



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 171

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025

No. 43

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, before whose eyes the ages pass, who knows our changing thoughts, help us to remember that You guide the planets and our times are in Your hands. Open our ears to hear Your voice as the Heavens declare Your glory and the flowers speak of Your majesty. As you whisper in the wind, teach us to number our days and to seize the seasons You have given us to serve.

Strengthen our lawmakers for today's work. Give them priorities that honor You, patience to persevere, and humility to build new bridges of cooperation. Lord, empower them to do to others what they want done to themselves.

And, Lord, bring peace to our troubled world.

We pray in Your great 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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Troy Edgar, of California, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, my message today is to the administration and particularly to President Trump, who is very forcefully enforcing the immigration laws that were not enforced in the last administration, a message about bringing justice to some people who have been harmed by the previous administration.

On January 20, President Trump's first day in office, he signed the Executive order that is called Securing Our Borders Executive Order. His Executive order properly instructs the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security to "fulfill the requirements of the DNA Fingerprint Act of 2005." That is music to my ears because I have been involved in that issue in regard to the kids who have been lost in this system of immigration that the previous administration has not been able to follow. As I said, that is music to my ears.

For years, my oversight has sounded the alarm on the Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Homeland Security's failure to fully implement the 2005 DNA Fingerprint Act.

I have a lot of whistleblowers come to me on different subjects. Three whistleblowers—Mark Jones, Mike Taylor, and Fred Wynn—disclosed to their superiors that the Department of Homeland Security wasn't following

the 2005 law. In other words, they were not taking DNA from the people whom they were supposed to be keeping track of. Specifically, these whistleblowers disclosed that the government wasn't collecting the DNA from individuals encountered at the southern border like the law requires.

As you might expect, because it happens to so many whistleblowers, instead of being thanked for pointing out this failure, the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection officials retaliated against these whistleblowers. That is why you hear me say so often that whistleblowers are a very—I would like to say they love their country. They want to see their government just simply enforce the law. Then we find out, as I am going to show you, how they are treated like a skunk at a picnic.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Taylor had their law enforcement credentials removed. After 30 years of Federal service, Mr. Taylor lost his law enforcement retirement benefits. All three were subject to harassment.

The Office of Special Counsel has the power to investigate and did investigate and substantiated their whistleblower disclosures and that retaliation occurred.

President Trump and this administration, moving so forcefully to see that the laws are enforced, ought to appreciate whistleblowers who are telling the truth about the government not carrying out the law. In this case, I am asking President Trump to immediately remedy the situation of these whistleblowers.

Last year, how I became acquainted with a lot of this—at least the details of it—I hosted an oversight roundtable with these whistleblowers. The roundtable exposed that the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection failed to take the DNA of the individuals charged with the tragic murder of Rachel Morin despite having three opportunities to

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



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take those fingerprints. Had the Biden-Harris Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection done their job, there is a chance that Ms. Morin would be alive today.

This Executive action couldn't come soon enough. That is why I am pleading with President Trump or his staff to follow up and make sure that justice is brought to these three whistleblowers. Then the President is going to see that the law is enforced. I don't have any doubt about the President seeing that this law is carried out in the future because full compliance with the law will make our border stronger and our citizens safer.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in just a few short weeks, President Trump has restored order to the southern border. If initial reports are accurate, approximately 8,450 illegal immigrants were apprehended trying to cross the border last month. Not long ago, Border Patrol would sometimes apprehend that many illegal immigrants in a single day—in a single day.

With less chaos, Border Patrol can focus on the criminals, cartels, terrorists, and traffickers who used to try to hide behind the surges, and that makes our country safer. But we have more work to do. Illegal drugs continue to plague too many communities and take too many Americans' lives. More Americans die of drug overdoses each year than Americans who died in the entirety of the Vietnam war. The New England Journal of Medicine estimated that 22 teenagers died of overdoses each week in 2022. That is an entire high school classroom lost every week to the scourge of drugs. And so many of these tragedies are from a lethal dose of fentanyl in a single pill—fentanyl that can frequently be traced back to the southern border.

This crisis is affecting every part of the country. We have seen it in South Dakota. Police in Sioux Falls seized enough fentanyl to kill 2.5 million people last year. Law enforcement reports that cartels have a presence in our area, and the price of a single pill has dropped from \$40 a few years ago to \$5 per pill today, largely because of increasing supply.

I am grateful for the men and women in law enforcement and first responders who work every day to save lives, and we need to help them get these drugs off our streets and prevent more overdose deaths.

The President is already taking major steps to halt the supply of drugs

flowing across our borders, and, later today, the Senate will vote to begin consideration of the HALT Fentanyl Act, which will provide law enforcement with a critical tool to combat fentanyl.

Until a few years ago, the fentanyl analogs that have killed so many Americans were generally classified as schedule II substances, meaning they were less tightly regulated and violations carried lighter penalties. And if a particular analog was moved to schedule I, cartels would slightly alter the chemical composition of their fentanyl equivalents to avoid a crackdown—changes that made those drugs no less deadly.

But in 2018, President Trump put a stop to that. All fentanyl analogs were temporarily reclassified as schedule I drugs, enabling law enforcement to go after the people bringing this poison to our communities. Congress has extended this provision several times because it works, but the most recent extension expires at the end of this month. It is time that all fentanyl analogs are permanently classified as what they are: the most deadly kind of drugs.

Our colleagues Senators CASSIDY, GRASSLEY, and HEINRICH have put forward a bill to do just that, expanding on Senator JOHNSON's leadership in this area and Senator GRAHAM's good work. The HALT Fentanyl Act would permanently list fentanyl analogs on schedule I. Doing this will help law enforcement keep pace with the evolving threat of fentanyl that is driving drug overdoses in our country.

It has backing from a number of State attorneys general and from law enforcement. Attorney General Bondi has endorsed the bill. It has bipartisan support here in Congress, including bipartisan cosponsorship and strong bipartisan votes in both the Senate Judiciary Committee and in the House of Representatives.

I am also proud that this bill has come to the Senate floor through regular order. The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on fentanyl, where members heard the heart-breaking stories of lives taken or changed forever by deadly fentanyl analogs. The committee held a markup and reported the bill to the floor by a bipartisan vote of 16 to 5, and now we are going to have a debate on the bill here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. And I hope that, in the coming days, we will have a productive process to make a law that will save American lives.

So, Mr. President, I thank Senators CASSIDY, GRASSLEY, and HEINRICH for their leadership on this issue, and Senators JOHNSON and GRAHAM for their work, as well, and I am looking forward to sending the HALT Fentanyl Act to President Trump's desk soon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, last night, reports came out that President Trump is preparing to sign an Executive order to abolish—end—the Department of Education as soon as today. If this report is true, this would be one of the most destructive and devastating steps Donald Trump has ever taken—and the main victims of this decision: American children.

This right here is why every single Democrat said “hell no” to the nomination of Linda McMahon. This is why we did it. Linda McMahon is an Education Secretary who personifies nails on the chalkboard. I have never heard before of a Secretary who wanted a Cabinet job solely for the purpose of detonating the very Agency she seeks to lead. I have never heard of an Education Secretary who wants to give every teacher in America a rotten apple. But this is where we are.

These are not just metaphors of the moment. They are the perils of the present. This would be horrible for our schools, our school leaders, our families, and the children Secretary McMahon is supposed to serve. The blast radius of this order will harm nearly every child, every teacher, every family, and every community in the country.

Don't forget: Defunding education means property taxes will go up to make up the funding gap. Homeowners are about to get blindsided by the toxic brew of seeing their property taxes go up while seeing the quality of many schools that depend on funding go down.

But nobody—nobody—will suffer more from Donald Trump's decision than our kids. Almost 90 percent of the students in America attend public schools, and they will suffer because of what Donald Trump is doing. Why?

The Department of Education is a lifeline for public schools across the country. It is particularly strong in rural areas because there is not much choice. There is one school in the town.

With Federal funding, many rural schools will vanish and some schools will crumble at the foundation, literally. Education is the best investment for turning a struggling community around. With good schools and without the funding to support these schools, our children will be hurt, our country will be worse, and the notion of the American dream will fall by the wayside.

Rural schools will be particularly hard-hit because rural communities often only have one school in the area, and if that disappears, the communities will deteriorate. Kids with special education needs will be left out in