

the numbers of murders, rapes, and robberies have fallen dramatically.

Tragically, just 1 day before Thanksgiving, two members of the National Guard were targeted. It was an ambush attack, and it happened just blocks away from the White House. It was an act of terrorism. The act was not only on our National Guardsmen; it was on our entire Nation.

One of the servicemembers was Sarah Beckstrom. She was an Army specialist from West Virginia. She died on Thanksgiving Day. She was only 20 years old.

The other is Andrew Wolfe. He is a staff sergeant in the Air Force, also from West Virginia, and is 24 years old. He remains hospitalized in critical condition, fighting for his life.

We join all Americans in praying for them and their families.

The terrorist who attacked them was an Afghan national. He is one of tens of thousands of Afghans who were flown into our country following Joe Biden's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. We now know for a fact that thousands of these individuals were not properly vetted.

I specifically questioned Joe Biden's Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, here in the Senate about this, and I questioned him under oath. Under oath, he testified—Joe Biden's Secretary of State—that “most of them were not” vetted.

It didn't matter to Joe Biden. He waved them all into our country.

Republicans warned repeatedly that bringing people without proper clearance from a war-torn country was a major national security risk. The negligent Biden administration ignored the warning.

In 2021, 13 American heroes were killed in the botched withdrawal from Kabul, Afghanistan. One of them was Wyoming's own Rylee McCollum. He embodied the best of Wyoming. He was a marine. He joined the Marines on his 18th birthday.

I spoke at his funeral. He was Wyoming's wrestling champion. He was about to become a father. He was just 20 years old when he died. He was the same age as Sarah Beckstrom from West Virginia.

#### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the fallout from Joe Biden's disastrous decision hurt Americans then, and it continues to hurt Americans today. President Trump and Republicans are working to reverse these failures. The President is strengthening law enforcement. He is deporting criminals who are here in our country illegally, and he is taking a hard look at anyone who has been improperly vetted. His actions will make America safer and more secure.

Joe Biden's disgraceful withdrawal was not an isolated failure. It was part of a pattern of dangerous, destructive, and deadly policies. More than 10 million illegal immigrants entered our

country under Joe Biden and the Democrats. Millions more are known “got-aways.” They are individuals who were seen by the Border Patrol but never charged, never stopped, never questioned.

How many more terrorists slipped into our country because Democrats threw open the borders? Where are they now? What are they up to? We don't know.

Most Americans understand that national security begins with border security. That means we must stop people from entering our country illegally. It means we must ensure dangerous individuals do not enter our country, even through legal means, and it certainly means we must remove dangerous criminals that are in the country today.

As the Trump administration recently warned, “mass migration poses an existential threat to Western civilization.”

So what do the Democrats think? Well, on Sunday, on “Face the Nation,” CBS asked the junior Senator from Virginia if the vetting process should be strengthened after the shooting. Now, that is exactly what President Trump is doing. The Senator refused to answer that question. Instead, he told a national television audience that having the National Guard in Washington, DC, was a “political stunt.” He blamed President Trump.

“Political stunt”? It is a matter of public safety.

President Trump is the one who is protecting American citizens from terrorist attacks—attacks like the one witnessed last week, just in front of the White House. President Trump and Republicans want every American to be safe, to be secure, and to be prosperous. This is our top priority.

After last week's brutal attack, securing our border and our communities is more urgent than ever, and Republicans are going to continue to remove criminals from the streets and get the terrorists out of the country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, many of us bring life experiences to the Senate Chamber, and it shapes our judgment on critical issues.

When I was first married, my wife and I were blessed with a beautiful little baby girl. I was going to law school here in Washington, DC. It turns out that our little girl had a serious, serious medical problem.

The difficulty I faced was the fact that I had no health insurance. I was a law student, and I ended up going to Children's Hospital here in Washington, DC, with my wife and our little baby girl and sitting in the charity ward, which basically was there for people who couldn't pay their medical bills and had no health insurance. We

waited for the door to open and for our family name to be called out to meet, for the first time, the doctor who was going to treat my little girl.

I never felt more helpless in my life, as a father, to have that baby with that medical problem and to have no health insurance. I am sure that colored my judgment the rest of my life and my service of over 40 years in Congress.

I have always voted to give families a better chance of having health insurance. Having lived without it, I value it so much. It has been a major part of my feelings about healthcare and about the role of Congress.

And so then, 15 years ago, when President Obama, my former colleague from Illinois, was President of the United States and set out to achieve something that had never been done in the United States—to dramatically expand the coverage of health insurance to families that otherwise wouldn't qualify under the existing law or couldn't afford it—I worked hard to pass that bill. It took us a long time and a lot of effort.

I was whip of the Senate Democrats at that point, and I used to go to Harry Reid's office several times a day to talk about the next step in passing the Affordable Care Act.

The day finally came. I won't dwell on the minutia or the details of how we reached, but we did it. Unfortunately, throughout that process, we never—had one Republican vote of support, ever. We were fortunate to have 60 Democrats at the right moment politically to pass a bill in the U.S. Senate.

I was sorry that the Republicans didn't join us in this effort. They could have made a better bill out of it—I am sure of it—if they had joined us, but they decided not to.

And so, for the last 15 years, the Affordable Care Act has offered to millions of Americans health insurance coverage, which was unthinkable before it passed.

Let me give you a couple of examples.

There was a time when health insurance plans in the United States, before the Affordable Care Act, didn't cover mental health issues or addiction issues. You think to yourself, well, those are serious issues. They affect people's health. Why wouldn't they cover it? Because they are expensive, and they didn't want to.

But two Senators came out on the floor here—one a Democrat, Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, and the other a Republican, Pete Domenici of New Mexico—and pushed to include as a requirement, in all health insurance plans, that they cover mental illness.

I supported that. My family, like most families, has a story to tell when it comes to mental illness, and I viewed it as an issue of health, not an issue of a curse that a person has to try to outlive. So we included it. Thank goodness we did. Not only did mental illness have health insurance coverage, but

the addiction problem did as well. Just at the time, we entered into the opioid addiction, which swamped the United States and needed this kind of response in Congress. That was one thing.

The second thing, before the Affordable Care Act, if you had any history of any illness, coverage would be excluded for that illness when you got your health insurance plan. So most plans were worthless for people who came into the market looking for healthcare coverage if they had any history whatsoever. That was eliminated, and I am glad it was.

We also extended health insurance coverage for children of families to age 26. The belief was simple: When your child, your son or your daughter, graduates college and starts looking for a job, they may not have luck at the outset. They may not have a full-time job when they finally do find employment. And they probably, in those days, had no health insurance offered to them as part-time employees. So we let young people stay under their family health insurance plan until they reached the age of 26.

Those are the types of things that have been decried by many Republicans as socialism, too much government, too much regulation. But it meant that the health insurance market was actually worth something to families who otherwise were excluded from it or found it too expensive.

As I said, we passed that major legislation 15 years ago—roughly 15 years ago—at a time when not a single Republican would support it.

Now we are back into a period—and I listened closely to the Republican leader this morning—where we are asking: What are we going to do moving forward?

Here is the problem: For those people who had limited income, health insurance was beyond their reach. And so we offered a tax break—a tax credit—for people to help pay their health insurance premiums. Otherwise, they were too expensive. That health insurance tax credit helped millions of American families afford health insurance, and we moved forward.

But there came a time when the Republicans had a chance, with their own majority, to address the Affordable Care Act, and they started eliminating that health insurance credit.

As a consequence, many families—24 million, we believe, nationwide—face the prospect that their health insurance premiums are going to be too high and increase dramatically, beyond their reach in family income.

And that is exactly what is happening. Families across America who qualify for the Affordable Care Act health insurance tax credit are learning that their health insurance premiums are going up dramatically. I receive letters and contacts from people in Illinois, which I will put in the record in just a moment here.

But Senator THUNE, who is a friend and the Republican leader of the Sen-

ate, came to the floor this morning and pointed to two areas he thinks needed to be changed in the Affordable Care Act. One is whether your income level should be taken into consideration for the tax credit, and I believe it should and he does, too, I think. I don't want to put words in his mouth, but that is what I understood him to say this morning. Secondly, that there are zero premium policies that are being taken advantage of by some unethical people.

I think those are two legitimate areas of debate. I want to offer, as a Democratic Senator, my good offices and personal effort to try to fix those two problems if it means we can come together and restore tax credits for families that otherwise cannot afford their health insurance premiums. We are going to have a chance to do it.

And it was Senator THUNE who created that chance. He said the Democrats could offer a basic bill to improve the system, which I am sure we will. And I hope that the Republicans may offer amendments to it or may have their own approach that we can debate leading into it. The problem is, we have precious little time. It is supposed to be done before December 12, and that is only a few days away. Some of these changes are significant. We ought to take a little time to make sure we get them right.

I am just saying, as an offer—and I hope the American people follow this closely—this Democrat, and I am sure others as well on my side of the aisle, will sit down with Senator THUNE to try to address the problems that he raised this morning. They are legitimate concerns. We may see them a little differently, but let's discuss it.

Let's do something we hardly ever do in the U.S. Senate anymore: Let's legislate. Let's do it on a bipartisan basis. They don't have 60 votes on their side of the aisle, nor do we. But if we come together, we can muster 60 votes for a good change and say to millions of Americans with health insurance premiums they can't afford that there is a way out of this.

Let us extend the Affordable Care Act tax credits with some changes, as suggested, but do it for a period of time that is reasonable and gives people peace of mind. If we are concerned about the cost of living and family budgets, for goodness' sake, it starts with healthcare. Health insurance premiums can be so high, people have no choice.

#### OPERATION MIDWAY BLITZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to address another issue on a different topic. For more than 3 months, Chicago has endured President Trump's Operation Midway Blitz. It is a cruel campaign that swept up innocent citizens, legal American residents, and immigrants who pose absolutely no threat to public safety.

Remember why the President wanted to send troops and more resources to

the Department of Homeland Security into the city of Chicago? Because he was going after "the worst of the worst." He was going after terrorists, murderers, rapists, the criminally insane who somehow got into this country, and he was going to make it safer by going after them. What has actually happened? The Trump administration justified their actions by saying that they were going after "the worst of the worst," but what happened was just the opposite.

Federal agents, under President Trump, have used excessive force in Chicago while patrolling our streets, including deploying pepper balls and tear gas into crowds, using zip ties to contain women and children, and physically tackling peaceful protesters to the ground. If you think I am making this up, virtually everything I just said is verified by video.

In a hearing challenging the treatment of press and protesters by Federal immigration agents, U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis said the "use of force shocks the conscience" and "this conduct shows no sign of stopping," said the Federal judge. In contrast to this judge's observation, Border Patrol Chief Greg Bovino boasted in his deposition, almost mockingly, that "all uses of force have been more than exemplary." I will just tell you, Mr. Bovino, look at the videotape.

To rein in the lawlessness, Judge Ellis issued a preliminary injunction restricting the agents' use of chemical agents against protesters. Outside of a Lutheran church in Albany Park several weeks ago, after an 11 o'clock service broke up, the parishioners were leaving the church. The ICE agents were waiting on the sidewalk and dropped a tear gas canister in front of the church. Whistles were going off and eventually ICE agents left. But do you think would-be terrorists were at that Lutheran service? I don't think so. It was harassment in that neighborhood.

Judge Ellis issued a finding, a 233-page opinion, explaining her ruling on examining specific instances of Federal immigration agents' use of excessive force. While the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals has temporarily paused that injunction, which she issued while it considers the government's appeal, the court noted that Judge Ellis "has developed voluminous . . . robust factual findings" of wrongdoing by these agents.

And though some courts have acted as a critical guard against the President's lawlessness, those rulings don't change the fact that the Trump administration's militarized raids are dangerous political theater meant to spread fear and advance an anti-immigrant agenda.

After wreaking havoc in Illinois and now Charlotte, reports indicate the city of New Orleans is Greg Bovino's next target. I ask my Republican colleagues: What if this Midway Blitz comes to your State, your hometown? What is stopping the President from