

month—the highest number in 21 years—threatening our national security and the safety of American families.

President Biden's immigration policies are putting unaccompanied minors at risk of human trafficking, violence, sexual abuse, and separation from their families. I mean, it is horrible. They are leading to an alarming increase in human trafficking and drug smuggling by cartels.

FBI Director Wray said there is “no question” that the cartel activity from Mexico is “spilling over” to the United States. We are seeing it in Florida. I talk to our sheriffs, and what they are telling me is that they are seeing a lot more deadly fentanyl coming into their counties, and it is showing up in their labs.

But instead of securing the border and finishing the wall construction projects—I don't get it. Why did President Biden terminate all the border wall projects? No one can—he has never had an explanation.

So this inaction of not going to the border by President Biden and Vice President HARRIS doesn't make any sense. Why can't they acknowledge that we expect and we deserve a secure border that is good for our Nation? Why can't they stand up against the radical left and say that open borders are dangerous for our families?

It should make every American furious. It is not something to laugh about. People are dying. Children are being exploited and abandoned in the desert.

This is a picture of two young 3- and 5-year-old Ecuadorian girls. You can see it. They were just dropped. Anybody who has been around little children, 3 and 5 years old—think about it. They were just dropped over the wall and just abandoned, just abandoned, hoping somebody was going to take care of them. Abandoned in the middle of the night. I mean, I have grandkids. I just can't imagine—I can't imagine anybody doing this.

The White House claims that Vice President HARRIS's last trip was to talk about the root causes of immigration. It doesn't make any sense. It seems like it was just a political stunt to me.

President Biden and Vice President HARRIS need to stop avoiding the crisis, stop laughing about the threat, get down to the border, and actually take real steps to really secure the border.

So if either of them goes to the border, I am lifting my holds, but as long as they refuse to help those risking their lives every day to keep us safe, as long as they refuse to visit the border and put an end to the humanitarian crisis they have created, I am going to keep my holds on.

Those two little girls, they deserve better. The millions of immigrants going through the legal immigration process, they deserve better. Our Border Patrol agents deserve better. Our local law enforcement agents deserve better. ICE deserves better. American families deserve better. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—NO. S. 2216

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I think we are all aware President Biden has decided to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan in September. Now, some agree with his decision; some disagree with his decision. The bill that I am about to talk about has nothing to do with the merits of his decision.

There are about 18,000—not 1,800, 18,000—interpreters and members of their immediate families who helped our troops fight the war in Afghanistan against the Taliban and against ISIS. They are at risk.

There was an article in a leading newspaper yesterday. I will read you the headline. It says: “Afghan government could collapse 6 months after US withdrawal.”

These 18,000 interpreters and their immediate families, who have helped American troops, would like to get out. We have a visa process, which is going very, very slowly. We will not be able to get all of those 18,000 human beings out before the withdrawal in September. That much is clear.

Again, my bill has nothing to do with the merits or lack thereof of the war. My bill would direct the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State to develop a plan to relocate the Afghan interpreters and their immediate families who want to get out and bring them to America.

Now, obviously, before we bring them to America, those who want to come, we have to vet them. That is part of the problem. The vetting process right now is very slow. Rather than try to put together a bill that would set forth a specific plan to address this—I consider it a crisis if you are 1 of those 18,000 human beings—my bill will just direct the Defense Department and the State Department to come up with a plan to present to us within 30 days.

Now, my guess, and it is only a guess, is that State and Defense are going to come up with some plan to move those of the 18,000 who want to leave Afghanistan to a safe third place other than America so that we can continue to properly vet folks before they come into America. And I suggest we do need to properly vet them, but I also suggest that, No. 1, this is about right and wrong. These people helped Americans, and they helped American troops. And we owe them. And we don't want to see them massacred. And, No. 2, if we allow them to be massacred, I think it is going to send a message to many people throughout the world that loyalty to America means nothing, absolutely nothing.

So, in a nutshell, this bill would ask our Defense Department and our State Department, in the next 30 days, to give a plan to Congress to properly vet and allow any of these 18,000 interpreters and their families who helped American troops come to America.

With that, Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2216, which was introduced earlier today; further, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon table the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, in the first two decades after the Revolutionary War, America was under siege and our Capitol was ransacked, but I don't recall in reading history that any of our Founding Fathers said that they would flee the country or leave and give up on the quest for liberty.

The quest for liberty requires fighting by the people who have been given their liberty, the people whom we have helped to get their liberty. You can say the people in Afghanistan helped us or you can also say we helped liberate them as well.

They have been free for 20 years. It seems like it might precipitate the overcoming of the Taliban if you take 18,000 of the most westernized, those who speak English, and you say: Flee, flee, flee. The end is coming. Well, guess what. The end comes quicker if they all leave. So I would encourage them, rather, to stay and fight. I think it would be good to have many English speakers in Afghanistan. The future of Afghanistan could be a bright future, but they are going to have to fight for it. And, ultimately, it is their fight. And if we offer easy escape and easy plans to leave the country, we are assuring the defeat of the people who are our friends in Afghanistan. So I object to this piece of legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I respect my colleague, and I certainly respect his right to object. I disagree.

We are all aware of what is going on in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government is in a bitter fight to the end with the Taliban. And the Taliban is winning. And the Taliban is ruthless. And they are going to murder these people. They are going to murder them. And the blood is going to be on American hands if we don't do something to help.

My proposal would not have required any of these 18,000 Afghans who stood with American troops to beat back the Taliban and to beat back ISIS—they stood with us at their own risk, at the risk of their own kids, and their own spouses.

Now, we decided to leave. I am not saying that is right or wrong. I have my own opinion, but that is not what this bill is about. And we owe it to these 18,000 people to offer them a chance to live. And if we don't do something, they are going to be butchered. They are going to be gutted like

a deer—like a deer—and the blood is going to on American hands. And the whole world is going to take notice.

There is right and wrong in this world. There is politics. There is a time for it. But there is a time to do the right thing, and the right thing is to help save these human lives who fought for America and their families and their children.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COTTON. 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 Senator from Arkansas.

MASK MANDATES

Mr. COTTON. There is a disturbing trend in the not-so-friendly skies these days—a big spike in confrontations, often violent, on American airplanes. It is all the more disturbing because it is totally unnecessary. In most cases, these disputes go back to one of the Biden administration's dumbest policies—the mask mandate at airports and on airplanes.

When the Wuhan coronavirus broke out in our country last year, confusion and uncertainty reigned, but within a couple of months, some commonsense standards had emerged: Protect the elderly and the frail. Outdoor activities are safer than indoor ones. Keep your distance. Wear a mask when you can't for prolonged periods inside. Be civil and kind to each other.

Thanks to Operation Warp Speed, these standards are largely a thing of the past. Americans are tired of it, and they want their freedoms back, and they are right. But too many Democratic politicians and know-it-all bureaucrats don't want to give up their newfound powers.

No single action captures this power grab by government busybodies better than the TSA's decision to extend its zero-tolerance mask mandates for planes, trains, and buses until September, through the summer travel season. This mandate applies to the vaccinated and the unvaccinated alike, as well as kids over the age of 2.

Passengers without a mask or accompanied by children without a mask can lose their seats and be banned from airlines and subject to a \$1,500 fine. This draconian and punitive policy has no basis in science. After all, airports typically have larger spaces and higher ceilings than, say, a grocery store and pharmacy. Planes have some of the most advanced air filtration systems available in the market today.

But this stupid mandate does have real-world consequences. Just last month, a Colorado mother and her family were removed from their flight because the plane's captain didn't believe that her 3-year-old son with autism would keep his mask on. This mother, unfortunately, was not the first to be

removed from a flight, and I am sure she won't be the last if this absurd mandate remains in place.

This policy discourages family travel after a year of separation and forces Americans with children, especially children with disabilities, to cancel travel or else live in constant fear that an untimely tantrum or a bad day could ruin their trip and cost them more than \$1,000 in fines.

As the father of two young boys, I can only assume the morons who cooked up this rule don't have children, or perhaps they outsource their kids to nannies and au pairs during flights, just as they do during their dinner parties and fancy retreats. Young kids, especially when they are in a new location surrounded by strangers, tend to act out and misbehave, as any parent will tell you. That entirely predictable behavior shouldn't result in their whole family being kicked off planes, trains, and buses far from home or their destination.

I must also observe—although I know that facts have nothing to do with this mandate—that young kids are also the least likely to get the coronavirus and the least likely to spread it.

Now, I concede that it is not only young kids who sometimes cause problems on planes. There are too many instances of grownups refusing to wear masks or berating flight attendants merely trying to do their job. These unruly adults should know better, of course, but so should the politicians and the bureaucrats who imposed this idiotic mandate in the first place.

Millions of Americans are flying again, and to say simply that “they should follow my rules” is impractical and ignores all we know about human nature.

The mandate, therefore, hurts not only passengers but also flight attendants. In our line of work, we probably fly more than most Americans these days. Over the last couple of months, I have personally seen so many flight attendants set up for failure by the Biden administration. They usually don't want to boss around their passengers or kick them off an airplane and cause a scene that will go viral on social media, but they are also told they have to enforce this stupid mask mandate, and it is all for no good reason.

It would be one thing if there was scientific evidence that suggested that these masks in airports and on airplanes or buses or trains actually slowed the spread of the virus among the unvaccinated, but that is not the case. Even the Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, can't defend these mandates on the merits. He doesn't even try. The only rationale he could give when recently asked about the mandate was, “They're a matter of respect,” to which I would respond, how about some respect for Americans and their common sense?

If you can't defend a policy on the merits, you shouldn't have the policy,

and the Biden administration should therefore immediately rescind its mask mandates for airports and airplanes and buses and trains. Vaccinated Americans and their young kids should not be forced to wear face coverings on airplanes or anywhere else, for that matter. It is unnecessary, it is unscientific, and in the case of children, it is cruel.

I think I speak for millions of Americans when I say: Mask mandates have long since outlived their usefulness and their welcome. We have all but won the war against the Wuhan coronavirus. It is time for us to act like it, to reclaim victory and reclaim our freedom.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

Mr. BROWN. Object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BROWN. Object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill clerk continued with the call of the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

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

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

VOTE ON JACKSON-AKIWUMI NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Jackson-Akiwumi nomination?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) would have voted “nay.”

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 40, as follows: