We have seen, since 2016 to 2023, the number of THC poisonings of children under 5 go up 10 times and the number of hospitalizations of children under 5 go up 3 times.

In 2024, that was 620 children under the age of 5 poisoned. Of those children being poisoned, 100 have been hospitalized and ended up on ventilators. This is a serious health risk problem.

And I mention the Sour Patch Kids here, but let's look at some of the other examples of how this industry is targeting and trying to confuse consumers.

Here we have Nerds, a candy many children are familiar with, and a Nerds knockoff that has THC in it. Here we have Fritos—the regular Fritos product that is a safe product—and Fritos with THC in it. Here we have a safe product, again, that looks like gummy worms, and here we have a product with THC in it.

This is an industry that, because we made a mistake in the farm bill in 2018, has taken advantage of a loophole of the law to manufacture delta-8 and delta-10 THC to be able to infuse it into these products.

Now, again, you cannot grow the hemp plant in concentrations to make this. You have to manufacture this. This was done on purpose. It was manufactured. And, by the way, this kind of knockoff doesn't happen by accident either. This was on purpose too. And this is what is poisoning our children. We have to shut this loophole down.

And so last year we did. We actually changed the definition to cover all THC that would be in these types of products; that all THC products would have to stay below that 0.3 percent case. So it is not going to impact CBD oil because that is below 0.3 percent. It wouldn't impact any of those products that are used for clothing or for jewelry because they are all below 0.3 percent.

In fact, the only place it is going to impact is for the intoxicating products that are out there in the marketplace, that are only out there because of this loophole that we created back in 2018.

So, last year in our Ag appropriations bill, we closed this loophole. Now, one of the Senators in our body offered an amendment to strip out that loop—closing the loophole. And we had Republicans and Democrats vote together to stop that amendment—75 Senators, 51 Republicans all came together to say: No, we want to close this loophole.

Well, now in our continuing resolution, somebody has decided to open that loophole back up again. We gave the industry until November 12 to adjust. We said: The loophole has been out there. We are going to give you a year to get your products in line with the new law. It has got to be below 0.3 percent, and you have got until November 12.

But in our current continuing resolution, somebody wants to keep that extended until December 11.

I have cosponsored an amendment with TED BUDD to take that amendment out of the continuing resolution. I am cosponsoring that because we don't need to extend this. This has been out there for a year. People know what is coming. One month more is not going to make a big difference in doing this.

For those of you who say this is going to impact agriculture, I will tell you right now, hemp production in the United States probably presents about 0.0056 percent of all the farmland—49,000 acres—and only 17,000 are using it to grow the kind of hemp that would go into these kinds of products.

There are pilot programs right now on how to use CBD oil in the treatments of things like cancer. They are all out there. They are not going to be impacted. We should let this expire November 12.

My colleague TED BUDD and I—the Senator from North Carolina—we want an amendment vote to be able to take this out of this continuing resolution and call upon my colleagues to help pass it.

This is literally—these high-THC products disguised as candies—could get into the hands of young children and poison them. It has done so already.

Let's stop this right now because we know when THC gets into young people's minds, it can reduce their IQs, lead to mental health issues, such as suicidal ideation, anxiety, depression. This drug is bad for young people. So let's close this loophole and keep it closed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JUSTICE). The Senator from Louisiana.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I have been coming to this floor talking about Social Security. No offense, but you look like, with that gray hair of yours, you might be on Social Security. I am thinking that might be the case.

But a lot of people who are watching right now are on Social Security. Why? Like 75 million Americans are, and this should be important to Congress because in 6 years, Social Security goes insolvent.

And when that happens, those folks watching right now who are on Social or anybody who is watching who is going to be on Social—which I hope includes everybody in this room, including the young people who are our pages—they will get a 22- to 28.5-percent cut in their benefits.

Let me say that again. In 6 years, when the Social Security trust fund goes insolvent, by law, there will be a 22- to 28.5-percent cut in the benefits that people on Social Security receive—from now until eternity.

And folks say: No, no, no, we will just raise taxes. We will just pay for it. We won't cut benefits. We will just raise taxes.

If we do that, according to the actuaries, we have to raise payroll taxes 40 percent. So think about that family who is struggling to make ends meet. They notice that they are paying a payroll tax, and now that goes up 40 percent.

Over the course of the year, that can be thousands of dollars that they don't have in their pocket to pay for their groceries, their gasoline, the time to be together on a special night, hopefully, putting some away for savings. That won't be there because, instead of cutting benefits, we are going to raise taxes.

And then a third group says: No, no, we are just going to borrow the money.

The Congressional Budget Office has looked at it. If we just try and borrow our way out of here, they say the amount of debt accumulated is so large, their models cannot calculate the destabilizing effect upon the U.S. economy.

What does that mean? Interest rates sky-high, can't afford a car, can't afford to buy a house. You can't afford to buy a house, so no one is employed building houses. No one is employed building houses, so no one is making shingles. No one is cutting wood, so no one is shipping lumber from here to there. That has ramifications for each of us. We need a better solution.

But the problem is that we have lacked a sense of urgency of fixing Social Security now. I say we need to have that urgency. It is almost like we are telling our seniors: We built a bridge for Social Security, but, by the way, it is about to lose a step. And on that last step, ''woo, boom.'' And Congress sits there and says: We will get to it someday.

It is time for Congress to do its job. It is time for Congress to get serious about something affecting not just the folks in this, who look as if they are elderly, but folks of all ages who will be affected because one day we will all, hopefully, be able to access Social Security.

Now, the good news is, today we had a Senate Finance Committee hearing on the PROMISE Act. DICK DURBIN—a Democratic Senator, the whip for the Democrats and their leadership, been here for a long time—he has got a bill. BILL CASSIDY is the cosponsor, a conservative Republican. We have got a bill called the PROMISE Act that doesn't say how Social Security is going to be fixed; it sets up a process by which we would consider how to fix Social Security—a process that, ideally, would give a product for the Senate and the House to consider sometime later in the year. Instead of saying we will get to it someday, we get to it this Congress.

By the way, this process is transparent, with input from anybody who wishes to have an input. And we are not saying what the solution is going to be. We are saying: Come up with a solution. But, by the way, if the Senate doesn't like it or if the Senate Finance Committee doesn't like it, they can replace it or, if an individual Member—BERNIE SANDERS has a bill. If BERNIE doesn't like the product, he can offer his bill as a substitute. Same with SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, RON WYDEN, ELIZABETH WARREN, any of us could put up a bill as a substitute.

And so we are not prescribing a solution. We are just trying to generate a process by which the Senate will consider how to rescue Social Security.

Now, what was good about the hearing, AARP was there. And AARP, represented by Nancy LeaMond, came out against the PROMISE Act.

I am thinking to myself, Wait a second. All we are doing is setting up a process. We are not saying it has to look like this, the solution. We are setting up a process whereby Congress does its job, and we are forced to come up with something that would rescue Social Security for AARP's members as well as all other Americans.

And so this is kind of the questions I had with Ms. LeaMond. And at the end of it, she said that they could support what I am about to propose.

I said: Ms. LeaMond, do your 38 million members, do they want a benefit cut that would—I am paraphrasing, condensing—would your 38 million members want a Social Security System which is fully funded and is not threatened with a 22- to 28-percent benefit cut?

She answers: No, they don't want a benefit cut.

Would they like a Social Security System fully funded?

Yes, they would.

Is AARP developing a plan to do so?

We are not developing our own plan at this time.

So they want it fully funded. They don't like the PROMISE Act, setting up a process that would lead to a solution, but they are not coming up with their own plan. They are just objecting to people who are coming up with a process to develop a plan.

So I go on to say, to condense it: It seems like what you object to is that, in the PROMISE Act, it is not Senators and Representatives doing the initial analysis, it is a Social Security Commission.

And she says: Basically, yes, that is true.

So I said: If we take out the Social Security Commission and we put together a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives to start considering all the plans—Senator WHITEHOUSE's plan, Senator SANDERS' plan, ELIZABETH WARREN and BERNIE MORENO's plan, the Cassidy-Durbin plan—would you support that?

And she said: We would want to talk to you about that.

And I pressed her on that. Wait. You want to talk to us about it? I need a yes or a no.

It is like asking somebody to be married. When you ask somebody: Will you marry me, you don't say: Well, let's talk about it. You say, Hey, dear, either you are going to marry me or you are not. If not, I am out of here. But if you want to, let's get married.

So kind of putting it that way—I didn't ask her to marry me—but I did say: Wait a second. We are going to have a 22- to 28-percent cut in benefits if we do nothing. Your people don't want a cut in benefits. We are talking about a regular-order process, which you say you want, with Representatives and Senators coming together where you would have input, your members would have input, this is—and then bring it back to the Senate Finance Committee for a week of hearings and then bring it to the Senate floor for a vote. Could you support that?

If it is a regular order, which is what it sounds like, yes—meaning they could support it.

Now, I love that. AARP likes what I am about to say.

I have heard that they and others are concerned about the PROMISE Act and how the PROMISE Act would, first, ask a group from the Social Security Advisory Board to come up with a plan.

So to replace the PROMISE Act, I am going to introduce a Senate resolution. The Senate resolution does exactly what I just said. It would immediately—or within a week or two—impanel a group of Senators, invite the House of Representatives to join.

It is a Senate resolution, but we would invite them to join. And we would spend the next 2 months considering all the things that have been proposed to fix Social Security. And we would have open hearings. We would get as much public comment as possible. We would come up with two different proposals and, by the end of September, ask the Social Security actuaries to score these proposals. Does it actually fix Social Security? That would be our goal. And we would start as soon as possible.

We can't wait to get to it someday, Mr. President. We have got to get to it now. There needs to be a sense of urgency. We need to do this like yesterday; if not yesterday, how about tomorrow? And AARP said they could support that process.

And it does go through regular order. All it does is establish a time agreement where, after the products are delivered, they are to be considered by the Senate Finance Committee, and they would come to the Senate floor for further consideration.

I am inviting the House with this resolution, so they also could participate through the Ways and Means Committee. They would have to. That is the whole point.

I would love to have them vote on the resolution, too, but they have been out since July 23. And it is too important to wait to come back until September. Let us pass it in the Senate, pass it in the Senate and invite them to join us, and then that way we could have these hearings through August and September and deliver a product at the beginning of October to the Social Security actuaries to be scored. And then we could consider it.

And by the way, it may be that the products developed are not what the Senate Finance Committee wants. Senator BERNIE SANDERS could bring his proposal and offer it as an alternative. Senator ELIZABETH WARREN and Senator BERNIE MORENO, who have got a plan, bipartisan plan, could bring their plan. Or Senator WYDEN spoke about his plan; his plan could be offered because we are not, in this resolution, dictating an outcome. We are dictating a process whereby their proposals can be heard. And in that, we can serve the American people.

What we don't want to do is to delay any further because every year we delay, the taxes get higher or the cuts get deeper or the debt gets bigger in order to fix this problem.

What we are doing right now is only setting up a process where SANDERS and WYDEN and WARREN and MORENO and CASSIDY and DURBIN and WYDEN can have their proposals heard.

Mr. President, I am introducing this resolution—I guess I am. We are doing a hotline right now. We are in the process of doing this.

And if you are watching on C–SPAN or somehow seeing this, contact your Senator. Ask them to support this resolution because all it does is set up a process and then demands that Congress does its job. Don't give Congress a free pass on getting into it someday.

I will finish by saying this: I was once given a compliment by both Lindsey Graham at one time and BERNIE SANDERS at the other, and I will kind of do it with Lindsey's accent: BILL, you are a lousy politician. You are a good Senator, but you are a lousy politician.

I think I should probably take that as a compliment.

So I am a lousy politician. I think right now we all should be lousy politicians. We should all be good Senators. Let us run to the problem. And the problem is the Social Security System is going insolvent. That will lead up to a 28.5-percent benefit cut for seniors if we follow the law. Let us be good Senators. Let us be good Senators and solve this problem beginning now.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative 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.

The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.