

some basic rules and stop profiting off of children, they will continue padding their bottom lines.

The Kids Off Social Media Act is not some intensely complicated piece of legislation. That is the problem in the Commerce Committee and in the Energy and Commerce Committee on the House side. There are so many smart lawyers and staffers who are going back and forth and doing 500-page bills, who tweak this and tweak that and have causes of action over it. This is what this bill does: There is a minimum-age threshold for children to get on social media, OK? Then, if you are still a minor but are permitted to get on social media—so from the ages of 13 to 18—algorithmic browsing is banned. So it is like the old Facebook where it is, like, just your friends. It is like a big group chat: “I made a cupcake.” “Look how cute my dog is.” “This is a sunset.” “I had a wipeout while surfing”—whatever. It is fun and useless but not damaging.

I promise you that parents across the country left, right, and center—TED CRUZ and I have a hard time finding areas of agreement. And I like TED. KATIE BRYTT and I have a hard time finding areas of agreement. Yet parents across the political spectrum and across geography believe that the way to protect kids is to simply delay the onset of the use of social media, which we have a perfect right to do under statutory law, and then, for those minors who are on social media, to turn off the algorithm. That is what we should pass.

Some of those House bills are constructive moves in the right direction, but they are nibbling around the edges. When we send something to the President's desk, it cannot be nibbling around the edges. This is not just a mental health crisis—and it is—it is a societal emergency.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

PAROLE AUTHORITY AND OPERATION ALLIES  
WELCOME

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I spoke earlier this week about the tragic incident that happened over the week of Thanksgiving here in Washington, DC, when two National Guardsmen were shot in the line of duty, and one of them died of her wounds.

Today, I would like to spend a little bit more time discussing the perpetrator of this act of violence and how he happened to be in the country in the first place.

The man who committed this crime was a 29-year-old Afghan national by the name of Rahmanullah Lakanwal. The Biden administration paroled him into the United States in 2021 as part of Operation Allies Welcome. He was not the recipient of any special immigrant visa process or processed through the overseas Afghan SIV Program. He was later granted asylum after his parole period expired.

But I would like to dwell on the word “parole” for a minute so that people

understand exactly how this shooter made his way into the United States and how he had come to stay here and commit these crimes.

Ordinarily, under immigration law, Congress would be engaged and pass certain immigrant visa legislation saying that you need to meet these criteria, these standards, in order to qualify. That is not what happened to the shooter of these two West Virginia National Guardsmen. He was paroled into the country, which means that the Biden administration simply allowed him into the country without any sort of background check or any sort of vetting.

We are more familiar with the word “parole” in the criminal law context, which comes to mind when people are released from prison following demonstrating good behavior, but in immigration law, “parole” is a provision under U.S. law that allows the Secretary of Homeland Security to allow certain aliens—and that would be foreigners—on a case-by-case basis—and that is important. It would allow certain aliens, on a case-by-case basis, to temporarily enter the United States.

Aliens who have been paroled into the United States are usually not eligible for entry into the United States or for a visa because they are barred by certain grounds of inadmissibility or removal that apply.

Parole is not a lawful immigration status or formal admission to the United States. I know this is fairly technical, but it is really important in this context. This shooter was not admitted into the United States as a result of any legislation that Congress passed or any of us voted for. It was solely done by the Biden administration and by the Department of Homeland Security during his administration.

Just as importantly, this power—this parole power—is only to be used in very limited circumstances, such as a medical emergency or because we find it is in our Nation's best interests, such as an individual alien cooperating with law enforcement or in a criminal prosecution.

Aliens who are paroled into the United States are only allowed to be here temporarily and under certain conditions prescribed by the Secretary of Homeland Security. Significantly, they do not—they do not—undergo the same formal screening process as those who apply for a green card or a visa.

Parole was never meant to be a vehicle for massive numbers of immigrants coming into the country or the sort of categorical parole done by the Biden administration, where people from certain countries were admitted by the tens of thousands, literally, each month. It is supposed to be done on a case-by-case basis.

So what I am suggesting is these sorts of categorical paroles that the Biden administration issued—including the parole which resulted in this shooter being in Washington, DC, and at-

tacking these two National Guard members—were illegitimate. It was an illegitimate use of this parole authority under U.S. law.

The Biden administration's abuse of the immigration laws, of course, is well known, and their abuse of parole authority. The very notion of mass parole is what you might call an oxymoron. In other words, it is inconsistent—mass, or categorical, and parole. There is an inherent contradiction. Using this authority illegitimately to allow massive numbers of immigrants into the country defies the very nature and purpose of this authority.

The Biden administration created a number of programs to extend parole status to immigrants from around the world. Under a program known as the CHNV, the Biden administration allowed as many as 30,000 individuals per month from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, as well as their immediate family members. They were admitted under this program of the Biden administration, again, illegitimately, using the parole authority to grant categorical or massive entry of these individuals into the United States. Under that program, they were allowed into the United States for a 2-year period of time and received a work permit. The Trump administration rightfully terminated this program in March of this year.

But that was not the only misuse of parole. After the disastrous fall of Afghanistan and the bungled evacuation, the Biden administration added insult to injury. Under Operation Allies Welcome, the Biden administration rolled out the welcome mat to Afghan nationals. As of 2023, the Biden administration had brought more than 70,000 Afghan nationals into the United States under this claimed parole authority. Again, parole is only supposed to be used on a case-by-case basis. But the Biden administration, by illegitimately exercising this authority, allowed 70,000 Afghan nationals into the country.

What that also means—and in particular relevance to this crime committed against these two National Guardsmen—is that there was not the normal sort of vetting process that you would see for refugees or anybody else coming into the country. We knew very little about these individuals, and we didn't check up on them once they got here. We didn't know whether they were criminals, whether they had ties to radical terrorist groups or anything. Of course, that is pretty consistent with the Biden administration. Their open border policies for 4 years let basically anybody and everybody who wanted to come into the United States in, including people who were determined to commit crimes and do us harm.

For some of these parolees, the U.S. Government under the Biden administration even allowed them to collect cash welfare benefits, such as Supplemental Security Income, SSI; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families,

TANF; and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. So not only did they come in unvetted and were allowed to stay here for 2 years, but they were given a work permit and given benefits that are paid for by you and me and the rest of the American taxpayers.

A video on the DHS website with information for Afghan nationals details that U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services will expedite asylum applications for those paroled under Operation Allies Welcome and that they may not even need to comply with the regular application filing deadline.

A cursory review of this program on the website—the Operation Allies Welcome website—exposes that the Biden administration was much more concerned with testing these immigrants for COVID-19 than ensuring they would not otherwise pose a threat to the American people.

The Department of Homeland Security inspector general reported that DHS paroled in at least two people who were known national security risks—known national security risks. And the Department of Defense inspector general wrote, in another report, that “Afghan refugees were not vetted by the National Counterterrorism Center using all DOD data prior to arriving in” the continental United States.

Now, when I have learned about this abuse of parole authority within Operation Allies Welcome, I raised the alarm bell. In October of 2024, I co-led a letter, along with my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee, to DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, back in the Biden administration. In this letter, we pressed the administration for answers on how foreign extremists, such as one Afghan national, Nasir Ahmad Tawhedi, who was arrested for his connection to an ISIS plot to commit a violent attack within the United States on election day—how people like that were slipping through the cracks in our immigration system. I guess the answer is there weren’t cracks; there were yawning gaps that you could drive a truck through—that anybody and everybody who was determined to come here could abuse and commit acts of violence and harm against the American people.

The Biden administration had claimed that Tawhedi, who had ties to ISIS, had a special immigrant visa, but that was not true. He never had been vetted for a special immigrant visa and was allowed into the country on parole. Here we go again.

And throughout the criminal investigation, the Department of Homeland Security continued to say that “no red flags were raised” during the parole vetting process. Well, of course not—if the parole vetting process is virtually nonexistent, how do you expect red flags to be raised?

The fact that a foreign national, who would later collaborate with ISIS on a terrorist plot within the United States, raised no red flags during DHS’s parole vetting process tells us all we need to

know about what that vetting process consisted of. It was obviously not sufficient. At minimum, it was insufficient to ensure that those entering the country did not pose a threat.

The letter I referred to a moment ago also referenced the Office of Inspector General report that found that the Department of Homeland Security had no established process for monitoring the Afghan parolee population as their parole periods expired. In other words, they were allowed into the country, ostensibly, for a 2-year period of time, given a work permit, given social service benefits, and no followup to make sure that, after their parole period ended, they returned to their country of origin or pursued some other legitimate pathway to allow them to stay legally in the United States.

Now, we sent this letter back in 2024 because of our concern that another foreign extremist might make their way into our country via this parole process and commit some act of violence. And it became increasingly clear, during Thanksgiving week, that our concerns were not unwarranted.

A 29-year-old Afghan national entered our country through the Biden administration’s abuse of parole authority under Operation Allies Welcome and murdered one of our National Guardsmen on duty.

Last week, Attorney General Bondi, alongside Federal and State law enforcement, arrested another Afghan citizen residing in Fort Worth, TX, for threatening to build a bomb and carry out a suicide attack against Americans.

There are many lessons to be learned from this sad experience, this sad episode. We simply cannot ignore the importance of thoroughly vetting for each and every person who enters our country to make sure that we are keeping out radicals who may want to harm Americans or criminals or other people who have no business being in the United States in the first place.

These horrific incidents should be a reminder to all of us that the decisions that are made here in Washington have real life implications on the lives of the people that we represent. And, I must say, the Federal Government failed this young National Guardsman who lost her life during Thanksgiving week, and we don’t know how many more potential threats are still out there because 70,000 Afghan nationals were paroled under this bogus Operation Allies Welcome program by the Biden administration. We don’t know how many more potentially dangerous individuals are spread around the country.

Last week, an American service woman lost her life because of the Biden administration’s abuse of parole authority. President Biden is no longer in office, but the consequences of his reckless immigration policies are still with us. And I fear they will be with us not for days, not for weeks, not for months, but for years and possibly longer.

I commend President Trump for freezing the processing of asylum and visa applications from Afghan nationals while we figure out what happened and figure out how to fix it. We have to get to the bottom of this in order to make sure that such a tragedy never happens again.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from New Mexico.

S.J. RES. 91

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, nestled in the far northeast corner of Alaska is one of the wildest and most untouched places left in North America: The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

I have been blessed to see this refuge with my own eyes. I have seen its towering peaks; I have seen the critical habitat on the Coastal Plain where caribou drop their calves; and I have seen its polar bears.

Over the course of a year in the Arctic Refuge, you might also see one of the last great spectacles of migrating caribou, dueling musk ox straight out of the Pleistocene, or rare spectacled eiders nesting on the Coastal Plain.

In fact, the Arctic Refuge is home to hundreds of iconic wildlife species, including 200 species of birds that have called this landscape home since long before humans stepped on this continent.

Simply put, the Arctic Refuge is the crown jewel of the American National Wildlife Refuge System, and it has been ever since it was set aside in 1960 by President Eisenhower to protect its wildlife and habitat values.

But that is only part of its story.

The Arctic Refuge is also deeply connected to the traditions and daily life of the people who have lived there for thousands of years—longer than this building, this city, this country have existed—because the refuge is not just land.

For wildlife, it is essential habitat. For many people who live there and are sustained by its caribou, this place is literally their grocery store. It is not just a reminder of the past, it is hope for the future. But that future is at stake.

The Arctic Refuge is under threat from the Trump administration’s relentless attacks on public lands, attacks that put so-called energy dominance above every other use, every other value.

Today, the Senate will vote on a congressional resolution of disapproval to overturn the management plan for the Arctic Refuge. And instead of a targeted approach that emphasizes things like subsistence hunting, wildlife conservation, and a focus on Tribal consultation, a vote for this resolution will—redundantly—open up the entire Coastal Plain of the refuge to be leased for oil drilling without local input.

I say “redundantly” because the Trump administration has already overturned this management plan. The Republicans in Congress have already