

Jefferson-Hillman, and it is now right at the center of the University of Alabama at Birmingham Medical Campus.

MaMa was ready to ship out to Europe to tend to our wounded soldiers, but V-Day actually came right before she graduated. Still wanting to serve her fellow Americans in some way, she moved to Enterprise, AL—I am proud to call that my hometown—and she began her 40-year nursing career.

In the early fifties, during the Korean war, her husband—my PaPa, as I call him—was among the brave soldiers defending our ally from communist invasion. MaMa and her sisters moved to Seattle during the time. She moved to live with her sister there, and she worked as a registered nurse.

During her time in the Pacific Northwest, she never lost her southern roots. Her colleagues even called her “Magnolia.” They said it was clear that she held Alabama dear. Ultimately, she and PaPa made their way back down to the Yellowhammer State, as MaMa worked as a labor and delivery nurse until she retired.

Both she and PaPa’s life are emblematic of their generation. Rooted in unselfishness, unselfish service to our great country, they personified what JFK said:

Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.

MaMa helped teach that to my entire family. She wanted us to know that life wasn’t always about us. She makes sure, in every conversation, that we understand that there is a greater purpose and a higher calling to which we must answer and a service to which we must all work. We all have a responsibility to put our God, our family, our friends, and our country above our own personal interest. And there is nobody who embodies that better than my grandmother.

That service to our communities and our Nation can take many shapes and forms. For both of my grandfathers, it was military service. For others in my family, it has been protecting their fellow Americans as law enforcement officers and firefighters. For me, it is the honor to stand and serve in this body. And for MaMa, it was helping bring life into this world, helping new moms, and nursing people back from sickness.

Above all, what MaMa has taught me is that you must use your post, whatever it is in life, to make a difference in the lives around you. We are all called to serve. We are all called to be in the arena. Everyone’s service is different, but no one’s is less important. It is about striving to do better, to be better, and to leave this world better than we found it.

So, thank you, MaMa, for being a guiding light throughout the course of my life. On behalf of my aunts and uncles, cousins, and MaMa’s family and friends, we say, “Happy 100th birthday.” We love you dearly, MaMa.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

(The remarks of Mr. CASSIDY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1015 are printed in today’s RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, 74,000 people died of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs in 2023. Everyone in this Chamber and everyone watching from home knows of someone who has died of a fentanyl overdose. If you watched the Super Bowl, 74,000 is more people than were in the New Orleans Superdome.

Now, they didn’t just occur in a border State or in my State or in the Presiding Officer’s State; they occurred across the country. Every State is a border State when it comes to fentanyl flooding our country. Everyone has felt the effect of the 50,000 pounds of fentanyl that has poured across the open southern border or through the mail over the last couple of years. Fifty thousand pounds is enough to produce over 2 billion lethal doses—enough to kill everyone in the country six times over.

I was just told by a friend about the DEA Museum just outside of Washington, DC. It has a new exhibit, the “Faces of Fentanyl.” You see walls covered with thousands of photographs of Americans—many of them young—who have died from an overdose. When you see the pictures on these walls, you can’t see them, but you know the presence of parents, brothers, sisters, friends, cousins, aunts, and uncles who were devastated when that person on the wall died, when they heard the news that their loved one had bought a pill online or from somebody they happened to know. Perhaps they thought it was something else or perhaps they didn’t know the potency. Nonetheless, when they took it, they died.

The pain of this for so many people is why I urge my colleagues to join me in passing the HALT Fentanyl Act—to help law enforcement stop the criminals who are poisoning our fellow Americans.

What does the HALT Fentanyl Act do? It makes permanent the schedule I classification of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. What is a fentanyl analog? I am a doctor, so I am going to speak a little bit like a doctor. An analog is fentanyl, which is illegal except they change it just enough so that, when they change it, technically, it would not be illegal. Yes, it looks like fentanyl; it addicts like fentanyl; it can kill like fentanyl. Yet, because of a minor modification, it is not actually fentanyl, but it still has the same terrible, addictive, deadly effect of the actual thing. It still has the ability to take our loved ones from us.

So how do we stop that? We say that whether it was fentanyl or a fentanyl analog, it is banned and that if you are illegally in possession of this or if you are selling it to other people, then law enforcement has the right to arrest you.

This bill makes the schedule I classification—schedule I, meaning it is illegal to have—permanent.

Aside from closing the loophole that criminals use to skirt around the law, we also strengthen the penalty for those who possess the fentanyl analog and, again, make it easier for law enforcement to prosecute.

This isn’t controversial; this is bipartisan. The need is there. We have been doing this on a temporary basis, but now we are going to make it permanent. Law enforcement will keep the most vital tool they have to hold fentanyl dealers accountable and to go after criminals.

The bill also makes it easier to research fentanyl analogs to determine if they actually have a medical use. It is possible that one of these analogs is better than the real thing, and fentanyl does have, when prescribed by a physician appropriately, a valid medical use, so maybe one of these analogs is useful. We allow for research into that. At the same time, we give law enforcement the ability to prosecute if it is used for things such as to create an addiction.

President Trump said he would sign this if we passed it. We are working—I am working—to get this bill to his desk.

I would like to thank my colleague from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, the Judiciary Committee chairman, for moving this bill through his committee so quickly and thank the majority leader for bringing this bill up for a vote. I also want to thank my colleague from Wisconsin, RON JOHNSON, for his work on this issue. I also thank MARTIN HEINRICH from New Mexico, who has really cared about this issue, and Senator HEINRICH has pushed this on a bipartisan basis.

The longer we wait, the more it emboldens drug cartels, people in China who either send supplies to Mexico or mail the fentanyl itself through the mail, and other criminals who look to exploit our communities.

We can take a concrete step in fighting the opioid crisis with the HALT Fentanyl Act. Republicans are united. This is a bipartisan bill. The country is united. Let’s bring that 74,000 fentanyl death toll down to zero.

I will never yield in this fight, but for now, I do yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MOODY). The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, later today, the Senate will vote on passage of the HALT Fentanyl Act. Opioid addiction has had a devastating impact on communities all across the country.

We have an overdose crisis in the United States, and we should be doing everything possible to combat it. In just a decade, fentanyl has emerged as the deadliest drug in American history. All it takes is 2 milligrams—that is a fraction of the size of a penny—to cause an overdose.

But we must do more than simply pass this bill. Since fentanyl-related substances were originally scheduled by the DEA, in 2018, Congress has never allowed this authority to expire. So, by passing this bill, we are merely maintaining the status quo. We must also address how this poison gets into the hands of the most vulnerable: our children. Too often, fentanyl is peddled in the open on some of the world's largest social media platforms.

When the Senate Judiciary Committee marked up the HALT Fentanyl Act last month, I filed amendments that would finally hold these companies accountable and demand they put safeguards in place to protect our children. One of my amendments would have repealed the liability shield that Congress granted Big Tech nearly 30 years ago, known as section 230.

At that markup, Chairman GRASSLEY agreed to work with me to finally—finally—allow these companies to be sued by their victims' families so they can be held accountable in a court of law. I hope the full Senate will join us in this effort. Enough teens have died due to Big Tech's deliberate indifference.

If we are going to stem the fentanyl crisis, we also must acknowledge the role the United States has played in arming cartels to the teeth—sending hundreds of thousands of firearms south in an “iron river”—and facilitating the cartels' use of violence to traffic fentanyl into the U.S. That is why I filed my Stop Arming Cartels Act as an amendment to this bill.

The HALT Fentanyl Act fails to account for the role that America's lax gun laws play in arming and enabling drug cartels to traffic fentanyl. Consider this: An estimated 200,000 to 500,000 American-made guns are trafficked into Mexico annually. A study by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives found that 70 percent of crime guns recovered in Mexico from 2014–2018 and submitted for tracing were from the United States.

My Stop Arming Cartels Act would prohibit future manufacture, sale, and possession of .50-caliber rifles—a particularly powerful weapon favored by Mexican drug cartels. These high-caliber weapons smuggled from the United States have allowed cartels to shoot down police helicopters, attack military convoys, and undercut public faith in law and order. My bill would also

allow victims of gun violence to sue manufacturers and dealers who engage in firearm transactions prohibited under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act.

We also must provide local and Federal law enforcement with the resources they need to fight against the highly armed cartels.

These Agencies are on the frontlines protecting our communities from fentanyl and other opioids. But detection is getting more difficult. Fentanyl is so potent and moved in quantities so small that high-value shipments are easily hidden. As a result, law enforcement needs access to technology and resources to quickly and efficiently detect these drugs. This includes expanding nonintrusive inspection capabilities, making lifesaving Naloxone widely available, and adequately funding State and local law enforcement.

I am also gravely concerned about the negative impact of President Trump's recent order diverting Federal law enforcement agents, including from the DEA and ATF, away from combatting fentanyl and firearms trafficked by cartels and onto working on the President's mass deportation efforts. As a reminder, the vast majority of fentanyl and other illegal drugs entering the United States are smuggled by American citizens through legal ports of entry. And lastly, I am concerned about the negative impact of President Trump's mass removals and reassignments of senior career law enforcement at DOJ and FBI and how that will affect our ability to hold traffickers accountable and cut off the supply of fentanyl.

Today, I will vote for the HALT Fentanyl Act. Still, it is only a starting point, and there is so much more that we can do, like stopping the trafficking of American guns that arm the cartels and holding social media companies accountable for peddling fentanyl to our kids. Getting fentanyl off the streets is a herculean task that will require us all to come together and work across the aisle to make this country a healthier, safer place to live. I hope this bill is a sign that all of my Senate colleagues are willing to continue working on this task with me in the future.

 JANUARY 6 PARDONS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, on January 6, 2021, a solemn constitutional proceeding was disrupted when a mob of thugs, egged on by President Trump, attacked and trashed the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to overturn a free and fair election.

The grimmest results of the insurrection were the subsequent deaths of five of our law enforcement officers and the injuries to approximately 140 others, many of whom are still paying the price for that day.

On the campaign trail, Donald Trump promised that he would pardon January 6 insurrectionists—but it still came

as a shock when, on the first day of his second Presidential term, he issued a blanket pardon and 14 commutations to all of those who had been charged or convicted for their involvement in the attack on the Capitol.

And listen to what President Trump said about his pardons at a recent press conference “I pardoned people who were assaulted themselves. They were assaulted by our government . . . They didn't assault. They were assaulted, and what I did was a great thing for humanity.”

Trump's decision is highly unpopular, with 83 percent of Americans opposed to these pardons. This includes 70 percent of those who lean Republican.

And not only that, but these pardons also highlight the hypocrisy of President Trump when it comes to his claimed crackdown on antisemitism. Just days after pardoning these rioters, he signed an Executive order outlining his administration's efforts to combat “the explosion of antisemitism” in the U.S..

But, many of the rioters who Trump pardoned openly embrace violent antisemitism. Take Robert Keith Parker, who wore a black hoodie emblazoned with “Camp Auschwitz” on that horrific day.

Robert Keith Parker was pardoned by President Trump.

Or consider Timothy Hale-Cusanelli, whom prosecutors identified as a “white supremacist and Nazi sympathizer.” He told his coworkers that “Hitler should have finished the job” and frequently dresses up as Adolf Hitler.

At Hale-Cusanelli's sentencing hearing, Judge Trevor McFadden, a Trump appointee, said “Statements and actions like yours make [Jewish people] less safe and less confident they can participate as equal members of our society.”

Timothy Hale-Cusanelli was pardoned by President Trump. And what is more? After his release from prison, Mr. Hale-Cusanelli was welcomed as a speaker at two events held by the President's supporters last year at his Bedminster club.

At one of these events, he received an award from Ed Martin, now serving as President Trump's interim U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. Mr. Martin called Hale-Cusanelli an “extraordinary man” and an “extraordinary leader.”

Does that sound like the actions of an administration that cares about protecting the Jewish community from antisemitism? Seems more like lip service to me.

But the hypocrisy doesn't end there. President Donald Trump, in his speech to the joint session of Congress last week, said he would, “Get police officers nationwide the support, protection, and respect they so dearly deserve.” He said those words in a chamber that was protected by the very officers who were violently assaulted on January 6 by the rioters who he egged on and later pardoned.