

And when I say “defund,” I mean defund. Democrats opposed giving these Agencies a single dollar. And I hope—I really hope—that my Democrat colleagues are not going to attempt to defend themselves by claiming that they simply wanted reforms of these Agencies and that Republicans wouldn’t give them to them, because as the record amply, amply reflects, Democrats were offered reforms again and again. The White House not only made reforms on its own; it repeatedly offered Democrats a robust legislative package. But Democrats weren’t interested, presumably because they somehow thought that “defund law enforcement” and “abolish border security” would play well for them in November.

Of course, I am pretty sure most Americans don’t think we should eliminate security at our Nation’s borders or open the floodgates for unchecked illegal immigration. But that hasn’t stopped Democrats from embracing “defund the police 2.0.”

I am happy to report that, as of Friday, Democrats’ crusade to defund border security and law enforcement is well on its way to failure—for now—for now, at any rate. Senate Republicans passed legislation to fund Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement for the next 3 years to ensure that Democrats can’t try defunding these Agencies again this fall. But it is deeply disturbing that we are in this position, that we are having to use the reconciliation process just to get normal appropriations passed for border security and immigration enforcement.

The damage that Democrats caused in the 2026 fiscal year has been immense: two recordbreaking government shutdowns, critical workers at DHS left for months without pay, government workers lined up at food banks, TSA agents quitting in droves. And that is not to even mention what could be irreparable harm to the appropriations process here in the Senate.

And then there is our subject today, “defund the police 2.0”—the Democrats’ resolute refusal to spend a single dollar protecting our Nation’s borders or deporting criminals here in our country illegally.

It is absurd that Republicans are having to act unilaterally to fund basic national security responsibilities.

What is the Democratic Party going to propose defunding next? The DEA? The FBI? Our Nation’s military? Where exactly does this insanity end?

The Democrat leader has repeatedly attempted to cloud the issue, going so far as to make the insane suggestion that Congress somehow has to choose between our national security responsibilities and addressing the challenges facing hard-working Americans—to which I say not only can we walk and chew gum at the same time, but we have an obligation to do so. It is our responsibility as Members of Congress to work to alleviate not only the economic challenges facing Americans but

to protect our Nation’s security, and that includes securing our borders and attempting to ensure that criminals, drug traffickers, terrorists, and other dangerous individuals do not make their way into our country and that, if they do make their way in, they are identified and deported.

As long as Republicans are in charge, we will be focused on both the economic challenges facing our country and on securing peace and safety for hard-working Americans. On our watch, there will be agents at our borders to prevent terrorists, traffickers, and other dangerous individuals from making their way into our country, and there will be agents to take criminal illegal immigrants off of America’s streets.

I only wish I could say the same of our Democrat colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

#### IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I met a woman at a hearing, from Chicago, which I am honored to represent. Her name was Marimar Martinez.

On a Saturday morning, last October, Ms. Martinez decided she had some spare clothes that she was going to take to her church to give to people who needed clothing. She got in her car on Kedzie Avenue and was driving along, when she ran into a group of ICE agents, who stopped her.

She is Hispanic and appears to be Hispanic, and they decided to question whether or not she was in America legally. She had committed no crime, violated no law. She was just driving, looking Hispanic, which was enough for them.

Before it was all over, she was driving away from the scene and was shot five times by the ICE agents. How this woman survived, I will never know, but she did. And, of course, she had to go through a lot of hospitalization and a lot of trouble. But she insisted to the ICE agents that she had never violated the law.

And when it was all over, they sought her out at a hospital and arrested her and then, within days or weeks, dropped all charges. They argued, in the original charge, that her car had crashed into one of the ICE agent’s cars and therefore she had committed a criminal act.

When it was all over, that car was removed from the scene and never produced again. They took it to New England, for goodness’ sake, from Chicago so that no one could actually look to see if there was any damage on it. There wasn’t.

Marimar Martinez survived. It was nothing short of a miracle. She was swept up into this hysteria that President Trump started at his rallies, where he would get up and say over and over again: We have to stop these rap-

ists and murderers and terrorists and the criminally insane and child predators who came across the border under the Biden administration. We are going to get them, and we are going to send in people to make sure that happens.

In came the ICE agents. Did you happen to watch what happened in Minnesota? Did you notice the two innocent individuals who were protesting for sure but were not violating the law, who were shot down and killed in Minneapolis?

That is what has happened here and what has led to what the Republican leader just described, the difference between Democrats here, Republicans there, about how we should handle this issue.

Let me say here again what I have said many times. I was chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I am now the ranking Democrat. Immigration is one of our issues, and here is what I think is the bottom line I feel everyone agrees with—I hope they do. The bottom line is this: We should never knowingly allow a dangerous person to come into this country. Short declarative sentence: Never knowingly allow a dangerous person to come into this country.

Second, if someone is in this country and wants to stay, wants any kind of legal status, and commits a dangerous crime, they are gone, no ifs, ands, or buts. They are gone.

Third point, we need an orderly process at our border. We cannot accept all of the people in the world who want to immigrate to the United States at this moment. There has to be an orderly process.

Those, I think, are the three basic principles that most Americans agree on. Some will disagree.

But I come to this issue with a personal agenda. My mother was an immigrant to this country. She was brought here at the age of 2. Hers was a poor family from Lithuania that came to the land of opportunity—East St. Louis, IL, where I was born and raised.

My grandfather worked jobs that required manual labor, as immigrants do. They took jobs other people wouldn’t consider. And here, the next generation produces a grandson who was elected to the U.S. Senate.

That is my story. That is my family’s story. That is America’s story. We are a nation of immigrants—some brought here involuntarily, some came here voluntarily—and it has made us a great nation. I am proud of it.

In my office just a few steps from here is my mother’s naturalization certificate by my desk. I want everyone who comes to my office to know I am the proud son of an immigrant. I don’t believe immigrants are inherently evil or bad. I think just the opposite—they are people who come here and work themselves to death so that their kids have a better life.

We have now reached a mindset in this country that anyone who wants to come here is suspected of a crime or

dangerous conduct. We should do a background check for sure. But listen to what happened.

I have been in the Senate for a number of years, and 20 years ago, I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act basically said: If you were brought to the United States as a child, grew up in the United States, and have nothing serious in your background that raises any question; if you went to that school every day and pledged allegiance to that flag believing you were part of America, you deserve a chance to earn your pathway to citizenship.

That is what the DREAM Act said.

Lucky for me, one of my colleagues in the Senate by the name of Barack Obama was a cosponsor of my bill. Turns out he got a promotion from the Senate and became President of the United States.

I wrote him a letter cosigned by Senator Richard Lugar, Republican of Indiana, asking him by Executive order to try to create a mechanism like the DREAM Act that gave these kids brought to America a chance to earn their way to citizenship. He came up with something called DACA.

Under DACA, these young people, if they would step forward and identify themselves to the government—they are undocumented—if they identify themselves to the government, if they were brought here as children, we would give them a chance. But the chance was simply this: You can legally work in the United States, and you won't be deported. Every 2 years, you have to apply for DACA again—every 2 years—pay a \$600 fee every 2 years, and go through a lengthy criminal background check. If you pass it, you get DACA for another 2 years.

Mr. President, 980,000 young people stepped forward in the United States to sign up for DACA. How are we doing with these people from DACA? Pretty good. They are teachers. They are nurses. They are doctors. They are policemen. They are serving in our military. They are proving the point they wanted to make: They love this country; they believe they are part of this country. They are not the problem. They have never been the problem.

So what is the Trump administration doing to them? Denying them another opportunity to sign up for another 2 years. Their time is up. They are ready to do it, and they are holding them back. Sadly, they are deporting these young people who have done nothing wrong except try to prove themselves to be loyal Americans.

So when you look at the environment here created by the Trump administration on the issue of immigration, you see overwhelmingly that you have to sit and listen to the whole story. Of every seven people who are arrested and deported by ICE under the Trump administration—out of every seven, six of them have no criminal record. They are not the rapists and the murders and the terrorists. They are people who live

next door to you. They go to the same church you go to. They are the ones who just took care of your sale at the convenience store. They are doing their thing in America, and they are not breaking any laws, and the Trump administration has said they still have to be deported. That, I think, is too much.

When it comes to this debate over funding ICE, what the Republican leader—and he is my friend. JOHN THUNE is my friend from South Dakota. We disagree on a lot of politics. I respect him as a person. We disagree on this issue. And when he talks about these individuals who are involved with the ICE agents and Border Patrol and such and how they need to be funded, what he doesn't mention is we have already funded them for this year and last year.

Do you know what the funding level is for those Agencies? It is more than the appropriation for the U.S. Marine Corps—more than the appropriation for the U.S. Marine Corps for these ICE agents who insist on wearing masks and don't want to be held responsible for what they are doing in the streets of Chicago and Minnesota and other places.

I think it is reasonable to say to them: You should be held to the same standards as any law enforcement official in America.

My State troopers in Illinois don't wear masks. The sheriff's deputies don't wear masks. The policemen in Chicago don't wear masks. They wear video cameras, which we are insisting that these ICE agents also carry. They have their names above their badges so that you know who they are and can hold them responsible for any misconduct.

It is not unreasonable to do this. The Republicans say: No. We will make the rules.

You probably saw—maybe you didn't; it was a Chicago occurrence, and we all saw it—when they broke down the door of a man's home and went in and said: You are undocumented. We are going to deport you.

They dragged him out, and he was wearing a bathrobe. They took him out of the shower. It took 2 or 3 days to finally square it away. He was an American citizen. They had the wrong house. They had no warrant to tear down his front door; they did it anyway.

That sort of thing should stop. ICE agents should play by the same rules as policemen, professional law enforcement all across America. That is what we feel on the Democratic side. We are getting nowhere on that issue on the Republican side.

So I think the bottom line is this: We want a safe country, but we also have values. We don't want to mistreat people who are doing a good job in their lives and serving us in very important ways.

I think about my State of Illinois and most other States, and we have a very serious problem finding caregivers

in daycare centers for children, for disabled people, and certainly for our parents and grandparents who are in nursing homes and places. Who are those caregivers? Go in and take a look. Forty percent of them are immigrants. They are the ones who make sure your mom and your grandmother are treated with respect and have a chance for decent human treatment during the course of a day. We want them gone? Who is going to take their place? We know better. These are tough jobs. They don't pay an awful lot of money. These folks deserve a lot more than they are currently being paid.

The reality is immigrants are critically important.

The Farm Bureau is a very conservative organization in my State of Illinois. Politically, I know they are on the other side for most issues from me. But I always welcome them each year to hear what they have to say. They came to see me recently and talked about farm labor, migrant farm labor.

There was a lady who has an orchard in Southern Illinois that is pretty well known for peaches and apples and the like. She said: Senator, I can't get the local high school kids to take any job at my orchard. I can't even get them to go to the fruit stand—and I put in an air-conditioner—to sell fruit to people who drive by.

I have to deal—if I am going to deal with anybody—with migrant labor, people that I have known and who have worked for me for years. Now they are afraid to come to the United States. Will you help me?

I said: I will try to help you if I can, but the bottom line is that they are scared, they are frightened of what is going to happen to them if they come to the United States.

Is that a healthy thing?

This lady said: I am not going to be able to keep this orchard for another year or two if I can't get workers to pick the fruit and sell the fruit as part of the operation.

A lady from a dairy farm in Northern Illinois, hundreds of miles away—same story. She said: We don't have enough kids. We used to have a lot of kids in dairy farm families. We don't have enough kids anymore. We need migrant labor to come in and help us on the farm.

That is part of America. It is a job that most people don't jump to take, but it is an important job and an important part of our future.

So I would just say to my friend the Senator from South Dakota: We ought to be able to work this out—don't you think?—it seems to me, if we are reasonable.

There are people like Stephen Miller, who works in the White House and advises the President. He doesn't like immigrants. I know Mr. Miller. I have worked on the other side of the table from him for a long time. I know what his values are. He just doesn't like them, and he is pretty clear about that. He inspires a lot of the conduct

coming out of the White House. But there are others sitting on the other side of the aisle, the Republican side, who I know feel differently who would be willing to sit down and work.

Is it possible for a partisan U.S. Senate to write a comprehensive immigration bill that both sides agree on? The answer is clearly yes. There were eight of us, four Democrats and four Republicans. I was on the Democratic side with SCHUMER and a couple other Senators, and the Republican side was led by John McCain. We put together a comprehensive immigration bill and brought it to the floor, Democrats and Republicans, and passed it with over 60 votes.

It can be done, but you have to have people who are willing to sit down and say: Let's be honest about it. Keep the bad guys out, but give those DACA kids, for example, a chance to be part of America's future.

That is what I think is the middle ground most Americans would agree on. It is still something I think we should aspire to.

I don't know where we are going next on this immigration matter, but I worry about what is going to happen to a lot of people that I represent in Chicago. They are so frightened in the Hispanic communities in Chicago that they have stopped going to church, and some won't send their kids to school. They are just afraid of what is going to happen—somebody is going to be arrested, somebody will be deported or, like Marimar Martinez, God forbid, be shot on the street because they look too Hispanic.

That is the reality of where we are today. We are a better nation than that. We can do a better job than that. We can't leave the debate where it is: Who is in favor of law enforcement and who isn't?

I am in favor of law enforcement. I certainly was in favor on January 6 when the insurrectionists mobbed this Capitol and ran us out that door of the Senate because they were coming into this Chamber, rifling through our desks, aping for cameras. That was the reality. They attacked the law enforcement in this building that protected all of you, still protects you to this minute, and protects me and everyone else who works here—the Capitol Hill police. A hundred and forty of them were victimized by those insurrectionists.

Some people are trying to rewrite history and say this didn't happen. They have a problem. It is called videotape. Videotape tells the story, and we all saw it.

So let's respect law enforcement for the job they are doing. Let's not give them impossible tasks. Let's not ask them to wear masks, for goodness' sake, so people don't know who they are. America is better than that.

#### NOMINATION OF TODD BLANCHE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, President Trump announced that

he intends to nominate his former personal attorney Todd Blanche to serve as the next Attorney General of the United States.

When Blanche was under consideration to be Deputy Attorney General, the No. 2 position at the Justice Department, I reminded him of the importance of DOJ maintaining its independence from the President and the pull of politics.

Regrettably, over the past year, he has disregarded that call and erased that line, placing loyalty to President Trump above all else and damaging the independence and credibility of the Department in ways that will have ramifications for decades.

It appears that blind loyalty has paid off for Blanche, which is exactly how President Trump incentivizes his appointees to compromise their integrity.

How did Blanche earn the nod? I will tell you.

During his brief audition as Acting Attorney General, Blanche took the weaponization of the Department to new extremes.

He presided over the creation of a \$1.8 billion slush fund that would funnel money to allies of the President, including January 6 insurrectionists who beat up cops, in a purported legal settlement between the President and the government he runs.

It gets worse.

As part of that settlement, the IRS is permanently barred from auditing past tax returns of President Trump, his family, and related companies.

Let me state this another way: The President of the United States sued the government he runs in order to get cooperating Federal agents to give away taxpayer dollars to the President's political allies and permanently shield the President, his family, and his companies from accountability for any past tax crimes.

And Blanche acted exactly how President Trump expected him to: He advanced Trump's personal interests at the expense of the American people.

While deploying the Justice Department as a shield for the President and his cronies, Blanche has also used our top law enforcement agency as a sword against Trump's political opponents.

He brought a paper-thin indictment against the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights organization that has a long history of exposing violent White supremacist extremists who are allies of this White House.

And he brought DOJ's second baseless, vindictive indictment against former FBI Director James Comey. This prosecution was personally ordered up by the President, who despises Comey for overseeing the investigation of Russia's interference in the 2016 election.

Blanche's misconduct as Acting Attorney General is just the most recent link in a chain of controversies that has surrounded Blanche during his tenure at DOJ—controversies that demand transparency and answers.

Last week, appearing before the House Oversight Committee, former Attorney General Pam Bondi told lawmakers, “[Todd Blanche] was in charge of the process and the entire release of the Epstein files.”

Setting aside Bondi's failures in leadership on this issue, Blanche's direct role in the Department's failure to follow the law and protect the victims and survivors of Epstein's abuse is disqualifying.

These failures follow the inexplicable transfer of Ghislane Maxwell, Epstein's coconspirator, to a minimum-security prison after Blanche personally conducted an inappropriate and ineffectual 2-day interview with her.

Such a move is unprecedented for someone convicted of the crimes she committed and rightly received bipartisan scrutiny.

Survivors deserve an Attorney General who will ensure transparency and fairness in the justice system; instead, many of them were exposed while the network of people around their abusers remained redacted.

When Blanche appears before the Senate Judiciary Committee for his confirmation hearing, my Democratic colleagues and I will press him for answers and urge him to comply fully with the Epstein Files Transparency Act.

Consider Blanche's own words when, at an April press conference, he made clear that he was so devoted to President Trump that he would serve him in any capacity, even if he was not chosen to be the Attorney General nominee.

He said that if he was not nominated, his message to the President would be “[t]hank you very much, I love you sir.” He added that “I don't have any goals or aspirations beyond” serving Donald Trump.

That should tell the American people all they need to know about where Blanche's loyalty lies.

That love manifests as slush funds, partisan prosecutions against those the President feels have slighted him, and redirecting DOJ resources from protecting the American people from grave threats to treating the American people as grave threats.

Blanche has helped Trump achieve the goal that he couldn't in his first administration: fully warping the Department of Justice, the Nation's top law enforcement agency, into his personal law firm; corruption with doors wide open; political loyalty to the extreme; and a willingness to ignore the values of the Constitution.

When the Senate considered the confirmation of Todd Blanche to be Deputy Attorney General a year ago, I voted no.

The independence of DOJ has been decimated under Blanche's authority. I had no confidence in him before, and after everything we have seen, I doubt we can have confidence in him now.

After his fingerprints were found all over this so-called “Anti-Weaponization” fund, a few of my Republican colleagues signaled he may