

day. They will tell you: We simply don't have the capacity to manage that sort of tsunami of humanity. We don't have the facilities or the resources, and we certainly don't have the personnel. The only way we are able to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs is to divert law enforcement officers from their other important mission.

Frankly, that is part of these transnational criminal organizations' plans: They overwhelm the Border Patrol, divert their attention, and then, in the hole that is created in border security, here come the drugs.

Agents who would normally be on the frontlines, stopping cartels from smuggling drugs, are now serving meals and changing diapers.

When you consider all of those stats that I mentioned—hundreds of thousands of pounds of illegal drugs, 700 criminal gang members, 141 people on the terrorist watch list—there is an important qualifier to remember: Those are just the ones we know about. With law enforcement being shifted from patrol to caretaking duties, we are leaving major security gaps that are being exploited by the cartels and criminal organizations.

There is a whole category of migrant that comes across the border known as the got-aways. The asylum seekers will typically show up and turn themselves in, but, frankly, I think it is the got-aways—hundreds of thousands of people—that you have to worry about because they don't want to encounter law enforcement because they either don't have any legal basis to enter the United States or they happen to be transporting illegal drugs or have a criminal record on their own right.

There is no question that our security mission is taking a hit. Every day, cartel and gang members are trafficking and moving guns, drugs, illegal currency, and just about any other commodity that you can think about. And when they succeed, border communities aren't the only ones that see the impact.

As you can see, cartels and transnational criminal organizations have a presence in cities across the United States. Once cartels make it across the border, they head to places as diverse as Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, New York, San Diego, or just about any other city where they can do business, including Bangor, ME, and other places in Maine.

These aren't the only people who are coming to the United States. These are not people coming to build a better life. They are coming here to prey on innocent Americans for their own gain.

Last year, the Special Agent in Charge of the DEA's Chicago Field Division spoke about what happens once these drugs and criminals reach his backyard.

He said:

Cartels use every possible means to get drugs from Mexico into the United States and then into the local markets. And in Chicago—

For example—

that means predominantly to the gangs that control the drug markets in Chicago.

If you are concerned, as most Americans are, about the spike in crime that we have seen recently, well, a whole lot of that crime is caused by criminal street gangs committing various crimes, including selling illegal drugs and using guns to kill one another as part of their way to protect their market share and their territory. Those are the same gangs that fuel the overdose epidemic, the same gangs that perpetuate crime and gun violence, the same gangs that engage in deadly conflicts over territory. That is the cruel reality here.

It is a self-perpetuating cycle, and it starts at the border. So even though you may not be a border State, at least a southern border State, you are affected because, as you can see, the network of distribution of illicit drugs coming across the border affects almost every major American city. And it is not just cities. A lot of our rural areas in Texas and elsewhere are affected as well.

And we are reading increasingly about young people, unknown to them, consuming fentanyl in a fatal dose and dying, and it is happening every day, in every community around the United States. And 71,000 Americans died of fentanyl overdoses last year alone. This is where it comes from; this is how it is distributed; and those are the consequences. So no community in America has been spared the pain and suffering from this pandemic of drugs. In 2021, as I mentioned, 108,000 Americans died from drug overdoses; 71,000 of those 108,000 died from fentanyl.

You know, I remember on September 11, 2001, when terrorists diverted aircraft and killed about 3,000 Americans. We declared a war against terrorism when 3,000 Americans were killed here in the homeland. Yet 108,000 Americans died last year as a result of these open borders and our broken policy, and it doesn't seem to get the attention it deserves.

Of course, being a border State, communities in Texas are dealing with the consequences of this humanitarian crisis and these drugs on a daily basis. Last weekend, three people in Wichita Falls died from suspected fentanyl overdoses. The oldest victim was 21; the youngest was 13. In the last couple of months, four students from the Hays County Consolidated Independent School District, right outside of Austin, died from a fentanyl overdose. All four were between the ages of 15 and 17.

Across the State—indeed, across the Nation—families are mourning the loss of loved ones who have died from an overdose of these drugs, many of whom had no idea what they were consuming; they thought they were taking something else and ended up finding that it was laced with fentanyl—because the amount of fentanyl it takes to kill you is microscopic. The alarming increase in supply across our borders fore-

shadows even more devastation in the months and years to come.

Here is my point. The Biden administration needs to start taking this problem seriously. Cartels and criminal organizations are exploiting the security gaps at the border and sending these drugs and the criminals along with them to communities not just in Texas, not just in Arizona, not just in California or New Mexico, but all across the United States.

Addressing this security breakdown at our border has got to be a priority. We can't ignore it because it is not going to get any better. This is not just about migrants and immigration. It is about that, but it is not just about that. It is about security. It is about public safety. It is about knowing who is crossing our border and reaching into our local communities.

Cartels are sociopaths. They don't really care about people, including the migrants that they smuggle into the United States. If you go to Falfurrias, TX, which is in South Texas at a border checkpoint about 70 miles from the border—which is where, once migrants are stuffed into a car or a van or some other vehicle, they are then driven up the highway to these Border Patrol checkpoints; then they are told by the coyotes, which is the colloquial name for these human smugglers: Get out of the car and walk around the checkpoint because we can't risk going through the checkpoint with you there where we might be discovered. And so they do.

And so you go to Brooks County, TX, which is where the Falfurrias checkpoint is located, and they have asked the Federal Government for help to bury the bodies of migrants who die from exposure walking around that checkpoint in Falfurrias, TX, because it gets hot in Texas, particularly during the summer, and many of these migrants have come from far, far away and are suffering already from dehydration and other exposure.

But my point is the cartels don't care anything about them. They will leave them to die. They are just another way to make a buck. But the cartels terrorize more than just the migrants themselves; they terrorize communities across our country. And they seized on the Biden administration's weak policies to grow their foothold in the United States.

These transnational criminal organizations are getting rich smuggling migrants and smuggling drugs into the United States and killing Americans in the process. It is past time to do something. The Biden administration is being outmaneuvered by the cartels, and until we see leadership from the President, communities all across this country will continue to pay the price.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4924

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, the No. 1 job of our Commander in Chief is to

protect the homeland. The constitutional oath we all take as Members of Congress, similar to the one I swore when I joined the military, is to protect our citizens against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

I want everyone in this Chamber, the American people, our allies, and our adversaries to all hear me today. Iran, the world's most deadly state sponsor of terrorism, announced its intentions to track, target, and kill American citizens here on our shores. The radical Islamists of Iran and their terrorist proxies across the Middle East are seeking to destroy America, and they are coming here to our soil.

As you can see, the Iranian regime promises to "bring the orchestrators and perpetrators to justice." This is an undeniable death threat, one that they have already attempted to follow through on.

Iran isn't making this threat from Tehran, over 6,000 miles away. They made it here, for example, in New York City. Yesterday, at U.N. headquarters, the Butcher of Tehran, Ebrahim Raisi, was flanked by his personal security force, IRGC terrorists, tagged by our Justice Department as the entity responsible for attempting to kill Mike Pompeo, John Bolton, Brian Hook, and others who ordered and executed the strike on Qassem Suleimani.

This President's obligation is to safeguard and protect the life, liberty, and prosperity of our people and to deter, defeat, and, when necessary, destroy our enemies.

The Biden administration's desire to bring the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement back to life is delusional. Continued renegotiation with Russia as our proxy—no joke—ignores our men and women in uniform, the Iranian dissident community, our allies and partners in the Persian Gulf, and American citizens on the homeland who have bounties on their heads today.

Our Middle Eastern partners, in particular, are begging the Biden administration not to reenter this so-called nuclear agreement. They plead with us not to give Iran access to \$1 trillion in capital by 2030. Don't fund their military support of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and don't fund their acts of terrorism against our own people, they ask.

I am demanding that America does not fund or support a regime trying to kill our own people. The President's ongoing negotiations pacify rather than hold Iran accountable for targeting American citizens. The Biden administration's foolish pursuit of peace through appeasement must be stopped, and we can start today. Yesterday, with 26 of my colleagues, I introduced the PUNISH Act, or the Preventing Underhanded and Nefarious Iranian Supported Homicides Act. My bill would enforce U.S. sanctions on Iran until the Secretary of State certifies to Congress that Iran has not supported any attempt or activity to kill a U.S. citizen, former or current

U.S. official, or Iranian living within the United States. Specifically, it would codify the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" sanctions as well as preserve sanctions put in place by the Obama and Carter administrations.

It is hard to believe that, after countless attacks on Americans and multiple confirmed—confirmed—plots against U.S. officials, the Biden administration continues with these negotiations. President Biden should not provide a dime of sanctions relief to the largest state sponsor of terrorism which is actively trying to kill U.S. officials and citizens at home and abroad. I will remain committed to protecting the homeland, our troops, and officials abroad from the violent Islamic regime in Iran.

Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 4924, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object. First, this is a pretty long piece of legislation and impactful in the policy it makes. It was introduced yesterday.

It is probably not a great idea for the Senate to short circuit any process of reviewing this legislation and speed to its passage today, but Senator ERNST is a serious thinker on matters of national security, and so I do want to engage for 2 minutes on the merits because I think it is important to have this conversation.

Senator ERNST is right. At the heart, at the center of U.S. foreign policy has to be the protection of our citizens. We have to be coldblooded about making sure that our policy keeps our people safe, both here in the United States and abroad.

The good news, when it comes to Iran policy, is that we have tried both a policy of engagement and diplomacy and a policy of escalating sanction, and we can judge from those two periods of time which one better protected American security and the specific security of Americans here and in the region.

During the period of time that the United States and Iran were in an agreement regarding nuclear weapons together, there were not credible plots being hatched against U.S. persons inside the United States. There were not Iranian proxies firing at U.S. forces inside the Middle East. But as soon as the United States removed itself from that agreement and started this process of escalating sanction, all of a sudden, Americans and American assets were at risk all over the world. The plots started against U.S. persons here. The Iranians and their proxies started regularly shooting at Americans in the region.

And so the facts are the facts—less threat to the United States when we were in a diplomatic agreement and more threats to the United States when we weren't in a diplomatic agreement. I think that speaks to the question of whether engagement or maximum pressure actually—actually—in the end protects Americans best.

But, second, I want to make this point, and I think it is an important one. This is called the PUNISH Act. And I understand why. It speaks to a view of sanctions as simply a mechanism of punishment. And there is an element of sanctions that is sending a moral message, a moral signal, about our values and how they differ from the values of those that we are sanctioning. But sanctions are also used to influence. In fact, most of the sanctions that we are passing are not just merely punitive. They are actually designed to try to change the behavior of a regime.

So that is why, if we entered into a nuclear agreement, the only sanctions that I think we should remove are the sanctions that were specifically put in place to influence the Iranians to give up their nuclear weapons program.

In fact, I would argue—and I think President Biden would argue; I am sure President Biden would argue—that we should keep in place the sanctions that have been levied against Iran to try to influence their ballistic missile program or their support for terrorists.

And so I think it is just important for us all to come to the conclusion that, although there is a punishment element of sanctions, if we don't use sanctions to influence behavior, then I am not sure that the policy of sanctions matters as effectively as it should.

And, lastly, this: Iran, they are malevolent actors. They are not good people. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't enter into negotiations when we can take steps to protect our interests, the security of our people.

The nuclear bombs that we dropped on Japan were 15-kiloton weapons. Modern nuclear weapons range from 100 to 800 kilotons. So, yes, unapologetically, we should have a policy as a component of our national security to do whatever is possible to make sure that more countries—especially, more wildly irresponsible regimes—don't get their hands on nuclear weapons. And, yes, that should be more important than many of our other priorities.

Yes, in fact, we should elevate the conversation about stopping a regime like Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. They are bad actors. They are targeting U.S. forces. They are targeting U.S. persons. They are supporting terrorism. That, to me, is the reason, is the rationale why we should make sure that that regime—so dangerous, so destructive, so malevolent—doesn't get its hands on a nuclear weapon.

Their bad action in the region is a reason to engage in diplomacy to stop

them from getting a nuclear weapon, not a reason not to engage in that diplomacy. And so I understand that it is sometimes incredibly hard and distasteful to get your arms wrapped around engagement with an enemy.

But I will leave you with this. The Soviet Union, through their proxies, killed tens of thousands of Americans during the Cold War. There was no doubt that they possessed on a daily basis the existential ability to wipe out the United States. But we did, at the very least, four bilateral nuclear deals with the Soviet Union, seven multilateral nuclear deals with the Soviet Union, not because we misunderstood their aims and desires but because we thought it was so important to limit the scope of their nuclear program given their intentions to wipe out democracy all around the world.

I agree that it is apples to oranges comparing the Soviet Union to Iran, but the same principle applies. We need to elevate our work when it comes to nonproliferation. That just needs to matter more, and we shouldn't be afraid to engage with enemies and adversaries, especially on this question of making sure that their bad behavior doesn't end up having, amongst its tools, a nuclear weapon that could kill hundreds of thousands of Americans.

For that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, blocking the passage of the bill today, it is not just disappointing, but it is endangering. We do have to act now. I mean, you can read the tweet. It is right here. They are seeking justice. They are looking for retribution and revenge.

Again, it was sent from U.S. soil—this tweet was. If that doesn't constitute a clear and present danger demanding immediate attention, then I honestly don't know what does.

If a nuclear agreement is reached, folks, it is not going to change. Iran's aggression was not curbed by the Obama-Biden administration's failures. In fact, it invigorated Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapon. Their mythical deal effectively financed the world's best organized, most capable terror group to rain down attacks on the United States, Israel, and even the Arab Gulf States.

After the deal was signed, Iran went on the offensive, and I can give you some statistics to actually show that activities increased. Attacks against the United States and our partners increased from roughly 8 incidents per every 100 days in 2015 to 28 incidents in 100 days during the 3.5 years that the JCPOA was in effect.

So arguing that the nuclear deal is a credible deterrent against Iranian terror doesn't actually hold water. Thousands of folks have died fighting the global war on terrorism, including 600 U.S. servicemembers. They have been killed at the hands of Iranian proxies in Iraq and in Syria.

I was there on the ground in 2003, in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The leader of that initial surge was a name whom we all know well, Gen. Jim Mattis. The men and women in uniform, then and today, know that Iran is an enemy. We have no common cause with the ayatollahs or anyone who chants "Death to America." Jim Mattis told our enemies, and I will quote the good general:

I come in peace. I didn't bring artillery. But I am pleading with you, with tears in my eyes: if you [screw] with me—

And he used a different word—

I'll kill you all.

Folks, Iran is killing our people overseas, and they are trying to kill our people right here, right here in the United States of America. We cannot appease, and we cannot back down.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### INFLATION REDUCTION ACT OF 2022

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, we are now several weeks on from the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act.

The IRA is transformational legislation that will improve the lives of millions and millions of Americans: more affordable prescription drugs, cheaper energy bills, the largest investment in the climate in history, a serious commitment to cracking down on tax cheats who rip off the American people for billions of dollars every year, and ensuring that corporations pay a fair share.

I am proud to say that the vast majority of the Inflation Reduction Act came from the Finance Committee majority.

It is no exaggeration to say that the team on the committee and in my personal office collectively spent thousands and thousands of hours developing these proposals, building support for them under zero margin for error, and guaranteeing that they would pass under challenging Senate rules.

Senate Democrats spent more than a year debating what would go into this bill before it finally came together, but the staff of the Finance Committee began its work long before that. Some of the components of the IRA go back more than a decade.

So before the Senate goes out in the coming days, I wanted to come down to the floor to thank my committee and personal office staff, as well as the brilliant teams at the Joint Committee on Tax, Congressional Budget Office, and legislative counsel who made this achievement possible.

I will shout out a few specifics as I thank the staff, but understand that legislation this significant is always a collaborative effort. And furthermore, there are major priorities that did not make it into the final version of the IRA, and the staff who worked on those issues deserve credit, too.

I will start out with Tiffany Smith, who leads the best and hardest working tax policy team there is.

Bobby Andres has honcho'd the Clean Energy for America Act for 7-plus years. He tweaked and edited and improved that bill so many times, he can probably recite the text in his sleep.

Chris Arneson, Jon Goldman, and Sarah Schaefer have been instrumental in going after the tax loopholes that allow massive, profitable corporations to get away with paying little to nothing. Their work on those issues is going to continue to find its way into law.

Adam Carasso and Eric LoPresti helped to make sure the IRS has the resources it needs to go after wealthy tax cheats who skip out on paying what they owe.

And proof positive that Finance Teams support one another: Drew Crouch contributed tax policy help to the prescription drug reforms.

Rachael Kauss has put a ton of work into developing the billionaire's income tax, and although that proposal didn't make it in the final bill, there is more support than ever for making sure that those at the very top pay a fair share like everybody else.

Grace Enda assisted on the clean energy tax policies and more. Ursula Clausing supported the tax team and also made sure that our team and Senate Democrats were ready and organized for a tough floor debate. Arthur Shemitz and Melanie Jonas also supported the tax team's hard work.

One other point about the Finance Committee majority's tax team—and this applies across the board, not just to the Inflation Reduction Act. If anybody out there mistakenly believes it is easy to offset the legislation passed here in the Senate, it is only because our tax team, time and time again, makes it look effortless. The truth is, it takes a ton of hard work, but they get it done.

Patricio Gonzalez, a member of the committee's investigations team, has been digging into the tax practices of some of the biggest drug companies out there. His work went a long way to convincing key Senators that our corporate tax laws needed reform. Ryder Tobin, another member of the investigations team, contributed to that work and also helped us survive the grueling floor debate, as did Madison Moskowitz, Claire Kaliban, and Bonnie Million.

Next up: healthcare. When it comes to drug prices, Big Pharma has had a stranglehold on the U.S. Senate for a long, long time. A lot of people have gone up against Big Pharma and lost. Shawn Bishop and the Finance Committee health team took on Big Pharma and won.

Anna Kaltenboeck played a key role in our efforts on finally allowing Medicare to negotiate on behalf of seniors for a better deal on prescription drugs. She also worked with Raghav Aggarwal on crafting the Senate version of drug price negotiation, as well as key protections for seniors in Medicare Part D. That includes a \$2,000 annual out-of-pocket cap on their medications and a