

would deliver lower prices at the gas pump and boost the farm economy. Anybody who believes that E15 won't reduce prices ought to check prices at the pumps in the eight States of the Midwest that have already received permission from the EPA for E15 year-round in those eight States. What we need to do is make sure it is, by law, year-round—E15 year-round—and nationwide.

At the top of the list of expenses for most families is housing. It used to be that the average first-time homeowner was 30 years old. Today, he or she is 41 years old. We have to get housing costs down for first-time homeowners.

The Senate has passed the 21st Century ROAD to Housing legislation. This should increase the supply of affordable housing by cutting redtape and unlocking private capital.

Last but not least, affordability requires fiscal sanity. Fiscal recklessness by the Biden administration caused inflation, and fiscal restraint is the ultimate antidote. Last year's reconciliation bill took a step in the right direction by trimming \$1 trillion in mandatory spending. Yet uncommonly high deficits and mounting debt continue to fuel inflation and put upward pressure on interest rates. To finally stamp out inflation, Congress must recommit to sound budgeting.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we are now more than 6 months—halfway through—the 2026 fiscal year, and somehow, thanks to my Democrat colleagues, there are still parts of the Federal Government that aren't funded for 2026.

Mr. President, 43 days—43 days—Democrats shut down the government last fall—the longest government shutdown ever—all because they couldn't bring themselves to accept a clean, nonpartisan funding bill. Now they have refused to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security for well over 50 days—all because they couldn't take "yes" for an answer.

Republicans and Democrats had reached an agreement in January to fund the Department of Homeland Security for the remainder of the fiscal year, but Democrats reneged on that agreement, demanding reforms to Immigration and Customs Enforcement—over and above the reforms, I might add, that had already been agreed to in the funding bill. Republicans offered to give them additional reforms. In addition to implementing reforms on its

own, the White House repeatedly offered Democrats a robust package of additional reforms.

But nothing was ever enough for the Democrats. They just kept moving the goalposts, and eventually—eventually—they just walked away. It turns out their objective wasn't actually reform; it was a political issue. They didn't want a solution; they wanted a talking point—although I think they have overestimated how well "defund law enforcement" is going to play in November, because, let's be very clear, that is what this is. If this were about making reforms to some of the ways law enforcement does business, then Democrats would have accepted reforms, but they didn't. Instead, shortly before Easter, Democrats voted to defund—defund—law enforcement at the Department of Homeland Security. They voted to defund deportation of criminal illegal aliens—individuals guilty of things like murder, assault, and sexual crimes against minors. They voted to defund drug interdiction. They voted to defund the DHS arm that investigates transnational criminal organizations, narcotics smuggling, and human traffickers. They voted to defund our border security. That is right—Democrats voted to defund U.S. Border Patrol. Apparently, the Biden administration, with its 4 years of record-breaking illegal immigration, was not an anomaly; Democrats really don't believe in defending our borders.

I have to say it is mind-boggling. Leaving aside the national security implications of Democrats' position, Democrats do realize that it was partly the Biden border crisis that helped sink their party in the last election, don't they? I would think so. Do they really think that defunding border enforcement—border enforcement—is going to give them a victory in November?

Since Democrats have chosen to abdicate their responsibility to fund key parts of the Department of Homeland Security, Republicans are stepping in. Thanks to our foresight in the Working Families Tax Cut, immigration enforcement and border security are funded through the end of this fiscal year. But it is clear we can't rely on Democrats to fund law enforcement when it comes time to pass fiscal year 2027 funding in September, and so Republicans are going to take up a reconciliation bill to fund border security and immigration enforcement for the next 3 years.

Senator GRAHAM and the Senate Budget Committee are already working on a budget resolution to set up consideration of this bill. And I want to see the Senate take up this resolution and the subsequent bill—the reconciliation bill—to follow without delay.

We need to keep this process tight and focused so that we can get this done. Otherwise, we are going to end up in the unacceptable situation where parts of the Department of Homeland Security are going unfunded, not just now, but for the long term.

I know the Republicans in both Houses of Congress are in complete agreement on the need to ensure that law enforcement is fully funded. And I am more than confident that if we work together, we can have legislation to the President in the near future.

As for my Democrat colleagues, well, I guess we will see how well open borders and defunding law enforcement play for them in November.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened to the Republican leader from South Dakota Senator THUNE in his remarks today, and I would like to say a few words that may be in disagreement with him on some of the things that he said.

Let me preface my remarks by saying the Republican Senate leader is my friend. I think he would count me as a friend as well. We have served together for many years. There are many things we agree on; many things we disagree on.

But that is what the floor of the Senate is all about: Men and women elected to the Senate come to the floor and discuss the issues that they or the people who gather in the Gallery or at home follow this debate.

And there are differences of opinion. It is not unusual. But what I have seen in the 30 years—this is my 30th year in the U.S. Senate representing the State of Illinois—is that despite these disagreements, there comes a moment where the doors are closed, cameras are gone, and Members of both political parties sit down and say: OK, can we solve this problem? Is there a way to solve it?

And let me tell you what this problem is, and for some of you, it will not be a surprise because you have witnessed parts of it. There was an effort made by this President when he was elected to start a massive deportation effort. That is how they characterized it. It was massive.

Millions of people living in America would be forced to leave. And the Agency, the Department of Homeland Security would be in charge of that effort. We heard the President explain over and over and over again at his rallies what his goal was.

He used the words, you will recognize them: We are going to expel the "worst of the worst." Terrorists, murderers, rapists, criminally insane, sex and drug traffickers, they are gone. They never should have been allowed in this country, and now, they are going to be gone.

Well, let me hold up my hand and say: That is a worthy goal. I believe,

having been involved in the debate on immigration for decades now, there are some basics that I believe, and most Senators of both parties agree. Let me see if they ring true to you as well.

We should never knowingly allow a dangerous person to come into this country—never knowingly allow a dangerous person to come into this country. And if they are in this country seeking legal status and citizenship and are dangerous or commit a crime, they are gone. I think most Americans would say: Well, that just makes sense. We don't want dangerous people here. And if they come here and want to be part of America for any period of time, they have to demonstrate that they will be positive, contributing to this society and our economy.

What happened to the previous administration with the border, I am not going to debate one way or the other. We are in the present dealing with the second year of this President's term, and we are dealing with the situation as of today. The question is, What are we going to do about it?

Because it turns out that President Trump's promise to go after the "worst of the worst" was a promise that was not kept. I know it personally from the city of Chicago because the ICE forces showed up in Chicago.

I went over to their facilities. I asked as a Senator to see some of the people who were being held. They refused me that opportunity. It was the first time ever. They said: This is too dangerous a situation. We can't let you see the people we have arrested.

Well, it turns out that the legal reports of the people who were arrested and the people detained and the people sent away did not just include a handful of people who were dangerous but many more who were not dangerous. They have not broken any laws, and yet they were deported.

Some of them were American citizens, arrested by the ICE Agency. And now remember what happened in the streets of Minneapolis. We all saw that video over and over again. Two innocent Americans protesting, as they have a right to do under the Constitution, were killed on the streets of Minneapolis by ICE agents.

When they were asked later on by the Agency who were these people, they said they were domestic terrorists. They called them domestic terrorists. And when they took a look at their background, it turned out it wasn't true. One of them was actually a nurse in a veterans hospital in Minneapolis.

And so we said to ourselves: What is going on here? Thousands of ICE agents descending on populations in cities like Minneapolis and Chicago, deporting people from those cities, and they don't fit the definition of dangerous people, dangerous criminals. We have to do something about it to clean this up.

And why would we have ICE agents wearing masks? Why are they hiding their faces? I will just tell you: If your

home State is South Dakota like the Republican leader or Illinois like myself, our policemen don't wear masks; our State troopers don't wear masks; our deputy sheriffs don't wear masks. What is going on here? I know what is going on, and you do too.

It strikes fear in the hearts of a lot of people to see those folks heavily armed with combat type uniforms wearing masks. It is to create fear; it is not for effective law enforcement.

What we have tried to argue on this side—the Democratic side of the aisle—is we ought to use the same standards for the ICE agents that we use for police in our own States. That makes sense to me. I have talked to a lot of law enforcement about this, and they say: Our people don't wear masks, and they don't need to.

Now, if they are undercover agents, different thing, keep them safe, do what you need. But that is a rare circumstance, a limited number of people that it applies to.

So we have gone back and forth for weeks now as to what to do to reform the ICE agents and those who are working for this effort for masks and deportation. I thought we were at least moving in the right direction, but we had limited success.

And so we said on 11 different occasions to our friends on the other side of the aisle: Republicans, join us in doing this. Let's fund everything else in the Federal Government, everything else in the Department of Homeland Security, and leave this one area, ICE agents and such, which we are debating, separate.

We offered that amendment 11 times, and 11 times they voted no. Now, they can explain why they voted no. I happen to think they believed it was politically right for them to stick with the President at that point.

But we have gone beyond that point now. Just 2 weeks ago, Senator THUNE from South Dakota the Republican leader came to the floor and asked for unanimous consent to pass a funding bill, which excluded ICE from being included into it, and it passed here.

It was sent over to the House of Representatives where there is a Republican majority; they rejected it. They said: We want everything funded or nothing. So they funded everything, which brought us to a standstill again.

Needless to say, this needs to be resolved and soon. The good news is that the Agencies at the Department of Homeland Security like the Coast Guard, CISA, and FEMA, and a lot of other Agencies which you may be familiar with are going to be funded, but we still have to work out the ICE agents part. That is an important element in this, and it should be done and done right to make sure that our constitutional rights are protected.

If any law enforcement agent in any State that you happen to live in decided that it was time to search your home and to crash down your front door to get into your home, they would

need a judicial warrant for that purpose. Arguments are being made by some that ICE agents should be excepted from that; I think that is wrong. If you don't have a court that says you have legal authority to tear down my front door and come into my home and arrest me, then you shouldn't do it. You need a judicial warrant, except in the most extreme circumstances, and that doesn't apply to what ICE is doing. So that issue still is out there.

That is the background that Senator THUNE was alluding to. He sees it differently than I do, but that is not new in the Senate. There are always differences of opinion. The question is, Will we come together now and try to work out those differences? We have 3 weeks, this week and two more, that we will be in session. This is an opportunity to get it done. No excuses. Both parties, Democrats and Republicans, let's get it done, starting this week.

I am ready to stand and volunteer for that effort if I can help, but it should be done, and done soon.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Mr. President, earlier this month, President Trump announced that he was firing the Attorney General Pam Bondi. I would say it is no surprise. She has been politically controversial. She has done things in the little over a year that she served that are unprecedented. She transformed the Department from the Nation's preeminent law enforcement Agency into a political entity. Apparently, she didn't go far enough to please the President, and he fired her.

At the core of this MAGA makeover at DOJ was a systematic purge of career professionals. I have met with them, men and women working for the Department of Justice with years of experience, prosecuting cases, going after criminals and terrorists and the like. Hundreds of these experienced prosecutors were forced out, stripping the Department of decades of institutional knowledge and experience.

The acting Attorney General now, since Bondi was fired, is named Todd Blanche. He recently said that there remained no more employees in the Department of Justice and FBI that worked on the criminal investigations of President Trump. They have all been fired, forced out.

The impact over the last year can't be overstated. The Department recently said its National Security Division is facing unprecedented personnel constraints at a time when our country is embroiled in a significant international conflict in Iran.

At the same time, the Department under former Attorney General Bondi was quick to welcome individuals who were involved in violent efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

I mentioned earlier that I have been in the Senate for 30 years. There are moments I will never forget, and one of those was January 6. That was a time when we were counting the ballots in