy, Ukraine?

If so, the Senate ought to begin debate on an authorization for the use of military force or a declaration of war to that effect, but we haven't. So why then are we deploying so many troops there? Well, the skeptic, the cynic would argue that whenever we do that, whenever we deploy U.S. military personnel into a zone of hostilities, into a zone in which hostilities appear to be imminent, based on the circumstances, we are more or less acknowledging that what any of us would consider actions tantamount to warfare are, if not inevitable, somewhat likely.

So when we increase our troop deployments into that area, perhaps anticipating that war may spill over or that we might become more further or more directly involved—or to an area covering more of a surface area, where there is a bigger target on us—at that moment, we become a little bit more committed, a little bit more likely to go to war.

And we put them there so that if they do things that impact our troops, our U.S. military personnel, as various Iranian proxies in the region in and around the Middle East have done in recent weeks, we become that much more likely to be involved in armed conflicts. See when they fire on our people, the President has some immediate authority to repel an attack as it is occurring. That, in turn, can quickly lead into full-scale warfare.

We ought to be having more of those discussions. Instead, we are just spending more money, quietly sending more troops there. I don't think that gets enough airtime.

Different people might have different feelings about the extent to which we ought to be involved in that conflict, but we are not having it. And this is a conflict, after all, that involves some major adversaries, that could involve not only Russia but Iranian proxies and, ultimately, Iran. And all of this has been stirred up at about the same time. We ought to be concerned about that. We ought to be having conversations about where this can take us, and we are not.

It also allows an additional \$7.8 billion worth of weapons to leave U.S.

military stockpiles immediately. Now, keep in mind, we are still looking at years before those stockpiles are fully replenished. And, if we have to engage elsewhere—let's say, if we have to engage in the Indo-Pacific region in the near future, for example, if Beijing were to attack Taiwan and we needed to, wanted to supply Taiwan with weapons that it could use to deter that action, to make it less likely, we are making it, through this action, that much more difficult for us to do that, because I am told that many are the same weapons, according to a number of foreign policy and military experts.

People like my friend Elbridge Colby have pointed out that a lot of the same weapons that are being given to Ukraine now are the same weapons—the same types of weapons and weapon systems—that would be needed in Taiwan to deter an attack on Taiwan from Beijing. So that ties our hands there.

Some would also add that a lot of those same weapons were the same things, at least in some cases, needed by Israel, and yet we are giving up an additional \$7.8 billion worth of this stuff.

Now, it would be one thing—it would still be significant given the cost, but it would be one thing if we could just turn on a switch and say, "Make more of these weapons"—weapons with names like Javelins, ATACMS, HIMARS, among many others. If we could just flip a switch and say, "Make more of those"—but that is not really how it works.

This stuff is really sophisticated. It is really complicated. And some predict that we may not be able to replenish our stockpiles until the 2030s—in some cases, until many of the people entering our borders unlawfully today might have their ultimate immigration judge hearing, and well after the time in which many people fear Beijing might be most tempted to make a move on Taiwan.

But even more concerning, we don't know what other threats the United States might be facing over the next—I don't know—decade or so. There may be other threats to our national security out there, threats that we might not even be focused on right now, that might require those for use by our military forces in protecting the American homeland.

When we release this many of these very sophisticated, complicated, tough weapons, which, together with the bravery of the best men and women any military could have and that we have in the United States—we also achieved a degree of military success and prowess, not only because of the bravery and the expertise and the knowledge and the dedication and the patriotism of our brave men and women who serve in uniform, but also because we developed a really impressive arsenal of weapons—unmatched classes of weapons that have helped bring safety and security to the United States in a way that we have all bene-

fited from in a meaningful, material way. What happens, though, when we run out of those? When we have given them to other countries to such a degree, at such a pace, that we can't produce them fast enough? Will we find ourselves flat-footed, unable to protect the American homeland? The fact that that question hasn't really been asked much less answered to my satisfaction ought to concern all of us. I am not the only one asking the question. This needs to be discussed more than it is.

It is for this reason that this legislation even has to include that language to begin with. We have had existing law, background legislation, in place long before this war started between Russia and Ukraine, at least the current one. It provides that absent Congress passing legislation saying otherwise, the President has a maximum of \$100 million of what they call Presidential drawdown authority; that it can draw down existing caches of weapons, ammunition, things like that \$100 million without additional permission from Congress.

(Ms. BALDWIN assumed the Chair.)

So we have increased that threshold seventy-eightfold in this one provision. There is a good reason why we have the \$100 million Presidential drawdown authority cap, a very good reason indeed, and that reason has a lot to do with not wanting to leave the United States flat-footed by a President who chooses, perhaps shortsightedly, to give too many of our weapons away.

So we are multiplying that limit by 78 times at a moment when we have already given even more than that to Ukraine, at a time when our weapons cache, all kinds of weapons systems that we need to rely on, have been depleted substantially.

This is scary. We should be concerned. It was not just that this bill doesn't protect American national security on the homeland by fixing the border crisis and ending the invasion, it is that it also depletes our weapons and makes us less able to protect our homeland and our allies when needed.

This bill also allows the Department of Defense to enter into contracts for \$13.7 billion in new equipment for Ukraine through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative—this with no requirement whatsoever for the Biden administration, for the Pentagon to prioritize contracts that are necessary for our own readiness. In other words, the Biden administration is free, under this legislation, as it may choose—and is widely expected to choose—to prioritize this new series of weapons contracts to the tune of \$13.7 billion for Ukraine over weapons procurement needed to protect the American homeland. That is concerning. That ought to worry the American people.

The bill also funds the Ukrainian National Police and, get this, the Ukrainian State Border Guard to the tune of \$300 million. Just let that sit for a minute: \$300 million going to protect Ukraine's border, the Ukrainian National Police, and the Ukrainian State

Border Guard, while the Biden administration refuses to enforce and secure our borders.

Is this a good idea? Well, it is a great idea if you are Ukraine. And make no mistake, I want Ukraine to win. I want Ukrainians to be free. I bear them no ill will, but this is a really good deal for them. It is much less of a good deal for the United States and for the American people. This ought to be concerning to every one of us. Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, Independent, whatever you are, this ought to worry you more than just a little bit.

Here is another galling feature of this legislation: ensuring that Ukrainian bureaucrats, rest assured, won't miss a paycheck, not a single one, for the next year, courtesy of \$7.8 billion in budget support from U.S. taxpayers. So we will be meeting their entire government payroll, my understanding is it is for an entire year, no questions asked, courtesy of the American people—courtesy of the American people, while their own people, the Americans funding this through their hard-earned taxpayer dollars and through the corresponding increases in the prices of everything they buy—from housing to healthcare, from gas to groceries and everything else—that on top of their already hefty tax bill is paying for this. Now, that is great. I am happy for them that their paychecks will be secure.

But what about the American people? Isn't our first job to do no harm to them? Isn't our first job to make sure that when we fund somebody else's priority, we take care of our own first? And if those two are incompatible, we side with our own people, our own homeland? Call me crazy, but I always thought that was how it should work around here and how it would work, how it typically worked in the past. But this seems crazy to me.

Again, getting back to the idea of selecting people randomly out of voter registration rolls, if the phonebook still exists, out of a phonebook, I think most Americans would be really surprised and not in a good way upon learning facts like these about how this is going to impact American national security.

I think they certainly wouldn't want us to rush this through without adequate opportunity to debate this and in the light of day, in front of the American people, with a full opportunity to offer amendments, perhaps to clarify a few points.

Sure, I am not wild about this bill. I make no secret about that. It is still, nonetheless, my right procedurally and my obligation morally to try to make the bill better, to try to make it inure more to the benefit of the American people than it currently does and less to their detriment.

Shockingly, a number of my colleagues—and, right now, I am speaking just of Republican colleagues. This isn't even about Democrats. A number of my Republican colleagues have said

in recent days things that suggest that they don't think those of us who have concerns with the bill who are, as they put it, "never going to vote for this bill anyway," that we shouldn't get to decide what is in it; that we shouldn't have the opportunity to review it, to debate at length, much less to amend it.

I am sorry. I find that one really difficult to take, especially from fellow Republican Senators. There is absolutely nothing in the rules of the Senate or of any legislative body that I know of, any civilized nation on Earth or in the history of time, that says that unless you are going to swear to support the finished product no matter what is in it, that you can't support amendments to it; that you shouldn't be allowed to fully debate it and adequately have the opportunity to introduce and vote on amendments to improve it.

That is your obligation. And I find it shameful that any Member of this body would say that. I find it especially troubling that Republicans, particularly the slim minority of Republicans who have chosen to unite Democrats, sharply divide Republicans on a policy that is embraced by the Democratic Party and overwhelmingly opposed by Republicans, would say that to a fellow Republican standing up for what most Republicans in this body and in America believe.

This has become far too common. It is not the first time I have heard that argument, which is not only uncollegial, it is unpatriotic. It is incompatible with our system of government, and I look forward to the day when that argument will no longer even be raised by Members of this body because it is completely contrary to the cause of good government.

The bill also contains funding to the tune of billions of dollars that can be used for all sorts of things, all sorts of economic aid-related purposes out of the \$7.8 billion in economic assistance; can be used for all sorts of things and has been used in the past, in previous iterations of it, to subsidize things like clothing stores, Ukrainian clothing stores, and to buy concert tickets for people going to concerts in Ukraine, all while families living here in the United States are living paycheck to paycheck and not having their government fund their clothing stores or buy their concert tickets. The fact that that wasn't excluded from this bill when we know that things like that have been an issue is insulting to the American people.

This legislation begins Ukrainian reconstruction using U.S. dollars. In this bill, it is \$25 million for the transition initiatives account at the U.S. Agency known as USAID for "frontline and newly liberated communities reclaimed from Russian occupation."

Now, trying to figure out how best to put this, but at once one could say that is only \$25 million. In the grand scheme of this bill and in the grander scheme

of what Congress spends in any given year or grand scheme of U.S. GDP, yes, that can appear like a drop in the bucket. But that \$25 million didn't come from nowhere. It came off the bottom line of poor and middle-class Americans. Again, the wealthy can absorb something like this. In many circumstances, the wealthy even grow richer still under the yoke of inflation that is crippling to poor middle-class Americans.

The kind of inflation that 25 million here, 7.88 billion there, 13.5 billion there—you throw those numbers around. Before long, it really does start to add up, and it becomes part of the \$34 trillion in debt that we have accumulated which, within this year or perhaps next at the latest, we will be paying interest at the rate of a trillion a year.

Yes, we will soon see America spending more on interest on our national debt than on defense, itself creating one of the greatest threats to American national security that we have ever known, and we have done it ourselves, here, because of things like this, bit by bit.

I am sure those reclaimed communities in Ukraine, the people who live there, the frontline and newly liberated communities in Ukraine—I am sure they will be happy with this. I am sure they are good people, freedom-loving people who just want to live and be free, and they want to restart their lives. And my heart goes out to them.

This is not to say that anyone who benefits from this is undeserving or bad, what I am saying is: Where does this end? If you accept the premise that this is only \$25 million, let's examine that for a minute.

Separate and apart from the fact that I just mentioned that is a lot of money to the people who have to pay for it, but if it really is only \$25 million, meaning it is only \$25 million now—but we are setting a predicate now that apparently we are going to be responsible for reconstruction throughout Ukraine. It is going to be our responsibility from half a world away to fund and oversee the reconstruction of territory reclaimed, as it is reclaimed, liberated from Russian control.

Why, again, is this us rather than the Ukrainian people? Why is this us rather than Ukraine's neighbors, especially when we have already given so much more than any of them or, in some cases, all of them combined for the military aid—why is this us, and why are we setting this predicate now? You would almost have to strain with a magnifying glass to find those communities on the map in Ukraine that would be affected by this. And I think that is why it is "only" \$25 million; but when you set that predicate now, what is this going to amount to? If what we hope to see, which is Ukraine winning this war and more and more communities being liberated, are we in charge of all those, too? This bill would seem to set that predicate. That is concerning.

How has this gone elsewhere when we have put ourselves in charge of nation-building in countries half a world away? It hasn't ended well. In many cases, it ends up funding all the wrong things. We ought to be concerned about this.

The legislation asks for a multiyear strategy for Ukraine that places the United States at the helm of things like I just mentioned—things like the \$25 million reconstruction plan—for lack of a better word—as a gift to these woke and complacent European allies that have refused to own the responsibility of securing their continent, of securing their own backyard. They would rather have us to do it because they know we are just crazy enough to hit the printing presses rather than to ask them to carry their share of the burden, which should be much, much greater than ours given that we went first. We have already given an extraordinary sum to half a world away, where this is at their doorstep. And we have been carrying a disproportionate share of all of their security burdens for decades anyway.

The bill blatantly acknowledges that the nearly \$10 billion of humanitarian aid in the bill may very well be diverted by Hamas or, perhaps, other terror groups in Gaza. And I have linked two different accounts that add up to between \$9 and \$10 billion. There is Ukraine, laid out. I believe the language is something to the effect of “in and around Ukraine” and “in and around Israel.” These two accounts that, when added together, come up to somewhere between \$9 and \$10 billion—nothing in there that restricts that aid in a way that we can be certain won't end up helping Hamas. In fact, we can be quite confident that it will, based on past practice, based on what we have learned from other parts of the world, and based on the fact that it is hard for us to relate to what they face in Gaza. But to say, yeah, we are going to send up to \$9 or \$10 billion in humanitarian aid which, as far as we know, this administration has discretion under this legislation such that if it is passed, we have to assume—at least the possibility—that they devote all or nearly all or at least a substantial portion of those funds to humanitarian relief in Gaza.

Now, I am sure that we will hear, not if but when that happens: Don't worry, have no fear. This is only going to people in Gaza. It is not going to Hamas or any other terror group.

It is difficult for us to imagine a world like Gaza from our comfortable, secure, heaven-blessed land. We don't live like that. But to describe it as a dictatorship doesn't capture it. That implies the existence of an organized state. It is so much worse than that. It is the entire country lives under the iron, brutal, punishing, threatening, retaliatory bloodthirsty, iron fist of this organization Hamas.

It is not possible—you cannot send aid to there and say, don't worry, it

won't go to Hamas. It is hard to even think of an analogy that captures it. I mean, it would be more defensible to say we are going to send \$10 billion to the United Kingdom, but don't worry, it will not end up—none of it will end up in the hands of the British. It is just not plausible. But that is a gross understatement compared to the reality of this. Hamas is Gaza, and Gaza is Hamas. You send humanitarian aid there, you will be supporting them, just as other aid packages approved by this administration and by international bodies to which we are huge contributors, have spent countless billions of dollars sending there, and that has been used by Hamas. Although it was supposed to go to humanitarian relief, it has been used by Hamas to prepare for and execute this horrific attack that we saw on October 7—a horrific attack that, according to those in Gaza, according to Hamas itself, was just a preview of much bigger, grander, more ambitious, more bloodthirsty plans to come.

The bill also perpetuates a cycle of endless and unconstitutional wars in the Middle East bought and paid for by the United States. We get involved in these things, we stir up trouble, we arm those who we perceive to be our allies, not knowing how long they might be our allies or to what extent they might actually be our allies. We are assuming that just because we consider them our allies today, that they won't turn against us tomorrow or that they will necessarily use what we give them to our own people's benefit.

It encourages escalated conflicts in the region to the tune of \$2.4 billion, risking direct engagement with Iran.

Look, we have a crisis of never-before-seen proportions on our southern border, and we are doing all of this stirring up other conflicts, making it more likely to end up impacting Americans and America's brave men and women in uniform.

So it saddens me to recall that Republicans, just in very recent months, demanded meaningful border security; specifically, the House passed the Secure the Border Act, H.R. 2, and perhaps other provisions demanded by the majority of the Senate Republicans suggesting that Ukraine aid ought to be made contingent on President Biden utilizing those resources in H.R. 2, for example, or other existing law, as he could do and should do and, by law, is required to do before the Ukraine aid is released. Notwithstanding the fact that Republican after Republican insisted on that, the lead Republican negotiator was, we learned recently, instructed not even to raise the issue, even though, by my count, most Senate Republicans liked the idea. Inexplicable.

We demanded that as a condition with supporting aid to Ukraine. We didn't get it. What they produced didn't do what it was supposed to do, which was make it much, much harder for the Biden administration to continue to facilitate the ground invasion

taking place at our southern border over the last 3 years.

We waited for months with no meaningful news on the negotiations, no—apparently no input that was really heard and embraced into the negotiations and no confirmed details of legislative language until less than 6 days ago.

The border package produced by the sponsors of this bill did not secure the border. It contained other features that, perhaps in future administrations, might prove helpful at the margins, but it also included a lot of things that an administration—whether it is this one or one in the future—bent on not securing the border might use to its great advantage in keeping the border open.

Well, it didn't harness, as it was supposed to, the bipartisan—the overwhelming Democratic support for more Ukraine aid in order to use that support on the Democratic side as leverage for actually making the border more secure in this administration. It didn't do that.

So that is why we said: This one won't suffice. Let's offer up something that actually will. As you know, that doesn't offer any real consequence when you say that unless you are willing to walk away from the deal. And because just enough Senate Republicans—well, a little more than just enough—but a minority, a slim minority of Senate Republicans, just 17, decided to support this bill that we in conference said a few months ago we wouldn't support without something forcing border security, because they came back and said: Never mind, we will do it anyway, even though we said beforehand we won't. Because they did that, of course, the Democrats don't want to negotiate something that would force border security. I wish they would. They should. It should be a bipartisan issue. It shouldn't be deeply partisan, securing the border; but for whatever reason, they feel that way. And so given that they feel that way and want to support this administration's lawless approach to our southern border, of course, they are going to take the lowest price that they can get Republican support for. And if 17 Republicans are willing to give them that support without anything forcing border security in this administration as a condition of their ability to fund Ukraine aid, then, of course, they are going to take the easier path. Why would they do anything else? That part makes sense.

What I can't understand is: Why would Republicans do this? Why would Republicans, having taken that stand, do an about-face and say “never mind,” as though we walked into a car dealership saying: We want to buy this car, but we won't pay more than this price for it. But later, when the dealer didn't accept the deal, we—I say “we” speaking for Senate Republican leadership—said: Never mind, we want to buy the car. We don't care the price. We don't

care what concessions you give us on our end. We will take the original high price with little in it for us. We will take that deal.

When you go into a car dealership and say: I will pay any price for this, even if it is an exorbitantly high price, you are not going to get a great deal. And that is what happened here. It really is unfortunate.

My Democratic colleagues and many in the corporate media have made a great show pretending that just because we were given a so-called deal, a deal that contained the word “border” in it, that our demands for real border security have been met. This is laughable. It is laughable nonsense, in fact, as the language of that bill showed.

I don't mean that every provision of it was laughable, and I don't mean this as an insult to those who negotiated it, who I like and respect on a personal level and with whom I have worked on other projects. But, I mean it is laughable—it is laughably incompatible and unresponsive to the demands that we made, the deal that we made with each other and with the American people, as the language of that bill showed and as the American people's reaction to that bill also confirmed.

If our colleagues would truly secure the border, I would love to give them the opportunity to do so. The chance to do so right now wouldn't necessarily fix everything, but it should go a long way to fixing the problem with material change, a material enhancement in border security.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 1531

Madam President, I am proud to introduce the Stopping Border Surges amendment, which would make discrete, commonsense changes to our immigration law to protect our border. It would prevent traffickers from using toddlers and babies as a means to ensuring their customers easy admission into the interior of our country. It would allow minors from any nation, if they do not have a credible fear of persecution, to be safely returned to their home countries. It would expedite the hearing process for children trafficked across the border—often used as chattel, temporary chattel—just for the benefit of those trying to cross illegally.

It would require, if enacted into law, asylum seekers to apply for asylum in at least one safe country on their route to the United States. It would help eliminate the overwhelmingly fraudulent asylum claims that we see being brought. It would require asylum seekers to arrive and present themselves at a point of entry, and it would expand the time from claiming asylum to receiving a work permit, which would help curb the incentive to come here illegally.

I ask unanimous consent to set aside all pending amendments and motions and to make my amendment, Lee No. 1531, pending to the text of Murray No. 1388.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Illinois.
Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LEE. There we have it.
Keep in mind, what you have just witnessed is my making a motion not to pass this into law, not even a motion to accept this as an amendment to the text. I just asked for consent to call up the amendment and make it pending so that it could be one of the items that we consider, one of the matters to be voted on, one of the matters that we would at least have the opportunity to consider and debate on; to, hopefully, ultimately, vote on; and to ultimately resolve. But I guess that was too much.

My friend and colleague from Illinois, in acting, undoubtedly, at the direction of the Senate Democratic leadership, made an objection even to calling that up and to making the amendment pending. This is what the rules of the Senate—more than two centuries old—have evolved to over time. This is what they are there to do. All of these odd terms like “cloture” and all of these procedural votes that we have are really designed to maximize the opportunity for each individual Senator to make sure that we have robust debate and to consider possible improvements to be made to a bill.

In the past, this wasn't such a difficult thing to do. I have been in the U.S. Senate for 13 years now. I arrived in 2011. Things weren't perfect by any means, but, at the time, it was fairly common, when we were considering a major piece of legislation—or even some relatively minor pieces of legislation and while that legislation was pending—to direct time set aside to debate the measure. It was quite commonplace. It was considered a routine practice that Members could go down to the floor, call up their amendment, and make their amendment pending.

It didn't guarantee its passage into law. It didn't guarantee that their amendment would be adopted into the legislative text for final consideration along with the underlying legislation. No, it just meant that it could be made pending so that Senators could have an opportunity to debate it, discuss it, and, ultimately, vote on it or maybe have it fall with a motion to table.

In the event it was a germane amendment, it could still be considered after cloture but not if it were not germane, meaning tightly connected to the bill. A good example of an, obviously, germane or a very likely germane amendment is one that strikes a provision that is in there. You could still get a vote on that after cloture was achieved, but nongermane amendments fall out after cloture.

It wasn't that big of a deal—meaning it didn't grind the Senate to a halt. In fact, the Senate operated for more than two centuries really, really well with this practice in place.

The Senate rules still allow for this. They still call for it. They still contemplate it. Our history and tradition are such that, until very recently, this was the norm. But you see it. The one time of the week—prior to just a few hours ago, prior to 1 o'clock today, or at least prior to the vote that the Senate took last night and shortly before it adjourned for the evening, before it recessed for the evening—we had a vote. Prior to that time, it wouldn't have been in order to make an amendment pending. It is now in order. It is in order now, and I believe it will be until we vote on cloture, which is likely to occur sometime tomorrow. But this is the time we are supposed to do that.

Sometimes, in the past, if there were too many amendments, some Members would get concerned about that and say: Let's not call one up and make it pending.

It was still relatively rare, even when that happened. But look around. It is not like—I mean, to my knowledge, I am the first Senator who has offered up a single amendment to this today to try to make it pending; yet that is too much.

What? Are we all too busy that we can't debate something this significant as our Nation's border security? Have we really devolved to the point that Republican Senators can't operate in any manner without the support of Senate Republican leadership, and unless they support the amendment, we don't get it considered? Even if most Senate Republicans and the overwhelming majority of Republicans at large want to see something like this debated, we can't do it. It is sad.

Look, when given the chance to agree to a real border security provision—and my amendment, the Stopping Border Surges amendment, would do that—this is a real border security provision, one that could actually make a difference during this administration, this year, and stop the invasion of our southern border. But our Democratic colleagues rise to stop it. They won't even allow us to get onto the amendment to the point that it would have to be debated and ultimately disposed of one way or another.

So we now see who in the U.S. Senate is truly serious about securing America's borders. If we won't even allow people to debate measures that would, unlike the provision rejected earlier this week, actually force border security, in connection with harnessing the will power—the substantial will power—especially among Senate Democrats, to fund Ukraine, we don't have that opportunity.

Now, as I mentioned earlier, it is easy for me to understand why Democrats, who, for reasons I cannot understand, are hellbent on not securing the border and on insulating President Biden and his team from the consequences of not taking such steps as he could and should take to secure the border. That part I can understand. At

least it is consistent with the positions they have been taking.

What I can't understand is why 17 Senate Republicans, having initially committed to using this as an opportunity to force legislation that would actually secure the border—why those people, those Senate Republicans, those 17 Senate Republicans—support cloture on this bill when I can't even offer up so much as a suggestion that we should vote on a border security amendment.

So, to any Senate Republicans who are part of that group of 17, we saw what just happened. I would urge them—I would implore them—to take that into account. Don't support cloture tomorrow, not when they have shut us out like this. You don't want to be part of that. You don't want to be part of the problem that is off the charts in terms of its ramifications for human rights, humanitarian concerns, the rule of law—all kinds of things that are supposed to be important to our people and that Republicans all claim to support.

If you want to support the bill, I may disagree with you on that, but at least don't vote tomorrow to bring debate to a close and, in the absence of real debate, not be able to have the real changes that could actually do what we as Republicans claim to want. Otherwise, we will see that the U.S. Senate will be perceived correctly as not being serious about forcing the border security issue now.

All right. Perhaps, if a secure border isn't enough to make them happy—it isn't to their tastes—my colleagues who insist that they really are trying to solve this problem should approve of my next amendment.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 1530

Madam President, currently, under Federal law, it is illegal to vote in a Federal election if you are not an American citizen, but as you scour the United States, there is no real mechanism to enforce that law. This amendment would make very clear that proof of American citizenship is required when registering a person to vote in a Federal election.

The amendment would make it very clear that there are criminal penalties for knowingly registering an illegal alien to vote—criminal penalties, as well there should be—because if you register people to vote who are not citizens, you are putting non-Americans in charge of our own government. You are changing who gets to decide the direction of our government. Rather than being a government of, by, and for the American people, it becomes something else. So this amendment would make it very clear that an illegal alien who knowingly registers to vote would be subject to criminal penalties, and so will a person who knowingly registers someone to vote who is not a citizen.

For the next Presidential election—the one coming up this year—and for

every election beyond that, we have to take into account that we now have at least 8 million—quite probably 10 million, quite possibly more than 10 million—illegal aliens who have come into this country in the last 3 years alone, on top of those who have been here before then, who will now be prime targets for voter manipulation. Given the way many States operate their voter registration rolls, they may well be enrolled and, in some cases, automatically as they register for a driver's license or something like that.

So we should be concerned about this, significantly concerned, and I don't know that many Americans—you know, I have heard even a lot of Democrats say that only citizens are and should be able to vote. So it should be a very bipartisan issue. I don't know who would want noncitizens to be able to vote. Especially in light of the 10 million or so who have come in illegally recently, we can't discount the very real probability that a significant portion of these people might end up voting unless we put in place mechanisms for enforcing existing Federal law that makes it unlawful for noncitizens to vote.

For the next Presidential election and beyond, we will have these 8 to 10 million—maybe more—illegal aliens in the country. Whether or not they vote may be dependent entirely on what we do here and whether we take this action.

This ship may not pass again between now and the November 2024 election. We have got to protect our Republic and the integrity of each and every American—American vote—against a wave of possible illegal aliens and other noncitizens trying to vote.

I ask unanimous consent to set aside all pending amendments and motions and make my amendment, Lee No. 1530, pending to the text of Murray No. 1388.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Illinois.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I object.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LEE. That is too bad, Madam President. As we just saw, my Democratic colleague just blocked an amendment—not just blocked the amendment from becoming law, not just blocked the amendment from becoming a part of the bill that we are debating, but blocked it even from being made pending so that it could be thoroughly debated and disposed of by a vote, a point of order, or otherwise. It is an amendment that would prevent illegal aliens—people who are not American citizens, one way or another—from voting in our elections. What possible reason, what possible justification could there be for opposing the integrity of our ballot box in that specific way?

Again, back to the phonebook—if phonebooks still exist—if you pull peo-

ple randomly from the phonebook or some other source and ask people, I think you would struggle to find many who would say, yes, it is just fine for illegal aliens to vote in a Federal election, because, in fact, it is not legal; it is just that we don't have the tools in place that we need to make that law effective, to ensure compliance, to enforce the law. So I still wonder what possible reason there could be, what possible valid reason there could be to oppose that.

I suppose we really do need—as some would say, we need more immigrants to come into this country to do jobs that Americans don't want to do. I have always found that argument offensive on multiple levels. I don't even really know what that means exactly. But certainly whatever job people who say this sort of thing have in mind that a noncitizen would do, that an illegal alien would do that a U.S. citizen or somehow otherwise lawful inside the United States wouldn't do—of the many jobs they have in mind for them, voting isn't one of them; voting in Federal elections and determining the course of our government shouldn't be one of them.

Is there a perception, perhaps, that if we don't put any teeth behind this law prohibiting noncitizens from voting in a Federal election, they will be more likely to vote for Democrats? The fact that we even have to ask this question is itself troubling, and the fact that we are not even allowing this to be made pending is incredibly troubling.

I have introduced amendments that would actually ensure border security and protect America's Federal elections from foreign interference—things that I think all of my colleagues at least profess to care about, but now they have objected even to making these amendments pending.

I am glad that the American people now have the opportunity to witness this disaster on full display, to witness the dysfunction in a body that until recently prided itself as the world's greatest deliberative body into something that is divisively nondeliberative.

You see, that practice I referred to a few minutes ago that was fully in place not just for years, not just for decades, but for centuries before I got here—once you got onto a bill and the bill was on the floor, Members could routinely come to the floor, call up their amendment, make it pending, and the Senate would dispose of it. Yes, it takes time, but it is what we are supposed to do to make sure that it is thorough.

In recent years, sadly, with the assistance of leadership of both political parties, increasingly they won't let you do that unless you have—it is called a unanimous consent agreement to bundle up a whole bunch of amendments, those that everyone decides—particularly Republican and Democratic Senate leadership decide were acceptable to them to be voted on.

This often entails surrendering—limiting the amount of time that can be used to debate those things. You have to get somebody else's permission before doing that and then get Senate Republican and Senate Democratic leadership to bless that and come to the floor and propose it in a unanimous consent agreement.

It was much simpler when we would just come down and ask for consent to make an amendment pending one at a time. Simple principles of collegiality demand that we do that.

Again, I understand that sometimes there might be circumstances where someone concludes that there isn't enough time. By the way, when those circumstances arise, I believe that it is more important, not less important, to let every Senator call up, debate, and ultimately vote on amendments they deem necessary.

Let the basic principle of exhaustion and the informal, unwritten social rules that govern interpersonal human interactions in the Senate be the limiting force on this. Ultimately, that is what governs it. Ultimately, these things tend not to be abused.

Even in circumstances where any Senator can introduce as many amendments as they want during a period of time known as budget vote-arama—when we are passing a budget or a budget reconciliation act, there is a period of time in which any Senator may offer any amendment and have that voted on. Even then, those tend not to last more than 24 hours. Usually we don't even make it that long because the principle of exhaustion kicks in, and the social pressures associated with a body where everybody knows each other also kick in.

Here, we have none of the excuses that one might otherwise offer—disingenuously, I believe, but offer nonetheless—that we can't do this.

Again, to my knowledge, I am the only Senator who has offered to make a single amendment pending this entire day. The Chamber is almost empty. Most of my colleagues are not here. If they are in Washington at all, they are not in this Chamber.

We ought to be able to continue debating. There is no time crunch I am interfering with. This is a chance for us to debate, discuss, introduce, call up, make pending amendments, and ultimately vote on them.

This is a fleeting opportunity because unless those 17 Republicans decide to change their vote between now and tomorrow when we vote on cloture on the bill, where we won't have an opportunity to do it anymore, this is our only chance. This is our only shot.

Look, make no mistake, I understand that there are a lot of Americans who like this bill, who want it to pass as is. I get it. They have every right to feel that way. I disagree with them, but I nonetheless defend their right to take that position. But there are also a whole lot who are not satisfied with this bill and who are downright of-

fended, disgusted, hurt, or scared that we would consider voting on something like this without even considering a single change to it.

So, what, you put up a few negotiators in a room, a very small handful, and you say: You iron it out; you write it. Keep it secret from everybody else until days before the Senate will even debate it. Then you limit—as they may do if they decide to support cloture tomorrow—limit to only about, effectively speaking, maybe 24 hours the period of time in which amendments could be called up and made pending, debated, voted on, and considered. If they support cloture tomorrow, they are saying: Forget that. You don't matter. Your views don't matter. Those who embrace your views, who are trying to champion them in connection with this bill, don't matter because they don't count. If you are not a super-Senator, if you are not part of the law firm of Schumer and McConnell, if you are not closely tied to them or in alignment with their views on this legislation, then no matter how many hundreds of millions of Americans disagree strongly, your views don't count. They can't even be voted on here.

That is really tragic—something that we are losing as an institution, something we are losing as a country.

So I put forward these amendments to protect our elections and to protect our borders. These are things that most Senators do claim to care about, but they have objected to these amendments. I am glad the American people now finally have the opportunity to witness that strange resistance to even having to debate a slightly different approach on full display.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 1449

Madam President, I am now going to address some other issues with the other major problem in this bill, and that is the reckless, wasteful, bloody expense to the American taxpayer to fund a proxy war on the other side of the world.

On this front, the Biden administration's posture of “as long as it takes and as much as it takes in Ukraine”—it is not a real strategy. It is not a strategy at all. In fact, it is a blueprint for yet another forever war.

We have blindly sent over \$113 billion for Ukraine with no plan, no mission, no clear objectives on how U.S. engagement directly benefits our own national interests or how it makes individual men, women, and children in America any safer. This blind spending needs to stop, and it must stop today. We really shouldn't be sending one more dollar, one more dime, one more penny without a plan.

The Biden administration needs to put pen to paper to deliver a strategy that aligns our national interests with specific time-bound objectives.

I have an amendment—my Define the Mission Act amendment—that would allow only 2 percent of funds intended

for Ukraine to be released until the President delivers a strategy with specific objectives and precise timelines to Congress so that Congress can make an informed decision about these weighty matters and very impactful measures within the bill.

So I ask unanimous consent to set aside all pending amendments and motions and make my amendment, Lee No. 1449, pending to the text of Murray No. 1388.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Illinois.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LEE. Well, that is too bad.

This time, with this amendment, we see an objection, and with this amendment, we are talking about something that is a core part of what the bill actually does. In no way is it extraneous. In my view, we shouldn't consider the border security and election integrity amendments either—I don't think they are ancillary to this. I don't think we should take another step in this direction without things like that. But this one relates directly to the subject matter at hand, so it would be hard for them to say: Well, you are going too far afield from where this bill treads. This is a complement to existing legislation, and it is basic, commonsense reform to what we have now.

How weird is that? Apparently, the solid goals and the timelines and the expectations that we are requesting in this are just too much to ask of those who spent hundreds of billions of American taxpayer dollars on proxy wars overseas. Those same masters of the universe, self-appointed here in the U.S. Senate, who are so hell-bent on doing this notwithstanding understandable fear, reluctance, trepidation on the part of the American people, when asked to even defend themselves against why we are not demanding a plan, say no.

We are not even going to consider that. We won't even let you make it pending. We understand that you, Mike, are not even asking us to pass this. You are not even asking us to adopt it into the bill. You are just asking for the chance to have it pending on the Senate floor during the one time—the one period of time—in which we could consider such things on matters impacting national security and how much every dollar spends, and the answer is no.

I suppose the plans must be in their heads. It must be in the heads of the wise sages over at the Pentagon, at the White House, and the wise sages among Senate Democrats and the wise sages among the 17 Senate Republicans who are willing to vote yes on cloture on the motion to proceed to this bill. But I hope, I expect, I ask, I beg, I plead that the 17 Senate Republicans—each of them—who voted for front-end cloture on this bill will reconsider their

back-end cloture on this bill, which could come as early as tomorrow because debate has been shut down.

Bad things happen when we take debatable matters—especially important, essential, debatable matters—and render them beyond debate because a select powerful few refuse even to debate them. It is appalling. It is un-American. It is undemocratic. And the American people deserve better. And we all know that to be true.

I suppose American families are just supposed to trust the military geniuses behind this aid package, just like America trusted its leaders when we went to Vietnam, just like when America trusted its leaders when we went to start a war over weapons of mass destruction when those weapons weren't there, just like America trusted Barack Obama to arm only moderate rebels, only people who would never turn against us in Syria.

This is the kind of trust that Joe Biden and the U.S. Senate ask for now. Why would the American people and those they elect to represent them at this body fall for this yet again? It is like Charlie Brown kicking the football that magically disappears upon Lucy's action over and over and over again. You know what they say about insanity. I think it is safe to say that what we are doing is insane by that or any reasonable definition.

Don't worry, America. I am sure this time it will be different. I am sure this time nothing will go wrong. Never mind the fact that we are picking a fight for a proxy war with a nation that has enough nuclear weapons to kill us many, many times over. Never mind the fact that we are \$34 trillion in debt. Never mind the fact that we are being invaded across our southern border. This time it is going to be OK. Don't worry about it. Never mind the fact that we have the world's reserve currency and that every man, woman, and child in America alive today has benefited materially from that status and that we are jeopardizing that very status.

And when we jeopardize it more and more and more, eventually that falls. And we fall with it. And that fall will be unlike anything anyone has ever experienced in this country. Yet we continue to trust.

Our founding document—a document to which we have all sworn an oath—the U.S. Constitution, certainly contemplates a society in which we can trust each other. We trust but verify. And especially where our government, particularly our national government, our Federal Government is concerned—this government based here in this city for which we are the sovereign law-making authority—we are instructed not to just engage in blind trust, in putting faith in that government as if it were some sort of deity, as Americans, we trust, but we also verify.

This should be the verification platform. If not us, who? And if not right now, in the next 24 hours, before this

thing proceeds after what the bill's proponents hope to be a successful back-end cloture vote, beyond which no real significant debate, no real significant amendments will likely be possible, who will do it? When will it happen? It doesn't materialize automatically. We have to do it right now.

And what excuse do they have for not doing it? This Chamber is empty. Nobody else is lining up. Nobody else is trying to make their amendments pending. And yet the Senate can't be bothered. The Senate Democratic leadership, with the active open support, the complicity of the Senate Republican leadership, can't be bothered to stand up for this, to say this makes no sense; we need to consider amendments to make this better, if nothing else, to show the American people that we give a darn; that we care enough about them. And yet it doesn't happen. I am told that I can't even make these pending. Shame on us.

We must define our mission. We must, and yet apparently we won't. We won't even debate requirements to define our mission.

Next, I want to note that every dollar of economic aid in this bill for Ukraine is a slap in the face of every hard-working American battling the cost-of-living crisis created by Bidenomics right here at home. Economic aid is not going to just magically win the war for Ukraine, much as I think all of us would like to see Ukraine just win. We can't wish it into existence. We can't just dump enough money into it to make it happen.

On the contrary, economic aid by some measures is proving to be a colossal waste of money and, according to some critics, may be prolonging the war by forestalling a negotiated peace. Americans will be furious to learn that billions of dollars out of their paychecks are subsidizing clothing stores and concert tickets for Ukrainians while families here in the United States are living paycheck to paycheck. No, their clothing stores aren't getting funded, nor should they be. That is not the role of government.

The role of this government is to protect life, liberty, and property for its people. It is not to fund concert tickets a continent away in somebody else's war just because they are at war. It is not to pay somebody else's civil servants their salaries for an entire year just because they are at war.

Some of my colleagues called the billions of dollars in economic assistance, which we are providing to Ukraine, a small amount. A small amount—really? Economic assistance makes up 34 percent of the roughly \$113 billion in assistance that the United States has already, prior to this bill, provided directly to Ukraine. Calling that a small portion, that is an insult to every American struggling to put food on the table and gas in the car and a roof over their heads.

The leaders of both parties—at least the leaders of both parties in the Sen-

ate—will tell you that this bill cut economic aid to Ukraine and that we should be grateful for that. Well, thanks. The only problem is, it is a lie; it is a complete lie.

Let's be clear. Providing “only” \$7.8 billion in economic assistance instead of what President Biden had previously proposed in his boondoggle request of \$11 billion is not a meaningful cut. In fact, it is not a cut at all. That is not cutting. It is adding to what we have already given, just adding to it a little bit less than he had originally supposed. That is not a cut. Don't insult our intelligence, especially the intelligence of the American people, by calling that a cut when, in fact, it is not—and you know it is not.

The bill prohibits—mercifully, it prohibits pension payments. That was part of the original plan, you see. President Biden, in his eminent wisdom, wanted also to support pension assistance. I think that is why it has been reduced from the original request, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$11 billion down to \$7.8 billion, what this part of the bill now spends because they cut out support for more Ukrainian pensions. That is great. It is merciful, I guess, that you are not requiring Americans to do that. It still doesn't change the fact that you are saddling Americans with an obligation that is not theirs. It is not ours. It is somebody else's.

It is money that is going to continue to pay the salaries of Zelenskyy and his bureaucrats, whom every reputable news source in America acknowledged for their notorious corruption, even before this war started, long before the United States of America started pouring money into this corruption-saddled country to the tune of 12 figures. Twelve figures, that is where you get into the hundreds of billions of dollars.

So with a country that already has an endemic, systemic problem with money laundering, with corruption, what do you think happens when you dump \$113 billion into that country? What do you think happens when you then dump another 55-, 60-plus billion dollars on top of that? I can give you a hint. It hasn't gotten better.

And as many experts in the region will tell you, there has been example after example where we can't account for billions of dollars at a time. A big mystery there. Big shock there. And yet the American people are asked to continue to pay the salaries of Zelenskyy and his bureaucrats, everyone who works for the Government of Ukraine. What could go wrong?

My colleagues have also said cutting economic aid to Ukraine—again, “cutting” in air quotes—again, it sends the message to our European NATO allies to “step up” and do more.

This reminds me of a story I heard in college—I don't know whether it is true, maybe it was apocryphal—of a rich kid who got into trouble while in college. And his parents did what many rich parents do in that circumstance. They took away his Porsche. And in

place of the Porsche, they gave him a brandnew Jeep Cherokee. That was not punishment, as I perceived it at the time. Whether that story was real or imagined, this is certainly not telling Ukraine to get its game in gear. We are not even taking away the Porsche. They have already got the \$113 billion we have already given them. We are letting them keep the Porsche, and we are giving them the brandnew, top-of-the-line, fully loaded Jeep Cherokee. That is not a cut. And it certainly doesn't send a message that you better get your game in gear, not at all.

Make no mistake, this really is a laughable attempt at burden-sharing. The woke bureaucrats in NATO and the European Union are completely content with allowing the United States to pick up the tab for Europe's security. The bulk of assistance sent by European allies is humanitarian and economic, despite possessing the capacity and the incentive and, I believe, the need and the moral imperative to send weapons.

The only way to get Europe to do more is for the United States to actually do less. And this means no economic aid and no military aid, especially after all we have done and how little they have done over there. That is the only way to get them to tighten their belts. That is the only way to get our European allies in the game. That is why I am introducing an amendment prohibiting any funding for economic support of Ukraine, for paying the pensions or the salaries of Ukrainian Government bureaucrats, as well as paying for any Ukrainian welfare programs.

Again, this legislation originally was expected to also pay the pensions. President Biden wanted it to do that. It is an act of mercy, I suppose—although, penuriously doled-out mercy, I would add—that, at least, they prohibited this from going to pensions. But this would add to pensions in addition to saying this may not go to pay their pensions but also say they can't use it for their welfare programs or for their salaries.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 1445

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside all pending amendments and motions and make my amendment, Lee No. 1445, pending to the text of Murray No. 1338.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The senior Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, reserving my right to object, MAGA Republicans had their chance to work in a bipartisan fashion, and right-wing extremists in the GOP said no. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LEE. Ah, here we see it. So on the "MAGA extremists"—an extremist for saying that maybe, just maybe, we shouldn't be paying the salaries of Ukrainian bureaucrats to the tune of \$8 billion for an entire year; maybe, just

maybe, we shouldn't give them an assistance program that will also enable them to continue whatever welfare programs they have, whatever economic assistance programs they have in place to buy concert tickets, to keep clothing stores running as they see fit. If that is what passes for extremism in America, then I think you have just labeled all Americans extremists or, at least, the overwhelming majority of us.

Keep in mind, once again, I am not even asking that this be adopted. That is not what she objected to. I am not asking that it be passed into law, not asking that it be adopted even into the bill. I am just asking that it be made pending so we can debate it, we can discuss it, and we can vote on it.

You know what we heard the other day from these Republicans in the Senate who voted on cloture on the motion to proceed to the bill so we could get on the bill? What we heard from them was: Don't worry. We will have an amendment process. You will be able to offer up amendments, have them voted on, have them debated. You will be able to do that.

Well, that is not really materializing, is it? It is not. It is not materializing. I just asked to make this pending, and it didn't happen. For that, I am called an extremist.

Good heavens, what have we come to? I see that some Members of the U.S. Senate object to even modest measures protecting Americans, protecting their money from being wasted, stolen, or misused for nondefense-related purposes, for purposes that are very, very difficult to connect to any benefit on the part of the American people. If that makes me an extremist, what have we come to? It doesn't. My colleagues know that. And my colleagues know that most Americans would be concerned to know that we can't even make an amendment like this pending. It is a pretty modest reform. It is not too much to ask.

Oh, we are a fine, fine steward of America's finances. No wonder our country is \$34 trillion in debt, much to foreign adversaries like China.

What a disgrace.

Proponents of never-ending U.S. support for Ukraine, including many of my colleagues—including, unfortunately, apparently, 17 of my Republican colleagues—want America to pick up the tab for the rebuilding of Ukraine postwar. We know this bill perpetuates something we have seen before, which is a really dangerous and vicious cycle of obligation for the United States on rebuilding Ukraine and leaves U.S. taxpayers on the hook for massive corruption.

How do we know this? Well, because the same model was used to keep the United States entangled longer than we should have been in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. How did that turn out, that regime change, turn out for us, for example, in Afghanistan? A fail. A subtle democratic change, a stable democratic government favorable to U.S. interests toppled. It didn't happen.

By the way, in those circumstances, I suppose one could have even made a slightly better argument for nation-building. I still didn't support that then, and we shouldn't have been doing it, but at least I understand the argument better for that kind of nation-building, reconstruction postwar in a nation where we had actually been waging war ourselves as Americans.

Here we are, not even the people at war. We are just the people perpetuating that war, funding that war. We are funding it to the tune of 12 figures, money we won't ever get back and money, if we keep feeding it, that is probably going to obligate us even more. Waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer dollars was rampant in those countries. It will be even more rampant here.

So I am introducing an amendment that would prohibit any funds of this act being used for reconstruction and activities in Ukraine. Democracy is a result of dependency on the United States. It doesn't work out so well. I am not sure it ever does. Let's not ignore this history lesson yet again.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 1443

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside all pending amendments and motions and make my amendment, Lee No. 1443, pending to the text of Murray No. 1388.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The senior Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Reserving my right to object, Republicans had a chance to work in a bipartisan fashion, and right-wing extremists in the GOP said no. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LEE. OK. There are serious problems with that. Again, we hear words like "MAGA" and "extremists" coming out. I resent both characterizations. I even more resent the notion that because she disagrees with the views of some Members of this body, that it is appropriate, it is acceptable, that it somehow passes for legitimate argument to brand us using slurs that some of my colleagues have chosen for a while.

Let's not ignore something else here. This has absolutely nothing to do with the border security provisions—the border security provisions opposition to which my colleague said somehow disqualify me from raising a suggestion that maybe, just maybe, we shouldn't be involved in reconstruction of Ukraine. It has nothing to do with the border security provisions.

Moreover, unravel that argument for a minute. Think about what they are saying. Even if it were being raised—which is it is not—as my prior amendments I tried to bring up a few minutes ago dealing with some border security issues—even if they had been, on what planet is a U.S. Senator disqualified from debate simply because of a bill negotiated in secret by people not of

their own choosing, on terms that they never approved of, producing a bill, ultimately, that was not to their satisfaction—on what planet does that vitiate the procedural rights of U.S. Senators to offer improvements to a bill? It doesn't. It never has. I hope and I pray it never will.

And it is insulting to the American people to suggest that a condition precedent for being invited into the exclusive club of those allowed to offer improvements to an amendment are those who kiss the ring of the Senate Democratic and Senate Republican leadership in this body, the law firm of "Schumer, McConnell, and Its Acolytes and Associates."

This is wrong. I have seen it accelerate during the entirety of the 13 years I have been here. I can deal with it when I think about it only in terms of what it does to me personally. It is what it is. I get really angry when I think about what it does to the American people, to those people I represent, the 3.5 million people I represent in Utah and the hundreds of millions of others represented by colleagues who are not one of the precious few. I could, most of the time, count on one hand those who are privileged to see those documents to which she referred; documents that were negotiated against the wishes of the majority of the Senate Republicans, directly contrary to what we had committed to each other and to our voters to support. And now, somehow, we get to the floor of the U.S. Senate and because I expressed concern on that, I am apparently disqualified, along with any other Senate Republican who had concerns with that border security language. I am, therefore, disqualified to somehow offer improvements, amendments to improve this bill, to make it less bad simply because I objected to it because it was not at all what any of us agreed to. That is stunning.

Here we sit in an empty Chamber with no other amendments offered today, no other amendments made pending today, but we can't do these ones. Why? Well, those who supported this bill of both parties apparently believe that we are disqualified from having a voice here if we won't unflinchingly bow to them in what they negotiated, as if it were conical scripture, as if it were carved on the stone. Shameful.

Apparently, those objecting to this not only believe that Americans should have to pay for proxy wars on other continents, on behalf of other countries, against yet other countries, but also that we should more or less irrevocably, open-endedly commit to rebuilding them.

Can somebody tell me when Ukraine was admitted as the 51st State? I must have missed that day.

Madam President, even if my colleagues disagree with me and disagree with dozens of other Senators who harbor these concerns and hundreds of millions of Americans who feel the

same way that are being asked to fund all of these things against their will and their wishes; even if they believe that somehow we in the Senate have perfect wisdom and knowledge and virtue to send billions of dollars overseas to do nothing more than stop and harm and kill evil people doing evil things so that those evil things are no longer going to be done; even if you could assume all of that—which you can't; we know that you can't, and you shouldn't—surely, they would agree with me that we should not send aid to the terrorist perpetrators of the October 7 massacre in Israel. Surely, they would agree with me that we should not send aid to the terrorist perpetrators who, having carried out those heinous atrocities, still have ambitions that would make those heinous atrocities of October 7 look like a Sunday picnic.

I think many Americans would be shocked to learn that Congress has almost no visibility into how our funds are used within the United Nations and within other multilateral globalist organizations funded by the United States. With Ukraine alone, our own government admits the following:

[That] routing U.S. assistance funds to Ukraine through multilateral institutions . . . where U.S. donations will merge with funding streams from other international donors—has the potential to reduce transparency and oversight.

Well, that is the understatement of the year: "To reduce transparency and oversight." You think? You think that when we give money to the U.N. and the U.N. gives money to another U.N. entity and somebody gives money to somebody else—it changes hands multiple times, commingled with funds from other countries—you think that will reduce transparency and oversight? You think so. You know so. We have every reason to believe that. We are fools if we don't admit it.

The American people aren't fools. They have every reason to be concerned about this. Why would we expect—when we know what we know and we know what our own government has admitted very recently is the case, why on Earth would we expect routing our assistance for Gaza through the United Nations will be any different?

Referring back to that definition of insanity, here we go again.

Look, decades of U.S. payrolling the U.N. system as the largest donor nation, both on the mandatory and on the voluntary portions of the funds that we pay, these have made taxpayers unknowingly, unwillingly but, nonetheless, very complicit in terrorism and anti-Semitism in the indoctrination of generations of children living in Gaza who have been taught to hate and harm and kill Jewish people just because they are Jewish and they happen to live in Israel.

The American people don't want any part of that. They certainly don't want to add to it, knowing what we know now, what we have learned, about the

catastrophic consequences of ignoring what happens when we ignore the problem.

That is why I am introducing an amendment to clarify that not only will our donors stop the funding of UNRWA—this is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency—an agency that has itself been responsible for fomenting a lot of this hatred and this indoctrination, anti-Semitic indoctrination, and otherwise have proven to be of material assistance—one could say an accomplice to the crimes involving but culminating in and not limited to the attacks of October 7.

But mercifully, I suppose, the authors of this bill decided to write out UNRWA—the U.N. Relief and Works Agency—saying: No soup for them. No benefits for them. They can't have it.

But my amendment would add to that, acknowledging that the agencies supported by the United Nations are all part of a network. There are close to two dozen of them operating in Gaza, and if you exclude only UNRWA from that network, that money will just go somewhere else, inflicting many of the same harms that have come through UNRWA. So my amendment would clarify that not only will our dollars stop funding UNRWA, but they will no longer fund any U.N. organization operating in Gaza.

Look, we have been down this road before, funneling our aid dollars through multilateral institutions, and we know exactly how it ends: in tragedy, in savage brutality in which we have been complicit through our financial support.

Without my amendment, there is nothing to prevent the administration from taking funds that could have, would have otherwise gone to UNRWA and redirecting them to the nearly two dozen other U.N. entities that operate in Gaza, where we lose all visibility and all control over where our dollars end up and how they are used and what they fund. Enough is enough.

Like most multilateral institutions, the U.N. is a bloated, corrupt, and really woke system, one that is far past its prime, and it has proven adversarial to the United States and overtly hostile to our ally Israel. It is a platform for tyrants to mock us, for brutal dictatorships to sit on human rights committees, and for terrorists to receive aid. We can't trust this administration not to fund U.N. programs in Gaza, and we can't trust the U.N. not to fund terrorists and foment their acts of brutality, which is exactly why my amendment is so urgently needed.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 1448

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside all pending amendments and motions and make my amendment Lee No. 1448, pending to the text of Murray No. 1388.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The senior Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Reserving my right to object.

Republicans had a chance to work in a bipartisan fashion, and rightwing extremists in the GOP said no. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, what else is there to say? We shouldn't be doing these things. We certainly shouldn't be doing them with reckless disregard for the very serious problems that we are creating, for the very serious existing problems that we will be exacerbating through this legislation. We certainly shouldn't be doing this in a way that excludes a very significant percentage of the composition of the U.S. Senate from having any input.

Did you hear what she said? Yet again, on a measure that has absolutely nothing—nothing at all—to do with the border security measures, that were rejected, with good reason, by nearly all Senate Republicans, she is on that basis calling us extremists and on that basis excluding us from even making our amendments pending. This is insane. This has nothing to do with border security provisions. This has to do with this bill.

For that matter, this is a germane amendment to this legislation, to exclude us simply because we wouldn't bow and kiss the ring of the law firm of Schumer & McConnell and its acolytes and associates is a disgrace to this institution. It is essentially saying: You must agree with the machine; you must agree with the firm; or you will be shut out. You won't have anything to say.

This is unacceptable. What will be even more unacceptable is if those same Senate Republicans, who just a couple of days ago and just a few feet from here on the same floor of the same building here in the Capitol, the same Senate Republicans told us: Don't worry. You will still have the opportunity to offer up amendments and make them pending, to have them disposed of by the Senate after we get on to the bill. And that is why they—those 17—voted that way. We will see within the next 24 hours whether they meant what they said because, if they did, they should be voting against this.

Look at what has happened today. The only amendments that have been called up and they have drawn objections, every single time—and oddly enough, as they become more relevant, more obviously germane to the bill, they have drawn more vicious objections, dismissing those of us who have concerns with this bill and with the border security provisions negotiated without our knowledge or consent over a period of 3 or 4 months, was rejected by many of us with good reason because it didn't do what we promised each other we would try to accomplish. We are told we are shut out of the process now; that is, most Senate Republicans are now shut out of the process.

So I ask, I implore, I plead with my Senate Republican colleagues at least, it is sad that the Democrats have gotten to this point. Senate Democrats,

when I first started here, didn't do that. We didn't do that to each other generally. They are fully bought in on this now apparently.

But I at least plead with my Republican colleagues, if you voted for cloture on the motion to proceed, front-end cloture, I implore you, tomorrow, please don't support cloture. They have shut this down. They shut down the very process that you told us we would have access to, the very process that the American people have come to expect and demand, especially when we are going to spend some \$95 billion in legislation, sending out—I don't know—\$55–\$60 billion more to Ukraine, after we have sent \$113 billion to Ukraine already.

No, the American people demand more. They should demand more of all of us, but certainly, the Republican voters demand more of Republican Senators, especially given that Republican Senators as a whole, as a conference, we made a decision to try to use this as an opportunity to force the border security measure, and now, we are told: No soup for you.

So, you know, without that amendment—it is just rejected even being made pending—there is, to be clear, nothing to prevent the administration from taking these funds, taking these funds that would have otherwise gone to UNRWA and just following through some other U.N. entity or some other body than UNRWA.

My colleagues have rejected every safeguard, every limit, every improvement, every condition that I have offered that we may be good and faithful stewards of America's resources and the taxes taken from hard-working families, taxes that, at the very least, they should expect not to be used to kill Israelis, to threaten Americans, to undermine American national security, to say nothing of the missed opportunity here to secure a genuinely bipartisan agreement on something where there is not agreement in both parties as overwhelming as some would wish, but where there could be if you matched up adequate border security provisions with provisions giving aid to Ukraine.

We will find out tomorrow whether those Senate Republicans who voted to get on to the bill—notwithstanding the absence of the conditions that we demanded months ago—we will see how they feel then. I really hope they will reconsider. They have every reason to reconsider their vote and to do it differently in light of the fact that they are just shutting us out of amendments, shutting us out with the excuse that anyone who disagrees with them, anyone who takes a different position than the firm and its acolytes and associates can't even have a voice on a measure like this.

Today, we have explored the utter arrogance of politicians who believe that they—and they alone—can determine the risks and the rewards of proxy wars across the globe. They believe that

they are playing a grand game of geopolitical chess. But as millions of Americans have seen, they are just playing with fire.

We can't throw more of America's treasure into these bloody conflicts across the globe without maintaining visibility, transparency, access, and control over that funding. We can't do that and pretend that we are not harming hard-working families who find it hard to put food on the table and a roof over their heads because of Bidenomics, because of reckless spending like this.

We cannot simply blindly dance with nuclear powers, without forethought, without even so much as a plan. Remember, before even getting on to this bill, the majority leader assured us that the amendment process would be, as I believe in his words, "fair and open." But then—then—once Republicans decided to get on the bill, enough Republicans to get him past that critical threshold of 60 votes to bring debate to a close on getting on to the bill, to give the votes to consider it, then and only then did the majority leader change his language when he said that it would be a "fair and reasonable" process, not fair and open, but "fair and reasonable."

Reasonable is apparently in the eyes of the beholder, the eyes of the beholder being one who views anyone who disagrees with him as an extremist whose views are not worth considering. It is not extremist for the American people to ask that noncitizens be prohibited from voting in their elections. It is not unreasonable for the American people to ask that the government for which they work months out of every year just to pay their Federal taxes, only to be told that is not nearly enough because we are \$34 trillion in debt, so we are going to print more money to make every dollar spend less—spend and go less far and buy less things.

It is not fair to those same people to say that those same people are extremists insofar as they have concerns, concerns that tell them that they should want a secure border and they should want their elected lawmakers in Washington, DC, to be demanding a degree of border security be forced on the Biden administration because it apparently has to be forced on them, because they are quite unwilling to do it on their own.

It is not unreasonable for them to ask those things. It is not unreasonable for the American people to ask and not have to fund acts of terrorism through agencies that have indoctrinated so many people in the hateful, hateful marinade of anti-Semitism. It is not unreasonable for them to demand that these things at least be considered or that we at least have a plan relative to Ukraine. That is not unreasonable either.

These goalposts are already shifted. So who decides what is a reasonable amendment process? The three or four

Members of the Senate who wrote this bill in secret? The leadership? The law firm of Schumer and McConnell and its acolytes and associates? The leadership and bill managers who gave us just days to read the bill before forcing us to vote on it, requiring us to scramble?

As my staff and the staff of many of my Republican friends and colleagues have done in a short period of time, they have put together amendments. It is difficult to draft amendments for a bill before you see the bill. We weren't allowed to see the bill until Sunday night at 7 p.m., eastern standard time. So my hat goes off to my staff and the staff of many others who have burned the midnight oil—sometimes quite literally—throughout this whole week in order to get us ready to at least offer amendments. And now we are told: No such luck. No soup for you. You didn't kiss the ring of the firm. Sorry, you lose.

But it is not “we” who is losing that I am concerned about. It is not “we” in the sense of a few Senators. It is those whom we represent. It is the hundreds of millions of Americans who were told that their voice doesn't matter because they are concerned about such frivolous things as actually securing the border or actually making sure that we have a plan before funding yet another proxy war, this time involving an adversary with enough nuclear arms to kill the American people many times over.

What about the other 96 Members of this body? What about the States they represent? Are they given a voice in this process? Even those who voted for cloture to get on the bill, cloture on the motion to proceed—front-end cloture, as we describe it—most of them were excluded, if they were being honest. If they were administered truth serum, they would have to admit that they had little to no say in what went into it. This was written by a very small handful of people, under cover of darkness, over many months. And now, after being told there was a fair and open process that magically transformed into a fair and reasonable process, which, apparently, means nothing—apparently, it means if you disagree with the firm and its acolytes and associates, then you lose. You are excluded, and so are your voters.

On Thursday, we compared notes and gathered information from a dozen or so of my colleagues. This isn't even all of my Republican colleagues, just a dozen or so of us who had been talking about what amendments we felt were appropriate to be introduced. And just a dozen or so of us submitted over a hundred amendments to our leadership team for consideration.

Now, in good faith, we, as a group, we whittled that down, and we have whittled down that list of over 100 amendments down to 28 priorities. We have worked in good faith to reduce what we are asking for.

So far, I am still the only person today who has offered up and tried to

make pending even a single amendment, and even that is apparently not in order.

Over time, it has just become the new normal. The American people have been asked to settle so many times, to settle for a process that disenfranchises them by excluding those they elect to be part of the law-making process. Unless they are part of this elite cabal called the firm and those who manifest unwavering allegiance to it in moments like this, they are excluded.

This is why we are \$34 trillion in debt, by the way. This is why we are now swimming in a sea not only of the \$34 trillion in debt—which soon is going to be producing enough in interest payments alone to swallow up other priorities, including priorities that only we can take care of, like national defense—but it is also subjecting the American people to a Byzantine labyrinth of Federal regulations and laws made by men and women not of their own choosing, Federal bureaucrats, whose names will never be known, much less appear on the ballot to anyone in America, who write laws that collectively add to the expense of government to the tune of \$2 or \$3 trillion every single year, with no ability to elect them.

And now, on top of all of that, they are told that even those they do elect aren't able to help them unless they are part of this cabal, of a very tiny handful of people that draft the bill.

This is wrong. We all know it is wrong. We have got the procedural tools available at our disposal to allow us to get around it. We cannot say—not credibly, not honestly—that we just inherited this: Awe shucks, there is nothing we can do about it.

We know that is absurd. We know that is not true. We know that is not true because the rules themselves give us protection against that.

And so I say—I implore—whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, but especially if you are a Republican—and especially if you are Republican, any of the Republicans who, I think, all of us said we should use this as an opportunity to force border security, to harness what support there is behind providing additional assistance to Ukraine to force security of the border with an administration bent on the opposite of that.

When we got a draft of the bill, it just didn't do that. Despite whatever nice things you might want to say about the language or its drafters or the intentions of those who were trying to produce something, it didn't do that. It didn't do that to the point where all but four Republicans voted against it.

So the fact that we are now being told that the default to that is that Democrats win, Democrats get the support of 17 Republicans who will support not only the legislation crafted in secret that unites Democrats and sharply divides Republicans but also alienates, overwhelmingly and with good reason,

most Republican voters—that they are going to be accomplices now in shutting out the base. I ask, I beg, I plead of all of my colleagues, especially those Republicans who purportedly share that concern—whether they express that concern or not—regardless of how they feel about border security, for that matter, regardless of what political party they belong to, they should care about making sure that our money is not going to fund interests hostile to the American people, hostile to their interest, to make life more burdensome to them.

We have a certain implicit obligation that we take on when we take our oath of office, and the obligation is to ensure that we first do no harm. This bill violates that. And deep down—deep down—a lot of my colleagues realize that.

Remember, it only takes 41 votes. Madam President, 41 votes opposing cloture stops the bill, stops it either indefinitely or until such time as these concerns can be resolved. They are not insuperable concerns. They are not unreasonable concerns. They are certainly not concerns that should be shut out from debate. So I ask, I plead to any of my colleagues who happen to, for whatever reason, be listening to my words at this moment and for any voters out there who, for whatever reason, happen to be listening to me on a nice Saturday afternoon, if you share these views, share them with your Senators and encourage your Senators to allow the American people into the dark and secret tent in which these things are being negotiated to the exclusion of every American.

We are a nation of laws. I hope we always will be. Despite our flaws, our country is the last great hope in a world that is increasingly hostile. I hope we will always be available to be that. We can't do it when we treat our own people this way. We can't do it when we ignore risks like those that we are ignoring today as long as we continue this. So I implore my colleagues and I implore voters out there who have the ear of any of my colleagues to oppose cloture tomorrow. We haven't had a fair and reasonable process. We haven't had a fair and open process or any kind of process on amendments because the firm is determined to exclude us, determined to exclude us in a way that benefits the military industrial complex, will earn pats on the head for a small handful of politicians in America, but otherwise undermines American interest, especially when we refuse even to consider opportunities to make the bill better or at least less bad. That is not too much to ask.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to pass the national security legislation that is in front of us. It reaffirms our commitment to our partners across the globe.

Now, earlier this week, we had an opportunity to move forward with this bill, plus provisions—important provisions—that have been negotiated by Senator LANKFORD of Oklahoma, Senator MURPHY, Senator SINEMA, and many others, that would have focused on border security—an issue that Senator LEE has been raising in his objections today.

I think it is important that people understand the many opportunities we have had to move on border security, but this was a gleaming opportunity because it was negotiated by a conservative Republican from Oklahoma who had been designated by his caucus, someone many in this Chamber have deep respect for. And, unlike other pieces of legislation that I strongly supported, this actually wasn't comprehensive reform.

We have had many opportunities in the past, including passing a bill through this Senate that would have created legal paths to citizenship while strengthening our border, and I hope we continue to have those opportunities.

The provision that was voted down by our Republican colleagues would have strengthened the border security in a major way, giving the President emergency powers that he could have exercised at the border. It also would have done something about fentanyl.

A sheriff in my State, in our biggest county, in the last year, seized enough fentanyl to kill every single person in that county. This legislation would have actually provided the resources for technology—cutting-edge technology—to detect the fentanyl coming over to our country from ports of entry—whether they be right on the border, whether they be on the Canadian border, something of concern to the Presiding Officer and myself, or whether they be in airports and the like. Sadly, our colleagues voted that down. So originally, this combined piece of legislation was about standing with our allies around the world, but it was also about our own security—border security, economic security. It actually contained a number of visas and work permits for those who come to this country legally and would like to work. And sadly, that was turned down.

I know that in the rural areas of my State, where we don't have enough workers in our nursing homes and in our hospitals, where we don't have enough doctors in those hospitals, where we don't have enough people to work in manufacturing and in our agricultural communities, that actually would have been a big game changer for us, as I know it would have been in a lot of the Northern States, but that was turned down by our colleagues.

So we have the package in front of us, and the package in front of us is about national security. As we work to try to get them to join us and strengthen border security, at least we must stand by our allies around the world.

There is one ally that I especially want to focus on, and that is what is happening in Ukraine. I have been to Ukraine twice in the last few years, also to the border right after the invasion, in Poland, standing there with Senator WICKER and Senator BLUMENTHAL, meeting with our troops and the NATO troops that were stationed in Poland. But seeing people fleeing from Ukraine, when that invasion began, always indelibly marked in my mind would be the grandma who was 90, in a wheelchair, being pushed over the border from the only country that she had ever known, into Poland; and the little kids with nothing but backpacks with their stuffed animals. They had to leave so fast because there had been a bombing of a training facility. And we happened to be there that day, only weeks after the war started.

And since then, Vladimir Putin's unprovoked, unlawful, unjustifiable invasion, the largest land war in Europe since World War II rages on.

This is not only a battle for Ukrainian sovereignty, it is a battle for democracy itself. And just as Vladimir Putin has shown his true colors, razing cities to the ground, slaughtering innocents, abducting children, the Ukrainian people have shown theirs, defending their democracy in brilliant blue and yellow. They have succeeded, even taken back some territory because of their unbreakable resolve, but also because countries across the globe as far away as Japan and South Korea, their neighbors in Europe, the United States, Canada, have stood with them. And now is not the time to give up.

Over 100,000 Ukrainians have been wounded and 70,000 have been killed. In the words of the NATO Secretary-General, the war has become a battle for ammunition. Russia is firing nearly 10,000 rounds a day, while Ukraine is only managing 2,000.

It is not just the U.S. that has stood up to this challenge with not only military aid and expertise but also, of course, humanitarian aid. And the humanitarian aid in this agreement, of course, will give much-needed humanitarian assistance to those innocents in Gaza. And we all mourn what is happening there right now. It will help people throughout the world.

But it is important to note that it isn't just the U.S. standing up. Our European allies are standing up to this challenge. The British Prime Minister visited Ukraine in January and promised to increase funding to over \$3 billion by next year. Latvia, a tiny Baltic State of less than 2 million people, is providing military support to Ukraine that is equivalent to more than 1 percent of its GDP. They have also trained 3,000 Ukrainian troops and plan to train more as the fighting continues. And Finland, which shares more than an 800-mile border with Russia, has given Ukraine over \$2 billion in aid since the fight began.

These countries know that freedom is at stake. These border countries that I

once visited with Senator McCain during the first invasion—and I have heard the stories of Estonia, where, when Russia was mad at them for moving a statue, they turned off their Wi-Fi. Or in Latvia and Lithuania, when people would stand up for democracy, they would hack into their phones—or the kinds of false advertising and interference on the internet with misinformation that we first saw in those border countries, in places like Finland and places like Sweden, as we now know, the Russians have tried and are trying it over here.

The Ukrainian people, though—they are on the frontline. While we deal with this over the internet, as hard as that is, they are dealing with it on the frontlines—shedding blood, killing hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers, standing up for their homeland; the chef cooking meals for the troops on the frontline; the nurse who traded in her scrubs for camo and now serves as a field medic; the martial arts teacher leading an 11-man recon unit to keep his village safe. These are the lives at stake.

As President Zelenskyy said in September, "There is not a soul in Ukraine that does not feel gratitude to you, America." I saw this firsthand when I was there with Senator Portman in the middle of the war. We were the first ones to go over officially after some of the leaders in the Senate and House had gone there. The U.S. Embassy officials in Kyiv told us that one evening when they picked up a take-out order, a restaurant employee had written "Thank you for the HIMARS" on the back. They didn't even know they worked at the Embassy.

U.S. aid has empowered Ukraine to take back half of its country and saved lives. It has given families hope that there will be a future. When you think of the numbers, today, more than 6 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homeland—6 million Ukrainians. Just as our Polish allies and other countries in the region have taken in refugees, America has, too, especially in my home State of Minnesota that has always had a proud Ukrainian-American population. I have met a number of refugees. Sometimes, it is flower farms, where the Ukrainians would come to work in the summers and bring back that money home. Now, they are staying there and bringing their families, and the farmers have taken in their families.

Sometimes, it is people who simply had no place to go; and the relatives, the distant relatives, took them in. I met them at the Ukrainian churches, and I have met them in their workplaces. It is a very hard situation. And to a tee, every single one of them says, "I just want to go home."

Throughout our history, America has never failed to defend our friends in this manner. If we were just to simply withdraw, just like that—just because of the dysfunction in this place? How could we ever explain that and hold our heads high with the rest of the world?

The question is, as Vladimir Putin seeks to wipe Ukraine off the map and march right in and could easily march right into a NATO country and put America and our military right in the middle of a major war, the question is, Will America answer the call of the Ukrainian people?

To me, it is not a question, it is a must. We must be here for Ukraine, for the moms, dads, grandmas, grandpas, kids, and grandkids who are counting on us. We must say as President Zelenskyy said on the first day of the invasion when he went down to the street corner and said three simple words: "We are here." It is now our moment to say, "We are here."

AFGHAN ADJUSTMENT ACT

Madam President, one other topic, that I wanted to discuss today is the work we are doing on the Afghan Adjustment Act amendment. We don't know if there are going to be amendments, but if there are, I hope, with the strong bipartisan support that we have for this measure, that we will be able to have a vote which we know will pass on this important measure.

This is an obligation—a security obligation. Just as I talk about the border and our obligation to do something on the border and to make sure we have a strong legal immigration system, just as I talked about Ukraine and the importance of standing with that ally, just as I talked about the importance of humanitarian aid to Gaza and places around the world, we also have an obligation to stand with those who stood with us. That is about keeping promises. That is about keeping our covenant.

So yesterday, I filed a bipartisan amendment based on the Afghan bill that Senator GRAHAM and I have long put forward. This is an amendment that Senator JERRY MORAN—the highest ranking Republican on the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the U.S. Senate—and I have put forward.

Senator GRAHAM is also a cosponsor of this amendment. Our cosponsors include Senator WICKER, who is the highest ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee; Senator CASSIDY, Senator MULLIN, Senator TILLIS, Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator CRAPO—I note that Senator GRAHAM is the ranking member on the Judiciary Committee for the Republicans—Senator ROUNDS, Senator CAPITO; of course, many Democrats, including Senator COONS, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator KING, Senator BLUMENTHAL. This is about doing right by those who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with our troops. This amendment is supported by so many of the groups that stand with our veterans.

And I know when I—and I am sure the Presiding Officer and Senator KAINE who is with us today in the Chamber—when we go and talk to our veterans and meet them wherever they are, they talk to us about things like exposure to burn pits. Oftentimes, it is not those who are exposed to the burn

pits, but they know someone that was or someone's husband that was or someone's wife that was, and they are looking out for them. And all the times when they talk to me about benefits, it will be about someone they know that has PTSD or someone who has mental health issues. It is very rarely about their own problem.

That is the same thing going on here. This is legislation, and I have never seen so many vets come up to me about something where they get so emotional, because it is about the people that stood with them on the frontline, the translators, the people who gather intel, the people that were willing to take a bullet.

That is why this bill—this amendment we put forth—has the strong and never-ending support of groups like With Honor, No One Left Behind, Operation Recovery, the American Legion, the VFW, I would add the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; as well as many of our Nation's most revered military leaders, including Admirals Mike Mullen, William McRaven, Generals Richard Myers of the Air Force, Joseph Dunford from the Marine Corps, Stan McChrystal from the Army, and the list goes on and on.

I literally have hundreds of generals who have commanded troops all over the world in many different conflicts who say this is a fight worth having because, when the Vietnamese and the Hmong stood with our troops in Vietnam and when we were through and so many of them fled to our country, we didn't just leave them in legal limbo. We didn't just leave them as what happened to, as Senator KAINE is aware, one of the Afghan interpreters who was working double shifts as a driver with Lyft and Uber and ends up getting murdered. We didn't leave them back then in legal limbo. We made sure they had a path to permanent residence. We made sure they were able to live in this country with dignity.

And what did we get out of it, besides the obvious national security implications that others will want to stand with us because they know we keep our promises? What did we get out of it? A thriving Hmong and Vietnamese community in this country, just as we have with others who have stood with us. They are now nurses and doctors and firefighters. They are teachers. My daughter went to elementary school. Half of her class were Hmong.

That was what we did for those communities, and now, they are a part of America because, in America, we know that immigrants don't diminish America, they are America. This covenant, for so many reasons, with our Afghans must be kept.

So what am I talking about here?

Well, I am talking about nearly 80,000 Afghans who sought refuge in our country after the withdrawal. They are here in our country. So let's think about this. They are actually in our country.

What our bill does, which was negotiated with many conservative Sen-

ators—it actually has strong provisions for vetting, to go back and to see what the people who are here have done while they were here. Many of you can imagine that there are work permits, that they are finding ways to work. They are trying to raise their families. They have more people who will vouch for them. Over half the people have a letter from the head of mission in Afghanistan. They have letters from our own military about what they did and how they saved their lives. In addition, there are those who are still in hiding who stood with our troops in places around the world—brave translators, humanitarian workers, courageous members of the Afghan military. That is what is in the bill.

What are we talking about here?

Well, we are talking about the female tactical teams of Afghanistan I got to meet within the last few months. They had our troops' backs as they pursued missions hunting down ISIS combatants on unforgiving terrain and freeing prisoners from the grips of the Taliban. The entire purpose of the programs that we have in place and that we are working to expand and extend to the Afghans is to provide residency to those who have supported the United States abroad, not just to be here with a trapdoor under them, not knowing when someone is going to take away their residencies and send them back to a certain death, but actually make a place for them in our country when we need them.

Let me just give you some examples of the people I have met.

Mahnaz—and they don't want their last names mentioned. Why don't they want their last names mentioned? Because they still have family back in Afghanistan. Mahnaz is a commander of the Afghan National Army's female tactical platoon who worked closely with our military support team to facilitate discussions between our soldiers and the Afghan women when they crossed their paths in the field.

Ahmad is a pilot whose helicopter was shot down, not once but twice. In speaking of his work with our troops, he said:

In the face of danger, we were united. We were relentless. We were resilient.

Another pilot, who didn't even want his first name mentioned and who spent 10 years helping American soldiers identify Taliban positions in the mountains of Afghanistan, said his job was to capture the bad guys.

Nangialy, an Afghan interpreter, put his life on the line to support our troops. Why? To use his words:

Same goals. Same target. Same achievement.

The next is a helicopter fighter pilot who worked with our troops to combat the Taliban in remote areas of Afghanistan for 8 years and survived being shot in the face by a flying bullet. So we are going to tell this guy: Well, we are having fights, and even though we have enough votes for this, eh, it is kind of inconvenient to vote for this right now.

Reggie is another Afghan interpreter. Now, remember, in Afghanistan, being an interpreter wasn't a desk job. They weren't like when you see the diplomatic meetings and they have got the things on in the U.N. and they are interpreting meetings and you wait and you stand, as all of us have done, where you talk and they interpret from a stage. No. They—and if you haven't seen the movie "The Covenant," I suggest you see it. It explains one story—a true story—of one translator and what he did for an American soldier. They worked soldier to soldier with our troops while they were on foreign soil. Where the troops went, the interpreter went. If the troops got ambushed by bullets, the interpreter got ambushed by bullets. If the troops got bombed, the interpreter got bombed. This was a risk that Reggie took every day.

On August 8, 2012, Reggie was working on patrol with a group of servicemembers, including Army CPT Florent Groberg. Suddenly, a suicide bomber approached. Groberg acted fast and protected other members of his unit by shoving the bomber aside, but the vest still detonated, leaving Groberg and Reggie—the Afghan interpreter—bloodied and fighting for every breath. The explosion left Reggie, the Afghan, with 23 pieces of shrapnel lodged in his own body; but even still, he used the energy he had to go to Groberg's aid and help him stop the bleeding.

To this day, as a result of that attack, Reggie has problems with his left ear, and he sometimes can't control his body. That is what he sacrificed for our troops. That is the depth of his commitment and covenant.

Reggie and the captain survived that attack; but, tragically, several men did not. One of the men we lost that day was U.S. Air Force Maj. Walter David Gray. He left behind his kids and his wife Heather.

In August 2021, 9 years after the attack, Heather learned from an NPR reporter that Reggie was being targeted by the Taliban in Afghanistan. She wrote about that experience in an essay for the Dallas Morning News. I will share her words with you now, and I want you to think about the bill that is before us, supported by multiple Republicans and Democrats, supported by commanders and generals across the country, supported by every major veterans group.

Listen to what she said:

Turmoil is a good way to describe the emotions I felt when I listened to that radio interview. It was "Reggie" in Afghanistan on the NPR broadcast describing his service as a linguist for our military and the danger his family was in if they didn't get out.

Reggie served with my husband, Maj. Walter David Gray, in the Air Force, and was with him when David and three others were killed by suicide bombers in Kunar Province on August 8, 2012.

After listening, I called my friend CPT Florent Groberg, who . . . confirmed that the man we were hearing on the radio—

That is Reggie telling about how scared he is for his family—

was indeed "our guy."

With that confirmation, my family spun into action, working with others, both state-side and in Afghanistan, to get Reggie, his wife, and their four young children through the gauntlet outside Kabul's airport and onto a military plane.

It would be nearly November before Reggie's family was resettled in Fort Worth where his brother lives.

Heather's story continues. She wrote:

My family traveled four hours to Fort Worth to meet them. As we worked alongside each other assembling furniture, Reggie showed me scars from the battle that killed my husband. As he recounted stories of the many battles in which he fought alongside our servicemembers, a car backfired outside, and he instinctively lowered to the floor. He still struggles with traumatic brain injury and PTSD.

A few weeks later, I brought my new husband and kids up to spend Thanksgiving with Reggie's family. Despite the language barrier . . . we celebrated as one big family because that is what we are.

Reggie is now gainfully employed. His children are in school and their English gets better every day. He is among the Afghan allies who needs Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act.

Heather shared one more detail that stuck with me. She said:

Every time we see Reggie, he reminds my children that their father died a hero.

I'm certain [that my husband] would say he was just doing his job and that Reggie was the real hero for risking his life to serve alongside our military.

In honor of these heroes, our U.S. military but also those who served with them, we must pass this amendment.

Maj. Walter David Gray died on the battlefield. Captain Groberg flung his body at a suicide bomber; but after the explosion, a bloody Reggie focused his energy on taking care of the captain.

That is why we have this broad support of people who are not going to let this go—the American Legion, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America—as they wrote in a letter:

America's veterans served with Afghans for two decades in Afghanistan. We fought side by side with them, and we saw firsthand their courage and dedication. They risked their lives to help us and made significant contributions to our mission.

This is about the original bill, which has been slightly modified, actually, by our Republican colleagues, but it still has the same purpose and will have the same effect.

We urge you to support the Afghan Adjustment Act as soon as possible. We promise to stand by our allies who often, at risk to themselves and their families, served in uniform or publicly defended women's and democratic rights. The U.S. Government made a similar promise; keeping it assures that the American commitments will be honored.

Or listen to national security experts from Republican and Democratic Presidents.

They wrote this:

The bipartisan Afghan Adjustment Act honors our nation's commitment to its wartime allies by providing a path to permanent status for Afghan evacuees. It also ensures these evacuees are properly and scrupulously vetted—

And, by the way, they are in the country already—

prior to considering them for such status.

The status quo leaves tens of thousands of evacuees in legal limbo while failing to put to rest security concerns raised in the OIG reports. No action is not an option—we urge you to act to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act.

"No action," say our security experts, "is not an option."

It is not just military groups and national security experts. Eight former U.S. Ambassadors to Afghanistan called on us to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act. Those Ambassadors served under President George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden, and each has an intimate understanding of the diplomatic stakes of getting this right.

They said this:

We are a group of retired Ambassadors, all of whom served as Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, who have dedicated our professional lives to furthering America's interests in the world. We are writing today because we are convinced that the Afghan Adjustment Act furthers those interests. The need is urgent and time is short.

Let me list some of the military leaders: Gen. Dunford, ADM Mike Mullen, who support this bill, who have made this a major priority, who have made calls about this bill.

Maybe, just maybe, it is worth listening to them and simply getting a vote on this piece of legislation that has been vetted itself through multiple Republican Senators. It is not the original bill, which was good enough to get the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee and the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee; but it is actually the bill that was negotiated with Senator LANKFORD that was included in the original package.

Why am I calling on an amendment here? Because this is a national security package, and this is a national security issue to keep our covenant.

Dunford, Mullen, Myers, Stavridis, GEN Peter Chiarelli, GEN Stan McChrystal, GEN David McKiernan, ADM William McRaven, GEN Austin Miller, GEN John Nicholson, GEN M. David Rodriguez, GEN Curtis Scaparrotti, GEN Raymond Thomas, GEN Joseph Votel, Gen. Mark Welsh. The list goes on.

What did their letter say?

If Congress fails to enact the Afghan Adjustment Act, the United States will be less secure. Potential allies will remember what happens now with our Afghan allies. If we claim to support the troops and want to enable their success in wartime, we must keep our commitments today.

To conclude, we have Republicans, Democrats, military and veterans groups, national security leaders, retired leading U.S. Ambassadors to Afghanistan, and flag officers all on the same page. We have worked on this bill and made changes for multiple Senators over the years. There is actually not that much controversy about the language of the bill. And we have the

votes to get it passed. I don't believe there are any more excuses.

The way I see it, this is about our national security—that is what this package is—a moral example for the world, and showing people everywhere in every corner of the Earth that when America makes a promise, when America makes a covenant, it will be kept. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINÉ. Madam President, I had not intended to speak today, but I had the good fortune to be on the floor to hear my colleague from Minnesota describe this urgent amendment, which we do need to take action on. I want to commend her for the work that she has done for our Afghan allies over a number of years. I do believe that if this is offered as an amendment, it will get an overwhelmingly positive vote in this body.

I wanted to just share a little bit about these Afghans in Virginia.

In 2021, when Afghans were coming to the United States at the end of the war, they came to Virginia. Almost all of the Afghans who came to the United States came to Dulles Airport. They were then taken to a facility that was a Dulles conference center, where they were processed. I had the opportunity to see them both at the airport and at the Dulles convention center.

After initial processing, these Afghans were distributed to eight military bases across the United States, and three of those bases were in Virginia: Quantico, Fort Gregg-Adams, and Fort Barfoot. In those months, October and November of 2021, I visited each of the bases to interview the Afghans and hear about their journey but also about their hopes for life in this country. It was tremendously inspiring.

When Afghans would arrive at these bases on a bus from the Dulles conference center, they would be met by our troops standing outside the bus, waving American flags. That was their welcome.

I had a chance to visit with Afghans when I visited Fort Barfoot in southern Virginia. I happened to be there the day before Veterans Day. I went around to all these families, and I said: I am giving a Veterans Day speech tomorrow. What do you want me to tell American troops, veterans, and their families?

Over and over and over again, what I heard from these Afghans was their descriptions of their love and affection for American troops, their love and affection for this country, the perils of the journey to get here but their excitement that they might now be opening a new chapter of free life in the United States.

More Afghans have chosen to settle in Virginia than any other State by raw numbers and certainly per capita. In those years since 2021, I have visited with Afghans all around our Commonwealth. About a year after they ar-

rived, we did a welcome celebration at Mount Vernon. I had a chance to interview so many Afghans who were settling into life in the United States and hear what they were doing.

My colleague from Minnesota described some of the things they are doing to already improve their community. I talked to young activists who were using the internet to try to help family members still in Afghanistan or gain reports about human rights or the treatment of women in Afghanistan or work on community support for Afghan communities around Virginia and around the United States.

Just recently—just recently—I paid an amazing visit to a small city in southern Virginia, Danville, VA. I went there because of another part of this national security package.

In the national security package, there is an investment in something called AUKUS—the United States-Australia-UK cooperative defense agreement in the Indo-Pacific—whereby the United States will help train Aussies to build nuclear subs, sell Virginia-built nuclear subs to Australia during the 2030s but eventually enable Australia to build their own nuclear subs in the 2040s.

The Navy, at my urging as a member of the Armed Services Committee, has helped stand up a training program in Danville. Danville is a great manufacturing city but then lost a lot of manufacturing, tobacco, textile, furniture during the 1990s, but it has fought back strong. Danville is experiencing a renaissance. About a year ago, the Navy opened up a facility in Danville to train the next generation of shipbuilders and sub builders in this Nation. On the Armed Services Committee—as chairman of the Seapower Subcommittee, I wanted to see this innovative program.

It is an 8-week program, five different disciplines. People come from employers all over the United States to train together to help meet the requirements of our own defense and these AUKUS commitments that we have made.

As I walked in each of the five classes and looked at who was there learning, it started to dawn on me: It was youngsters from Danville. It was people from all parts of the United States whose employers had decided they wanted to send them to this training program. It was Aussies, Australian shipbuilders. Those who built the current diesel-powered subs in Australia were sending people to Danville, VA, for 8 weeks so they could learn side by side with their American counterparts. But it was also Afghans. It was Afghans who have been in this country less than 2 years but who have already sacrificed to support the defense of this Nation and who decided when they heard about this opportunity: You know what, why don't I be a shipbuilder? Why don't I be a part of the submarine industrial base?

Watching Afghans sit next to Australians standing next to kids from

Danville, VA, to train, to build, and to manufacture the most complicated items that are built on the planet so that they could defend this country and defend freedom around the world—these are not only people who have sacrificed for us; these are people who are already becoming good citizens in this country, contributing to the Nation, contributing to their communities. They don't deserve to be held in a legal limbo, where every day they question what their status will be tomorrow.

That is why supporting the Afghan Adjustment Act, as negotiated into an amendment on this bill, might be one of the very best pieces of this bill. It is my deep hope that we can get this done before we leave here, and pass the supplemental.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Madam President, for the information of Senators, the Senate will gavel back into session tomorrow, Sunday, February 11, at noon. At around 1 o'clock, we will hold the cloture vote on the substitute amendment, which has the text of the supplemental. We still hope our Republican colleagues can work with us to reach an agreement on a reasonable list of amendments so we can speed this process up.

Again, as I have already made clear, we will keep working on this bill until the job is done.

MORNING BUSINESS

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

AMENDMENT NO. 1543

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 1543 intended to be proposed 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 1571

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms.