

Republic. In July of 2015, a little over a year ago, Philadelphia police arrested Pilarte, a 40-year-old man, for the rape of a child. He had previously been convicted of drug trafficking, resisting arrest, and theft—convicted, sentenced, and went to jail—but he was released and rearrested. In 2015, when he was rearrested, he managed to raise the money necessary for bail. When the background check was done, Federal law enforcement asked the city of Philadelphia to hold him temporarily, after he had raised the money for bail, rather than simply releasing him—to hold him temporarily so they could pick him up and begin deportation proceedings. The city refused to cooperate, and they instead released this dangerous, previously convicted man who was here illegally, released him back onto the streets of Philadelphia. Pilarte roamed the streets of Philadelphia for a full year, doing who knows what, until just this week when Federal officials managed to find him and took him into custody.

Consider the case of Jose Palermo Ramirez. In 2013 this 43-year-old illegal immigrant was convicted of indecent assault on a 7-year-old girl. Federal immigration officials asked the city in this case to notify them when Palermo Ramirez completed his sentence and prior to his release so they could pick him up and begin the deportation proceedings of this person who was here illegally and obviously a dangerous and convicted criminal, but the city refused. Instead, they released this convicted child molester back out onto the city streets. Luckily for Pennsylvania families, Federal law enforcement officers were able to find and deport him, despite the lack of help from the city.

Maybe the most heartbreaking story is that of Ramon Ochoa. Ramon Ochoa is a Honduran immigrant who came here illegally in 2009. He was caught and he was deported. He found his way back into the United States and managed to get to Philadelphia. Last year Philadelphia police arrested him, and they had him in custody on charges of aggravated assault, making terrorist threats, resisting arrest, and harassment.

Again, when the background check was done, Federal law enforcement officials realized they knew who this was. He was here illegally, he had been deported previously, and he was violent and dangerous. They asked the city to cooperate with them so they could pick him up and begin deportation proceedings. Once again, Philadelphia refused. Instead, they released him back onto the city streets, where he continued to prey on others, and just 4 months ago, Ochoa was arrested, this time for raping a child under the age of 13.

How can this possibly happen? How can this possibly happen, that a city would knowingly, willfully, and repeatedly choose to release dangerous criminals, including child molesters who don't even have a right to be in the

United States in the first place because they came here illegally? It is just unbelievable, but this is what is happening, and it happens because Philadelphia is a sanctuary city. Let's be clear about what that means. That means it is the legal policy of the city of Philadelphia to forbid local law enforcement from even cooperating, even sharing information with Federal immigration officials when the person in question came here illegally. In many cases, we confer this special legal privilege on dangerous, violent criminals because they came here illegally. It is unbelievable.

This isn't the police's fault. Police would much rather be cooperating with Federal immigration officials. They are not allowed to because local politicians in cities across America have decided they will not allow it to take place. This is absurd. This is very dangerous, and small children in my State are paying the price for this.

This is why earlier this year I introduced legislation, which is called the Stop Dangerous Sanctuary Cities Act, and it would solve this problem. It does it with two components. The first is to eliminate the perceived, and understandably perceived, legal liability that communities have, municipalities have, and here is the nature of their concern. There is a court order that says if the Department of Homeland Security issues a detainer request—the request that you detain a person who is here illegally that they believe is violent—and you comply with that request, you detain the person, and it turns out the Department of Homeland Security had the wrong guy, the concern on the part of our municipalities is they can be sued for that.

My legislation solves that problem. It says: In a case like that, where a municipality complies with a bona fide detainer request, if the person is wrongly held and they have a cause of action they can take, they can do so, but that has to be against the Federal Government. It has to be against the entity that asked for the detainer.

That makes perfect sense, and it completely eliminates any legal liability on the part of the municipality that would then cooperate with these detainer requests and information requests. That is the first part, eliminate any danger of a legal liability.

The second part is, if a city, nevertheless, chooses that it wants to be a sanctuary city, then we should withhold some of the Federal funding we currently send to these cities. Specifically, my legislation would withhold community development block grants—very cherished by the city governments all across America—if they choose to endanger all of us by continuing to be sanctuary cities.

We had a vote on this. Last summer we had a vote. A majority of this body voted in favor of my legislation to bring an end to sanctuary cities this way, but unfortunately we didn't have the 60 votes we needed to overcome Senator REID's filibuster on this.

I am suggesting we revisit this because these appalling crimes are continuing to be committed, as of course they will, if cities keep releasing violent criminals back out onto our streets. In the meantime, I will suggest there is something that President-Elect Trump can do when he becomes President, and that would be he could issue an Executive order which would, I think, significantly limit dangerous sanctuary cities.

Let me be clear. The Executive action he could legally pursue would not be permanent. I don't think it would be as effective as the legislation I have introduced. It wouldn't have the legal force of a new law, but it would be a good start, and it would be fully consistent with his constitutional powers. That would be progress. I think it is very clear that we have to act.

How important is the rule of law to all of us? How important is the safety and security of the American people? How important are the childhoods of the victims we are hearing about repeatedly as recently as just this week? To me, the answer is clear. These are very important priorities, and we need to act. While we await the opportunity to enact this legislation, I hope our new President will take the Executive order steps he can to at least diminish this problem.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to use the time that I may require and that following my remarks, Senator CASSIDY and Senator MURPHY be recognized.

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

SEVIER COUNTY, TENNESSEE, WILDFIRES

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak on two matters. The first is the matter of wildfires in Tennessee.

Anybody who has been watching television the last few days has seen the devastation caused by the runaway wildfires just outside the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Gatlinburg, TN. We are not used to that in Tennessee. I know we have debates on the floor, and we have colleagues who see the fires in the West where it doesn't rain much, a few inches of rain a year, but in the Great Smoky Mountains where I live—I live just outside of the park—we have 80, 83 inches of rain a year. We have dense forests, and this time of year the leaves are all over the ground, and usually there is a lot of rain to tamp that down.

For the last few months, we have not had rain, and so the forest floor is like a tinderbox. On Monday, in the chimney tops area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a fire started—maybe it was a campfire—and then winds as high as 80 to 90 miles an hour came and swept the fire through the park and into the resort town of Gatlinburg.

There were stories of firefighters getting back in their trucks to avoid the bears who were fleeing the fire. There were stories of cars catching fire as motorists drove to escape the fire. A couple from Alabama said they watched their windshield wipers melt on the car as they drove down the mountain. At least four people have been killed and others are missing. Fortunately, by now the fires have been pretty much put out. There were no fire outbreaks that were new in Pigeon Forge, which is nearby. Gatlinburg had some more fire outbreaks, but the rain that fell last night helped to put most of those out. The small town of Gatlinburg, a picturesque community on the edge of the Smokies where people have vacationed and have gone for their honeymoons, had to evacuate 14,000 citizens.

The Red Cross in addition to other independent groups operated six shelters. The mayor of Gatlinburg told people that his home burned up in 15 minutes. The city manager's home burned down. We have had a tremendous response from the Governor of our State, Governor Haslam, who was on the spot the next day with many of his State officials. There were 400 firefighters and more than 100 firetrucks that came from all parts of Tennessee. There were National Guardsmen and highway patrolmen. The Governor said they haven't seen a fire like that in Tennessee in 100 years. As I said, 14,000 citizens have been evacuated.

This is a heartbreaking story for all of us who know and love the Great Smoky Mountains and the people who live near there. I want the residents in Sevier County, Gatlinburg, and that area to know that Senator CORKER and I—and all of us in the Federal delegation—will do whatever we can appropriately do to help. That starts with helping pay for 75 percent of the cost of fighting fires, and, after that, cooperating with Governor Haslam as the State looks for ways to help individuals who might be hurt by this.

I know the mayor of Gatlinburg, the city manager, and Larry Waters, the county mayor, would want me to say that this is a resilient town and resilient people, and they are going to be fine, but it is going to be tough and hard. Fire always is. But Dollywood will be open at 2 p.m. on Friday, and people will be coming back. They have about 10 million people visit the Great Smoky Mountains National Park every year. We don't want people to stay away, but I do want the people of Gatlinburg and Sevier County to know how much we care for them and how

determined we are to help them help themselves so they can get back on their feet.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, the second subject I came here to talk about is the 21st Century Cures Act and the mental health legislation, both of which are being debated in the U.S. House of Representatives. There will be a vote on that legislation this afternoon at about 5:30.

This is legislation that has the strong support of the President of the United States, the active support of the Vice President of the United States. House Speaker RYAN has said that it is an important part of his agenda for health care for the future, and the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, has said he believes it is the most important piece of legislation Congress could enact this year. One reason it has been successful is that it has been so bipartisan in its making, both in the House and in the Senate.

Let me begin by thanking President Obama and Vice President BIDEN for their strong support and their interest. The President supports precision medicine—the idea of personalized medicine. For example, if the Senator from Pennsylvania and I each have the same disease, we might not take exactly the same medicine because our genetics might be different. We now know enough about it that if we can help doctors have that information, they can prescribe medicines that will help us live longer.

The President and the executive office of the President have issued a Statement of Administration Policy that is one of the strongest I have seen. I hope it persuades both Republicans and Democrats to be supportive of this legislation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my remarks, the Statement of Administration Policy be printed in the RECORD.

Mr. President, I mentioned the bipartisan nature of the legislation, and I will give two examples of that. My two colleagues, who are on the floor, will give the second example, which is the mental health bill.

This has been complex, no doubt about it. Yesterday I spoke at length on the floor about that. I ask that my colleagues recognize the core of this legislation, which is the following: There were 19 different bills that went through the Senate's Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee—22 Members of the Senate. After many hearings, the largest number of recorded votes against any of those 19 bills was 2. We have a very diverse committee. We have some of the most liberal Members and some of the most conservative Members, and we were able to work out 19 bills that are the core of this legislation on a complex issue like this, and the largest number of votes recorded against any of the 19 bills was 2.

Secondly, every single one of those 19 bills but one had a Democratic sponsor and a Republican sponsor—usually more than one.

In addition to that, there is money attached to the bill. That is very unusual because this is an authorization bill, but the House did it, and we did it as well. We recognized the importance of this to the American people, and we did it in a fiscally responsible way. It is \$6.3 billion. It doesn't add a penny to the overall budget because for every increase in the discretionary budget, we reduced the same amount in the mandatory budget.

What is the funding for? The National Institutes of Health will get \$4.8 billion for research on urgent matters; \$1.8 billion for the Cancer Moonshot that the Vice President is leading; \$1.4 billion for precision medicine; \$1.6 billion for the BRAIN Initiative, including Alzheimer's; and then \$1 billion for State grants to help States fight the opioid abuse epidemic. That money has been accelerated so that all of this money is spent in the first 2 years and all of the Cancer Moonshot money is spent in the first 5 years. Speaker RYAN arranged for this money in the following way: While it has to be approved each year by the Appropriations Committee, it cannot be spent on anything other than what it has been designated for. So that \$1 billion can be spent only on opioid abuse.

I cannot imagine that the House of Representatives, if it overwhelmingly passes the 21st Century Cures bill in a vote, will not complete its promise to spend \$1 billion on opioid abuse this year and next year. I cannot imagine the U.S. Senate, which I also expect will approve this by a large vote, doing the same. I also can't imagine Democrats and Republicans going home and having to explain why they would vote no on \$1 billion worth of State grants for opioid money when all year we have been talking about what an urgent epidemic it is or having to explain why they voted no for \$1.4 billion for Cancer Moonshot when so many advances are being made or voting against \$1.4 billion for precision medicine when the President so eloquently made the case of why it is important or \$1.6 billion for the BRAIN Initiative at a time when Dr. Francis Collins, the head of the National Institutes of Health, tells us that we are close to identifying Alzheimer's before there are symptoms and we could have the medicine that will permit us to retard its progression. Think of the grief that will save millions of families. Think of the billions of dollars that will save for our country.

This bill has had the participation of dozens of Members of the U.S. Senate but none more effective and important than the Senator from Louisiana, Mr. CASSIDY, and the Senator from Connecticut, CHRIS MURPHY. Even though they are both relatively new to the Senate, they have taken the mental health bill and navigated landmines as