

of Russell Vought. The last time he worked at the White House, Mr. Vought pushed radical budget proposals that gutted Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and funding for public health.

During the last default crisis, Mr. Vought was a key advisor to hard-right Republicans who pushed America to the brink of disaster by using the debt ceiling as blackmail to cut trillions in funding for healthcare, for seniors, for hungry kids.

When Congress did not appropriate Donald Trump's border wall, Vought raided the accounts of the Pentagon and the Treasury Department to pay for it. And on top of it all, Mr. Vought put America's national security at risk by illegally withholding foreign aid to Ukraine in an attempt to help Donald Trump on the campaign trail.

To call Mr. Vought an extremist would, frankly, give extremists a bad name. The only people in America who can be happy about Mr. Vought are the richest of the rich, who would make a killing if Donald Trump and Republicans hand them another trillion-dollar tax cut. And, again, just let me repeat, this man is the chief architect of Project 2025. Republicans are running away from that project now, but at the same time, they are putting its chief architect in one of the most powerful positions in the Federal Government, which had a broad range across just about every policy.

So today's hearing with Mr. Vought is a reminder to the American people that Donald Trump does not intend to keep his promises to working people. If Donald Trump were serious about being proworker, he would not have turned to the godfather of the ultraright to oversee White House policy.

And on Chris Wright, the tragic fires in California are another warning that the climate crisis continues to grow in strength. The scientific community across the world from the U.N. to NASA to even national security experts agree that ignoring climate change is dangerous.

So Donald Trump's nominee for Energy Secretary is truly alarming: oil executive Chris Wright. Everything you need to know about who Mr. Wright is and what he will fight for can be found in the following quote he once gave in an interview. Mr. Wright said:

Oil and Gas make the world go round.

Mr. Wright amassed his wealth in fracking and is an oil executive, so, of course, he thinks oil and gas are the only things that count in the world. An article from the New York Times this morning called him an evangelist for fossil fuels.

What makes Mr. Wright so troubling, however, is that he is perfectly willing to admit climate change is happening while rejecting that we should do anything about it.

He says calling climate change a crisis is pure fearmongering. He says the real crisis is that not enough people

are using hydrocarbons. Imagine, that is what he said, not enough people are using hydrocarbons. That is the crisis in the world. Can you believe it?

He even says that roadblocks to unrestrained fossil fuel development are outright "immoral." This man is an extremist when it comes to energy issues. He is not even among the conservative mainstream he is so far over.

What a shock this is, a wealthy oil executive thinks that the solutions to the world's problems are to produce more oil. This is who Donald Trump wants leading America's energy policy.

Mr. Wright's nomination should be an alarm bell for every single American who has gotten a job recently at battery plants, EV factories, and other good-paying clean jobs. Many of these Americans are in red States that trusted Donald Trump to look after them. But as far as Donald Trump's pick for Energy Secretary is concerned, he thinks "we're not in the midst of an energy transition." That is his words.

Tell that to the workers in rural America rebuilding EV batteries and wind and solar. I hope our Republican colleagues will repeat those words to the employees in their districts who have gotten good-paying jobs in these new clean energy industries.

Everyone knows we still have a lot of work to do before we reach our clean energy goals, and everybody knows it is not going to be easy. The question is whether or not Donald Trump's administration is going to protect the clean energy jobs we have created or kill them and put people out of work for the sake of Big Oil.

Mr. Wright's nomination suggests that Donald Trump is willing to let all those good-paying clean energy jobs we have created disappear.

And to my Republican colleagues, when Donald Trump and Mr. Wright start cutting the jobs that have come from clean energy that are in your States, don't say we didn't tell you so. And remember, the voters are going to know who you voted for, for the head of Energy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

LAKEN RILEY ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 5, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5) to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to take into custody

aliens who have been charged in the United States with theft, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune (for Ernst/Grassley) Amendment No. 8, to include crimes resulting in death or serious bodily injury to the list of offenses that, if committed by an inadmissible alien, require mandatory detention.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, yesterday I watched closely the nomination hearing for Pete Hegseth. He is President Trump's nominee to be Secretary of Defense.

For the safety and security of our Nation, Pete deserves a swift, swift confirmation. I am going to vote for him to be the next Secretary of Defense, and I believe that vote is going to happen soon.

He was very clear in the hearing yesterday, the incoming administration is going to refocus the Pentagon on American strength and on hard power—not a woke agenda, which is what we have seen for the last 4 years.

To me, this is very welcome news, and I believe it is welcome news to Americans all across this country who are worried about the security of our Nation and the strength of our Nation.

We have a significant problem in the military today. It is a problem with morale and a problem with recruitment. Pete Hegseth is the right person to address both of these issues and to make sure that we—America—have a military that is ready to fight. Pete served in combat at the height of the war on terror. He deployed overseas to Iraq, to Afghanistan, and to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

He is a decorated veteran. He has earned two Bronze Stars. He also earned the Combat Infantryman's badge. When Pete's executive officer evaluated his performance in Iraq, the feedback was glowing. Pete, he said, was "an incredibly talented, battle-proven leader."

Incredibly talented, battle-proven leader.

He "always [completed] every mission to high standards with minimal guidance or supervision." That is what you want.

Now, I heard Senator SCHUMER ask on this floor: Why should Americans entrust Pete to lead our military? Well, Pete Hegseth answered that question yesterday.

Senator SHEEHY asked during the hearing: Are you going to have the backs of the warfighters? To which our nominee said, yes, he will have their backs. That is why Americans should trust Pete to lead our military.

It is interesting to hear my Democrat colleagues dismiss Pete's years of military service. They sounded angry about his plan to restore American strength. They seemed frustrated that he clearly loves our country and wants to continue to serve. Democrats tried to turn yesterday's hearing into a kangaroo court. They claimed that Pete isn't qualified.

So let's talk about his military experience. The Department of Defense is filled with people who have decades of experience working in the Pentagon. The Pentagon just failed its seventh—seventh—consecutive audit. Think about that for a second.

Each year, the American taxpayers send the Pentagon more than \$850 billion—billion with “b”—yet the Pentagon can't pass a single audit. Look, it sounds like we don't need more experience like that. We need a fresh set of eyes, a soldier—as Pete said himself—with dirt on his boots.

Being Secretary of Defense isn't just about managing a bureaucracy; it is about making America's military the best and most lethal fighting force in the world. Pete is going to be a Secretary of Defense who respects the warfighter and who respects the taxpayer. He is a bold choice for the future of our military, a bold choice for the future of our Nation, and the right choice to be Secretary of Defense.

A Senate confirmation is not an easy process, and the Secretary of Defense is not an easy job. Yesterday, Pete gave strong answers to tough questions. He is confident, and he is knowledgeable. He is ready to lead the Department of Defense.

He knows the cost of war. He knows the price of weakness, and the true value and the valor of American soldiers.

As Secretary of Defense, he is going to reestablish deterrence and rebuild our military. He is going to champion American servicemembers and restore American military readiness.

Pete is going to bring the Pentagon back to what its mission should be: lethality, accountability, transparency, merit. The focus is going to be on military readiness, not social experiments and partisan policies.

America needs a strong Secretary of Defense now, immediately. Senate Republicans will get it done.

s. 5

Mr. President, today the Senate is considering amendments to the Laken Riley Act. The Laken Riley Act is actually bipartisan legislation. It is a lifesaving bill. It is a lifesaving bill that is going to lock up illegal immigrants and then deport them.

Republicans are offering targeted amendments to make this bill even stronger. Senator ERNST has an amendment that would detain illegal immigrants who commit murder or cause serious bodily injury. Senator CORNYN has an amendment that will detain illegal immigrants who attack law enforcement officers.

Those are the type of amendments that Republicans are discussing to strengthen the bill. I know there is some Democrats who are trying to undermine the bill. They want to replace it with thousands of pages of immigration reform.

I have said this before, and it bears repeating: Republicans are not going to undermine or weaken this lifesaving bill.

The Laken Riley Act is not comprehensive immigration reform. It is a targeted piece of tough immigration enforcement. Republicans aren't going to trade American lives for amnesty. We will make the law that puts the safety of the American people first. That is what Americans voted for in November: safety, security, for our communities, for our citizens.

Senator JOHN FETTERMAN of Pennsylvania was recently asked about the bipartisan Laken Riley Act. This is what he said, he said: Pretend that you are in a parking lot in a Wal-Mart in Scranton, PA, as we are out traveling around the State in our own home States.

He said: Well, I am going to vote against a bill that allows people to deport people that are charged with a crime or have a criminal record?

To me, I hope others will listen to Senator FETTERMAN and hear those words and realize how ridiculous it sounds that anyone would vote against the Laken Riley Act.

The Laken Riley Act deserves strong, targeted amendments and swift passage in this body and then signed into law by the President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Tennessee.

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I have to say, I think the remarks I planned today are so pertinent to what is taking place in our world as we are hearing about the Trump effect actually bringing forward a deal with Israel, Hamas, and the hostages because my remarks today are centered on UNRWA, the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

Now, this has been one of the biggest obstacles to peace in the Middle East. To the world, UNRWA presents itself as an aid group for Palestinians. But, in reality, this agency—this U.N. agency that has been the recipient of 7.1 billion U.S. taxpayer dollars—is nothing more than a terror group that works to undermine Israel's security and safety. We have known this for years, but in the aftermath of the Hamas barbaric October 7 attack on the Jewish State, we have learned much more about UNRWA's terror ties.

Early last year, the Wall Street Journal reported that 10 percent of UNRWA's staff have ties to Islamist militant groups. Among them, 6 took part in the October 7 assault that left 1,200 Israelis dead and hundreds more in captivity.

After reports emerged that an UNRWA teacher held an Israeli hostage in his attic, I pressed the agency to in-

vestigate that employee. Instead of taking action, the group dismissed this request and this claim as “unsubstantiated” and called on the Israeli journalist who reported the news to “immediately delete the post.”

We also know that UNRWA has indoctrinated Palestinian children with schools that glorify terrorism and promote violent hatred of Jews, allowed Hamas to store weapons in their buildings, and provided support and aid to the terror group.

Now, a new report from UN Watch, the top watchdog for holding the U.N. accountable, shows that UNRWA works with Hamas, as well as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, at the highest level of the agency. To quote the report, “this secret relationship allows the terrorist organizations to significantly influence the policies and practices of a UN agency with 30,000 employees, and \$1.5 billion annual budget that is funded primarily by Western states.

The evidence is overwhelming. In 2017, UNRWA's then-Commissioner General met with leaders of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to strengthen—in his words—“a spirit of partnership.” To protect the agency's credibility, however, the Commissioner General urged the terror leaders to ensure that “discussions not be made public.”

Of course, open collaboration with U.S.-designated terror groups could jeopardize the millions it receives from Western countries every year. So they tried to cover it up so that they could keep getting these millions and billions of dollars—as I said, U.S. taxpayers, 7.1 billion that has gone into this group.

In the years since, UNRWA leaders have repeatedly pledged support for Palestinian terrorists. That same year, the agency's Lebanon director told terror leaders that UNRWA hoped to have a strong partnership with them. A year later, their program director in Lebanon met with a Hamas official to discuss “ongoing cooperation and coordination.”

Also in 2018, a former UNRWA official appeared at a rally alongside Hamas terror leaders who urged support for UNRWA “until we return to Palestine”—meaning the end of Israel as a Jewish State. The UNRWA official, of course, thanked the terrorist “for their understanding.”

In 2021, the former Deputy Commissioner General of UNRWA met with Sinwar—now, that is the Hamas leader who later planned the October 7 attack—after one of her employees admitted on TV that Israel's strikes on Hamas are “very precise.”

In response, the Deputy Commissioner General removed the employee from his position and thanked Sinwar for “his positivity and desire to continue cooperation in facilitating the agency's work in the Gaza Strip.”

You see there is a pattern here of participation between UNRWA and between Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This is just a sample of the

high-level meetings between leaders of UNRWA and these groups. The list could go on and on and on. What this report makes very clear is that UNRWA's support for terror groups is not something that happens at the agency's fringes. Instead, supporting and enabling terrorism against Israel is UNRWA's main purpose.

I want to say that again: UNRWA's support for these terrorist groups is not just at the fringes. It is with their leadership. They are supporting and enabling terrorism against Israel, and we need to realize this.

This is why President Trump canceled U.S. funding to the agency during his first administration, and it is why President Biden's decision in 2021 to restore that funding—over \$730 million that year—was a huge mistake.

After the October 7 attack, I led the charge in introducing legislation to defund UNRWA, and, in March of last year, President Biden finally signed into law a 1-year ban on that funding.

With all we know about UNRWA, though, we need to make this ban permanent, which is why I am working on legislation that will do just that once we get a new President and once we begin to say no to these organizations who take taxpayer dollars and turn around and use it against the American people, use it for pro-terror, pro-violence organizations and groups.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

S. 5

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, you will see for the next hour a whole group of Republicans coming to the floor to be able to talk about one issue: our need for border security and safer communities. This is something that not just Republicans in the Senate are talking about; this is something that the American people spoke loudly and clearly about during the last election when they elected President Trump, a Republican Senate, and a Republican House. There is not a single Member who is a Republican in this body, in the House, or, clearly, President Trump, who didn't talk about border security and safer communities throughout the entire election.

Every single poll showed that this was one of the priority issues that every single American was thinking about. A Gallup poll last year found that more than three-quarters of Americans support increasing the number of Border Patrol agents; that two-thirds of Americans want the President and the Homeland Security Secretary to temporarily halt all asylum requests when the border is overwhelmed; and third, a majority of Americans support

expanding border wall construction. People want a secure community.

On the floor this week—we started last week and are still debating it this week—is what to do on what is called the Laken Riley Act. Some Americans are familiar with Laken Riley's story; some are not. Laken Riley was a college student in Georgia who was brutally murdered by a Venezuelan who came into the United States illegally, was detained at the border, but then released. He traveled around the country wherever he wanted to under a parole system that was given to him at the border in 2022. He committed a crime, was arrested for that crime, and then was released. He committed another crime—shoplifting. He was arrested for that crime and was then released. The third crime, as far as we know—there might have been many more, but the third crime, as far as we know, was his murder of Laken Riley.

He should have never been in the United States. He should have never been paroled at the border. He should have been detained and then deported, but he wasn't. He was paroled into the United States. When he committed a crime in the United States, he should have been deported, but he was not. He was released. When he committed a second crime in the United States, he should have been deported, but he wasn't. He was released—before he ever got to murder.

The Laken Riley Act is pretty simple. It says: If someone is here illegally and they commit a crime in the United States of stealing Americans' stuff, like he did, that he is deported. I don't think it is a radical concept to be able to say that Americans don't want someone to come into the country illegally and take their stuff. Why this is even a challenge to be able to pass this, I have no idea. This passed in the House last session, but the Senate never took it up to even discuss it.

If I go to any of the great 4 million Oklahomans in my State and I say "What do you think about someone illegally coming into the country and stealing people's stuff? Do you think that is OK, that they should still be able to stay?" I don't think I would find anybody of the 4 million Oklahomans who would say "I am OK with someone illegally coming into the country, stealing people's stuff" and say "You can go ahead and stay."

That is all that this bill does. It says that if someone comes into this country illegally and starts stealing stuff, they are detained; they are held. They are not just allowed to be released to be able to drift around the country to steal other things or to commit a murder later. If they come into our country illegally and start stealing things, they are detained, and they will go through the rest of the legal process. It doesn't mean they are automatically deported the very next day. They still have a legal challenge there. They can have their legal challenge. But they are not going to just wander around the country.

That is why we believe this Laken Riley Act is so important. It is because we never, ever, ever want to have another American who is murdered by someone illegally present here, especially someone who had already committed multiple crimes before they ever got to that murder.

So let's have the debate. I am willing to be able to talk to any one of my Democratic or Republican colleagues who has a question about this, but at the base of this is, why would we let someone who is already illegally present in the country and who we already know has committed additional crimes just continue to walk our streets just to commit more crimes? Why would we not detain those individuals?

On Monday, President Trump will be inaugurated. I am looking forward to working with him and seeing even what happens on day one to be able to secure the border. This is something the American people want. They want a border that is secure; they want communities that are secure; and they want just basic commonsense things done, like if someone breaks into our country and then steals stuff, they are actually detained rather than just released to go do it again. Let's at least do the basics that we can do while we continue to be able to work toward the big projects that still need to be done.

Multiple of my colleagues will be coming in the moments ahead to talk through this same issue because we feel like, on this side, it is incredibly important we get this done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, this week, the Senate is proud to take another step forward toward securing our southern border as we consider the Laken Riley Act. I want to extend my deep gratitude to Senator KATIE BRITT and Senator TED BUDD for their leadership in bringing this bill forward.

First and foremost, I want to say that I strongly support this measure. With this bill, the Senate will be taking a bold step for the safety and prosperity of American citizens after 4 years of mismanagement and decline and, ultimately, chaos at the border.

The Laken Riley Act is the answer to a loud and clear call made at the ballot box by the American people to unite us as a country, to put America first, and to address the tragic lawlessness that we see on our southern border. So in the Senate's first order of legislative business, we are answering that call.

The radical open border policies of the left have caused untold suffering to families across the Nation—families like the Riley family, who is still grieving the unimaginable loss of their beautiful daughter Laken.

Laken was just 22 years old—a young nursing student with a promising future ahead of her. Tragically, she was stolen from this Earth by an individual who should have never been allowed to

room free in this country. Laken should be alive today, and she would have been if her killer had been brought to justice before it was too late. In Laken, we lost a bright and beautiful soul, as those who knew her will attest.

The law should serve our citizens, yet it has somehow been Laken's killer who has benefited from our system. It is time we honor Laken's legacy by putting American citizens first.

The Laken Riley Act, while too late to prevent Laken's tragedy, is a targeted bill that will save countless other lives. It will ensure that other illegal immigrants who are not dissimilar to her killer are detained for their crimes before they get a chance to commit another and maybe a more serious offense. Anyone who has entered the United States illegally and then committed a crime should and will face detention and deportation. It sounds like common sense to me. Laken's killer was arrested three times and released three times—once at the border, again in New York City, and a third time in Athens, GA, mere weeks before he took Laken's life. That will not happen and cannot happen under the Laken Riley Act.

This is a problem that cannot be ignored or explained away or made trivial. The American people demand change. The American people want us to fix this system that failed to uphold the law and failed to keep Laken safe. Her cause is their cause. It is the cause of every mother, every father, every brother, every sister—of a young girl who simply wants to go to school and then go out for a run in her neighborhood and feel safe.

I know, at its core, this is truly a bipartisan issue. We all want to keep our communities safe—all Republicans and Democrats. Our Republican conference is completely unified behind the Laken Riley Act, and we have managed to win over a majority of Senate Democrats for the bill's initial consideration, including two who have signed on as co-sponsors. As my Democrat colleague from Pennsylvania has noted, the failure to pass this bill would represent everything that is wrong with Congress.

The truth is, the American citizens have had enough talk, especially after these last 4 years. Now is the time for action. That is what the election was about—action, not empty words. This week, we will have before us a tranche of critical votes that America will be intently watching.

To the families watching who have lost loved ones, like the Riley family, we stand with you. We feel your grief and your pain, and we will guard against this heartbreak ever happening again.

Now more than ever, it is incumbent upon my colleagues and me to support America's families and pass the strongest possible bill for our communities.

With that, I look forward to advancing the Laken Riley Act this week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, today I join my colleagues in looking forward to January 20, when we can turn the page on the failed border policies of the Biden-Harris administration and get back to the commonsense—commonsense—approach to border security under President Donald Trump.

During 4 years of the Biden-Harris border policies, our country saw the highest annual total of illegal alien crossings, the highest monthly total of illegal alien crossings, and the highest total of individuals on the Terror Watchlist attempting to cross our border.

These are the plain and simple facts. The Biden-Harris administration has made our country less safe, less secure, and more vulnerable to threats from abroad.

The American people saw beyond the Biden-Harris administration's false claims that the border was secure and last November gave a very clear and compelling mandate: Secure the border. Secure the border.

Already, the new Republican Senate majority is taking a first step to protect the American people against the consequences of the Biden-Harris administration's policies by working to pass the Laken Riley Act.

Under this bill, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will be required to detain illegal immigrants who have committed theft-related offenses and issue an immigration detainer request to local law enforcement for illegal aliens who have committed related crimes.

The legislation can empower States to hold Federal officials accountable when they fail to enforce Federal immigration law.

This important legislation is one we should have never had to pass, but because the Biden-Harris administration played politics with our country's borders and immigration policy, Senate Republicans are here today ready to work on behalf of the American people.

Working with the Trump administration, we will prioritize the enforcement of policies that protect our southern border, which include reinstating the Migrant Protection Protocols or "Remain in Mexico" policy, enforcing safe third-country agreements, and resuming construction of the border wall.

In his first 100 days in office, President Biden revoked 94 Trump-era Executive orders and reversed crucial border security policies.

In less than a week, President-elect Trump will be sworn into office. He has committed to taking Executive action on day one to reinstate the policies that will secure our border. I look forward to these changes and working further to address the crisis created under the Biden-Harris administration.

I also look forward to the debate that will take place in the coming weeks regarding how Republicans will secure the border through reconciliation. We

are already hard at work on that. This will be an important legislative tool that will help refocus resources so that the professionals at ICE, CBP, and U.S. Border Patrol can focus on the mission of securing our border, removing criminal aliens who should not be in the United States, and addressing potential threats to the homeland.

To accomplish these goals, we must recruit and retain more border security professionals, modernize our border security tools like autonomous towers, and better utilize technology like the counter-unmanned aircraft systems along the border. The cause of these threats to our homeland is clear: President Biden's failure to secure the southern border.

Senate Republicans stand ready to work with President Trump to advance the policies that kept our border secure during his first administration. That is exactly what my colleagues and I will be working to accomplish every day in the coming months because border security is national security.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from North Dakota for his comments in support of this legislation.

One of the highest priorities of the next administration is securing the southern border, restoring law and order, and reversing the dangerous open border policies of President Biden. Too many Americans have felt the tragic consequences of these policies.

One of them was a woman named Laken Riley. She was a nursing student at the University of Georgia, and last year an illegal immigrant from Venezuela murdered her while she was out on an early morning jog.

What makes this story all the more devastating was that the killer should have been stopped but wasn't. He should have been stopped at the border in 2022, but he was paroled into this country. He should have been detained when he was arrested in New York in 2023 but wasn't. He should have been detained when he was arrested in Georgia for shoplifting, but he wasn't. The chain of these events is downright shameful.

We must make sure that these don't ever happen again, and that is why I worked with my good friend Senator KATIE BRITT of Alabama to reintroduce the Laken Riley Act.

This bill would require ICE to issue detainers and take into custody illegal aliens who commit crimes like theft and shoplifting.

We need to stop these individuals when they commit minor crimes before they are able to commit major crimes like the horrific murder of Laken Riley.

The Laken Riley Act will empower the Trump administration to enforce our laws, keep our Nation secure, and prevent—prevent—tragedies.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is common sense. But if you stay here in Washington long enough, you will sometimes feel that common sense is not all that common.

But I appreciate the newfound bipartisanship that seems to have broken out on Capitol Hill on this issue. It is wonderful. Dozens of Democrats have now supported the Laken Riley Act. I want to welcome them to the cause of law and order.

But a word here about amendments. And I thank Leader THUNE, who I think is off to a wonderful start, and I appreciate his leadership. He is open, as he promised, to amendments—several on this side of the aisle and several on the other. But let's just say that some of our friends on the other side of the aisle, they have an amendment. And let's say that it doesn't get the amount of votes. Let's not use that as a pretext for them not supporting this bill. Let's support this. And then you have our commitment to go back and work on that and take a look at that specific legislation that they were trying to introduce by amendment. But please don't use the failure of said amendment to not support this very important legislation.

It is my hope that we can continue in this spirit and make sure that the Laken Riley Act is passed by both Chambers and signed into law by our Nation's 47th President, Donald J. Trump.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, President Biden is spending his final days in office on a valedictory tour.

Now, here is one accomplishment he won't mention: a crisis on our southern border which has spread chaos across our country, flooded our communities with fentanyl, and cost innocent American lives.

Now, it is correct to call this one of President Biden's "accomplishments." He intentionally reversed the Trump administration's border policies as soon as he reached the Oval Office, and it was by design—by design—that millions of migrants who illegally crossed our southern border were released into our country. This self-inflicted disaster will be a major part of President Biden's ignominious legacy, and it is, in part, why Americans chose to return President Trump to office in November.

When the American people voted for a Republican President and a Republican Congress, they were voting to restore the rule of law at the border. They were demanding that their government fulfill its constitutionally delegated duty to provide for their national security. They were demanding that their government do that, and they were arguing, correctly, that it is not discrimination for a nation to demand that those who seek to call it home do so legally.

The American people want the return of commonsense immigration policy;

that is all. That is what I hear back home. But you see, this wasn't possible under President Biden.

Beginning next week, we will have a new President, and there will be no excuses. The open-border policies must end. Criminal migrants must go. The number of Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers must be increased. Barriers to illegal entry must be expanded and enlarged. Republicans are working on legislation which will help accomplish all of these things and improve the security of our border, just like the American people expect.

It will be too little, too late for the family of Laken Riley, though. Of course, she should still be with us today. The man who murdered her last February should have never set foot in America. Her death was preventable. Her killer entered this country illegally and was quickly paroled. Then he was sent, at taxpayer expense, to New York, where he was arrested and released. If that was the end of the story, it would still be an outrage and an indictment of the failed Biden administration. But from there, he went to Georgia, you see—all courtesy of taxpayers—where he was arrested and freed again before brutally murdering Laken Riley.

Weakening border enforcement, incentivizing criminals with specious asylum claims to cross our border, failing to detain and deport these very same people for crimes committed far away from it—these were the policies that led to Laken's death. This cannot happen again. It can't happen again to another American or to their family. That is why we need to pass the Laken Riley Act. It won't singlehandedly end the crisis at our southern border, no. That is not its objective. But it is an important first step in the broader mission we have been assigned by the American people.

Homeland Security must detain migrants charged with crimes—here again, common sense—crimes like shoplifting, one of the crimes for which Laken's killer was arrested. The bill we are currently debating, the Laken Riley Act, requires that they do this and that we meet the objectives of the American people as it relates to border security.

You see, enforcing immigration law is a national security priority. I began emphasizing this years ago. I know so many other Americans believe this in their bones. It is time Washington started acting like it.

So this bill is one of many steps we should take to reverse the Biden administration's open border policies. Stop the madness. Stop the madness. I plead with my colleagues to support the Laken Riley Act. We should pass it now.

Let President Biden have his victory tour. But starting next week, the insanity ends, and we begin to secure our border.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, President Biden's open border policies have created a national security, humanitarian, and drug catastrophe in our country. In 2023, law enforcement encounters at the border found 169 people on the FBI's Terrorist Watchlist. In previous years, under the Trump administration, that number was in the single digits. We have had 10.5 million border encounters since Biden took office.

On a single day in December, U.S. Customs and Border Protection encountered 12,600 people trying to illegally enter into our country. That is just along the southern border—12,600. It set an alltime, single-day record for the number of people trying to break into our country.

In years past, administration officials have said: If there are 1,000 people encountered at our southern border trying to get in, that is a crisis.

So 12,600 is a catastrophe.

Record amounts of deadly drugs have also flown into our country since President Biden opened our borders. We experienced this directly in Nebraska. In 2019, when I was Governor, Nebraska law enforcement took 46 pills laced with fentanyl off of our streets—46. Then, after Biden became President, in just the first 6 months of 2021, Nebraska law enforcement took 151,000 pills off our streets—from 46 to 151,000.

While I was Governor, after Biden became President, we saw that our law enforcement started confiscating twice as much methamphetamine, 3 times as much fentanyl, and 10 times as much cocaine because of our open southern border and the cartels taking advantage of it.

And just like all around the country, our young people paid the price as well. Taryn Lee Griffith was a young mom of two who took a pill that was laced with fentanyl and died because of it. The single largest killer of Americans 18 to 45 is fentanyl overdose, all facilitated by President Biden's open border policies along our southern border.

Jose Ibarra was a different kind of problem. Jose Ibarra was a Venezuelan national who crossed our border illegally in the Texas area and asked for asylum.

His wife said he just wanted a better job, but regardless, the Biden administration released him into this country. He was bused to New York City, and there he was arrested for "acting in a manner to endanger a child under the age of 17."

However, New York City is a sanctuary city. He was not detained or deported, as he ought to have been. He was released. He made his way to Georgia, and once again he was arrested; this time for shoplifting. But once again he was not detained or deported by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

And because he was not, he went on to brutally murder Laken Riley. This

tragedy could have been avoided if President Biden had been protecting our southern border, if illegal immigrants were being detained and deported. People who break the laws in our country need to be held accountable. That is what the Laken Riley Act does.

It requires Immigration and Customs Enforcement to detain people who are breaking our laws. When people come here illegally, and they are breaking our laws, they need to be held accountable. With the Laken Riley Act, if you are committing theft, burglary, shoplifting, you will be detained and tragedies like Laken Riley can be avoided.

This is just common sense that we need to enforce our laws. To me, it is common sense that we need to protect our borders. And thank goodness, starting in a few days, we will have a President who understands the safety of the American people is the priority, and President Trump will secure our borders.

The election results were overwhelming; President Trump has a mandate to secure our borders. Senate Republicans will stand up to help him do just that. The Laken Riley Act is our first step to be able to help him do that. And I call upon my colleagues from the other side of the aisle to continue to support this bill as they have done on the previous votes.

Let's get this bill passed. Let's make sure other families don't have to live through the tragedy that Laken Riley's family had to live through.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, our Nation, this body, and the American people are all too familiar with stories like Laken Riley's, the 22-year-old nursing student beaten to death by an illegal immigrant, one who was already in police custody in New York City before being let go.

Unfortunately, after 4 years of Biden's open border, this heartbreaking story has become too commonplace. Hardly a day goes by without hearing of another American who has fallen victim to crimes perpetrated by the illegal immigrants the Biden administration let flood into our country.

And worse, too many times an illegal immigrant arrested for a violent crime posts bail, never to be heard from again, escaping through loopholes in the law.

This crisis only continues. While these tragedies should have never happened in the first place, my colleagues and I are taking action to ensure they never happen again.

My legislation, Sarah's Law, in conjunction with the Laken Riley Act will close these loopholes, so our laws no longer prioritize illegal immigrants over our own citizens.

Working to secure the border and protect Americans is not a new fight for me, but it became personal nearly 9 years ago. On January 31—so at the end

of this month—marks 9 years since Iowans Michelle Root and Scott Root, whom I know personally, woke up to every parent's worst nightmare. Their daughter, Sarah, was killed by a drunk driver who was an illegal immigrant.

Sarah—and she is a beautiful, young woman. She was 21 years old, she was from Council Bluffs, and she had just graduated from Bellevue University in Nebraska with a 4.0 GPA.

She had her bachelor's degree in criminal investigations. She was headed home after celebrating this really important milestone with her family and her friends. Sarah had her entire life ahead of her; but, instead, an illegal immigrant, Edwin Mejia, who was drunk driving with a blood alcohol level three times over the legal limit struck and killed her.

One would think that Sarah's killer would clearly meet Immigration and Customs Enforcement's enforcement priorities. But, no, citing the Obama administration's November 2014 memo, ICE declined to take custody of Mejia, despite his repeated driving offenses and history of skipping court dates.

Before the Root family could even lay Sarah to rest, her murderer posted bond and was released, never to be seen again.

To rub salt in the wound, the Biden administration removed Mejia from ICE's Most Wanted list.

Since then, I have warned repeatedly against the dangers of letting illegal immigrants—who have already broken our laws—roam the country and continue their lawlessness.

I have continually called on this body to step up and protect innocent Americans from criminals who are here in our country illegally and pass my bill: Sarah's Law.

A loophole in the law means Sarah's killer escaped justice. But today, we can do something to ensure no other family has to go through the pain and the grief that Sarah's parents, Scott and Michelle, still feel from their heartbreaking day.

My bill named in Sarah's honor would close the alarming loophole that let Sarah's killer go free.

It would simply require ICE to detain illegal immigrants charged with killing or seriously injuring another person, so they do not disappear before facing justice.

It is common sense, folks. No parent should have to endure the pain of losing a child like the Root family did. But, unfortunately, the Riley family is experiencing this same heartbreak.

Sarah's and Laken's deaths are both tragic and, unfortunately, are doomed to be repeated if we don't close the loopholes in that law. Those who come here illegally and harm our citizens should, without question, be detained so they face justice.

Again, folks, this is common sense. We can no longer prioritize illegal immigrants over public safety. We must pass the Laken Riley Act and Sarah's Law to send this message loud and

clear for Sarah's family, for Laken's family, and for the countless American families that this action would protect.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, after months of swearing up and down that they were focused on lowering the price of eggs, the price of groceries, the price of gas, the price of insurance—that was what the last election was about, right? It was about inflation. It was about the amount that people were paying. That is what the last election was about. Interestingly, the very first thing that Donald Trump and the Republicans have decided to do is to cut taxes for billionaire corporations, and they are going to pay for it by ripping off working Americans.

Now, that might sound like a political talking point. It sounds too convenient, too absurd. How can you spend 4 years pounding on the party in power about how much people are getting hit in the pocketbook—and they were. And they were. The price of eggs; the price of utilities; the price of gasoline—still in Hawaii around 4.59 a gallon. People are still paying too much. Yet the first order of business is not to do anything about that. It is not to do anything about that. It is to cut taxes for the wealthiest international corporations in human history.

I am here today with my Senate Democratic colleagues, and I want to make a sort of broader point. As Democrats struggle through, learn about, argue about what went wrong over the last 2 to 4 years politically, one of things that we did not do well enough is stay on the same theme. This place gets crazy, and it is especially crazy with Donald Trump as President. I remember, and it is distracting.

Even in the best of circumstances, people fly home, and then they arrive on Monday. There is a 5:30 vote, and oftentimes, the last vote is on Thursday at 1:45. So we talk about one thing from Monday at 5:30 until Thursday at 1:45, and the thing we talk about is often whatever is on the floor or whatever is in committee. We are going to do that. We have to do that. We have to comment on what we are working on. But we are also going to talk about this rip-off tax bill because that illustrates the difference between the parties. That is going to illustrate in three dimensions that all of this talk about lowering costs was a lie.

I am here with my Senate Democratic colleagues, including members of the Senate Finance Committee, led by Senator WYDEN on the Democratic side, who will be on the forefront of this particular fight. We are not here because we are surprised that Republicans are going to raise and not lower costs because we know that was the plan all along. We are not here because we are shocked that Republicans want to cut taxes for the ultrawealthy. They do that like clockwork every time they

win the House and the Senate and the Presidency. We are here because nothing can distract us from the reality of what is about to happen. This will be a giveaway of the worst kind at a time when people can least afford it.

So how do they plan to do it? And this is a little technical, so bear with me. House Republicans are saying that you have to pay for these tax cuts, right? You reduce revenue to the government. In order to pay for it, you have to find savings. You have to either get new revenue—that is kind of off the table for Republicans; they don't like new revenue unless it is tariffs, which Americans pay—or you have to cut something.

So last Friday, this document was released—and I understand, if you are watching this on your phone or even on CSPAN, it is kind of small, right? I get it. This document listed their so-called pay-fors; in other words, how are they going to pay for these massive tax cuts for the wealthiest individuals, the wealthiest privately held and publicly held corporations in human history?

Here are just a couple of things they are using as so-called pay-fors: \$700 billion in cuts, kicking millions of people off of Medicaid; \$500 billion out of Medicare, reducing access to care for seniors everywhere; more than \$150 billion in cuts to the Affordable Care Act subsidies. What does that mean? If you are on ACA, if you get your healthcare through ACA, the subsidy goes away, and your monthly insurance bill is about to skyrocket. Tens of millions of Americans who pay for their health insurance through the ACA exchange and receive that subsidy are going to have to pay more. What happens with that money? It doesn't go for roads. It doesn't go for firehouses. It doesn't go for public health. It goes to this tax cut.

I am not exaggerating. This is not a rhetorical flourish. This is not a political talking point. They are literally cutting Medicare, Medicaid, possibly Social Security, the Affordable Care Act, and they are going to take all these resources—these are their pay-fors—and shovel it to people so that they can continue their private jet subsidies, pay a lower tax rate, eliminate the 15-percent minimum billion-dollar corporation tax.

So before we passed the tax legislation when we were in charge, there were lots of the wealthiest corporations, international corporations, in the history of the planet that paid zero taxes—zero taxes. So what did we do both to generate money but also because it is a question of basic fairness? We established a minimum rate for these wealthy corporations. They want to eliminate that too. Why? Because this is what they do. Because that is actually their governing philosophy.

You know, they say: Campaign in poetry; govern in prose. That is not what is happening here. They campaigned on misleading people that their abiding concern, their main concern was, gosh,

people are paying too much for a dozen eggs. And I don't mean to diminish that. People were paying too much for a dozen eggs. But right now, inflation is 2.7 percent, and gas in a lot of places across the country is below 3 bucks. So people were paying too much, and people were rightly pissed off—by the way, at Democrats, too, for not recognizing how acute this problem was for a lot of American families. I get it. But I don't know anybody who thinks the solution to people paying too much out of pocket is to make them pay more out of pocket.

There is not a single voter that I know—not a single voter that I know—that I have interacted with who says: You know what. Gosh, I wish the highest corporate tax rate were just a little bit lower. Gosh, I wish the 15-percent minimum billion-dollar corporation tax were rescinded. Gosh, I wish people who are being subsidized so they can afford healthcare—I wish we would eliminate that. And, gosh, I wish we would use all that money and shovel it back to the wealthiest people in the world.

So we are not going to stop talking about this. I just had two hearings with Sean Duffy and MARCO RUBIO. I know Pam Bondi was today. Lots of very exciting and interesting things are happening, and we are going to have to comment on that. We are going to have to engage in that. But every week, we are going to be talking about this rip-off. Every week, every opportunity we get, we are going to be talking about this because this is the difference between the two political parties.

With that, I want to yield to my very good friend, who really understands tax policy and with whom I have been working on this and with whom—we fought together to win the ACA fight many, many years ago. Senator CHRIS MURPHY from Connecticut.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator.

I just can't believe we are talking about something that nobody wants, right? That is what this comes down to. The No. 1 priority for Republicans is extending and likely expanding a tax cut that benefits the wealthiest 1 percent, .1 percent in this country at a rate that dwarfs—dwarfs—the help for anyone else.

The tax cut that we are talking about extending gives a tax cut to the top 1 percent of earners in this country that isn't 10 times bigger than working families at the bottom of the income scale; it is not 100 times bigger; it is not 500 times bigger. Taxpayers in the top 1 percent will get a tax cut 852 times larger than working families at the bottom of the income threshold—852 times bigger.

What we have seen coming out of the pandemic is that while the broad middle of the country has been struggling, the wealthy have gotten richer and richer and richer. We have more billionaires than ever before in this coun-

try. The folks that don't rely on salaries, that can just plow their income and their earnings into the capital markets, have reaped huge, huge rewards. So the very, very wealthy in this country right now, at this moment in time, don't need any more help, and yet the average family that is in that top 1 percent bracket is going to get a tax cut on average of \$70,000. Well, if you make \$30,000 in this country, you are going to get about \$100 back in your pocket.

Of course, the theory is that if you just layer on tax cuts for corporations and for billionaires and millionaires, that money will eventually trickle down to everybody else, right? That is a lie. That is not true. That is a fraud. It has never been true. It has been perpetuated on the American public because it is a great way to rationalize giving the bulk of tax cuts to the very, very wealthy. The idea is that somehow that will make it down to the rest of us. Go on to any Main Street of this country, go into any subdivision in your State—you won't find many of your constituents who make \$50,000 or \$100,000 or even \$200,000 who have had much of that trickle down to them.

To Senator SCHATZ's point, 8 years ago when this tax cut was first put into place, it was egregious not because of the balance only but also because the whole thing was borrowed. All that money was just put on the American credit card—a credit card that comes due and ends up getting paid by middle-class families one way or the other.

This time around, I guess the good news is that they are talking about paying for it, not borrowing, to give a huge tax cut to corporations and to billionaires and millionaires. Instead, they are talking about immediately taking money out of the pockets of working families and seniors and poor people. Instead of borrowing money and having the bill come due for middle-class families later, this new tax cut for billionaires and corporations is going to be financed by an immediate cut to services and benefits to some of the most vulnerable people in this country.

At the end of last year, as a means of passing the continuing resolution, there was a deal apparently cut—this is reported in the press—in which there was a promise made to finance this tax cut with \$2 trillion of cuts to Medicaid and Medicare. Medicaid—poor kids, poor families. Medicare—seniors in this country.

Now, \$2 trillion is a hard number to get your head wrapped around, but there is no way to enact \$2 trillion—\$2 trillion, a “t”—worth of cuts in Medicare and Medicaid without hundreds of thousands of people, senior citizens and poor kids, losing access to care. You are literally—this is not hyperbole—\$2 trillion worth of cuts means that nursing homes shut down. People are put out on the streets. It means that poor kids don't get access to mental health services.

So what happened 8 years ago was cruel—a tax cut put on the American public's credit card, 80 percent of the benefits going to the very, very richest, and none of it trickling down. This version that Republicans are talking about passing in a matter of weeks is even more cruel because it is the same balance: the benefit going to the very, very wealthy—President-elect Trump's friends who pay to get in and out of Mar-a-Lago—but financed immediately by cuts that are going to be devastating for the people in this country who get up every day relying on programs like Medicare and Medicaid. So I agree with my friend from Hawaii. We have to be down on the floor talking about this every single day.

Folks thought it was an inevitability 8 years ago when Republicans made it a priority to steal health insurance from 20 million Americans. And by the skin of our teeth, we were able to save health insurance for 20 million Americans. And maybe if we raise enough of a fuss about this massive transfer of wealth from the middle class and the poor to the very, very wealthy, we can stop this egregious policy as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, let's talk about Trump's betrayal of middle-class America. In 2017, many of us warned that Trump's tax giveaway was a disaster for working families. It was a giveaway to billionaires. It was a giveaway to powerful corporations. It stole from America's Treasury, increasing the debt of this country to gild the richest Americans. They wanted platinum treatment. They wanted more money than anybody else has ever imagined, and they got it from Trump by draining the American Treasury.

Well, that failed America's working families. There is nothing about giving several hundred thousand dollars to the richest Americans—that is each one of them—that helped a single working American.

These policies are coming to an end in 2025. But now, Trump 2 is coming along, and he says: I campaigned on working Americans, but I want to raid the programs for them and raid the Treasury to enrich them again. I didn't give them enough the first time around. The rich are not rich enough. I campaigned for working families, but I am going to betray them with tax cuts, tax giveaways, a tax raid on programs and the Treasury for the richest Americans. That is the Trump betrayal that we are facing right now.

CBO says extending the Trump tax cuts would blow a \$4.6 trillion hole in the Federal budget over the next 10 years. As my colleague just pointed out, Republicans are saying they might decrease the size of that hole by raiding healthcare for Americans. What an evil and twisted plot that is, what an assault on working families across our Nation.

That \$4.6 trillion—no, I did not say “m” for million or “b” for billion; we are talking trillion, \$4.6 trillion—should go to basic services for all Americans or reduce our deficit instead of going into the pockets of the very few.

So whom are you for? Are you for the very richest 1 percent and 0.1 percent of Americans who have so much money they don't know what to do with it or are you for working families? Because this Trump budget is the betrayal of working families.

If you are for working families, you invest in healthcare, you don't raid it; you invest in housing, you don't raid housing programs; you invest in education, you don't raid education programs.

Those are the foundations. Those are the good-paying jobs. Those are the four foundations for families to thrive.

If you work an hourly job and make less than \$34,000 a year—which is the case for 50 million American taxpayers—you would get back \$130 a year—\$2.50, roughly, two and a half dollars. All right. Right now, that is less than a cup of coffee. Enjoy that every week because that is what Trump cares about for those families who are working at the bottom of the ladder trying to move up.

Instead of helping move up, he wants to take the programs away from them and give them to these folks who are going to get a \$280,000 per-person tax break at the very top.

Look how skewed this is. Working families on the left get nothing. The richest on the right get everything. That is what we are looking at. That little tiny \$130—just a little change in the cost of drugs or your rent, your groceries wipes that out. Two thousand times the help for the richest compared to those who are struggling.

That is twisted. That is warped. That is the Trump betrayal of working families.

Let's stand for working families. Let's stand for healthcare and housing and education, the foundation for every family to move up the ladder because that is what it means to care about every American family, whether they are in the party of the elite rich like the Trump betrayal presents.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I join my colleagues on the same topic to talk about the forthcoming debate that we will have about tax policies in this Chamber. Since coming to Congress—really before, when I was a mayor and Governor—I advocated for smart, simple pro-growth and pro-family tax reform. Taxes should be fair. They should be consistent. They should be predictable. And they should generate the revenue that America needs to fund Social Security, Medicare, education, roads, national security, and the other critical investments that matter to our constituents.

I repeat what some of my colleagues said. In 2017, during the first Trump ad-

ministration, after the failed effort to take health insurance away from more than 20 million people and deprive all Americans of being protected from discrimination by insurance companies if they had preexisting conditions—and thank goodness that reconciliation effort failed when three Republicans joined Democrats to block that effort—the Trump administration colleagues turned to the idea of tax reform.

Democrats were very willing to work on deficit-neutral, pro-growth tax reform. But instead, Republicans chose: We don't want to have a committee process. We don't want to include Democrats. We want to write a bill, and we will write a bill that will pass partisan tax cuts that will dramatically expand the deficit.

At this time—and I know my colleagues remember this—economists were saying that America's corporate tax rate of 35 percent was high compared to global averages. So there was some suggestion that what we should do is lower the corporate tax rate to put it more in tune with what other nations were charging. There is a little bit of an apples to oranges difficulty in doing that because other nations use a VAT tax that we don't use.

Most economists said if we wanted to make our corporate tax rate equivalent to other nations, we should try to lower the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to, like, 28 percent. And many of my businesses in Virginia were coming to me saying: We have to be more competitive. We have to have a corporate tax rate that matches up more with global norms. Cut the global tax rate to 28 percent.

Instead, even though companies were only asking for that reduction, our Republican colleagues plummeted and slashed the corporate tax rate not to 28 percent, not to 25 percent but to 21 percent. And they didn't even pay for it—didn't even pay for it. As Senator MURPHY said, just racked up higher deficits.

There were a few individual tax cuts in this bill. If you look at the bill from 2017, it was mostly corporate tax cuts. There were a few, in that pie chart, individual tax cuts. But they were heavily tilted toward the wealthy, as my colleagues have described. Analysis at the time showed households in the top 1 percent would get an average tax cut of \$60,000, while households in the bottom 60 percent averaged only \$500 each.

The bill also left out our Nation's poorest children. Nearly 20 million children were left out of the full value of the child tax credit because it was not made refundable. Democrats demonstrated in the American Rescue Plan that when you expand the Child Tax Credit and allow it to be refundable, you could lead to a revolutionary drop in child poverty when it was in effect. But Republicans took a different route.

And on top of these inequities, that the bill was too heavily weighted toward corporations, too light toward individuals, and with individuals, too heavily weighted toward the wealthy

rather than lower and middle-income people, the Republican bill in 2017 did another thing that was entirely unjustified. The bill made the corporate tax cuts permanent and the individual tax cuts temporary. So big, permanent corporate tax cuts; tiny, temporary, heavily skewed individual tax cuts.

During the debate, I offered a simple amendment that virtually all my Democratic colleagues voted for. And we said: Hey, look, let's go ahead and reduce the corporate tax rate, but let's not reduce it to 21 percent. If we reduce it to 25 percent, which is a big reduction, we can make these individual tax cuts for everyday people permanent, so at least the individual tax cuts to everyday people would be permanent, like the corporate tax cuts. All of my Republican colleagues opposed it. The Senate was majority Republican so we were stuck with a bad bill.

And that brings us to today. Republicans are debating how to ram another \$4.6 trillion tax cut through the Senate. I will remind my colleagues that when the Senate Republicans did this in 2017, they were really proud because they thought it would help them in the 2018 midterms. I think it was heavily driven by an electoral strategy. What they found is after about 90 days of talking about it, the American public was so mad that these tax cuts went to the wealthy rather than everyday people that they dropped it as a campaign issue to talk about other things and still lost badly in those midterms.

The proposed extensions are going to tilt toward the wealthy, as my colleagues indicated. But get this, the deficit effects that are likely to be felt in some of these distributional effects President Trump is proposing, why not mitigate those by jacking up tariffs? OK. So we are going to do tax cuts that benefit the wealthy, but we are also going to do tariffs. And whom will tariffs impact? President-elect Trump often says tariffs won't affect Americans; it will hurt China and Mexico. But once the election was over, he acknowledged that he can't guarantee American families won't be affected by costs of tariffs.

I am going to guarantee this. If President Trump moves forward with broad-based universal tariffs, and they are not defeated in this body, American families will suffer. American families will pay the cost. We know it because we have seen it before. Study after study shows American consumers bore the brunt of Trump's first trade war, and this time it will be even more. Projections suggest that the tariffs will impact American families to the tune of either between \$2,500 and \$4,000 per American household in additional costs. So \$2,500 compared to this tiny, little tax benefit that everyday Americans will experience.

Talk about salt in a wound.

We are going to do a tax bill for the wealthiest when they don't need it, not do much for everyday people who do need it but put on the shoulders of

those same people tariffs that are going to increase the cost of goods. Imagine coming out of COVID and other things and having this kind of burden put on your shoulders.

There is a better path. Let me give you an example. Democrats are going to work with Republicans to do tax reform that will be fair. Just last year, we saw bipartisan negotiations in the House and how those negotiations can lead to more balanced, more smart, better for the deficit, bipartisan priorities.

Our colleague Senator WYDEN was able to reach a deal with House Chair JASON SMITH on a bipartisan tax package that would have lifted children out of poverty—the child tax credit—that would have incentivized investment into research and development, good for companies who then innovate, and that is good for jobs.

And also the third piece of this tax bill that was bipartisan would have expanded our ability to build affordable housing. And it was fully paid for.

This bill got 357 votes in the House. We can't get that for a Mother's Day resolution in the House of Representatives. But then it died here in the Senate because Republicans didn't want to take the bill up because they wanted to wait to do a bill that would benefit the wealthiest.

I urge my colleagues: You made a mistake before in 2017 by going down a path that busted the deficit and made the American voters really mad. Don't go down that path again. Work with us to find a tax bill that will appropriately prioritize the needs of everyday American citizens and small businesses.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BOOKER. Senator KAINE, would you yield for a question?

Mr. KAINE. I would yield for a question from my colleague from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. That was the stunning thing: Whom are you for? Are you working for Americans, are you for American families, or are you for the wealthiest of the wealthy?

I watched this in slow motion, this disaster for our country economically, when I was getting lobbied by corporations in the same way that you said. They said: We are not globally competitive. We are not globally competitive.

Everybody here, all 100 of us, want American businesses to win. So, yes, I think that we should have—my opinion was, yes, let's make our tax rate globally competitive and get rid of some of these crazy corporate tax loopholes that people use. So many companies pay zero taxes.

So we could have had a bipartisan conversation that could have reflected our values, lowered the overall corporate tax rate, and found a way to get rid of loopholes so corporations don't find a way to exempt themselves from taxes when the average police officer is paying higher taxes than some of the biggest corporations.

I watched you during that time—this was 8 years ago—and you began to say: Let's make sure that this tax plan benefits working Americans because when you invest in middle-class Americans, in working-class Americans, it is a proven way to grow the economy other than this fallacy of trickle-down.

And so the stunning thing for me—and this is where I want you to—I think that was one of the most powerful points I heard. It was when people were coming to me and saying 28 percent, 27 percent, 26 percent. The biggest corporations were saying it publicly. I was reading it in the newspaper. The lowest thing I saw the corporations asking for was 25 percent. What were those conversations like when you were talking to our colleagues on the other side? How did they end up at 21 percent and then not even support an amendment to bring it back up to what the corporate leaders were asking for to the benefit of working-class people? How could that amendment not have passed?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is reminded that the question did refer to the Chair.

Mr. BOOKER. Forgive me, especially with who the Chair is. I am afraid.

So I direct that question to the Chair to the person here.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I will just direct it, and my answer is going to reveal my naivete because my corporate sector in Virginia—and my companies were like everybody's companies—were saying: Hey, drop that 35 percent rate to 28. I may have had one that said to 25, but they were basically saying: If you do it at 28, we are going to be equivalent to other nations.

When the bill was put on the table—and, remember, we got it with handwritten interlineations late in the evening when we didn't even have an ability to even decipher what some of the handwritten interlineations were, but we realized they had dropped it to 21 percent. I almost thought it was a typo. It was one of these handwritten things. I thought it was a typo because the companies were only asking for 28 percent. Then I looked further in this massive bill, and I realized that all the individual tax cuts were tiny, temporary, and expiring rather than being big and permanent.

So I went to my colleagues, and I said: Have I got a great idea for you. You can take all of these individual tax cuts, if you shave off some of the ones to the most wealthy, and you can make them permanent and still do what the corporations had wanted us to do by having a corporate tax rate equivalent to other nations.

I thought I was being helpful. I had a solution to a math problem that I thought they were going to like. Instead, what they said is, no, it has got to be 21 percent and these individuals are going to be weighted to the wealthy and they are going to be temporary.

Mr. BOOKER. Would the Senator yield for one last question. Then I will

yield to Senator LUJÁN for his presentation.

Mr. KAINE. I would be glad to yield.

Mr. BOOKER. Senator, I came to the floor—or to the Chair, I came to the floor to listen to the good-faith arguments of colleagues about the Trump tax cut. I heard them say they would pay for themselves. This was a mantra I heard over and over again: It will pay for itself. It will pay for itself.

But independent folks, like on the Federal Reserve Board and the Joint Committee on Taxation, found that their corporate tax cuts did not pay for themselves, but they drove our government into a multitrillion-dollar and more deficit. The benefits within this idea of trickle-down economics—said by the same groups I just mentioned—were that 90 percent of workers didn't see a dime. Overwhelmingly, it expanded corporate wealth and the wealth of the top 1 percent significantly and didn't inure to the benefit of the postal worker, the cop, the firefighter, the plumber, the teacher.

It is stunning to me that I sat here and listened to folks. But my challenge to you because you have been sort of a pragmatic, moderate guy for a long time, and we are seeing this coming around the corner—the estimates are now that their new tax plan that they are talking about could cause a deficit and expand, again, by now over \$4 trillion.

You have been around here longer than I have. When we start running budget deficits, and we know factually that their last tax plan expanded the deficit into the trillions—and this one is projected, if they do it again, to be to the benefit of the top 1 percent and, again, with very few of the benefits going to working Americans—what will that mean for America's fiscal stability going out 10 years from now or 15 years from now?

What kind of pressures will that create, and what kind of calls do we have from Republicans about how to fix the problem that their tax plan has caused?

Mr. KAINE. I hope we can take this up in the Budget Committee. I have some Budget Committee colleagues who are here on the floor. Senator WHITEHOUSE has been the lead Democrat on the Budget Committee for some time and is now at the helm of another committee. But Senator MERKLEY, who spoke passionately a couple of minutes ago, is now the lead Democrat on the Budget Committee. We need to take up the issue of these tax cuts as proposed and explore what the long-term consequences will be.

The consequence will be to bust the deficit. The consequence will be to put dollars in the hands of those who don't need them and take dollars out of the hands of those who do when you combine it with the tariff effect, but the consequence will also be significant on the national debt.

As Senator MURPHY said during his comments, the national debt gets fi-

nanced, and it gets financed in ways that ends up coming back. And who pays for it? Everyday folks. So you will have a compounding effect on everyday folks where they will not get tax relief. They may see their taxes increase. They will see their prices go up with this tariff blitz, and then they will end up being saddled with the consequences of debt.

We should take the time to do this right. We should take the time to do—again, I use the example of what the Finance Committee did last year on the R&D tax credit, the child tax credit, and the low-income housing tax credit. It is not that that bill was perfect, and it is not that it included everything that you might want to include, but it is an example of you don't have to jam this through with one party holding the pen and excluding the other party. You can do a tax bill that can get 357 votes in the House of Representatives on something that will be paid for, not increase the deficit, that will help businesses innovate, help children get a good start in life, and help people afford affordable housing. If you do it the right way, we will come up with a good plan, and I hope that we will.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Will the Senator yield for one more question?

Mr. KAINE. I will yield for another question.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Through the Chair, the Senator mentioned the Budget Committee. In the hearings that we have had in the Budget Committee, during which we have discussed tax cuts and their effect on revenues and their ability to pay for themselves, how many times have our Republican colleagues been able to produce a witness who, under oath, would say that these tax cuts would actually pay for themselves?

Mr. KAINE. Precisely zero, even though that phrase that “they will pay for themselves” or that “they have paid for themselves” was used all the time, but no one would, under oath, say that that actually happened.

It reminds me of a great political maxim. I think it was Eugene McCarthy, a former Senator, who once said the issues candidate is the one who says the word “issues” the most times.

Just saying these cuts will pay for themselves is not the same as its being true. It wasn't true in the 2017 tax cuts, and we could never find any credible witness who would come and testify to that effect.

With that, I have other colleagues on the floor who are ready and raring to go, and I yield to them.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. LUJÁN. Madam President, I especially want to start by giving thanks to our colleague from Hawaii for asking us to come together and have a conversation with the American people.

I am a proud Senator from the State of New Mexico—from a small, rural

community in the northern part of the State—and I wanted to come down to the floor to continue this conversation as we have heard from colleagues already talk about what this is and what this isn't. It seems to me, when my Republican colleagues last did this, what I heard in townhall after townhall across New Mexico was that, from Democrats, Republicans, Independents, voters, constituents, they just wanted to hear the truth. They wanted to hear what this is and what this is not.

So I am going to start off by holding up this report that says that almost 60 percent of the benefit of extending the Republican tax policies will go to the top 0.1 percent of the wealthiest in America—0.1 percent of the wealthiest in America—and I am not talking about the other 99.9 percent. Now let's define how much money people who are in the top 0.1 percent in America are making. They are doing very well. They are making \$2.8 million per year. It is a lot of money, and they are successful, but it is under the guise of giving middle-class families, hard-working families all across America a tax cut when the benefit goes to the top 0.1 percent. If you are making 2.8 million bucks a year, yes, this is for you.

The American people just want to hear the truth. This is not for those hard-working, middle-class families back home—my brothers and sisters, police men and women who fight to keep us safe, the EMS who respond when we need them the most, nurses, teachers, electricians, ironworkers, pipefitters. You know, they are all the folks across America who are doing everything they can to put some food on the table, to keep a roof over their heads, to provide for their kids, and maybe save for retirement if they have a little extra.

They are playing by the rules. This golden rule promised that, if you fight hard and you play by the rules, you will do better than the previous generation, and you are going to help your kids and everyone who follows you. So while you are playing by the rules all across the country—and I am talking to everyone not making 2.8 million bucks a year—my Senate Republican colleagues are getting ready to rig the system with a tax cut that is going to give more money to the people in the top 0.1 percent—remember, the people making \$2.8 million a year or more. Well, maybe that will let some of those folks buy another jet plane or another yacht if they are doing well as \$2.8 million is a lot of money.

Now, one of the concerns across the country is, just as it happened before, my Senate Republican colleagues are going to try to do this behind closed doors, all the while making false promises that this will be for you, working-class families, all across America, but at the end of the night, all they are going to do is stick you with the bill.

They are going to pay for this, as we have heard time and time again, by eliminating programs that support our

veterans, that feed young children or babies, that take care of our grandparents or elders, or by taking away your children's ability to see the same doctors they have been seeing since they were born. Studies show that just extending this Republican tax scam would blow a \$4 trillion hole. Let that sink in. Facts. We are talking about the realities of what this will and will not do.

The incoming administration is going to try and pass this off as—you heard it here—a middle-class tax cut. That is how they are going to sell this to the American people, but it is not. It is a handout to the wealthiest folks who are making more than \$2.8 million a year. The economic analysis makes it clear that this tax scam will drive up the debt and leave working families behind. We all know the way to grow the economy is to invest in the working class, to lower taxes for working families, and to bring industry and innovation back to our communities across the country. The success of our teachers, our nurses, our pipefitters, our firefighters, our police officers, and everyone in between will be the success of building up the economy across America.

Now, look, you have heard this from my Democratic colleagues: I and we are ready to work with my Republican colleagues to find better solutions for growing our economy and lowering taxes to prioritize them to target the middle class, to help them, but this scam is horrible. It is why I wanted to come to the floor today to have a conversation with my colleagues and to share the facts about what is happening here with the American people and let my colleagues know across the aisle: Let's work together. Let's truly deliver on a promise to help hard-working, middle-class families all across the country, including in the State of New Mexico.

I want to thank again Senator SCHATZ.

I yield to my colleague from Vermont as well, with whom I had the honor of serving in the House and being part of this debate when it happened.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, the situation for working families in Vermont is really, really hard. They show up and work. They get a paycheck. And, at the end of the month, when they try to pay their bills, there is not enough there.

The situation for families is enormously insecure when it comes to housing. We find Vermonters who are working at ski areas can't live within an hour of the ski lift that they are attending. We find that folks in factories who want to live in the community they grew up in can't afford a house. They are competing, oftentimes, with cash buyers, usually from out of State, and it is folks who are in the economy who have the assets and have ridden the rising stock market—and good for them.

But we need a tax system that is good for working families. People want to work. They want to pay their bills. They don't want to have the constant anxiety of whether they are going to miss a mortgage payment or they are going to miss a rent payment.

To have a discussion about a tax policy that essentially funnels money to folks who have done extremely well raises a fairness question, which my colleagues have talked to, but it also raises a very practical question about how do you grow an economy. You can only grow an economy if folks who are working and committed to the communities they are in can pay their bills, can earn what they need in order to pay the grocery bill and to pay rent and healthcare. That is why the starting point of tax reform should be addressing family needs that, by the way, are employer needs.

The childcare tax credit really worked. It meant that families were able to afford things, and we saw the results with a 50-percent reduction in childhood poverty. What we also see is that when we can put money into education so families can be secure about a safe place and a good place for their kids to go to school, that will work.

So our starting point should be: How does this help the paycheck for the working family? And that is pretty simple: the earned-income tax credit, the child tax credit, low-income housing credits to build the housing that we need. That is where we have to start.

Funneling money to folks who are doing really well and who have a massive amount of discretionary income and where, for corporations, the capital that they need to invest is there—there is not a capital shortage. We need to focus on families, not on the well-to-do and the corporations that got a reduction in taxes that was far more than they even requested.

The second point I want to make is about the process that is being used to pass the tax bill or to consider it. It is the reconciliation process. By definition, what that means is it will be a Republican-only bill. There will be no discussion among Democrats, where we have some point of views that, by the way, are really beneficial to folks in my State, whether they voted for Harris or they voted for Trump. A lot of working families need that childcare tax credit.

The reconciliation process means that the political tradeoffs have to all be in the direction of the most extreme wing of the House Republican Party. So that process is going to handcuff us right at the beginning.

The third point that many of my colleagues have made is that tax cuts do not pay for themselves. You know, dream on. Folks like to say that. It is as though it is magical. They don't pay for themselves. This tax cut will add about \$4 trillion to the deficit.

What is next? Then we say: Hey, we have got to cut spending. What spending do we have to cut? Healthcare, the ACA premium support.

To the Senator from Massachusetts that would mean—and for a family in Vermont—a lot of them will pay 300, 400, 500 bucks more each month. That is on top of the high grocery bill.

So the pressure, then, if we have this explosion in the deficit, is to cut spending, and it usually means that veterans are on the block. It means that the low-income folks are on the block. It means that healthcare for working families is on the block.

So let's have a tax system that is fair and also promotes growth and invests in the folks who want to work to make this economy strong, who want to build strong communities and take care of their families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, we are in a climate emergency. Over just the past few months, powerful hurricanes and severe wildfires have caused nearly one-half of a trillion dollars in estimated damage.

The Los Angeles fires are estimated to be the costliest blaze in the history of our country. Insurance is becoming unaffordable. People have lost their lives. People have lost their livelihoods.

Rather than address our climate catastrophe, Republicans' highest priority is passing a new \$5 trillion tax scam to subsidize the ultrawealthy at the expense of working families.

Now, in Massachusetts, per capita, we are the wealthiest State in America. We are very proud of that. We believe in capitalism. But I haven't had one millionaire come up to me and say: I need a tax break—because they know they don't.

To pay for their tax scam, Republicans propose slashing Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, ripping away food security and other supports that parents rely on to feed their children and keep a roof over their head, and ending support for clean energy, which would only add more fuel to the fires raging across our country. Los Angeles is just the most recent example.

House Republicans have said they want to pay for their tax cuts for the ultrarich with \$300 billion in "the Green New Deal Provisions in the 2021 Infrastructure Bill."

I don't know if that means cutting programs to get lead out of our drinking water or stopping programs to help struggling school districts buy new clean energy buses to cut costs and keep kids healthy. Maybe they have a problem with programs that let people walk and bike and live safely in communities across the country.

But we are watching hundreds of billions of dollars in climate-fueled tragedy in the past few months alone. The Green New Deal is a systemic response to this crisis.

I will give you a couple of numbers. Hurricane Milton, Hurricane Helene—remember them last fall—two storms, 2 weeks? It was \$300 billion worth of damage—\$300 billion.

They are saying: Let's cut the \$300 billion for clean energy programs.

Oh, sure, let's have the storms cost \$600 billion worth of damage, \$1 trillion worth of damage each time they come to shore. Sure. Why put prevention in place? Why have wind and solar ever be deployed?

That is what they are coming for. It is outrageous.

Donald Trump and Republicans would rather trade programs to help communities survive the climate crisis for tax cuts that help their ultrarich donors survive tax season.

This week, in a response, I will be introducing legislation to make polluters pay by increasing taxes on private jet fuel to \$2 a gallon. Do you know what these billionaires pay for their private jets today? Twenty cents. That is the tax on the jet fuel they put in their luxury jets to travel around America and the world. So we are just going to bump it up to \$2 a gallon.

That will ultimately raise \$1.8 billion. I think they can afford it, given what we are seeing happening in L.A. or Florida or North Carolina or State after State in the last 6 months.

The tax-dodging ultrawealthy need to stop fanning the flames and start supporting first-class solutions.

To tackle the climate crisis and to have a fair Tax Code, we need to ensure that those doing more than their fair share to fuel the problem are paying the bare minimum and are held accountable for contributing to the solution.

So if Donald Trump and his Cabinet of fat-cat billionaires and the three richest people in the world want to fly private jets to Monday's inauguration to pay tribute to Donald Trump, the very least they can do is to pay for the damage they are doing to our environment.

Per passenger, private jets pollute up to 14 times more than commercial flights, and they pollute 50 times more than trains, producing as much emissions as 5 million cars every single year. Do you hear that? Private jets emit as much pollution as 5 million cars a year.

Just a few hours of flying private offset the benefits of an entire year of driving an electric car. That is not fair.

In just 1 year, Elon Musk's two private jets produced nearly 5,500 tons of carbon emissions. That is more than 300 years' worth of emissions for the average American.

Everyday Americans should not have to subsidize the lavish lifestyle of the ultrarich. The world's wealthiest 1 percent burn through their entire carbon budget for the year in the first 10 days of January—10 days. So let's not let the 1 percent blow a \$5 trillion hole in our Federal budget as well.

Republicans just spent the past 2 years complaining about the Inflation Reduction Act. Yet Republicans are preparing to spend trillions on tax breaks.

They want to feed billionaires' greed instead of the families who will go hun-

gry when they cut SNAP. They want to grow billionaire excess while they cut people's healthcare, including the two-thirds of nursing home patients and 40 million children on Medicaid, and pursue work requirements that do little.

Let me just say this. Ronald Reagan, 1981? He set the playbook. Who followed it? Newt Gingrich, 1995. Who followed him? George W. Bush, 2021. Who followed him? Donald Trump, 2017. They each had the same plan because the Republicans have a remarkable ability to harness voluminous amounts of information to defend knowingly erroneous promises, and the central erroneous promise is that it is possible to dramatically increase defense spending, which they want to do and which those others guys did; cut taxes for the richest people in our country—that is what all these other guys did—and then to pretend with crocodile tears that they want to balance the budget because all that is left are the programs for regular families, for poor families.

We call it Medicaid. Do you want to hear another way of describing Medicaid? Two-thirds of all people in nursing homes are on Medicaid. Two-thirds of all people who are in nursing homes are being paid by Medicaid.

Do you want to know another number about them? Fifty percent of them have Alzheimer's.

How can families keep them in a nursing home? Medicaid.

Do you know another name we have for them? They are called Grandma and Grandpa. Grandma and Grandpa are in nursing homes with Alzheimer's because of Medicaid.

They want to cut that? Good. Come for it. We are ready for this discussion.

The poorest children in our country, 50 percent of all children in our country—50 percent—are on SNAP, on food stamps, at some point in their life. That is the poorest children in our country. That is who they are.

That is Medicaid. That is another way of talking about Medicaid—the poorest children, the most vulnerable seniors. That is the piggy bank they are going to use for tax breaks for billionaires. And they are then going to turn and say: We are going to the Affordable Care Act.

Do you know another way of talking about that? That is how people get the funding for opioid treatment and for mental health treatment. That is the Affordable Care Act. That is millions of people.

Yes, just slash it. Sure. Who needs to help families with mental health issues? Who needs to help families who have opioid addiction? Why do that?

Then they say: We are going to go to wind and solar, and we are going to cut that too. And we are going to keep the tax breaks for the oil and gas industry.

Kick them in the heart; you are going to break your toe. That is what this plan is all about. It is what the plan has always been about since 1981.

So we just can't let the ultrawealthy play while leaving hard-working Amer-

icans to pay with their healthcare, their financial security, and bearing the brunt of the climate atrocities.

We need economic justice. We need climate justice. We need wealthy polluters to pay, especially jet-setting billionaires who are polluting right now. And we need a system that works for the American people, not for the billionaire excess that the Republican Party is going to bring out to the Senate floor.

I yield to my friend from Rhode Island, a great leader, Senator WHITEHOUSE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I would make the point to my friend from Massachusetts that when Democrats used reconciliation, we used the reconciliation process to do the Inflation Reduction Act and help everyone. The Inflation Reduction Act meant green jobs to red States, and it meant less pollution for everyone. The Republicans are teeing up to use reconciliation to help big CEOs, billionaires, and big corporations that are already doing amazingly well.

If you feel you are being left behind by those folks, it is because you are. Look at what CEO pay has done, rocketing skyward, compared to the pay of the top 1 percent—other folks in the C-suite who may not be the CEO—compared to typical worker wages down here. Most Americans are right here, and most of the benefit of this tax reform will go to these folks.

CEOs are taking a larger and larger share for themselves of the resources of American corporations, leaving less and less to pay their workers, and that is the difference: rocketing upward and more or less flat. They want to make this worse through their reconciliation.

If you want to add another backdrop to what is going on here, this is the share of America's revenue that is contributed by corporations. A lot of people in this body seem to want to go back to the good old days of the 1950s when things were whatever they were then. Well, back in the 1950s, more than 30 percent of America's revenue came from our corporate community. Corporations were making a real and significant contribution to America's revenues and enjoying the significant growth that being an American corporation provides you. But politically they hacked and they hacked and they hacked away at their responsibilities, and now they are paying 6 percent of America's revenues. As wealthy as American corporations are, they add 6 percent now of America's revenues. And this, too, will be made worse by this Republican program.

Half the benefits go to the top 5 percent. If you are making over a million bucks, it is a \$78,000 tax cut; if you are making 50 grand, 273 bucks. Thanks a bunch. And the hit is going to come to regular Americans through Medicare, through Medicaid, and through support for their healthcare.

They will even lower taxes for companies moving jobs and profits offshore. How about that for “Make America Great Again.”

I tell you, when you actually take a look under the hood, what you see every time is that the benefits of these Republican tax cuts go to the biggest corporations, to the billionaires, and to corporate CEOs, and within those biggest corporations, the worst ones for moving jobs and profits offshore. It is as reliable as the sunrise, and it is as wrong as it can be.

I yield to my friend Senator ROSEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Madam President, I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE.

As it is my first time addressing you from the Senate floor since I began my second term, I would like to start by saying how grateful I am that Nevadans have put their trust in me to serve another 6 years in the U.S. Senate. People in my State know that above all else, I am a Nevadan first before any political party or ideology, and my track record is clear. I will always support policies that work for everyone.

As Members of Congress, we have the opportunity to make a real and meaningful difference in people’s lives, and that starts by working to make the American dream more affordable for hard-working people.

Heading into the new administration, I am deeply concerned about President Trump’s plan to cut taxes for the ultrawealthy and billionaires on the backs of workers, senior citizens, and middle-class families. When the Trump tax cuts were first passed in 2017, they overwhelmingly benefited the wealthiest individuals and the largest corporations, while increasing our national debt and leaving the middle-class and working families—well, they just left them with much less to show for it.

Senate Democrats—we will fight. We will fight to stop this from happening again. As we negotiate the upcoming comprehensive tax reform package, we must focus on making sure it provides meaningful tax relief for hard-working families—for you, for all of us. While the Trump administration and Senate Republicans look out for billionaires and corporations, Senate Democrats are working for you.

For one, we should be working to re-start or expand several key tax credits that help support American families, like expanding the child tax credit, which will increase the amount of hard-earned money families get to keep in their pockets. We also need to use this opportunity to address the high cost of housing, which is impacting families in Nevada and across the country. We must expand the low-income housing tax credit so that we can help build more housing and increase supply, and that ultimately lowers costs for you, for everyone.

As someone who grew up in a working-class family, I know what it is like to work multiple jobs and rely on tips

to make ends meet. That is why we need to make sure we put money back in the pockets of hard-working Nevadans, which is why any package—any package—should include the bipartisan plan to eliminate income tax on tips for service and hospitality workers. By ending income tax on tips and adding guardrails to prevent the ultrawealthy and CEOs from exploiting loopholes, we can make sure that Nevadans keep more of their hard-earned money.

We also need to provide a broad-based tax cut for working families and the middle class and make sure that families making less than \$400,000 a year don’t see a tax hike.

Instead of lowering already low tax rates for corporations, we should be providing much needed tax relief for our businesses, like restoring research and development expensing.

Our country’s strength has always come from the middle class—our teachers, our first responders, our small business owners, our factory workers—families who get up every morning, every day, and they send their kids off to school and then go out and work hard to make our Nation run. They deserve—they deserve—tax policies that work for them, not tax cuts that leave them behind while the wealthiest of us, the wealthiest of billionaires, the big corporations, reap the tax rewards.

So let’s be clear, though. If President-elect Trump and Senate Republicans don’t work with Democrats, Republican tax proposals—well, they won’t help you. They won’t help your family. Republican tax policies are only going to help billionaires.

We need to build an economy that works for everyone, for you, not just those at the top. So to all the families feeling the stress, know you are not alone. It is time for us to put your priorities first, to lower costs, and to expand opportunity. I see you—all of you—and I am ready and willing to fight for you and for all those you care about.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I am joining my colleagues on the Senate floor today for the same reasons—and I so appreciate my friend and colleague from the great State of Nevada because she is absolutely right, and my colleagues as well—drawing attention to what really is happening here in Washington that has an impact on our individuals and families back home.

Quite often, I see so many decisions being made here in this bubble in Washington without any true regard or understanding of the impact on Main Street, where we all live and we come from. And what we are talking about today is what incoming President Donald Trump had passed previously when he was President, which is this massive tax giveaway to billionaires.

What the American people don’t know, which we know and we are talking about—and that is why we are

here—is that tax cut for billionaires is about to expire, and many of my colleagues, Republican colleagues, want to extend the entire bill at the expense of middle-class families across the country.

Now, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that reauthorizing the Trump tax bill as-is would add \$4.6 trillion to our national debt. That would raise interest rates and make it more expensive for families to buy a home, to send their kids to college, or to start a business.

Based on how much time my colleagues across the aisle have spent the last 4 years—as I have sat in the Presiding Officer’s seat listening to my colleagues, I have heard them say that we should be talking about the deficit and doing something about it. I would hope that they would want to avoid adding trillions of dollars to it, regardless of who is in the White House, even now. Unfortunately, that doesn’t appear to be the case.

Instead, my colleagues now—my Republican colleagues—have come up with two options for selling this legislation to the American people—again, this legislation that will mainly benefit the very wealthy in this country, the billionaires—legislation that is going to add \$4 trillion to the deficit. This is how they plan to do it. One option is Republican leadership in the Senate has suggested that because they want to extend policy that currently exists, we should just ignore the cost of extending it; there shouldn’t be a pay-for; we don’t have to worry about it; that all of a sudden, that \$4 trillion increase in deficit just doesn’t exist.

Now, I know we all wish we could forget about an actual debt sometimes, but that is not what the American people sent us here to do, and that is not what American people do. I can tell you that every family across this country has to live within their means and manage their budget—my family, my grandparents, my parents, everybody, every individual. So we should be working together to address this issue.

The other option that I have heard from some of my colleagues across the aisle to reauthorize this Trump tax bill is they have suggested a pay-for which is to gut Medicaid in order to pay for tax breaks, again, for the wealthiest people. I can’t stress this enough: again, tax breaks for the very, very wealthy—the top 1 percent—on the backs of working families, on the backs of individuals, our middle class. To me, that is just outrageous. Padding the pockets of the top 1 percent at the expense of hard-working families is unacceptable, and nobody should stand for that.

I urge my Republican colleagues and leadership in this body to work in a bipartisan manner on this and find solutions that will benefit all Americans, not just CEOs and their board members. There is a way we can come together to make sure our middle class benefits, that our small businesses and

companies—by the way, that are essential for that middle class and our labor force, because you need both—work together to benefit, and really work and identify a pay-for and how we are not going to add to the deficit.

I can't stress this enough: We need to come together and build on spending reductions from the bipartisan Fiscal Responsibility Act instead of targeting Americans' healthcare. And let's ensure that the wealthiest pay their fair share to protect the middle class and their children from the exorbitant trillion-dollar bill the Republicans are currently going to send to them.

The two options just do not work, but there is an option that works, and I will stress it one more time. We need to work together in a bipartisan way. This should not be a partisan issue. This should not be done just through reconciliation without any input from the Democrats because, at the end of the day, our families are no different, our communities are no different.

My firefighters in Nevada are no different than firefighters in your State. My hard-working laborers in my State, whether they come from the service industry and it is somebody who is washing dishes in a restaurant in Nevada, are no different than that person washing dishes in some of my colleagues' States.

Everybody benefits if we come together in a bipartisan way, and that is how this should work. And I am hopeful my colleagues are willing to do so. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday I came to the floor of the U.S. Senate to talk about the importance of promptly confirming President Trump's Cabinet. The American people having voted for President Trump, having said that they are unhappy with the direction the country is going in is entitled to his team to help him actually do what he said he would do during the campaign.

Well, today I would like to reiterate that message; but, in particular, I want to highlight some of the hypocrisy of our Democratic colleagues on this important matter as it pertains to our country's democratic processes.

We know that our colleagues are frequently warning that ways of the Republicans are allegedly undermining democracy, but this is like the little boy who cried wolf. If you cry wolf often enough, the people begin to believe that it is not really serious; and, indeed, it shouldn't be taken seriously in the case of the allegation that Republicans are somehow trying to undermine democracy.

Let me give you an example. Back in 2022, when Republicans passed State laws that included commonsense election integrity measures, like voter ID, Democratic Leader CHUCK SCHUMER criticized these initiatives, which were intended to ensure the integrity of our elections.

You would think that would be a no-brainer, that everybody would want to embrace measures that would protect the integrity of our elections. But he claimed somehow there was an attempt to suppress people from voting. Well, I remember it wasn't that long ago when Barbara Jordan, a Democrat from Texas, revered justly as an incredible leader for our State and country, along with James Baker III cochaired a commission that came out with voter ID as one of the consensus recommendations.

But now Democrats claim making sure that people are who they say they are and using the same sorts of things that you need in order to get on an airplane or to buy tobacco or a six-pack of beer, somehow that undermines democracy. It just doesn't make any sense.

But here is Senator SCHUMER on the Senate floor. He said, "Republicans across the country are trying to stop the other side from voting. That tears apart, rips apart, the very fabric of our democracy." I can almost see him crying crocodile tears as he says that.

Well, I did a rough check a moment ago, and 152 million Americans voted in 2024. If Republicans were trying to suppress the vote, we are doing a lousy job because you are seeing historic numbers of people, a lot of whom have not made a practice of voting before, showed up at the ballot box this time because they hated the direction our country was going in and they felt like this was our last chance, perhaps, to save our country as we know it.

Well, the Senator from New York used this argument to advocate for changes to the Senate filibuster rule—the requirement you get 60 votes to close off debate—in order to pass what he called Federal voting rights legislation. Well, first of all, what it would have done, it would have preempted the States' laws when it came to voting practices and created a single uniform standard here at the Federal level, which would have prevented some of these commonsense measures like voter ID from taking place.

Well, President Biden also expressed the same sentiment. He pressed for the filibuster to be changed to advance the so-called voting rights package, saying that the package must be passed "to defend our democracy." Well, actually, it would have made it easier to cheat.

Now, ironically, they used the same argument for democracy to undermine the Senate filibuster, which is one of the bedrocks of this institution. But what I have noticed is that if an issue can be framed as a threat to democracy, Democrats throw any other concerns out the window; hence, the sky is falling.

More recently, in 2023, Democrats brought up this same question of protecting democracy as a reason to advance legislation addressing artificial intelligence. Well, as it turns out, artificial intelligence has been around for decades. It has recently captured the popular imagination because technology has taken us to places we never dreamed we could go.

Well, in 2023, the Committee on Rules and Administration held a hearing on AI, and the Democratic leader said this:

If left unchecked—

Here he goes again. He said:

If left unchecked, [artificial intelligence]'s use in our elections could erode our democracy from within and from abroad, and the damage, unfortunately, could be irreversible.

That is a pretty common scare tactic. You scare people enough, well, maybe they are willing to let you do things that they, otherwise, wouldn't do upon calmer reflection.

He went on to stress the importance of Republicans and Democrats working together to protect and reinforce our democracy. We are for that. But here is what he said:

I can think of few issues that should both—unite both parties faster than safeguarding our democracy . . . It will take all of us, the Administration, the private sector, Congress working together to protect our democracy, ensure robust transparency and safeguards, and ultimately keep the vision of our founders alive in the 21st century.

Well, taken at face value, that sounds pretty good until you start beginning to look at the details about what he says we need to do in order to accomplish that goal. That is where you see—begin to see the huge disconnect. It is in pursuit of another agenda.

Democrats have become the party that cried wolf—or excuse me—threat to democracy; and the more they say it, the less meaning it actually holds. For what it is worth, I agree that the administration of private sector and Congress should work together to protect rather than undermine democracy. But we do have some different perspectives or points of view about how we might do it. That is a laudable goal, but not in pursuit of a fairly cynical and partisan policy agenda.

There is a very tangible way that Democrats can join with us to do this, this week. They can cooperate with the President that the people elected as Commander in Chief of the United States by confirming his Cabinet. How is that for protecting democracy?

The opposite, which is to stonewall the President's Cabinet nominees, to burn as much time as possible before we are able to get that done, is not preserving and protecting democracy; it is undermining it.

Our Democratic colleagues never seem to lose an opportunity to say that whatever the subject, it is a threat to democracy. But here they are today participating in a campaign to stonewall President Trump's nominees, which I would argue is undermining the democratic process. It is denying an elected President of the United States, who won not only the electoral college vote but the popular vote as well—to deny him his team so he can actually get to work on January 20th doing what he was elected to do.

Just yesterday, Senator SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, came to the

floor to air his grievances on each of the President's nominees for the Cabinet. He argued that many of the policies they would implement would be disastrous. But the fact of the matter is the American people have chosen. They did that on November 5 when they went to the polls and they gave President Trump a substantial majority and even a mandate for a new direction in the country.

They repudiated the failed policies of the Biden administration, starting with what has been happening at the border, which is an unmitigated disaster from a public health and public safety point of view. And it would, indeed, be a threat to democracy if our Democrat colleagues chose to ignore the will of the voters and deny the President his Cabinet or delay it for no good reason and prevent these nominees from going to work to implement the policies that the American people elected President Trump to enact.

Unfortunately, this is sort of reflexive, it is kind of what our Democratic colleagues do. I have been amazed to listen on television and hear in-person for the last—however it has been—hour, Democratic colleagues who came to the floor to speak, but they didn't talk about the pending business, the Laken Riley Act.

This young woman was killed by an illegal immigrant who should not have been in the country. I asked Pam Bondi, who is the nominee for Attorney General, this morning during her confirmation hearing, I said: If President Biden and Harris had secured the border, do you think Laken Riley would still be alive? And she said, yes, together with many others who have been victimized by illegal immigrants who come across the border to do Americans harm in one way or another. Not all of them. But when you open the border to 10 or more million people with 2 million of them "got-aways," evading law enforcement, you don't know what you are going to get.

Well, I take that back, you do know what you are going to get. You are going to get some people who do not intend to come here for a better way of life; they come here to rape and pillage and rob and to commit crimes.

Well, Republicans are tired of hearing excuse after excuse from our Democrats, some of these hearings are being delayed due to incomplete background checks, but ask yourself who is responsible for the background checks? Well, it is Joe Biden's FBI. The FBI owes it to the American people to work around the clock, 24/7, to get these background checks done on a timely basis.

Otherwise, we are, literally, undermining a democratically elected President.

So I would urge our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to heed their own words when it comes to confirming President Trump's Cabinet.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle like to talk a big talk about defending democracy, but I would like

to see them put these commitments into practice by ending the undemocratic obstructionist tactics that they are using to deny this President his team.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Vermont.

H-1B VISA

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, as we go forward in this new session of Congress, I would hope very much that there will be a serious focus on the crises facing the working families of our country. We are the wealthiest nation on Earth. In fact, we are the wealthiest Nation in the history of the world. Yet, today, we have more income and wealth inequality than we have ever had. Sixty percent of our people live paycheck to paycheck. The life expectancy of working people is far below that in other wealthy countries. Eighty-five million Americans are uninsured or underinsured. Some 800,000 Americans are homeless. Twenty-five percent of seniors are trying to survive on \$15,000 a year or less. We have the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any major nation on Earth. Further, we remain, shamefully, the only wealthy country not to guarantee healthcare to all people as a human right.

Meanwhile, while working families struggle to put food on the table and pay their bills, the wealthiest people in our country have never, ever had it so good. We are now in the absurd situation, the grossly unjust situation, where the 3 wealthiest people on top own more wealth than the bottom half of American society, some 170 million people. The 3 people on top have more wealth than 170 million on the bottom. That is not what America is supposed to be about.

In truth, there are a number of reasons why we are living in a nation today where the wealth of the billionaire class is exploding while the working class of our country struggles to keep their heads above water. There are many causes as to why, despite a huge increase in worker productivity, real weekly wages for the average American worker are less today than they were 50 years ago—real weekly wages are less than they were 50 years ago—and why, during that period, there was a \$50 trillion transfer of wealth from the bottom 90 percent to the top 1 percent.

Now, a lot of the reasons as to why the very rich are becoming richer and working-class families are struggling have to do with disastrous trade policies which have resulted in the loss of millions of good-paying jobs. The fail-

ure of Congress to raise the minimum wage to a living wage is another reason why millions and millions of workers today are forced to try to survive on starvation wages. Furthermore, we are seeing and have seen aggressive and often illegal union-busting activities on the part of major employers. All of those reasons, and more, are issues that we have to deal with.

Today, I want to focus on one more reason as to why the working class of this country is struggling, and that has to do with the H-1B guest worker program.

Elon Musk, the wealthiest man in the world, with a net worth of nearly \$430 billion, and other multibillionaires in the high-tech industry claim that the H-1B Federal guest worker program is vital to our economy because of the scarcity of highly skilled engineers and other technology workers in the United States. In other words, what they say is that they are trying desperately to find highly skilled American workers to do their jobs; just can't find them; just not there.

In my view, Musk and the other billionaires who are strongly supporting the H-1B Program are dead wrong. American workers are there; they are just not looking for them.

In my view, the main function of the H-1B Program is not to hire the best and the brightest. That is the theory—we have to bring in the best and the brightest to help our companies function and grow wealth in America. That is the theory, but in truth, the reality of what the H-1B Program is, is to replace good-paying American jobs with hundreds of thousands of lower paid guest workers from abroad who are often treated as indentured servants. The cheaper it is to hire guest workers, the more money the multibillionaire owners of large corporations make. In other words, this program is not only grossly unfair to American workers; in many ways, it is unfair to foreign workers as well.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, between 2022 and 2023, the top 30 companies using the H-1B Program laid off 85,000 American workers while simultaneously bringing in over 34,000 guest workers from abroad.

In 2019 and 2020, 85 percent of H-1B visas were awarded to entry level and junior guest workers, who are paid between 20 to 40 percent less than American workers in similar occupations.

So, No. 1, it is simply not true that the H-1B Program focuses on the very rare and highly skilled workers that American companies cannot find. Eighty-five percent, to repeat, of H-1B visas were awarded to entry level and junior guest workers, and they are paid 20 to 40 percent less than American workers in similar occupations.

Let me just give you a few examples as to how unfair the H-1B Program is. In Dallas, TX, H-1B software developers are making \$44,000 less than American workers doing the exact same job. This is information from the U.S. Department of Labor.

In Houston, TX, H-1B accountants—I did not know, to be honest with you, that we had a scarcity in accountants, but be that as it may, H-1B accountants are paid nearly \$40,000 less than American accountants doing the exact same work.

In Santa Barbara, CA, H-1B workers who are hired as computer system engineers make just \$45,000 a year. Does that sound like the kind of salary that would bring forth some extremely, highly skilled people for jobs that American workers cannot fill? Madam President, you tell me. Why would a corporation hire an American computer systems engineer at a salary of \$110,000 a year when it is \$65,000 cheaper to hire an H-1B worker for that same exact position?

That is basically what this whole debate is about, and that is that large corporations are paying foreign workers substantially lower salaries than they are paying American workers. Madam President, if you want to know why multibillionaire owners of high-tech companies love the H-1B Program so much, that is the reason why. They are using this program to substantially undercut the wages of American workers.

Moreover, there are estimates that as many as 33 percent of all new information technology jobs in America are being filled by guest workers. According to the Census Bureau data, there are millions of Americans with advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math who are not currently employed in those professions. In other words, we tell kids “Go out and get involved in STEM work. Become a scientist. Become an engineer. Become a mathematician,” whatever, and then we bring in people from abroad to fill the jobs they were educated to do.

Adding insult to injury, half of the top 30 H-1B employers are companies whose major function in life is to outsource jobs, known in the industry as body shops. In other words, the same companies that are involved with supplying American companies with cheap foreign labor at home are the same exact companies that provide even cheaper labor to corporations when they move abroad. They are two sides of the same coin.

Madam President, if there is truly a major shortage of skilled tech workers in this country, as Elon Musk and others have argued, why did Tesla lay off over 7,500 American workers last year, including many software developers and engineers at its factory in Austin, TX, while, at the same time, applying to hire thousands of H-1B guest workers? If these jobs are only going to the “best and the brightest,” why has Tesla employed H-1B guest workers as associate accountants for as little as \$58,000 a year, associate mechanical engineers for as little as \$70,000 a year, and associate material planners for as little as \$80,000 a year?

I will admit, I am not a rocket scientist. But, to my mind, those occupa-

tions don't sound like highly specialized jobs that are primarily for the top 0.1 percent, as Mr. Musk claimed last month.

If this program is really supposed to be about importing workers with highly advanced degrees in science and technology, why are H-1B guest workers being employed as fashion models, lawyers, dog trainers, massage therapists, cooks, and English teachers? One might think that, in the United States of America, we could find English teachers and not need to bring in people from abroad. Further, does anyone really believe that in America we do not have enough lawyers and need to bring in more attorneys from abroad?

At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, we need fundamental changes in our economic policies. We need an economy that works for all, not just the few. And one small but very important way forward in that direction is to bring about major reforms to the H-1B Program in order to benefit American workers.

That is why I have filed an amendment to the Laken Riley bill that we are debating this week that will do just that. I hope very much that the leaders agree on allowing that amendment to be debated and voted upon. Let me very briefly describe what this amendment does in terms of reforming the H-1B Program.

First, this amendment would double the major H-1B fee that corporations pay before they can hire guest workers from abroad. This provision would generate over \$370 million in revenue each year. And what would we use that revenue for? Well, it would be used to provide nearly 20,000 scholarships each and every year for American students pursuing advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering, math, and other fields vital to the competitiveness of our Nation.

If the Members of this body truly believe we need H-1B visas in order to compensate for a shortage of skilled American professionals, this amendment will attract tens of thousands of America's best and brightest young people into those fields.

Second, this amendment requires corporations to substantially increase wages for the jobs they need before they would be allowed to hire H-1B guest workers. Specifically, this amendment would raise the prevailing wage for the H-1B Program to at least the median local wage. In other words, if the H-1B Program is truly meant for “the best and the brightest,” it should not be used as a tool to undercut the wages of highly skilled American workers. And that is what this amendment would prevent.

Third, this amendment would prohibit corporations from replacing laid-off American workers with H-1B guest workers from overseas. Corporations that are engaged in mass layoffs should not be allowed to replace American workers with guest workers.

Finally, this amendment would prevent corporations from treating H-1B

guest workers, for all intents and purposes, as indentured servants.

Under current law, H-1B guest workers are often locked into lower paying jobs and can have their visas taken away from them by their corporate bosses if they complain about dangerous, unfair, or illegal working conditions. That is unacceptable, and that has got to change. This amendment would make H-1B visas portable and give guest workers the ability to easily change jobs.

Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy and others have argued that we need a highly skilled and well-educated workforce. I agree. But the answer is not to bring in cheap labor from abroad through the H-1B Program. The answer is to hire qualified American workers first and to make certain that we have an education system that produces the kind of workforce that our country needs for the jobs of the future.

The bottom line: It must never be cheaper for a corporation to hire a guest worker from overseas than an American worker at home. And that is what this amendment is all about.

Let's be clear. Thirty years ago, the leaders of corporate America, the political establishment in both major parties, and the editorial boards of the most influential papers in our country told us not to worry about the loss of millions of blue-collar manufacturing jobs that would come as a result of unfettered free-trade agreements like NAFTA and permanent normal trade relations with China: Don't worry about the loss of those jobs.

And the reason they told us not to worry is that that job loss would be more than offset by the many good-paying, white-collar information technology jobs that would be created in the United States.

Yes, they said, you lose blue-collar manufacturing jobs, but not to worry. We will create zillions of good-paying, white-collar information technology jobs.

I, personally, was a Member of Congress at that time and never believed that. And I helped lead the effort against NAFTA and PNTR with China. Unfortunately, I and the many others who opposed those trade agreements were proven correct. NAFTA and PNTR cost us millions of good-paying manufacturing jobs as large corporations shut down here in America and fled to China, Mexico, and other low-wage countries in search of cheap labor.

And what about all of those great high-tech jobs that supposedly were going to be created? Well, that didn't quite happen either.

As a result of the H-1B guest worker program and other guest worker programs, major corporations are now importing hundreds of thousands of lower paid guest workers from abroad to fill the white-collar technology jobs that are currently available.

In other words, heads, billionaires win; tails, American workers lose.

In my view, we can and must change that reality. A good place to start

would be to pass this amendment and put American workers first. Multi-billionaires and Big Tech should not be allowed to hire guest workers to fill entry-level and mid-level information technology jobs. Those jobs should be going to American workers who have, among other things, the constitutional right to form unions and collectively bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.

Madam President, I will be asking for a rollcall vote on this amendment, and I hope very much we can get it to the floor. In my view, the time has come for the American people to know which side their Senators stand on this issue.

In order to accomplish that goal, I very much appreciated the statement Majority Leader THUNE gave on the floor of the Senate last November about the need for more amendment votes in the Senate. Here is what the majority leader said on November 14 with respect to the amendment process:

[A]ll Members of the Senate—and not just the Members of a particular committee—should have a voice in final legislation through amendments on the floor. Members should assume that amendment votes will be the norm. That will mean taking tough votes at times, but that is part of our jobs.

I would very much agree with Majority Leader THUNE. The truth is that, in the past, whether it has been Republican leaders or Democratic leaders, no one debates that the amendment process has been thwarted. I hope we will see a new opening here where people will be allowed to offer amendments and take up votes. That is what we were elected to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). The Senator from Massachusetts.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 103

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise today to stop the unnecessary and devastating consequences that will result from a ban on TikTok in the United States. In a few moments, I will ask unanimous consent that the Senate pass my legislation with Senator WYDEN and Senator BOOKER, the Extend the TikTok Deadline Act, to extend the deadline by which ByteDance, TikTok's parent company, must sell TikTok or face a ban in 270 days.

This simple, one-sentence bill would avoid significant harm for TikTok's creators, who depend upon the app to make a living, to find community, to share resources during emergencies such as the Los Angeles wildfires, and to discuss everything from the latest pop culture trends to controversial political topics.

It is the home to 170 million American users—170 million American users. That is over half of the U.S. population and 65 percent of the United States adult population. It is 50 percent higher than the number of Americans who watch the Super Bowl.

Those 170 million Americans will be devastated by a TikTok ban. Many

make their living on the app and could face difficulties paying for groceries, rent, or medical care. Others may lose contact with a crucial support system, leaving them isolated and scared.

If you don't believe me, then I encourage my colleagues to view the thousands of videos posted by TikTok users over the past few days explaining why TikTok is so important to them. These testimonials are powerful evidence about TikTok's economic, social, and cultural importance, and I implore my colleagues to listen to these users.

Now, supporters of the TikTok ban will claim that any delay will threaten national security and allow China to, supposedly, indoctrinate the youth with anti-American views.

First, I stand behind no lawmaker here in my commitment to protecting children online. I am the original author of the only Federal online protection for children today: the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. And I have authored legislation to update and modernize those protections. My Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act to lift it up to age 16, that was blocked here on the Senate floor just 1 month ago in December. We had it out of committee. We could not get it passed.

And I repeatedly sent letters to the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice urging them to investigate and impose penalties on TikTok for putting their younger users at risk. When TikTok violates the law and puts its users at risk, I will call them out and I will demand accountability. In fact, the Federal Trade Commission has fined TikTok for violation of my law, so, obviously, I am concerned.

But I am also concerned about what American social media companies do to teenagers. They do the same thing. I am very concerned about what they do to young children. According to the Surgeon General, we have a mental health crisis in our country, pointing the finger at social media—not one company, but all the companies that are targeting teenagers and children in our country.

As for the national security arguments, I recognize that ByteDance's ownership of TikTok poses security risks. I do not want China to have significant influence over an important communications channel in the United States and access to Americans' data, but Congress must appropriately balance those risks with the serious hardship imposed on TikTok's 170 million American users and the unintended consequences of a nationwide TikTok ban.

With the impending TikTok ban, Congress has gotten that balance wrong, and most importantly, the proponents of the ban have repeatedly argued that TikTok is "brainwashing Americans," but these claims are, at best, just speculation. At worst, they are a disguised effort to target Americans' speech.

So don't take it from me. In an affidavit in the District of Columbia Circuit, a senior intelligence officer stated that the government has "no information" that China coerced ByteDance to covertly manipulate content on TikTok. That is coming from our own government. That alone should make us pause.

This is in the DC Circuit Court. They are not lying to a circuit court. So they don't have any information with regard to that accusation.

Even worse, rather than addressing China's supposed influence over a key communications channel, the TikTok ban appears to be driving users to alternative Chinese applications which we know even less about. In fact, on Monday, RedNote—a China social media app—became the No. 1 most downloaded app on the Apple app store.

Is that the outcome that the law's supporters were seeking or thought about?

The TikTok ban not only threatens to shut down a platform critical for 170 million Americans, but also, 7 million American businesses use TikTok. They use it as part of their business. All of that will shut down on Sunday, 4 days from now—just shut down—7 million businesses who use it.

And it is taking effect, at least in parts of America, at the single worst period of time, a moment when TikTok creators in Los Angeles are using the app to share their stories and find resources during the tragic wildfires; a moment when a new President is set to take office with different views on the ban—and President-elect Trump is asking for a pause right now, asked the Supreme Court of the United States for a pause—Donald Trump—a moment when the Supreme Court is still considering the case, hasn't even rendered a decision yet; a moment when the first official bid for TikTok was just submitted last week.

It is time for Congress to acknowledge that the rushed passage of this law was a mistake. There were no hearings in the Senate. There were no witnesses in the Senate. No one got to hear anything about this ban because they put it into the bill that was going to provide military aid for Ukraine, for Israel—humanitarian aid—and they just stuck the TikTok ban into the legislation over in the House of Representatives to send it over here.

We never had a hearing. We never had any consideration. And it is time for Congress to acknowledge that the rushed passage of this law was a mistake, that we need more time to let the courts and outside parties consider this issue. We need to do a better job of understanding the importance of the TikTok community and the impact of a TikTok ban.

That is why I introduced the Extend the TikTok Deadline Act. This bill does not repeal the underlying act. It simply gives TikTok, Congress, the people here in the Senate, parties that might want to buy TikTok, the incoming Trump administration—he himself

is asking for an extension—and outside stakeholders additional time to get this right.

We need time. We need time to figure this out. The court process is still going on for something that started last April. That would never have been expected to have occurred. We don't have any certainty as to the outcome, one way or the other.

If this had happened in September, October, or November—out of the courts—we could have then deliberated before the deadline on Sunday, 4 days from now. But it didn't happen that way.

So to the millions of creators who have bravely shared their stories and explained why TikTok is important to them, I hear you, I am listening, and I encourage my colleagues to listen as well and to give a short reprieve to TikTok's death sentence.

TikTok is far too important to let it die like this on Sunday without having given the extra time which is needed—time for President-elect Trump, time for everyone to think about what an alternative pathway could be to letting TikTok die.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 103, introduced earlier today; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Reserving the right to object, which I most certainly do, TikTok isn't just another social media platform, TikTok is a Chinese communist spy app that addicts our kids, harvests their data, targets them with harmful and manipulative content, and spreads communist propaganda.

Congress recognized the unique dangers of TikTok when we voted on a massive bipartisan basis last April to give its Chinese communist-influenced parent company ByteDance 270 days to sell TikTok to an American buyer or to be shut down in America. That deadline is Sunday.

What is more, ByteDance and TikTok had plenty of additional warning for years about the possibility of such action, long before Congress set this firm Sunday deadline. The Trump administration, in 2020, attempted to shut down TikTok.

So there was no rush as the Senator from Massachusetts asserted. We didn't pull the rug out from under TikTok, and we didn't ban it. Instead, Congress simply demanded that the app could no longer be owned and controlled by our Nation's worst enemy, communist China.

In other words, TikTok's owners had plenty of time to find a buyer, and there were plenty of willing buyers as well. Instead, TikTok whined, lied, complained, sued, and lobbied. Oh, how they lobbied.

One notable lobbyist told me that he was offered \$100,000 a month—\$100,000 a month—to represent TikTok, but he refused because TikTok is a sewer of vile anti-Semitism. Good for him.

Unfortunately, I can't say that for the army of lawyers and lobbyists who saddled up on behalf of communist China. They know who they are. They should be ashamed of themselves, and they should know that I, for one, won't forget it.

So let me be crystal clear. There will be no extensions, no concessions, and no compromises for TikTok. ByteDance and the Chinese communists had plenty of time to make a deal. In fact, the legislation allows the President to grant a 90-day extension to the Sunday deadline, though only if negotiations have substantially advanced, and the sale could likely close in 90 days.

Neither is true today so I expect President Biden will not grant the extension. And what President Biden cannot do under current law, this Congress—this Republican Congress—certainly won't do by changing the law, not over my objection, in any case.

And isn't it telling that ByteDance says communist China blocked the sale of TikTok for these last 9 months? What exactly does that tell us? Exactly what I said earlier: TikTok is a Chinese communist spy app. Consider one reason why the bill passed with such a huge bipartisan vote in April; namely, the backlash against TikTok for its deranged lobbying campaign against the bill.

As the bill was being considered by a House committee, TikTok sent push notifications to its users demanding that they call into Congress and express opposition to the bill. This wasn't a case of American citizens spontaneously rising up to exercise their First Amendment rights but rather a foreign power egging them on, meddling in our politics, influencing our legislative debates.

And what happened? Thousands of children—kids—called into congressional offices, some threatening to kill themselves or to assassinate Members of Congress. No foreign adversary should have that kind of power over our politics or our children.

Imagine how Chinese communists would use TikTok to influence our political debates during, say, a moment of heightened tensions over Taiwan. And let's examine a little more closely just what TikTok does to our country. Just last week, renowned social psychologist Jonathan Haidt wrote that "TikTok is Harming Children on an Industrial Scale."

China's version of TikTok promotes math, science, and learning, basically telling Chinese kids to do their homework and eat their vegetables and respect their elders—most especially Chairman Xi, the Chinese dictator. In America, by contrast, TikTok promotes violence, obscenity, eating disorders, drug use, and even suicide.

Internal company documents even revealed that content promoting pedophilia has long flowed right past TikTok's supposed moderators.

Without question, TikTok's lethal algorithm has cost the lives of many American kids. China also uses TikTok to amplify its propaganda and suppress information critical of the communist tyranny in Beijing. Compared to other platforms, TikTok suppresses content related to China's genocide against the Uighur people, Tibet, Taiwan, the South China Sea, Hong Kong, Tiananmen Square, and the origins of COVID, among other topics.

TikTok also meddles in the politics of other countries by amplifying divisive content in, for instance, Israel, India, and, of course, America. And don't forget that TikTok harvests a vast trove of user data, including name, age, email, address, phone number, credit card number, facial features, voiceprints, keystrokes, photos, videos, and viewing habits.

This data can make users susceptible to manipulation and even blackmail, not only today but also years from now when users may have become influential persons in the military, the intelligence community, business, media, and other walks of life.

We are sometimes assured that TikTok has taken security measures to prevent Chinese communists from accessing this data of American citizens, but according to whistleblower testimony and internal company materials, these protections are about as airtight as a screen door.

So the end is coming for Chinese communist-controlled TikTok. Perhaps the sale can be closed by Sunday, though I seriously doubt it. Even so, that sale would have to pass legal review and guarantee that China retains no residual influence at the company or through its algorithm, no residual influence whatsoever. But one way or the other, communist China will no longer exert this massive influence over our Nation and our kids.

I will now yield to Senator RICKETTS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. Reserving the right to object. The Chinese Communist Party is our chief foreign adversary in the world and the only external existential threat to our Nation.

They threaten our freedom, our prosperity, our security, and our very way of life. When I was Governor of Nebraska, I was the first Governor to ban TikTok on State devices because of the threat it posed. Why did I do that? Well, because Xi Jinping said that he wants to replace us as the world leader. Dictators tend to say what they are going to do and try and do it. We should take him seriously.

TikTok is one of the ways that he is trying to do it, trying to undermine what we do around the world. The Chinese Communist Party wants to replace us; TikTok is one of the ways they are trying to influence our downfall.

As many as 150 million Americans use TikTok. Fifty-two percent of them say they regularly get news through TikTok, and we know that the CCP uses TikTok to slant the news. This is part of their propaganda.

Data shows, for example, my esteemed colleague from Arkansas referenced it, the anti-Semitism on TikTok. If you go back and look, you can see 50 times the posts on pro-Hamas, pro-Palestinian content, 50 times the views, despite the fact that overwhelmingly Americans support Israel—the polling shows it—and that is just one of the issues that they get involved with.

We wouldn't allow any foreign adversary, TV stations, radio stations, or newspapers to reach 150 million Americans. Why are we allowing our chief adversary in the world, one that seeks our downfall, to have that kind of access? It makes absolutely no sense.

And, of course, the Chinese Communist Party has no free rights in America. Those belong to American citizens. We need to make sure we take a step against this. And last April, we did, overwhelmingly, bipartisan, bicameral because this Congress saw the threat that TikTok poses by the Chinese Communist Party being able to influence ByteDance because they have to. ByteDance is a Chinese company. It has to do whatever the Chinese Communist Party says. That is their law. They have to do what the Chinese Communist Party says, so, therefore, they push the propaganda.

As my colleague from Arkansas pointed out, they spy on Americans, collect data on Americans. So we saw a bipartisan effort, over 350 votes in the House, to pass this bill and, by the way, the same bipartisan support here in the Senate, passing 79 to 18.

The law gathered so much bipartisan, bicameral support because we recognized this was about keeping America and Americans safe; that ByteDance needed to divest TikTok so that we could be assured that the Chinese Communist Party wasn't pushing its propaganda or spying on us.

We acted with conviction against that threat, and of course we know from our classified briefings what that threat for TikTok was. And this threat is not something far off or imagined. We have seen TikTok's interference in elections elsewhere around the world, most recently in Romania. The European Commission just opened an investigation on TikTok's failure to limit election interference in Romania's election, and that has caused all sorts of disruption in that country.

India has banned TikTok for the very same reason that they are seeing the push of Chinese propaganda slants on their news media the same way we see it here in America.

Albania, worried about Romania, banned TikTok. We passed a law that did not ban TikTok. We passed a law that said you have to have an American owner like, I don't know, radio

stations, TV stations, newspapers. The Senator from Massachusetts would like to give us a 270-day extension. What is going to be different? What is going to be different?

ByteDance has had 270 days, and rather than making legitimate attempts to find a buyer—and, by the way, you all recall the news stories when this law was being discussed and being passed. There were a number of Americans who said they would be interested in buying them. ByteDance didn't do anything.

Rather than looking for an American buyer, they decided to hire an army of lobbyists and lawyers to try and subvert the will of the Congress. They spent the last 270 days trying to avoid being sold. As my colleague said, the Chinese Communist Party will not let them be sold.

That, in and of itself, should tell you everything you need to know about this. If the Chinese Communist Party is refusing ByteDance to sell TikTok to an American buyer, you know they are using it to push their propaganda and to collect data on us. They don't want those algorithms coming to America because then they will be exposed. That is what this is about.

This is a national security threat. That is why we took action last April. They have had these 270 days. They did nothing with them. To extend would mean nothing as well, except give the Chinese Communist Party another 270 days to push their propaganda and to spy on more Americans.

Finally, today, in our Foreign Relations Committee hearing, we had the confirmation hearing for Senator RUBIO, who has been nominated for Secretary of State.

I asked him in his confirmation hearing earlier today why average Americans in Nebraska should care about the threat the Chinese Communist Party poses to our way of life, and he had a great response, and I want to read it here.

He said:

If we stay on the road we're on right now, in less than ten years, virtually everything that matters to us in life will depend on whether China will allow us to have it or not.

Folks, this is a clear test of whether America is going to get off that road. Are we willing to change direction? Are we willing to say to the Chinese Communist Party enough, no further, not now? We are changing. We are getting away from the bad practices of the past that the Chinese Communist Party is taking advantage of.

Let's send a clear signal to Beijing that America's national security is going to take priority. Let's stand strong. Let's remember, we passed this law for a reason, and it is to keep Americans safe, and, therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I am disappointed that my colleagues have

objected to this simple legislation. I recognize the national security risk here. But the fearmongering about the supposed anti-American content on TikTok is the exact type of government overreach that has left tens of millions of Americans furious. The hyperbolic statements made by my colleagues are especially concerning, given that the intelligence community itself has acknowledged that it has no information that China is covertly manipulating content on TikTok—no information.

Let me say that again: In the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, the government was asked to present evidence that ByteDance was covertly manipulating content on TikTok for the benefit of the Chinese Government, and the intelligence community submitted an affidavit saying that the government has no information that it is being manipulated.

So as we are out here today—by the way, that would change the whole debate. If they had information, we would be having a different debate. If there were proof that they were manipulating, provided by the intelligence community, we would be having a different debate. They don't have any information.

And I sat in the same intelligence briefings that my colleagues did, and I kept waiting to hear that information. I never heard it. I don't think it is giving up secrets to say: I didn't hear any secrets.

I didn't hear them because there weren't any. And they made that filing in the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. They have no information.

And I have read the reports and news articles. I have tracked the court case closely. I am clear-eyed about the risk. But unlike many of my colleagues, I am also clear-eyed about the profound economic, political, and social importance of TikTok to 170 million users and 7 million businesses in the United States, and I understand how many creators depend on TikTok to find community, share their story, find resources.

So my ask again here is simple: 270 days, and we can try to find a resolution of this issue that doesn't have a draconian cutoff on Sunday afternoon.

So this is the issue that we are confronted with at this point. We don't have the evidence that is being cited by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. It doesn't exist. They may believe it, but they don't have the evidence to present to this body because the intelligence community has not provided it. Otherwise, again, as I am saying, we would have a very different debate.

And this is a very important issue because the Supreme Court just had a hearing—it is unbelievable that it is 9 months later—on the constitutionality of your ban. So I think that the colleagues of mine who spoke on the other side, they are saying: Well, they should have already sold it.

Well, they took it to court to find out if this law was constitutional. They have a right to do that. They have a right to go to the Supreme Court. They have a right to have a hearing. They have a right to make their case. They have a right to say it is unconstitutional. It hasn't been ruled on yet. It hasn't been ruled on.

And so because of that, all I am asking: Give it more time.

Listen to Donald Trump. He is saying: Give it more time.

That is all I am asking for.

And I will say, as well, when my friend cites suicides and other incredible consequences of social media in our society, I do agree with him 100 percent. But it is not just TikTok. It is Instagram. It is Facebook. It is company after company after company that is targeting 14-year-old girls with bulimia, with anorexia, with information that is making them even sicker and sicker and sicker. That is why, when my bill was killed here in December to pass a law which said that parents can just say: Erase all that information you are gathering about my daughter—and it is the third Congress in a row that happened. Yes, TikTok should be stopped, and so should Facebook, and so should Instagram—so should all of them.

But just don't raise it in a TikTok context. Raise it in a Senate context.

That law should have passed. That should have already been on the President's desk. And it was bipartisan. It was bipartisan. You want to talk about lobbyists. You want to talk about stopping legislation.

So I agree with the gentleman on the fundamental fact that TikTok is a contributor to this problem, but it is a part of a larger problem. And I also want to make the point that there is no imminent threat of a compromise of this information that we are talking about here today because the intelligence community does not, in fact, have the information to say that that is accurate.

So I agree with Donald Trump. Give it more time. Allow for the process to play out. Allow for the Supreme Court to make a decision. Allow for potential buyers to step forth. Allow for the users of TikTok, the 7 million businesses that use it for their own families—allow for the families in the fire zone in L.A. to continue to use it to build community, to run their small businesses, and not cut it off on Sunday. And that is what I have been asking the Senate to do.

So I regret that the objection has been raised by my colleagues. But I tell you there is going to be real harm, and my hope is that I can partner with President-elect Trump to try to find a resolution of this issue so that we do it with the information that, right now, we do not have to take such an action.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. I want to respond briefly to a few points from my friend from

Massachusetts, and he is my friend. I want to make an underlying statement, first off, for the RECORD, because this is a notable day. Direct quotes from the Senator from Massachusetts: "Listen to Donald Trump," and "I agree with Donald Trump." Underline that in the RECORD. I am not sure you are going to see that again for the next 4 years.

But, more importantly, on this issue, the Senator is correct that TikTok is not alone in causing harm for American kids. I agree with him. Other apps can result in eating disorders or depression or mental illness.

I voted for his legislation in December. I had my own online safety legislation. The difference is that TikTok is influenced and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. And this bill did not just address TikTok; it addressed all foreign adversary-owned apps.

You raised the question of RedNote. Well, guess what. If TikTok users flood to RedNote, they are going to face the same challenge there because it is also controlled by the Communist Party.

Second, the Senator has made a lot about some affidavit by some intelligence community official in some case. I don't know what it is referring to. I do know this: I have been on the Intelligence Committee for 10 years. I chair it now. I have heard the testimony of senior leaders that TikTok poses a great threat to our national security and our people's well-being.

But I also know this: Third, you don't need intelligence. TikTok's own internal documents reveal the threat that it poses to Americans. The State attorneys general have brought lawsuits to defend their people. Those lawsuits have produced documents that showed, chapter and verse, exactly what TikTok has done to Americans.

And, finally, we keep hearing: It is only 270 days. It is only 270 days.

In 270 days, that is what TikTok will say again because it will not have been sold because Chinese communists won't allow it to be sold, because it is not just another app. It is not Instagram or Facebook or X or anything else. It is a Chinese communist spy app.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. I just want to briefly build upon my colleague from Arkansas.

Two quick points: One, our colleague from Massachusetts has called this a TikTok ban. That is inaccurate. The law that was passed, as my colleague pointed out, was about foreign adversaries and required TikTok to be sold to an American owner.

If it had been sold, TikTok could continue to be in operation. And my understanding is, even if it is forced to close down because it hasn't sold by Sunday, if it is sold in the future, it will be able to reestablish operations, as long as it is to an American buyer.

So it is not a ban.

The reason it is a ban is because TikTok and the Chinese Communist Party chose to make it a ban. ByteDance has not tried to parallel-path this, which was my colleague from Massachusetts' point. They could have been trying to sell it, the same time they were going through the court, and had that ready. In fact, they could have written a document saying: I am only going to sell if the Supreme Court says I have to. They could have found a buyer and written a contract that way—absolutely. They didn't have to make this a ban.

And with regard to my colleague from Massachusetts' other point, I did offer a proof point based upon data here in the United States about how TikTok pushes a Chinese Communist Party agenda to push their propaganda. In this case, it was anti-Semitism against Israel by promoting pro-Hamas, the terrorist group, posts—its posts—and then pro-Palestinian posts versus Israeli pro-Israel ones. So I gave data there.

But this is exactly the same kind of pushing of propaganda which has led, I presume, India to ban TikTok, as well, because the Chinese Communist Party is doing the same thing to them.

So a couple of points on this, and, again, I don't think anything will be different 270 days from now because the Chinese Communist Party will not allow TikTok to be sold because their algorithm would be exposed.

With that, I would just end by saying that China must be deterred.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, at 5:50 p.m. today, the Senate vote in relation to the following amendments: Cornyn No. 14 and Coons No. 23.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

AMENDMENT NO. 14 TO AMENDMENT NO. 8

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we just locked in a vote on my amendment.

I would like to call up my amendment No. 14 to Senate amendment No. 8 and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Texas [Mr. CORNYN] proposes an amendment numbered 14 to amendment No. 8.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To expand the list of criminal offenses that subject inadmissible aliens to mandatory detention)

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted, insert the following:

"(ii) is charged with, is arrested for, is convicted of, admits having committed, or admits committing acts which constitute the essential elements of any burglary, theft, larceny, shoplifting, or assault of a law enforcement officer offense, or any crime that

results in death or serious bodily injury to another person.”;

(2) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (4); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

“(2) DEFINITION.—For purposes of paragraph (1)(E), the terms ‘burglary’, ‘theft’, ‘larceny’, ‘shoplifting’, ‘assault of a law enforcement officer’, and ‘serious bodily injury’ have the meanings given such terms in the jurisdiction in which the acts occurred.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to offer an amendment that would add one more crime to the list covered by this legislation, and that would be assault of a law enforcement officer.

Anyone who comes into the country illegally and harms these brave men and women in uniform is dangerous, and dangerous not only to our first responders but also to the safety and security of all Texans and communities all around the country.

Unfortunately, we know, under the Biden-Harris administration, these people who are committing these kinds of crimes are routinely being released back into the streets, as we saw last February in New York City when seven people were arrested for assaulting a police officer—assaulting multiple police officers—outside of a migrant shelter in Times Square. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg made the decision to release five of these criminal suspects without bail.

There is no question that these criminals should have been detained and removed before they could go on and commit other crimes against innocent victims.

My amendment simply would require ICE to promptly take migrants who assault law enforcement officers into custody and ensure that illegal migrants who commit crimes against the men and women in blue are swiftly detained so they can be removed from our country.

I urge adoption of my amendment.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to finish my brief remarks before we proceed to the vote.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 23

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, we are about to consider two amendments to the Laken Riley Act. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to amendment No. 23, which would strike section 3 of the Laken Riley Act.

I respect that colleagues on both sides of the aisle have expressed their intention to vote for the Laken Riley

bill and to advance it. I have not yet made any such commitment out of concern about the unintended consequences of several provisions of this bill. I want to briefly speak to the consequences of the section that my amendment would strike.

Amidst real resource constraints, unpredictable migration patterns, and fluctuating diplomatic sensitivities, our Federal law enforcement officers at ICE and CBP make thousands of complex decisions day in and day out about how to deal with interior enforcement, about border encounters, who to detain, and who to release. It is because these decisions involve so many complex factors that the Supreme Court has repeatedly recognized that the Federal Government is and should be the ultimate authority on enforcement of our immigration laws.

Section 3, however, would mark a sea change by inviting every State attorney general to sue whenever they disagree with even an individual-level Federal decision regarding detention and removal. This could create uncertainty or even chaos by encouraging conflicting lawsuits brought by different States in different courts.

I will remind my colleagues that this provision may have been drafted when the view was that Republican States’ attorneys general would sue a Democratic administration to move closer towards the enforcement vision that they prioritized. Roughly half of the State attorneys general belong to each political party.

I hope that my colleagues who have reflected upon the consequences of this provision will conclude that we should not have the division and, frankly, ultimately the chaos in the enforcement of our immigration laws that would likely result from having a raft of lawsuits brought by State attorneys general in courts all over the country testing and challenging almost literally every detention decision.

I believe it is possible for this act to be improved, for it to advance public safety, and for it to make a contribution to the country, and it is my hope that the amendments being offered will be taken up and passed.

I will urge a “yes” vote on my amendment for all of my colleagues because I think an improved bill should be the ultimate objective of this amendment process.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 14

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on adoption of amendment No. 14 offered by the Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN.

Mr. CORNYN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Sen-

ator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE), and the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) would have voted “aye” and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) would have voted “aye.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 70, nays 25, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 3 Leg.]

YEAS—70

Baldwin	Fischer	Ossoff
Banks	Gallego	Paul
Barrasso	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Grassley	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hassan	Risch
Blumenthal	Hawley	Rosen
Boozman	Heinrich	Rounds
Britt	Hickenlooper	Rubio
Budd	Hoeben	Schmitt
Cantwell	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Capito	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Kelly	Shaheen
Collins	Kennedy	Sheehy
Coons	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lee	Thune
Cotton	Lujan	Tillis
Cramer	Marshall	Tuberville
Crapo	McConnell	Warner
Cruz	McCormick	Warnock
Curtis	Moran	Wicker
Daines	Moreno	Young
Ernst	Mullin	
Fetterman	Murkowski	

NAYS—25

Alsobrooks	King	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Markey	Schumer
Booker	Merkley	Smith
Duckworth	Murphy	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Padilla	Welch
Hirono	Reed	Whitehouse
Kaine	Sanders	
Kim	Schatz	

NOT VOTING—4

Hagerty	Lummis
Justice	Wyden

The amendment (No. 14) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). The Senator from Delaware.

AMENDMENT NO. 23

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 23, as provided under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Delaware [Mr. COONS] proposes an amendment numbered 23.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To strike the section that authorizes State attorneys general to sue Federal immigration authorities for alleged violations relating to the detention of aliens)

Beginning on page 3, strike line 9 and all that follows through page 8, line 10.

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute to this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I ask my colleagues to vote in favor of this amendment, which would focus and streamline this bill and make more likely its passage.

Many of us who have served here for many Congresses regret the falling away of the frequency of amendments intended to improve the bill. My amendment would remove the section that will encourage endless litigation by State attorneys general.

I will remind you, our States' attorneys general are roughly equally divided between the parties, and attorneys general can now and today sue against what they believe is manifest injustice in the Federal immigration system. This provision would encourage them to sue down to individual detention and release decisions.

I think it improves the bill to remove that section and focus on its critical public safety provisions.

I urge a "yes" vote on this amendment and the consideration of additional amendments in the future that will improve this bill.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 23

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on adoption of the amendment.

Mr. COONS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE), and the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) would have voted "nay" and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) would have voted "nay."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 46, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 4 Leg.]

YEAS—46

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Lujan	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Galleo	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	
Heinrich	Reed	

NAYS—49

Banks	Britt	Collins
Barrasso	Budd	Cornyn
Blackburn	Capito	Cotton
Boozman	Cassidy	Cramer

Crapo	Lankford	Rubio
Cruz	Lee	Schmitt
Curtis	Marshall	Scott (FL)
Daines	McConnell	Scott (SC)
Ernst	McCormick	Sheehy
Fischer	Moran	Sullivan
Graham	Moreno	Thune
Grassley	Mullin	Tillis
Hawley	Murkowski	Tuberville
Hoeben	Paul	Wicker
Hyde-Smith	Ricketts	Young
Johnson	Risch	
Kennedy	Rounds	

NOT VOTING—4

Hagerty	Lummis
Justice	Wyden

The amendment (No. 23) was rejected.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, filing cloture does not signal an end to our amendment process. We have been having constructive conversations all day. Those yielded the votes this evening, and I expect those conversations to continue tonight and into tomorrow so we can vote on more amendments this week. But at some point, we need to pass this commonsense legislation and get it to the House so that they can ratify what we have done.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for Calendar No. 1, S. 5.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 1, S. 5, a bill to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to take into custody aliens who have been charged in the United States with theft, and for other purposes.

John Thune, John Barrasso, Steve Daines, Bill Cassidy, Katie Britt, Mike Lee, Kevin Cramer, Ted Budd, Jim Banks, Dave McCormick, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, Rick Scott of Florida, Roger Marshall, Tommy Tuberville, Ron Johnson, Dan Sullivan.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate 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.

RECOGNIZING THE STENNIS CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the Stennis Center for Public Service is a legislative branch Agency with a congressional mandate to attract young

people to careers in public service, provide training for leaders in, or likely to be in, public service, and offer training and development opportunities for senior congressional staff, Members of Congress, and other public service leaders.

A strong civil society is the foundation of a free society and essential for our republican form of government to work. That starts with public service minded individuals identifying problems and working together to solve them. This aspect of our society astounded Alexis de Tocqueville when he traveled our country in the early days of our Republic and compared what he saw to his native France.

But, as Ronald Reagan observed, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."

Part of perpetuating a free society is encouraging civic minded thinking and actions. So I am glad that the "Public Service Review," produced by the Stennis Center for Public Service, features stories from young leaders who are making a difference in their communities. The publication, available on the Stennis Center's website at www.stennis.gov, recognizes and highlights examples of young people engaging in public service.

I am particularly proud that the entire summer 2024 edition highlights the Legislative Practice Center at Drake University Law School in Des Moines, IA. I encourage everyone to read this edition of "Public Service Review" and learn about how, for 25 years, the Drake Law School Legislative Practice Center has equipped students for public service careers by blending rigorous academic training with invaluable hands-on experiences. You will hear from staff and students in the Legislative Practice Center, learn about prominent alumni of the program now working in public service, and read about prominent Iowans working in public service, with stories written by the students.

The Drake Law students featured in this edition of Public Service Review include:

Carter Forrest
Witt Harberts
Haley Ledford
Laura Book
Natalie Sherman
Charlotte Miller
Zach Goodrich
Taylor McDonald
Zach Engstrom
Tom Ashworth
Bernardo Granwehr
Jacob Shrader
J.T. Harris

I congratulate them on this recognition and thank them for their dedication to public service.