

We need safety and security for the American people.

What we have seen after month and month and month of Democratic obstruction is very clear: Democrats want to go back to the days of the chaos of open borders, people streaming across the southern border into our Nation. Republicans are not prepared to allow them to do it.

The American people deserve to feel safe at home, safe in their communities. We deserve to have a homeland that is secure. That is why I am saying it is time to pass the Secure America Act.

Earlier this month, U.S. Border Patrol secured a historic record. The record is that for a full year—now that we have a Republican majority in the House and the Senate and Donald Trump in the White House—for a full year, not a single illegal immigrant was released into this country now that we have ended catch-and-release. Catch-and-release no longer exists. Our border is more secure than ever.

But security, of course, is not ever guaranteed. The border is secure because enforcement today is strong and there is a commitment by this administration to enforce the law. But the danger hasn't disappeared. The danger still exists, because just a week ago, U.S. Border Patrol agents and Texas Highway Patrol, working together, arrested 12 illegal immigrants in this country in Southwest Texas. The arrest occurred late at night on a private ranch near our southern border. Among those arrested are six Chinese nationals. All of them were military age, and all of them were captured wearing military-style camouflage—in our country, six Chinese nationals illegally here wearing military-style camouflage. We are not talking about kind of ordinary illegal immigrants here. They are what law enforcement classifies as “special interest aliens.” Now, a special interest alien is a noncitizen whose country of origin or travel history raises concerns of serious national security, a threat.

Special-interest aliens are subject to enhanced security scrutiny, as they should be. These six Chinese nationals wanted to avoid getting caught. We still don't know who they are. We don't know where they came from. We don't know how they got here. We don't know who they planned to meet or where they planned to go next from this remote-site ranch in Texas.

This situation reminds us of a core security principle: National security starts with border security.

Congress cannot allow Democrats to strangle the resources that the Border Patrol needs to keep our Nation safe. The U.S. Border Patrol stands on the frontlines of America's safety. Those are the men and women—the people in Border Patrol—who patrol areas that are rugged and remote, and they put their lives on the line for the rest of us.

They continue to secure our borders. They keep illegal immigrant criminals

out of our country. And they do dangerous and diligent work because they know it is what makes the American people safer.

Joe Biden and the Democrats shamelessly failed to secure the border. Joe Biden and the Democrats undermined the men and women of our Border Patrol.

They turned our southern border into a turnstile. Over 10 million illegal immigrants entered our country in those 4 years of the Biden administration. There was no enforcement of the law at the border. It was only abandonment of our border.

President Trump and Republicans have the common sense and the commitment to secure the border. Through the Working Families Tax Cut law, we invested \$170 billion in border security. That is the largest border security investment in American history. Republicans funded the border wall, and we ended Joe Biden's ridiculous catch-and-release plan. We restored the program of “Remain in Mexico” and cracked down on the cartels. We gave Border Patrol the tools and the resources they need to do the job to keep our Nation safe, and Republicans remain resolutely committed to keeping our Nation safe.

By contrast, we heard it here again from the minority leader today: Democrats continue their commitment to open borders and to defunding the police.

Democrats in the Senate right now, this very moment, are obstructing the funding of Border Patrol. They have been doing it for months, month after month after month. This has gone on here since January.

Democrats are choosing protecting illegal immigrants over protecting the American people. They want to defund the police. They want to defund American security. And they are choosing open borders over a secure nation.

That is what their party has become. Listen to their candidates running around the country, running in primary elections. It is a run to the far left—the radical, extreme, dangerous, scary left—who want open borders and want to get rid of immigration control enforcement.

They want to stand with the criminals and the cartels and the foreign adversaries, who right now are watching what we are doing in Washington, DC.

Defunding the Border Patrol is a dream to every criminal in the world who wishes to take advantage of innocent Americans. Why in the world are Democrats standing with them?

If we are serious about safe and secure communities, we must fully fund border security. Democrats will continue to vote against it.

Republicans are standing with the Secure America Act, and we are going to vote on that. It is going to fully fund Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement and do it for the next 3 years. This is going to give law enforcement the tools that they

need to keep illegal immigrant criminals and the cartels and the terrorist suspects out of our country. Republicans support the United States Border Patrol. We will deliver the resources that they need to give the brave men and women of our Nation who are committed to the safety and security of the American people what they need to do their job and to keep us safe.

That is what this is all about. It is, Who are you going to stand with? Who are you going to protect? The Democrats wanting to stand with and protect illegal immigrant criminals? Republicans standing with the safety and security of the American people?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The minority whip.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. We heard it so many times: Rapists, murderers, terrorists, the criminally insane, child predators—we are going to unleash the forces of the United States to keep us safe from these threatening people and dangerous people.

No argument here. But I think you can find, on both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans who agree those people should be the subject of law enforcement, and they shouldn't be allowed to live in our communities, period.

But what has actually happened with this war on immigration from the Trump White House? I have seen it firsthand in the city of Chicago, Aurora, and many other places in my State, where the ICE agents have arrived. America saw it firsthand in Minneapolis, when the ICE agents on the streets killed—murdered—two innocent people who were merely protesting, as they have a right to do under our Constitution.

So where are we today? Well, we are considering an appropriations bill, I assume today or at least this week, called reconciliation, which will appropriate more money for immigration enforcement than ever in our history.

And to give you an idea of perspective of whether it is proportionate to the threat that we face, consider this fact. The amount of money that will be appropriated for ICE agents—remember the people wearing masks in Minneapolis? The amount of money that the Republicans want to appropriate is larger than the appropriations for the U.S. Marine Corps—the U.S. Marine Corps—one of our best fighting units in the history of the United States. They want more money to go after illegal immigrants.

So the question, obviously, is how are they doing with the billions of dollars that are being spent on ICE and Border Patrol? How are they doing? It turns out that six out of the seven people who have been arrested by this immigration force had no criminal record whatsoever—six out of seven.

You ought to listen to the story of one of these people and come to understand what I am talking about.

This is Juan Chavez Velasco. What does he do for a living? He is a medical laboratory scientist.

How long has he lived in the United States? Twenty-five years.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Juan was a frontline worker at the hospital in his hometown. He never missed a day of work.

Juan has a problem, though. He is undocumented. His parents brought him to the United States when he was 8 years old. They made the decision to come to this country. Juan was in the backseat of the car.

For more than a decade, his ability to live and work in this country has been protected by one thing: DACA. You see, Juan is a DACA holder.

What is the DACA Program? Let me give you a minute or two of background. Over 20 years ago, I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act. And the DREAM Act said, if you were brought to the United States by your parents as a child—an infant, a toddler, a child under the age of 18—they made the decision to come to this country. You came with them. You were part of the family. And they didn't file the right paperwork for you. You are undocumented in the United States. The DREAM Act said, if there was a violation of law, you shouldn't be held responsible at 8 years of age due to your family's decision to come to this country.

What have you done with your life since? Have you gone to school? Have you committed a crime? There are serious questions we should ask.

But if you pass those tests, if you pass a criminal background check—a criminal background check—if you pay \$600 every 2 years, you can have what is known as DACA. DACA is protection for you to work in the United States legally and not be deported.

Juan is one of those people, a medical laboratory scientist, protected by DACA, and he has been for years. With DACA, Juan has been a contributing member for our country for years.

And then President Trump was elected to a second term. Everything changed.

In February, Juan was driving to deliver milk to a hospital to his infant daughter in the NICU, and he was stopped by ICE agents. You remember that you saw them on television. They wear the masks. They dress in camo. They carry guns around.

His wife Stephanie was on the phone with him as ICE agents questioned his immigration status, and they decided to detain him. He told them point-blank: I am a DACA holder. Every 2 years, I have to register and pay \$600 and go through a criminal background check, as required by Executive order and law. I have done all those things. They ignored him.

What happened to Juan? He was detained in ICE detention for 3 months.

When his son Damien visited him in detention, he sobbed at the sight of his father behind a glass barrier. He could not understand why the government took his dad away from him.

Juan was finally released last month, after his wife Stephanie bravely testified at a spotlight hearing that I convened. But he is not yet free. Juan still lives in fear that, any day, ICE agents could return and take him away from his family and deport him to Colombia.

Juan's story is heartbreaking, but it is only one of many stories from Dreamers who have been targeted by the Trump administration.

He is no danger. He is no criminal. He shows up, as the law requires, every 2 years, pays \$600, and goes through a criminal background check and then goes to his job at a medical laboratory in his hometown.

Upon returning to office, the President has used every tool at his disposal to thwart the protections of DACA, which was created to give young people like Juan a chance to remain in the United States. Last year, ICE arrested 261 people just like Juan, deporting 86 of them, all of them DACA holders.

And even those who have not been detained have been facing unprecedented delays in renewing their DACA status. They have shown up, as they are supposed to, when they are supposed to, and they are told: We are not going to approve you.

Without renewal, these young people will lose their ability to work legally in the United States and will not be protected from deportation.

The administration's attack on immigrants goes far beyond DACA. With President Trump and his close friend and adviser Stephen Miller in the White House, no immigrant is safe from this administration.

Last month, the Trump administration announced it would force legal—legal—immigrants to leave America and apply for a green card back in their country of origin, except in rare circumstances. That means immigrants who may have been here for years, who married a U.S. citizen, who have children who are citizens, would have to leave their families for God knows how long.

Rural communities, incidentally, have doctors and medical professionals that fit right into this category. They would lose the only doctor in town.

And with bans in effect preventing consular processing for green card applicants from 75 countries, there is no assurance that once having left the United States, they could ever return.

Of course, the implementation of this policy has been chaotic. After an outcry across the country, the Department of Homeland Security claimed to have rolled back their decision, saying applicants who "benefit the national interest"—whatever that means—would not be affected.

But it remains to be seen how this administration will define "national interest."

Will spouses of U.S. citizens qualify? Will immigrants sponsored for a green card for their work as doctors and nurses be allowed to stay in this country? We honestly don't know the answer to that.

The terror and fear that this administration seeks to inspire in legal immigrants does not make our Nation great. It undermines the promise we made to these people. We said to them, under DACA, if you do the right thing, if you work with government Agencies, if you are honest and don't commit a crime, we will protect you. And now the Trump administration is reversing this.

These are individuals who have lived in America for years, graduated alongside our kids, married and had their own U.S. citizen children, and are contributing to our communities.

Why would we want them to leave? As the Senate prepares to consider the upcoming Republican budget bill, which would put another \$70 billion into the President's mass deportation program, I urge my Republican colleagues to stand up and look at this honestly. I think we can agree on some basics. Let me say a few.

No. 1, we should never knowingly allow a dangerous person to come into this country.

No. 2, if someone is in this country, seeking legal status or permanent status, and has committed a dangerous crime, they are gone. Period.

No. 3, the United States cannot absorb every person in the world who wants to come into our country at this time. It has to be an orderly process.

If we agree on those three basic things, can we finally sit down and write immigration laws that make sense in the 21st century? I think we can. But we have got to take hatred and cruelty off the table. We have got to be honest and sincere.

Juan should have a future in this country. He is doing something good for this country now in this medical laboratory. He is obeying the law. He is showing up as he is supposed to. He is paying every 2 years his fee of \$600, and he goes through a criminal background check.

He was brought here at the age of 8, for goodness' sake. Wouldn't you give him a chance to earn his way toward legal status in this country? I would, the DREAM Act would, and so would DACA.

As the Senate considers the appropriations before us for recordbreaking amounts of money, to the poor people like Juan, I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: Take a look at the reality of the situation. Stop depending on labels. These are real human beings who are doing their best to make this a better country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

IRAN

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday, at the Senate Foreign Relations