

the State Department to issue a human rights report on topics voted upon by the Senate.

This particular 502B resolution concerns a most serious human rights and criminal justice matter and one of the worst abuses of the Presidential pardon power in the history of the United States.

I applaud my colleague Senator CORTEZ MASTO for leading on this bill. I am a cosponsor of the bill. I was a missionary in Honduras and lived there in 1980 and 1981, and I have a number of friends still there who feel this issue is definitely one that warrants some additional attention by our government.

And I thank Senator CORTEZ MASTO. She will be the final speaker on this before it is called up for vote. My colleagues might remember that on March 8, 2024, former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez was convicted of three counts of drug trafficking in a case that was brought in the Southern District of New York, also convicted of weapons conspiracy, and on June 26, 2024, he was sentenced to 45 years in prison.

Now, this conviction in March of 2024 followed a long investigatory process. President Hernandez' brother Tony was earlier convicted of serious drug offenses in the United States. That investigation began when Barack Obama was President. Most of the investigation was done during the Presidency of Donald Trump, term one. It continued during the Biden Presidency, and obviously, the conviction was obtained in the last year of the Biden Presidency.

The point is, this was a very intense effort by the Department of Justice over both Democratic and Republican administrations to go after serious narcotrafficking.

What was he convicted of doing? This former Honduran President was convicted of—while he was President, he was engaged in a conspiracy to import more than 400 tons of cocaine into the United States—400 tons.

U.S. prosecutors described Hernandez as a key figure in one of the largest and most dangerous drug trafficking convictions ever prosecuted in the United States court system.

This disgraced former President even bragged about how he and his cartel friends—and this was evidence that was introduced against him at trial:

We're going to shove the drugs right up the noses of the gringos, and they're never even going to know it.

A serious narcotrafficker who abused the public trust of his nation to flood the United States with drugs used to kill Americans.

On December 1, 2025, after less than a year, a little bit more than a year service of his 45-year sentence, President Orlando Hernandez, this disgraced drug trafficker was released from Federal prison and given a full and complete pardon by Donald Trump, our President.

We have yet to receive any public plausible explanation for the pardon.

President Trump said he thought it was a setup job done by the Biden administration, even though much of the investigation was conducted by President Trump's own officials in the Department of Justice in the Southern District of New York.

I have spoken about this matter before when the pardon was undertaken. The former President Hernandez is represented by some pretty high-priced folks. There is virtually no explanation for this that makes any sense, except a corrupt one. Someone got money for this pardon.

I don't know exactly who, and I am sure it is in an account somewhere that we will never be able to find out who, but there would be no reason to pardon this individual for this serious crime unless there was some corrupt motive behind it.

Now, this particular pardon raises serious doubts and questions given that President Trump is currently claiming to be at war against narcotraffickers. We have had much debate in this Chamber about the President's actions to direct the U.S. military to target and bomb boats and kill occupants on those boats in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific.

And at a hearing that we recently had with the Secretary of State, I asked him questions based upon my review of 46 files of the strikes, the first 46 strikes—now over 200 people have been killed in these strikes—and I asked the question why the administration did not demand evidence of the presence of narcotics on the boats that they are bombing.

That is not one of the targeting criteria. I am not allowed to describe the targeting criteria because they are classified, but I think I can discuss something that is not one of the targeting criteria. And evidence of narcotics on the boats has never been one of the targeting criteria in the strikes that have now killed more than 200 people.

But why would an administration that is bombing boats, even without evidence of narcotics, and claiming it is an effort to stop narcotrafficking—why would that administration pardon this guy—this guy—certainly, one of the most powerful and dangerous narcotraffickers ever convicted in the history of the United States? How does this make any sense?

Why is the President and this administration prioritizing Juan Orlando Hernandez over the American people?

And this is not the only example of a narcotrafficker or a drug trafficker being pardoned by the President. He pardoned a notorious drug trafficker on the first day of his Presidency. But this is the most egregious one.

Granting clemency to this narcotrafficker, after serving only 1 year out of a 45-year sentence, sends a troubling message about justice and accountability and about the fact that there are basically two systems of justice in this country—one for the well-con-

nected, who can hire fancy folks and pay a lot of money to get out of a 45-year sentence, and everybody else.

So I call on my colleagues to stand up for what is right, to push back on this enabling of cartels, to push back on this impunity in releasing a dangerous narcotrafficker.

And I thank my colleague Senator CORTEZ MASTO for filing this resolution and bringing it to the floor of the Senate so that all Members of the Senate can go on the record about whether they believe the law should apply to everybody or whether there are, in fact, two standards of justice for people like Juan Orlando Hernandez.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

#### INFLATION

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, last week, President Trump was asked about the surge in inflation. His response:

I love the inflation.

“I love the inflation”? It is almost like the reality betrays reality. What else does he love? Does he love the increase in measles cases, screwworm infecting our cattle, record credit card debt?

The truth is the President's economy has become a disaster for Americans. Families feel like they are getting squeezed every which way they look. This has become a cost-of-living emergency.

According to a recent report by the Joint Economic Committee minority, Coloradans have spent \$3,300 more on goods and services since President Trump took office last year. That is \$416 more on rent and mortgage payments; \$310 more for groceries at the checkout line, as everything from ground beef to coffee has spiked; and \$1,000 more in average deductibles for people on the Affordable Care Act insurance plans.

And Americans have gotten completely ripped off at the gas pump. In total, Coloradans have spent over \$780 million more on gas since the beginning of President Trump's illegal war with Iran. That means Colorado families are spending \$347 more now than they did before the war started.

Not only did President Trump raise your bills, but he also broke another campaign vow. He repeatedly promised, in his campaign, no more expensive, deadly wars.

Now, we are almost 14 months into an illegal war—a war of choice—in Iran. It is a war that Trump promised would be over in 4 to 5 weeks.

Mr. President, \$100 billion later, 14 servicemembers lost, and we are still waiting for it to end.

A few hours ago, the administration finally released the details of a memorandum of understanding, which appears to kick the can down the road on many of the hard decisions still to be

made, kicking that can down the road for another 60 days.

They still haven't briefed Congress, including the top Republican leaders.

What is clear is that the deal he is pitching comes nowhere close to limiting Iran's ability to obtain a nuclear weapon. It is clearly nowhere near the deal President Obama secured over a decade ago that meaningfully curbed Iran's nuclear ambitions—that is, until Trump ripped it up.

It is also hard to explain to Americans why the Iranian regime would get hundreds of billions of dollars in this settlement and sanctions relief, as well, all to restore access to a waterway that was free and open to all before Trump took us to war in the first place.

We will have spent all this money on the war, on the aftermath, on the future settlements, just to be in a position where the United States is worse off than where it was when we began.

Right before Trump bombed Iran, farmers and ranchers in Colorado and across this country were preparing to plant for this season. Trump's tariffs increased the cost of farming equipment, while retaliatory tariffs from other countries reduced access to international markets that bought better prices for American farmers. The climate change-driven megadrought in the West made matters even worse.

As the war stretched on, farmers and ranchers reckoned with a new hurdle—diesel and fertilizer costs. Approximately one-third of global fertilizer passes through the Strait of Hormuz, resulting in prices, with the blockade, rising over 40 percent.

These rising costs are crushing our farmers and our ranchers and sending grocery prices soaring for American families.

President Trump was elected to bring down prices. He pledged to "end inflation" on day one. He promised a government that finally works for working people. Yet President Trump's agenda can be better summed up in just three letters: A, B, C—anything but costs—the cost of diesel, the cost of fertilizer, the cost of food, housing, healthcare.

President Trump has plenty of time to host a UFC fight on the White House lawn. He has been laser-focused on refurbishing the Reflecting Pool on the National Mall. He has been unrelenting in his desire for a Department of Justice slush fund for election criminals like Tina Peters and the January 6 rioters. But he is not doing much to help you, the taxpayers.

Trump isn't unrigging the system, as he promised voters. He is rerigging it for himself. He is rerigging it for his pals and cronies. His family and close associates have pocketed billions, while Colorado families struggle to pay their monthly bills.

His "One Big Bad Betrayal Act" gave billions in tax cuts to ultrawealthy friends and the largest corporations and threw literally millions of Americans off their healthcare.

He sued the IRS so he wouldn't have to pay taxes again, while teachers, police officers, and nurses pay their taxes every year.

While working families worry about the cost of groceries, housing, and healthcare, this administration is focused on ballrooms, bombs, and billionaires.

This isn't why the American people sent us to Washington.

When I travel across Colorado, I hear the same things again and again. I hear: I can't afford to get sick. I can't afford my rent. I am scared about the kind of world my kids are going to inherit.

Working families don't "love" inflation. They don't think affordability is a "hoax." They are desperate for a country that works for them—a country where Washington focuses on lowering costs and improving their lives, not giving record tax breaks to the Epstein class; a country where healthcare is a right and not a privilege; and a country where every family can afford to buy a home, instead of getting outbid by Wall Street.

So while the White House administration focuses on their "anything but cost" agenda, we are showing up every day to build a country that works better for you, better for your family, better for your neighbors.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). The Senator from Ohio.

#### S. RES. 616

Mr. MORENO. Mr. President, I want to urge my colleagues, at 4:30 today, to vote strongly in objection to S. Res. 616.

This resolution, introduced by our Democrat colleagues, is a relic of a failed past approach to Central America, one that imposes a leftist ideology and a purity test and ties our hands, while cartels flood our streets with poison and chaos spills across our borders in the hemisphere. It demands a report dredging up old allegations against a former Honduran President, Juan Orlando Hernandez, focusing on events from his administration.

The irony is striking. Many of these activities and challenges occurred during the Obama administration, when Democrats were asleep at the wheel in the Western Hemisphere. They allowed narco-trafficking to flourish and created the Western Hemisphere's worst migration crisis, without decisive action.

This resolution also fails to mention the radical, leftwing Castro administration, which ravaged Honduras with policies that exacerbated migration and opened the doors to China.

Yet this resolution remains completely silent on the Biden administration's foreign policy failures and the open borders agenda that poured fuel on that fire.

Honduras suffered under the Biden and Castro era, but now it has abso-

lutely turned a page. Under President Tito Asfura, who I had the chance to go visit in person a little less than 2 weeks ago, it is a new day in a bilateral relationship. He is aligned with the "America First" priorities. He is a key partner in the Shield of the Americas and the Counter Cartel Coalition.

Honduras is working with us on intelligence sharing, going after the cartels, extraditions, and securing the hemisphere from Chinese and criminal influence.

President Asfura is hyperfocused on fixing what Castro and Biden broke and restoring stability and prosperity for the Honduran people.

This resolution singles out past issues under a previous government, while the current administration in Honduras and our own administration are focused on results: dismantling trafficking networks, ending the migration crisis, and building long-term prosperity.

As a side note, as you just heard from the Senator from Virginia, this actually has nothing to do with human rights. This has to do with clickbait speeches that are all intended to embarrass the President about a pardon.

Of course, it is ironic, given that President Biden pardoned tens of thousands of serious criminals.

But, back to Honduras, this resolution risks undermining the very security assistance and cooperation we need to keep Americans and Hondurans safe.

Section 502B is a tool, but in the hands of those who prioritize bureaucratic processes over results, it becomes a bludgeon against effective policy.

President Trump's approach? Security coordination, economic incentives for partners fighting cartels, and putting the stability and prosperity of the Western Hemisphere first.

It is delivering results: zero illegal border encounters this last 12-month period.

We are seeing deportations of criminals, revived extradition efforts, and a coalition that is actually confronting the cartels instead of studying the cartels.

Colleagues, the American people are tired of hollow and ideological resolutions that achieve nothing but clickbait headlines. They want secure borders, safe communities, and a foreign policy that puts our hemisphere's stability ahead of nonsense reports.

Objecting to this resolution isn't ignoring human rights. It is refusing to let the past paralyze the future.

Let's come together. Let's support our Western Hemisphere allies, like President Tito Asfura.

I urge my colleagues to reject S. Res. 616.

Let's focus on advancing the Shield of the Americas, supporting vetted partners, and delivering real results against the drug cartels that threaten us.

I will say one last thing. The Senator from Virginia has evidently another