

among nearly 200,000 Afghan nationals who were relocated to our country by the Biden administration under Operation Allies Welcome. This program was part of Biden's larger effort to make illegal immigration legal.

At the time, my Republican colleagues and I demanded answers from the administration about how they could possibly vet all the evacuees amid this chaotic withdrawal.

We must never forget that 13 U.S. servicemembers were murdered by a suicide bomber at the Abbey Gate during the evacuation, including SSG Ryan Knauss of Tennessee.

The Biden administration, however, insisted that the evacuees were properly vetted. The morning after the Abbey Gate bombings, Biden's Press Secretary Jen Psaki told the American people that all Afghan nationals were "screened and vetted prior to being allowed into the United States."

Well, that was a lie and a lie that has now cost the life of a U.S. servicemember.

In 2022, an inspector general report from the Department of Homeland Security found that the Biden administration "admitted or paroled evacuees who were not fully vetted into the United States," noting that "some information used to vet evacuees through U.S. government databases . . . was inaccurate, incomplete, or missing."

We can be grateful that President Trump is taking decisive action to strengthen vetting and prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again. He has halted visas for Afghan nationals and bolstered the vetting process for aliens from 19 high-risk countries. This is what it looks like when a President puts the American people first, and Congress should do everything possible to work with DHS and to support these efforts.

#### KIDS ONLINE SAFETY ACT

Mr. President, we have known for years that Big Tech has sold out children's safety online for the purpose of making a buck. Their algorithms connect children with drug dealers, pedophiles, and flood their feeds with pro-suicide content. Their AI chatbots sexualize children in role-playing fantasies. Their design features allow children to share their precise, real-time location on a map with anyone, including predators eager to track them down. Their entire profit model depends on addicting children to their product no matter the consequences. They are for doomscrolling by our kids.

Every day, we are learning more about this appalling abuse and addiction. A recent brief filed by more than 1,800 plaintiffs—1,800 plaintiffs—including parents and children, shows how Meta knowingly exposed children to unthinkable harms. According to the brief, Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, conducted internal studies showing that social media addiction among minors fuels anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and suicidal thoughts.

We all know that these numbers have soared over the past decade. Anxiety, depression, eating disorders, suicide coming from our kids—the numbers are soaring.

So Meta does some research, but here is the kicker that should disgust every single American: When these findings came out and the results were known, Meta buried the research and misled Congress about the results.

As a matter of policy, Meta allegedly refused to remove individuals who engaged in sex trafficking on its platforms until users reported the offender at least 17 times. This is unbelievable. They should never let them on in the first place. But Meta, whether it is Facebook or Instagram—they know that somebody is sex trafficking kids and women, and they still let them on their site. After they are reported once, they get a hand slap. And 5, 10, 15, 16 times, they get a hand slap. They get a notice, but they can stay in business. On the 17th time, they decide, well, that is too much, so they shut them down. Do you know what? A lot of those people go in, and they set up another account with another name, and they continue this sex trafficking mill.

It is disgusting and deplorable and revolting and every other negative adjective you can apply to this. How dare they do this, and how dare Meta let these human traffickers, sex traffickers, drug traffickers use their site to carry out illegal businesses.

Even when Meta detected child sexual abuse material—that is called CSAM—with 100 percent confidence, Meta often failed to remove the content. So they knew people were exploiting children. It is illegal. They knew they were being exploited, that children were being exploited, but do you know what? They didn't remove it. They let it go.

An internal audit even showed that the company knowingly—knowingly—connected minors with potential pedophiles and predators and groomers through its algorithmic "follow" recommendations. On a single day in 2022, it made such recommendations 1.4 million times. That is an accurate number. You have a website, you have a social media platform, and they know they are connecting kids to people that are going to harm and exploit them. In one single day, they do it 1.4 million times—total disregard for the children, total disregard for their welfare, total disregard for their well-being. They allow the exploitation to take place.

There are a couple of things we have learned about these big tech companies. First of all, they cannot be trusted to make their platforms safe by design because meaningful safety measures would cut into their bottom line. These are selfish, greedy people—people with the motto "Move fast and break things." Do you know what they are doing? They are breaking the lives of children and families.

This is why Congress must step up and ensure that these companies fi-

nally face accountability for the harm they have inflicted on an entire generation of our precious children.

Earlier this year, Senator BLUMENTHAL and I reintroduced the bipartisan Kids Online Safety Act. It would ensure that children are afforded the same protections from harm in the virtual space with laws we have passed that protect them in the physical world. The Senate's version of KOSA would establish a clear duty of care for online platforms to prevent their algorithms from pushing dangers on minors, including sexual abuse, illicit drugs, the promotion of suicide, and eating disorders.

That duty of care is critical. Requiring big tech companies to take responsibility for making their own products safer is essential to protecting kids and giving parents peace of mind and giving parents and kids a toolbox so that they are able to delink from that algorithmic black box.

You know what, Mr. President. It is amazing to me that in the physical world, if you sell alcohol or tobacco to a kid or expose them to pornography, take them to a strip club, the sheriff is going to come over, and they are going to lock your doors, and they are going to take you to jail. We have laws on the books. It is illegal to endanger a child. It is illegal to endanger a child's welfare and well-being. But in the virtual space, these reckless people at these AI companies and social media companies are developing these chatbots that sexualize and carry on sensual conversations with children. These social media platforms that connect kids to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, predators—they go every day about their business, endangering children and using our children as a product every single time they are online.

The need to do something about this is why we have now 70 cosponsors on the Kids Online Safety Act here in the Senate.

Last week, our colleagues in the House released a discussion draft of a new version of KOSA that would strip out the duty of care. I will tell you, when I looked at that, I thought, it looks like they gave it to Meta to mark it up, the way they redlined that, stripping out the duty of care so they could still take care of friends over at the big tech companies.

With the Senate version of the Kids Online Safety Act, social media platforms would be required to "exercise reasonable care in the creation and implementation of any design feature to prevent and mitigate . . . harms to minors where a reasonable and prudent person would agree that such harms were reasonably foreseeable." With the House version, platforms would only be required to "establish, implement, maintain, and enforce reasonable policies, practices, and procedures that address such harms." Without the duty of care to prevent foreseeable harms, this new requirement is completely unenforceable.

Let me give you an idea of what this would equate to and what it would compare to in the physical space. Let's just say that our counties and cities and States and the Federal Government decided that anybody ought to be able to go buy alcohol, tobacco, or drugs anytime they wanted to. Whatever you want to do, go do it. And kids as young as 7 or 8 years old would go and buy alcohol or drugs or go experience pornographic shows. You can't even take a kid into an X-rated or R-rated movie. But let's just say all those laws were stripped. That is what is happening in the virtual space because we do not have those protections in place.

It is so deeply disappointing to me that we have some in the House who say: Let's not worry about it. Let's not put any restrictions. Do you know what? That ought to be left up to parents and teachers and preachers to police this.

What if in the physical world you took away all of those laws? What if you said: We are not going to protect children. What if you said: We are not going to, as a society, put any constraints at all on minor children.

There is a reason children are referred to as "minors." There is a reason they don't get a driver's license until they are age 16 and they can't vote until they are 18. There are reasons we have laws to protect those that are vulnerable, to take care of our children. As you look at what came through the House version, it weakens the standard to prove that big tech companies have knowledgeable harms on their platforms. We know there are harms. We know they have done the research. We know this exists. We know that there are executives who want to bury their heads in the sand and play dumb. They think the American people are dumb. They think they are the gods of Silicon Valley. But do you know what? People have figured this out. They love their kids, and they want the Federal Government to do something about this—to establish standards, to exercise Federal preemption, and to pass the Kids Online Safety Act to make certain that children are going to be protected. Parents want to know that the Federal Government has their backs.

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

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

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, when Republicans tell you over and over, over a period of generations, that they have no interest in protecting people's healthcare, you should take them seriously.

For decades, since the days of Ronald Reagan, they have argued that Medicare is socialism, that Medicaid creates cycles of dependency, that the Affordable Care Act is making healthcare more expensive when, in fact, it is doing the opposite. So you should not be surprised that, given the opportunity to extend the Affordable Care Act tax credits and prevent people's premiums from more than doubling starting next month, Republicans do not have the votes to prevent that.

Look, this is not complicated. If Congress doesn't act this month, millions of Americans will lose their healthcare next year because they simply will not be able to afford to pay hundreds of dollars more every month for the same healthcare, and tens of millions of people will be forced to cut back on groceries or afterschool activities for their kids just so they can keep seeing their doctors.

The only way—the only way—to prevent the suffering that is about to happen is to pass a clean extension of these credits. There is no other plan. There is a lot of conversation—even on the left but also on the right—about how to reform the healthcare system. Nobody seriously thinks that can be accomplished in the month of December.

If we want to have a bipartisan conversation about how to fix the American healthcare system, count me in. This thing is a mess, between managed care and all of the subsidies and all of the sort of rent-seeking and the idea that most—maybe not most of the money but a substantial portion of the money in the American healthcare system goes to people and institutions and processes that don't deliver healthcare. There is utilization management. There is billing. There are pharmaceutical benefits managers. There are all kinds of rent seekers—people in the American economy, institutions in the American economy, and publicly traded companies in the American economy that take a cut out of your money that should be going to healthcare. That is a very important point.

If there were a bipartisan opportunity to fix that, count me in; count 47 of us in. But let's not kid ourselves: No one is getting that done by next week. So the question in front of us is a little more crisp and a little more uncomfortable than "Does the American healthcare system work efficiently?" Of course it doesn't. But these subsidies allow people to stay alive. These subsidies allow people to stay insured. These subsidies allow people to afford their healthcare so they can pay their rent or their mortgage or buy their groceries.

The question in front of us is not some big abstraction about public policy. We are not at some Axios event about what we should do about the American healthcare system. The vote in front of us next week is, do you want people to pay double and triple, or do you not want people to pay double and triple?

So let's stop messing around. Let's stop pretending there is some magical solution that will emerge over the weekend. We have got 47 votes. We have got 47 votes. I take some pride in being able to count. It is a weird business I am in that being able to count is such a unique skill, but I can tell you we have got 47 votes. So what does that mean? We need 13 votes over there. I can't even find 13 people who will verbalize that they would like to avoid this spike in premiums.

We have run out of time, and if Republicans want to solve this, there is a very straightforward path.

#### KIDS OFF SOCIAL MEDIA ACT

Mr. President, this week, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce is considering a package of bills aimed at protecting children on social media. For years, children and families across the country have been suffering from the mental health crisis precipitated by social media platforms, and it is well past time that Congress acted.

But I want to make one thing clear: This is not a question of retooling the settings or empowering users. We know—we know—from scientific research and data, as well as anecdotal evidence from every parent, teacher, or kid, that this is too big of a challenge to be solved by tinkering around the edges.

Tech companies have specifically designed their platforms to hijack the frontal lobes of impressionable children and feed them a never-ending stream of content that keeps them scrolling for hours. That is not simply going to be undone by more algorithmic choice or more conversations between parents and children at the dinner table.

Parents are asking for a very simple thing from their government—from their government—because these things are literally built in a lab to hijack a kid's frontal lobes before they are fully formed. Their profit motive is—we all know this—the longer they linger, the more eyeballs, the more revenue, the more money, the more profitability. So the more they addict your kid, the more money they make. And these things are more powerful than a 14-year-old's brain. They just are.

So the question in front of us is not to mandate that when you go into your social media account and you are 12 or you are 15, that you have the ability to tweak the algorithm. They are not going to do it—maybe 1, 2 percent. You know, some fancy-pants kid of a professor or of a Silicon Valley magnate is going to be, like, no phones and blah, blah, blah, but the rest of us need some help from our government to protect these children.

That is why Senator CRUZ and I and many others have developed the Kids Off Social Media Act. There is no good reason—no good reason—for an 8- or 9-year-old to be on Instagram or Snapchat, and until or unless companies are mandated by law to enforce