

Watchlist—our own Nation's Terror Watchlist—have crossed into our country boldly and illegally. Those 300, they are just the ones that we know about.

We also know that Iran—the world's No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism—is actively funding anti-Jewish protests on our college campuses. President Biden did nothing. Instead of showing strength, he kept our borders open and continued to ignore Iran's aggression.

Weakness in the White House put us here. Returning to strength will help lead us out. In 13 days, our weak and wavering President will be replaced by a President who is respected for strength and for boldness.

We have seen failure up close. Americans will now get a very good look at what strong leadership looks like once again.

President Trump and Senate Republicans will act for Americans' safety. The Senate is going to work to confirm President Trump's strong nominees through a fair and speedy process. It is important for the President to have his national security team in place as quickly as possible. Especially right now, personnel is policy, and President Trump's team is ready to act.

The President's nominees are not a return to business as usual. No, not at all. They are motivated. They are skilled. They are committed to the safety and security of every American. Our national security depends on confirming them. The New Orleans attack proves it.

To my colleagues, I would remind each and every one of them that the Senate's power of advice and consent is no excuse to delay and deny or to try to search and destroy.

Last month, a sleeping woman in New York City was set on fire in the subway. She died. Her killer was an illegal immigrant. He was deported under President Trump and snuck back into this country under President Biden. Since 2023, he has lived—this illegal immigrant criminal murderer—in taxpayer-funded shelters here in this country. That is what we have seen the last 4 years.

The current President's actions invited and allowed 10 million people to cross into our country illegally. Our cities are overrun and overwhelmed.

It was weak border policies that got us here, put us in this position, and it is strong border policies that are going to get us back to safety. That means funding a border wall, deporting illegal immigrant criminals, and restoring successful policies such as "Remain in Mexico."

Our goal is to empower President Trump to enforce the law.

Republicans are also going to work to restore deterrence through strength and then what we have seen as the politicization of our military. Without a military focused on lethality, we can't be strong.

If these actions are taken, peace and safety, security and strength are not just possible, they will be coming very soon.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

119TH CONGRESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as you know, last Friday, the Senate swore in new leaders for the 119th Congress, and in 2 weeks, the new Commander in Chief will be sworn in for a second time.

We are 6 days into a new year, and people around the country are making resolutions for the new year—everything from health to fitness, books to read, financial goals to meet—and as Republicans, now is a good time for us to do the exact same thing. We have our work cut out for us to help clean up the mess that President Biden and Senate Democrats have left us from the last 4 years.

I believe our first and most urgent task is to confirm President Trump's nominees for his Cabinet. The President won the election, and he is entitled to his team, absent extraordinary circumstances. It is simply impossible for the new administration to tackle the mountain of work waiting for them without their team of advisers who will lead critical government Agencies.

Without the President's Cabinet in place, he cannot get the job done that he was elected to do on November 5. With his Cabinet in place, we can get to work to implement the agenda that Texans and Americans across the country elected a trifecta of Republican leaders to accomplish.

The top of our list of priorities is, of course, to secure the southern border. I represent a State with 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico, and, sadly and tragically, under the previous administration's open border policies, it has been an unmitigated disaster.

The crisis at the southern border is one that President Biden quite literally invited with his campaign rhetoric and with his administration's policies. He invited this crisis. This was perhaps the one campaign promise that he delivered on. The Biden administration set out to reverse many, if not all, of President Trump's policies from his first term, including the "Remain in Mexico" policy and title 42.

Under President Biden's watch, the Border Patrol was overwhelmed with record numbers of illegal migrants crossing the border. Border Patrol encountered more than 370 people on the Terror Watchlist crossing between ports of entry during the Biden administration. We know there were roughly a dozen people who were part of the

conspiracy that resulted in the death of 3,000 Americans on September 11, 2001, and now here we have 370 people on the Terror Watchlist that crossed between ports of entry during the Biden administration. Well, that compares with well under 10 per year under the Trump administration. But I think the point is pretty obvious: This is dangerous.

Those are only the aliens who the Border Patrol encountered or apprehended. Remember that President Biden also set records for "got-aways." That is what the Border Patrol calls the people who simply evaded law enforcement—aliens who fled because, frankly, they were up to no good.

As of May, more than 1.7 million "got-aways" had made their way into the United States under their watch. These are just people who triggered various cameras and sensors and were able to evade law enforcement. Surely there were more that were able to make their way into the interior of the United States. Again, under President Biden's border policies, all you have to do is turn yourself in and you would be released into the interior, but these are people that could not even risk that because of either their criminal records or their intention to do harm, including carry drugs into the United States.

Since the Biden administration established the word "asylum" as a magic word that resulted in their release into the interior, we can be pretty sure that many of those evading Border Patrol have something else to hide.

Human trafficking and drug trafficking by the cartels have caused enormous and often untold suffering for the people of my home State of Texas and Americans as a whole. Fentanyl, which is now the leading cause of death of young people in America 18 to 45, is manufactured—or the precursors are manufactured in China and trafficked through the U.S.-Mexico border.

Countless migrants released into the interior of our country have failed to show up for their day in court, showing others looking to make the dangerous journey to the United States that they might also be able to make it and suffer zero consequences.

All of these actions—or lack of actions—from the Biden administration have sent a clear signal that the laws of the United States will not be enforced.

You know, law enforcement depends on our great men and women in blue to investigate crimes and to deter other people from committing crimes, but deterrence is a very important element that has simply been lost by the Biden administration's open border policies.

Given the fact that most people who come to the United States know, under the Biden administration, that they will simply be released, there is no reason for them to believe that they will not be released as well, and so there is zero deterrence. That is getting ready to change under President Trump.

Now, speaking of breaking the law without consequence, violent crime is another problem plaguing Texans and American cities across the country. Leftwing mayors and city governments have advanced soft-on-crime policies in major cities from Chicago to Los Angeles and from New York to San Francisco. What has been the result? Well, criminals have noticed that there are no consequences to them committing crimes in these cities. The lack of consequences is an incentive, an encouragement for them to continue stealing, breaking, and murdering.

That is all beginning to change under a new administration. Republicans are prepared to take steps necessary to prevent and ensure that ramifications for these crimes exist. We have done so before, and we are going to do so again.

During President Trump's first administration, I was proud to partner with him on legislation to lock up violent criminals and ensure justice for victims. One of my top priorities for the new year is to do everything I can to build on the great work we accomplished under President Trump's first term to make sure that our communities, our cities, and our streets are once again safe.

Another way that we will keep our citizens safe is by ensuring that Second Amendment rights are safeguarded. The Trump administration will end President Biden's assault on the Second Amendment—the right to keep and bear arms—as well as the Biden administration's bad-faith interpretations of Second Amendment-related legislation.

I look forward to leading my Senate colleagues in reintroducing my Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act and working with the Trump administration and our cosponsors here in the Senate to get this legislation across the finish line.

Now, I know some folks from places like New York or maybe San Francisco might say: You are actually going to make it easier for people to carry a firearm legally?

Well, the answer is, already the vast majority of States have licensing regimes where responsible, law-abiding citizens can exercise their Second Amendment rights by getting a license to carry a firearm, including Texas and including the District of Columbia. I happen to have a license in both jurisdictions. Many States have gone simply to a nonlicensed status so that people can exercise their Second Amendment rights.

I would reiterate, America and Americans have nothing to fear from law-abiding citizens exercising their Second Amendment rights. Those are not the people we should be concerned about. We should be most concerned about people who are criminals who cannot legally carry a firearm or people with mental health incapacities who are currently prohibited under existing law from carrying or owning or possessing a firearm. Those are existing laws that are enforced, given the

National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

Now, while our safety and security start at home, in our communities, and at our borders, it also extends around the world. As I have said before from this floor, we now have the most dangerous geopolitical environment that we have had since World War II.

Texans voted resoundingly for President Trump in this last election in part because of his pledge to hold China accountable. China threatens the peace in the Indo-Pacific by threatening to invade its neighbor Taiwan and interrupt freedom of commerce and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific.

One of the ways that we can hold China accountable is to pass my legislation to address outbound investment in China. I just had a chance to visit with the new Treasury Secretary nominee, and I told him it was really strange to me when you look historically at how we dealt with the Soviet Union and how we dealt with China, both of which are ruled by communist governments.

Many years ago, at the beginning of the Cold War, George Kennan, a famous diplomat, wrote something called the "Long Telegram," where he said you are not going to change communist Russia. It is an ideological obsession they have. You are not going to change their minds. So what you need to do—what the free world needs to do—is to contain them. And that is what the Cold War was all about, leading ultimately to the fall of the Soviet Union.

Strangely enough, the U.S. position toward China was just the opposite. Under President Clinton, he invited them into the World Trade Organization, believing that somehow by engaging in more trade with the rest of the world, that somehow China and the Communist Party would change. Well, as Xiaoping, one of the former leaders of communist China, said: Hide your motives and bide your time. And that is exactly what China has done.

China has now become the manufacturing center for the world. When you are buying inexpensive consumer products, that is one thing, but when you consider the vulnerability of our supply chains and things that China makes and does—like processes critical minerals, which it does 90 percent of the critical minerals of the world that we need for a variety of products, including military weapons—that represents a huge vulnerability. Well, we need to know who is investing in what industries in China because, right now, the rough estimate of the market value of American-based investment in China in 2020 was \$2.3 trillion.

China has built its economy—which, by itself, should not be a big concern—but they now have become a rival to the United States. If they played by the rules, that would be one thing. But China is famous for not honoring intellectual property laws and stealing all the technology they can. And they are using their economic power, which is

synonymous with their military power because they have something called civilian-military fusion laws, which said if the private sector creates a new innovative product, they have to share it with the People's Liberation Army and the Communist Party in China.

My point is, my outbound investment piece of legislation says we need to know who is investing money in China and what that is being used for. I could care less if people want to build more Burger Kings or Starbucks in China. I am not worried about that. But when you start talking about advanced semiconductors, when you start talking about serial intellectual property theft, when you look at some of the weapons systems and the airframes China has been creating, they bear a remarkable resemblance to those we built here in the United States because they have engaged in massive theft through cyber attacks and through intellectual property theft.

But it is simply foolish for the United States to continue to blindly invest billions of dollars in the very defense systems and technologies that the Chinese Communist Party could use to our detriment in the Indo-Pacific.

Our colleague Senator SULLIVAN from Alaska just retired as colonel from the Marines. He puts it very poignantly. He says: American investors are going to fund the very military buildup that will result in the death of my marines if China were to invade Taiwan.

To me—and I am sure to all of us—that is simply unacceptable. Right now, we are flying blind, and that needs to change.

While some might be concerned about lost investment potential in China, there are plenty of opportunities here at home and in other parts around the world, as we see more friendshoring and nearshoring, to create dependable supply chains to Asia, India, and elsewhere.

Well, there is another area where I expect President Trump to make a big difference, and that is in the energy sector and primarily to do this through regulatory reform. For the past 4 years, the Biden administration has put the wistful dreams of climate activists ahead of the interests of ordinary Americans, particularly those in my home State of Texas.

And he is certainly not letting the door hit him on the way out. Today—I think that was actually yesterday—President Biden announced one last nail in the coffin by issuing a permanent ban on oil and gas leasing in certain Federal waters preventing new drilling.

But nevertheless, Republicans will not be dissuaded from our task to reverse the damage of the Biden administration and unleash this huge asset, which is American energy. By removing burdensome regulations from our energy sector, by improving the permitting process so we can actually build things like the capacity to

produce electricity that would drive data centers and artificial intelligence, and by increasing our exports of things like natural gas so our friends and allies don't have to depend on Russia to keep the lights on or to heat their homes, we can create both growth for our economy here at home and we can improve our natural security posturing, including shoring up our vulnerable supply chains. Rather than forcing Europe to rely on Russia for its energy sources, we can increase their reliance—and they are eager to have it—on American energy, particularly liquefied natural gas.

This would be a big win for America and a big win for my State as well and a big loss for the “axis of evil”—Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea that are working together to undermine the United States and the West.

We have a lot to do and very little time to do it. We have an opportunity to pass huge wins for President Trump and, more specifically, for the American people. And that comes first through the budget reconciliation process. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and it is not an opportunity we can afford to squander. We can't let this go to waste by not taking this occasion to finally address our skyrocketing debt. And the only way we can do that is not only be responsible in the way we handle things like discretionary spending but to dig deeper into the areas that the Federal Government spends like mandatory spending.

I know Medicare and Social Security are particularly fraught. And without bipartisan support, it is really hard to save Social Security and Medicare, particularly if the Democrats aren't going to be willing to help. But there is about \$700 billion a year that the Federal Government spends that has mandatory spending. That means it is on autopilot, and we never go back to revisit it to see if it is still a priority, which continues to grow at 5, 6, 7, 8 percent a year. And until and unless we deal with this mandatory spending, we are never going to deal with this mountain of debt now approaching \$36 trillion.

We have now finally gotten to the point where we are paying more money for interest on the national debt than we are on our own defense, which is 2.7 percent of our GDP. We finally kicked the can down the road to the point we have run out of road. That is true both in terms of our fiscal condition and in terms of our national security.

We can't let this opportunity go to waste. As I said, we need to take a hard look at both our mandatory discretionary spending, and we also need to take a look at how the Tax Code has been transformed into a welfare system. About \$200 billion a year go to pay for the child tax credit and the earned income tax credit.

Democrats have been successful in decoupling any sort of work requirement for able-bodied adults. That needs to be reinstated because when it comes

to assessing the people who deserve help and need our help, able-bodied individuals should not be able to ride the backs of the American taxpayers. They need to do like everybody else does who is able-bodied, and that is to be a producer, not somebody who lives off the beneficence of the American taxpayer.

We have a lot of work to do, but this is an incredible opportunity that I trust we will not squander. The time to address these problems is now. We put it off long enough. I know it is easy to say let's do the easy things now, and we will do the hard stuff later. But later never seems to come so we have to deal with these now.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate stand in recess pursuant to the previous order.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:25 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH).

MORNING BUSINESS—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CONSTITUTING THE MAJORITY PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP ON CERTAIN COMMITTEES FOR THE ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consideration of S. Res. 16, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 16) to constitute the majority party's membership on certain committees for the One Hundred Nineteenth Congress, or until their successors are chosen.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, for the purpose of S. Res. 16, the majority committee membership resolution, the blank spaces with respect to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Energy and Natural Resources; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and Special Committee on Aging are there to preserve the ratios on those committees negotiated between the Democratic leader and myself. It is my intention to place Senator elect Jim Justice of West Virginia on those committees by subsequent resolution when he is sworn in on January 14, 2025.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 16) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

CONSTITUTING THE MINORITY PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP ON CERTAIN COMMITTEES FOR THE ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 17, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 17) to constitute the minority party's membership on certain committees for the One Hundred Nineteenth Congress, or until their successors are chosen.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 17) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 9

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 9) to provide that for purposes of determining compliance with title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 in athletics, sex shall be recognized based solely on a person's reproductive biology and genetics at birth.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I now ask for a second reading, and in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will receive its second reading on the next legislative day.