

about the importance of our constitutional responsibility of oversight, answering our letters, and listening to whistleblowers. And in regard to answering letters, everybody that comes before a committee is asked by the chairman of that committee: Will you answer our letters? And everybody says yes. And I advise them to say “maybe” so that they aren’t turned out to be liars.

So I expect Mr. Kennedy’s Agency to provide timely and complete responses to congressional oversight. Oversight allows us to hold bureaucrats accountable to the rule of law and helps keep faith with the taxpayers.

So I look forward to working with Mr. Kennedy to improve the health of all Americans, make our healthcare system more efficient, and ensure HHS’s adherence to Kennedy’s radical transparency commitment.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the Governor of the great State of Texas, Greg Abbott, has made a request to the U.S. Congress to reimburse our State for the expenses we have incurred in attempting to combat the Texas-Mexico border security crisis during the 4 years of the Biden administration. I am proud to support this request, along with my colleague Senator CRUZ and Members of the Texas delegation in the House of Representatives.

Securing the Nation’s borders is the responsibility of the Federal Government, plain and simple. Given the division of responsibilities between the States and the Federal Government, there is no doubt that this is a Federal responsibility. For 4 years, though, President Biden and Vice President Harris and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas intentionally and willfully refused to enforce the laws on the books to keep the border secure and to keep our Nation safe.

Even before his first day in the Office, President Biden rolled out the welcome mat to illegal immigrants in speeches during his campaign, inviting—inviting—what ensued.

Early in his Presidency, President Biden ended President Trump’s very effective policy known as “Remain in Mexico.” This, very simply, provided that those who sought asylum needed to remain outside of the borders of the United States while their asylum claim was litigated and ultimately decided, knowing that only about 15 percent of people who claim asylum ultimately are awarded that by an immigration court.

The Biden administration ended construction of President Trump’s border wall, and, instead, spent Federal funds to store those materials that had already been paid for, squandering taxpayer dollars in the process.

And as this crisis was evolving and worsening, President Biden ended title 42 authority, the COVID-era policy that was the last string in place helping to keep the lid on the illegal immigration crisis. So not only did the Biden administration turn a blind eye to what was an international responsibility and thus a Federal Government responsibility, they went a step further and actually actively enacted policies to make it worse.

The Department of Homeland Security invited more illegal immigration when it created an app for your phone called the CBP One app, Customs and Border Protection app, which allowed immigrants to literally schedule an appointment at a port of entry in order to illegally enter the United States. Of course, even those who did not claim asylum were simply paroled or released into the interior, along with a work permit.

Here, again, there was no manner of deterrence saying: Well, if you want to enter the United States, you need to do so according to the rules in an orderly basis.

Essentially, all the rules were set aside, and a big green light and a welcome mat were laid out for anybody and everybody who wanted to come—and come they did. Tens of millions of people—we really don’t know exactly how many—took advantage of this open border policy by the Biden administration. Let’s say 10 million in round numbers. We know that about 1.7 million people were “got-aways,” which is what the Border Patrol calls those who were evading law enforcement who presumably are up to no good because they know they can’t enter otherwise because they have either a criminal record or they are transporting drugs or engaged in some other illicit activity.

At the same time that the Biden administration laid out the welcome mat to anybody and everybody who wanted to come to the United States across our border, they issued hundreds of millions of dollars in reimbursements to nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations that helped facilitate this illegal immigration through FEMA’s Emergency Food and Shelter Program. Instead of meeting their responsibilities to secure the border, they essentially funded those organizations that facilitated it.

Vice President Harris was assigned the task, as we know, of being the border czar that helped manage this crisis, but she failed to even understand the assignment and failed utterly at completing that assignment.

She visited the Texas-Mexico border once in sort of what I would call a driveby during the 4 years that President Biden and Vice President Harris were in office.

It is safe to say she had no concept or clue about what conditions were like on the border and how dangerous this open border policy was. Clearly she didn’t care and was unwilling to do anything about it.

On her one and only visit to the Texas border, she steered clear of the hotspots, like the Rio Grande Valley, which was the very epicenter of the border crisis at the time. Instead, she went to El Paso for a sanitized, made-for-TV visit. Different parts of the border are very different, and instead of going to the place where she knew the action would be, she went to a place that was relatively calm and sedate. But she did it for a TV hit and no other reason.

In 2024, when the Democratic Party deposed President Biden as their nominee and coronated Vice President Harris as their Presidential candidate, she suddenly found herself campaigning to be President of the United States, but she actually shirked from the responsibilities President Biden had given her as the border czar and claimed that she was never actually tasked to oversee the migration crisis.

Suffice it to say that the Biden administration’s handling of border security was an unmitigated disaster. As a consequence, the State of Texas, which has 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico, was basically left up to its own devices. We had no choice but to pick up the slack and try to secure some semblance of basic safety for Texans and the rest of the country. Everything the State of Texas did to fill the gap inured not just to the benefit of the 31 million people who live in Texas but to the entire Nation.

Governor Abbott initiated something called Operation Lone Star, which resulted in the apprehension of more than half a million illegal immigrants by Texas law enforcement. Thanks to Operation Lone Star, law enforcement arrested more than 50,000 criminals trying to make their way across the border. Texas also built 240 miles of border barriers when the Federal Government refused to do its job. And officers across the State have seized more than half a billion deadly doses of fentanyl, which is the No. 1 cause of death for young people between the age of 18 and 45 in this country. As a result of Operation Lone Star, without any help at all from the Federal Government, Texas was able to reduce illegal immigration into the State by 87 percent.

Unfortunately, the State had to spend nearly \$4.8 billion—money that should have been provided by the Federal Government—Texas taxpayers had to foot the bill for \$4.8 billion on walls and barriers, local grants to counties and cities, processing criminal arrests, and moving migrants out of small Texas towns. The State also spent \$3.6 billion to deploy the National Guard for building border barriers, guarding and constructing those barriers, and assisting Border Patrol and Customs

and Border Protection. Another \$2.25 billion has gone toward personnel cost for Texas State troopers, law enforcement who were responsible for repelling additional illegal immigrants, arresting those who were committing crimes, as well as transnational gang members, cartel members, human smugglers, and human traffickers.

But this was just the start. There were costs associated with the prosecution of border crimes. At Operation Lone Star's criminal processing centers, State game wardens had to pitch in to help control the Rio Grande River on the border to help prevent illegal entries, and criminal processing centers required health and safety services.

We are all familiar with the saying "There is no such thing as a free lunch," but President Biden and Vice President Harris failed to pony up for 4 years and then asked Texans to pick up the tab for their bill. All told, Governor Abbott and the State legislature had to spend more than \$11 billion to make up for the Biden administration's blunders and malfeasance and nonfeasance when it came to border security and immigration.

So it is not particularly complicated. Securing the country's borders is a function of the Federal Government. And \$11 billion is no small amount of money for a State—particularly one that doesn't have an income tax—to provide that benefits the rest of the country. But this is no different than when the Federal Government steps in to help States that have to deal with extraordinary expenses during the wake of a natural disaster, as they did for Texas in the case of Hurricane Harvey. But instead of a natural disaster, what we had during the 4 years of the Biden administration was a manmade disaster.

While every State became a border State during the last administration, there are costs that Texas had to shoulder that our neighbors had not. It is just fair and right and just for Texas taxpayers to be made whole for the border security responsibilities it took on as a result of President Biden's dereliction of duty.

I am proud to support Governor Abbott's request for the State to be reimbursed. My colleagues on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees should expect me and Senator CRUZ and the entire Texas delegation to be strongly advocating for reimbursement for Texas in the coming weeks. I look forward to working with them in order to make this a reality.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

TARIFFS

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk to you about President Trump's tariffs. The media is in full meltdown. They are in a full meltdown mode after President Trump imposed duties and retaliatory tariffs this week on countries that

have basically been ripping the United States of America off, and they have been doing it for decades.

Apparently, globalists and Democrats are just fine with other countries imposing tariffs on the United States, but when it comes to President Trump trying to equalize it up, establish a level playing field for domestic producers, well, that is a bridge too far.

No one has been paying attention to President Trump. If they have been paying attention to President Trump, they should not remotely be surprised. He campaigned on this platform three times and has been crystal clear on his intentions. Now he is following through on his campaign promises. But in the corporate media—it seems to still be confused about all these tariffs. So let me spell it out.

President Trump's view on tariffs is as both a negotiating tool to get other countries to do a few things that we asked them to do and a way to boost American manufacturing and put American workers and businesses first, not last. President Trump has his work cut out for him after a disastrous 4 years for our small businesses and our corporations under the Biden administration.

The Biden administration made it clear to our friends and foes alike that globalists—the globalist agenda would take precedence over the safety and well-being of the American people. It is mind-boggling. Thankfully, those days are over.

The American people gave President Donald J. Trump a clear mandate to restore our country's superpower status and put all Americans first, all businesses first, everybody that does something in this country, and that starts, No. 1, with securing our borders.

Like I said many times, if you don't have a border, you don't have a country. And we have really struggled in the last four years. That is changing. That is why the master negotiator in chief, President Donald Trump, threatened to impose 25 percent tariffs on Mexico and Canada in just the last couple of weeks.

Over the last 4 years, the Mexican Government basically turned a blind eye while caravans of illegal aliens overran our borders, coming from Mexico, coming from Central America, all over the world, just overrunning our country. Thousands of women and children were trafficked, raped along the way. Drug cartels made an absolute fortune—absolute fortune—not just with drugs, by the way, but from payments of these illegals coming all the way through either Central America or South America to the United States—with a big basically tariff of their own, charging these people to come to the United States.

Lawlessness had become the status quo under President Biden. Nobody cared. The Democrats in this room—they didn't care. They didn't care what was going on. Let's just let them all come in. Let's let the drugs come in.

We lose 300 people pretty much every few days to illegal drugs in this country with overdoses, but let's not worry about that. Let's just worry about controlling our country the way they wanted to. Well, it has been a disaster.

Mexico showed zero signs of willingness to negotiate when President Trump took office. When he did take office, on January 20, they woke up real quick. President Trump correctly understands that Mexico's economy is heavily dependent on the United States of America and the citizens of this country. In fact, more than 80 percent of Mexico's exports come to the United States—80 percent come here—and American citizens buy those products that are made in Mexico. Mexico's economy would almost instantly—almost—feel the effects of a 25-percent tariff, leaving Mexico's President, Claudia Sheinbaum, no choice—no choice—but to come to the negotiating table under the master negotiator, Donald Trump. So that is why he uses his tariffs—to get his point across—because people across the world take us for granted.

As a result, within hours—hours—of President Trump's announcement of the tariffs, Mexico caved. They saw real quick. Obviously, they are not stupid. They agreed to help the United States secure the border and crack down on the cartels and the illegal drugs coming in almost immediately. We could have done the same thing with the past administration, but it just shows you they couldn't have cared less what happened at our border.

Our neighbor to the north also caved to President Trump after a 25-percent tariff was threatened on Canada. Not only are illicit drugs, like fentanyl, coming into our country from Mexico, but there was also about a 2,000-percent increase in drugs that came across the border in 2023 and 2024 from Canada—a 2,000-percent increase. In the last fiscal year alone, enough fentanyl was seized at the northern border to kill 9.8 million Americans.

To me, that would be a very serious problem, but do you think the Democrats cared? No. There was no action at all by the Biden administration on Canada and no action on Mexico. But thanks to President Trump's leadership, our North American neighbors to the north and south are making changes now daily that will protect American citizens from deadly drugs, criminals, and human traffickers.

The No. 1 job of the President of the United States is to protect the people in this country first, and that is what President Trump is doing.

In addition to using tariffs as a negotiating tool, President Trump also views tariffs as a way to right the wrongs of past ineffective trade deals. That is why, this week, he is imposing a 25-percent tariff on all steel and aluminum imports, including those of Canada and Mexico.

Contrary to what the media is telling you, this isn't unprecedented. It is not