

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wanted to join my colleagues from Wyoming. I heard they were paying a tribute to Al Simpson who recently passed away. It was my good fortune 15 years ago to be a member of the Simpson-Bowles Commission where Al Simpson, who had been retired from the Senate, cohosted that with Erskine Bowles in a bipartisan effort to deal with the deficit.

I never had a better time and a more educational experience than to be on that Commission. And, of course, you can't talk about Al Simpson's public service without referring to his sense of humor.

I said to a friend the other day on the floor of the Senate, I miss that part of the Senate. There used to be, you could count on several Senators to always have a joke, and he was one of them.

And good joke-tellers, I have found, have two qualities. First, they tell the same joke many times, but it seems like it is the first time. And, second, they usually start laughing before the punchline because they are enjoying the joke so much themselves.

But in addition to his good humor and nice way about him, he was a wonderful person to work with—really bipartisan. Being a Democrat, I didn't know quite how I would deal with him since we had never served together in the Senate, but he took me under his shoulder like any Member of his own party or family.

I might also mention for the record that Al and his wife were close friends with Paul and Jeanne Simon from Illinois, my predecessor; and Ann Simpson attended the funeral service for Jeanne Simon in Carbondale, IL, and I thought that was a nice tribute family to family.

I am sorry we don't have people like Al Simpson still serving. Maybe it is an incentive for all of us to learn a joke or two.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, we are in the tenth week of the first 10 weeks, obviously, of this Senate's session. It has been exceptionally productive during this time period.

We have not only moved more nominees into confirmation for President Trump than any Senate has done in more than two decades, we have passed bills like the Laken Riley Act, which will absolutely help us in trying to remove criminal aliens out of the country.

We have rolled back a lot of Biden's last-minute regulations that he literally threw in in the final hours that did not have the oversight, did not have the appearance. And they, obviously, didn't do it in the first 3½ years of their term. They stalled it till the very end on that for a reason: because it was unpopular with the American people.

Those have been rolled back, many of them, and we still have several to go.

Today we are finishing up a bill called HALT Fentanyl. The fentanyl epidemic is raging in our country.

If you go back to just 2019 and compare that to 2023, in that short period of time, in my State of Oklahoma in 2019, we had 50 people who died of fentanyl. Fast-forward 4 years to 2023, the last year that we have complete records on; that is actually 730 people died. In 2023, across the country, we had 74,000 Americans who died from fentanyl overdose.

Again, go back to 2019. Only about 10 percent of the opioid deaths in my State had fentanyl connected to it. Fast forward to 2023, 90 percent of the opioid-related deaths were connected to fentanyl.

What the Mexican cartels are doing and what Chinese precursor chemicals coming into the country are causing is the death of fellow citizens, as they slip it into different fake pills, as they slip it into methamphetamine, as they slip fentanyl into cocaine, as they slip it into different places, to have someone who is using a drug or someone who never intended to use that drug to take their life. It has to stop.

Even worse, the cartels not only know what they are doing, but they are trying to find specific ways to be able to avoid our laws. Fentanyl has a very specific definition in science of exactly what makes up fentanyl. And so what the cartels are doing is they are changing that chemical makeup ever so slightly in what they call an analog, and so it is really not "fentanyl" as a definition—meaning law enforcement, when they see it on the street, it has the same effect: It still kills you, but it is, actually, technically, not fentanyl, so you can't be prosecuted for it.

This bill that we are bringing to the floor today opens up the fentanyl definitions to deal with fentanyl and the analogs of fentanyl so that the cartels can't continue to bring these deadly drugs into our country to take the lives and increase addiction in America and get away with it. This puts it in the hands of law enforcement, where they have been disarmed in that area, enforcement priorities, so they can actually enforce the law on these cartels and on the drug dealers and so we can identify it for what it really is. It is a killer drug.

The HALT Fentanyl Act is incredibly important. And I am fully aware that in a week where our country is talking about: Are we going to have another government shutdown, it is going to slip through and people aren't even going to notice it. But law enforcement will notice it, and families in the future will notice it.

The folks aren't dealing with the same addiction, as we are putting one more piece out there to be able to take this off.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, as we talk about the government shutdown looming tonight

at midnight, I want to remind you and this body again: This is something I have spoken out on for years. Years ago, I sat down with my Democratic colleagues and said: How do we take government shutdowns off the table? How do we end this?

There have been proposals for literally decades to be able to end government shutdowns. Republicans have had a proposal for decades that said: Well, if we get to the end of the fiscal year and we haven't passed all the bills, we will just cut spending 1 percent every month, and that will force us to come to the table. And my Democratic colleagues have said to me over and over again: You guys are so crazy about reducing Federal spending, you will never reopen the government; you will just cut funding every single month. It is easy. Never going to vote for that.

My Democratic colleagues literally have a bill to say: We will end government shutdowns by every single month that we don't have a bill passed on it; we will increase funding by 1 percent every single month. And Republicans have looked at our Democratic colleagues and said: You have lost your mind. You want to increase spending every single month anyway. You will never pass a bill. We are never going to do that. There was a bill that was out there for a while—it sounds great—called No Budget No Pay.

That says if we don't pass our budget, we don't get our appropriations bill done, then Members of Congress won't be paid. And a lot of people say that is a great idea. I smile at folks back home, and I say: I hate to be blunt, but do you know how much most Members of the Senate are worth? Their congressional salary for many of my colleagues is a rounding error to their investment portfolio.

They are really not worried about their congressional pay to be able to make ends meet at the end of that month. In addition to that, constitutionally, you actually can't change a Member's pay during the time that they are actually set. So all it would mean is they wouldn't get their paycheck for however long it took to negotiate it, then they would still get their money.

That is really not going to make a difference. When I sat down with my Democratic colleagues several years ago and said: What is the one pressure point that we all feel that we can hold the American people harmless but actually get our work done? It is the same thing, rich or poor, live far away, live close, all of us have the same precious possession that we are all attentive to and it is time.

We all have the same amount of time in a day. And we all fight our calendars because they are full. So our simple solution to end government shutdowns is, if we get to the end of a fiscal year, like we are at tonight, and we haven't got our work done, like it has happened so far, the government stays open, same year's level as last year, nothing

changes on it. The American people are held harmless, all the Agencies are held harmless, but Members of Congress, both House and Senate, we stay in session 7 days a week. We have a quorum call at noon every single day. And we can't move to any bill other than appropriations.

In other words, if you don't have your work done, you have got to stay until your work is actually done. And we can't go do something else. We have to stay here to be able to get it done. I guarantee you, if this body was in session 7 days a week for two weeks, by the end of the second week, we would all be staring at each other saying: I want to go see my family. I want to be able to do the other things that are responsibilities that a Senator has. I need to be able to do those things; let's get this thing resolved.

If you remove all of our time, it puts the pressure on us to be able to actually get our work done. If I can say it just as simple as this: My mom, when my brother and I—and I know it may be shocking to some people that my brother and I didn't always get along every day growing up—but when my brother and I would get into a fight, my mom would send both of us into our rooms and say: You guys stay in that room, fight it out, then when you are done, then you can come out to the rest of the house. But go settle it in there, but make sure it is settled before you come out here.

As silly as it sounds, this government shutdown prevention bill I have brought year after year is just as simple as my mom's advice, don't make everybody else have to listen to the fight. Members of Congress should get in the room, fight it out, settle it; and when we are done, we come out and actually vote for it.

But, in the meantime, the rest of the country shouldn't have to suffer because we didn't get our work done on time. That seems pretty straightforward to me. It has had wide bipartisan support, and there have been lots of moments when we have been very close to passing it. There is no trick in it. There is no anything else. It is just, why do we have these crazy government shutdown fight moments that the rest of the world looks at us as Americans and says: Why can't the Americans get their act together?

And the rest of the country looks at us and says: We have to work out all of our details. Why don't you have to work out all of your details?

Those folks are not wrong.

We will, one day, solve this. Apparently, it is not today. Today, there is still a fight over whether we are going to keep the government open for tomorrow.

Federal workers that are already dealing with a lot of tension in their life, quite frankly, they have gotten emails and messages. They are hearing about downsizing in Federal Agencies. They are anxious right now.

And there are a lot of folks in my State, and, quite frankly, around the

country, that say we need to reduce the size of the bureaucracy, which we do. The last time we had a major reduction in the size of the bureaucracy was under Bill Clinton. When Bill Clinton was President, he declared: We are going to reinvent government.

And under Bill Clinton's Presidency, they reduced the Federal workforce by 400,000 people. That was a big reduction in Federal workforce. That is the last time that has occurred, decades ago.

We have grown now to a massive size that we have got to reduce again. Everybody knows it. But if you are a Federal worker or a family member or a next-door neighbor or you go to church together, you know how agonizing this really is. The last thing those Federal workers need is one more thing hanging over their head and a government shutdown at the same time. But it is being debated right now, and my Democratic colleagues are trying to determine if we are going to go into shutdown tonight still.

I would simply say: Let's get our work done. We disagree on many issues. OK? That is what grownups have; we have disagreements. Let's settle our disagreements. Let's keep us operating. Let's take this off the table for good at some point so we don't have this threat hanging over us and some countdown clock on 24-hour news: Here is how many minutes it is until we have a government shutdown. Let's take that off the table, and let's get our work done.

We have a giant deficit—giant—\$2 trillion in overspending this year. We should have budget fights. We should be more efficient. We should allow DOGE and some of those folks to be able to go after some of the wasteful spending.

I don't have a lot of people back in my State that are contacting me and saying: I really want to make sure that we are still spending money for the grants to go to the transgender opera in Colombia that USAID is funding, or the DEI initiatives in Serbia that the USAID is funding. No one is calling me and saying: We need to make sure we keep doing those things.

Everyone looks at it and shakes their head and says: What in the world? I want my tax money to go to education, and I want it to go to roads, and I want it to go to national defense. Don't do that.

So let's find ways to be more efficient. Let's find ways to be able to reduce waste and fraud. But let's also have the fight during office hours so the American people don't have to feel the effects of a government shutdown.

The clock is ticking today. My Democratic colleagues have got to determine if we are going to have this vote today. Let's pass it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

REMEMBERING ALAN K. SIMPSON

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, before I begin my comments, I wanted to

acknowledge the extraordinary life and the contributions of Senator Alan Simpson from Wyoming. I had an opportunity to hear several of my colleagues speak to the accomplishments of Senator Alan Simpson. And while I did not have an opportunity to serve with him, my father served many years with Al Simpson, and he and my mother Nancy were very close friends with Al and his wife Ann. They traveled together. They joked together.

And I had an opportunity to occasionally meet with Al Simpson. As has been mentioned, his humor was legendary. And as a young woman who was kind of observing, here you have this very important person, this Senator from Wyoming, who was very accomplished in so many years, with a sense of humor and a joke for just about everything—sometimes appropriate, maybe sometimes not quite as appropriate. But he was a genuinely beautiful individual, and you saw how he reacted and interacted with people at all levels.

I can only imagine the depth of appreciation and love that he had from the people in the great State of Wyoming because those of us who had just mere glimpses of an opportunity to see him and to know him found him to just be truly a lovely and a good man.

So I know that my parents would want me to be able to express my condolences to the Simpson family and the great appreciation for the contributions that he made to his State of Wyoming and to our great country.

IDITAROD

Mr. President, I come to the floor this morning with my annual update. As the occupant of the Chair heard, just a couple of weeks ago, we began the "Last Great Race," also known as the Iditarod. This is the sled dog race that typically begins from Willow, AK, and goes northward to Nome, a little less than a thousand miles.

This was the 53rd running of the Iditarod this year, and with great excitement, I am able to announce the winner of this year's Iditarod. At 2:55 a.m., this morning, Jessie Holmes crossed the finish line. He crossed the finish line in a remarkable time of 10 days, 14 hours, 55 minutes, and 41 seconds.

Now, this is not the fastest Iditarod, but it is by far the longest Iditarod. I mentioned that typically you have an Iditarod race of just about 1,000 miles. This was 1,128 miles through extraordinary wilderness, across conditions that were grueling in perhaps different ways: soft snow, howling winds, blasting sand—believe it or not—as they were crossing through river areas. It is a tough race every year, but this year was particularly rough.

They moved the start of the race, this year, from Willow to begin in the community of Fairbanks—my home town is there—but took a northern route through the interior, along the Yukon River, circling all the way down and doing a loop-the-loop down in Grayling, Anvik, and Shageluk.