

Now it is somebody else's responsibility.

Well, there is nobody else to deal with that. The child protective services in New Jersey, in Texas, and elsewhere are already overwhelmed. So to say to the States "now it is your job to protect these children" once we have allowed 300,000 of them into the United States and placed them with sponsors because of misguided border policies is a complete abdication of responsibility.

Well, 2½ years of failed border policies cannot be erased by a couple of months of reduced migration. It is premature, to say the least, to declare victory, to spike the ball, to pop a cork. The fact that we are not currently experiencing recordbreaking migration levels is, admittedly, a step in the right direction, but it is not a victory. There is still a crisis occurring. The number of border crossings is still historically high. Law enforcement remains under tremendous strain, and the southern border is far from secure. If the administration were to spend half as much time trying to solve the problem as it does trying to spin it, we would be in a much better place.

I have to say that there are those of us here—the Presiding Officer included—who would like to be part of the solution. We have asked the administration. We have asked the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator DURBIN, to bring legislation to the Judiciary Committee, which has jurisdiction over these matters. Give Senators on the Republican side and the Democratic side a chance to debate it and amend it and pass a bill out of the Judiciary Committee that would address this crisis. We have asked the majority leader, Senator SCHUMER, to encourage the chairman of the Judiciary Committee to take a bill out of committee and bring it to the floor.

Let us do our job. There is nobody else to fix this problem other than us—those of us who have the enormous privilege of serving our constituents here in the Nation's greatest deliberative body—the U.S. Senate—or in the House of Representatives, but all we get are crickets.

I keep asking myself: What will it take? What will it take to get the President's attention? What will it take to get the attention of our Democratic colleagues who are in leadership positions and who are able to put this on the agenda and do something about it?

Obviously, 6.9 million migrants coming across the border for the last 2½ years isn't enough to get their attention. Obviously, 108,000 dead Americans is not enough to get their attention. Also, 300,000 unaccompanied children who have been lost to an administration that can't tell you where they are or what is happening to them has so far not gotten their attention. But it should get our attention. We are in a position of responsibility in our being given the privilege of serving in this

body and in the U.S. Congress, and we ought to do something about it.

So if it doesn't start at the White House, if it doesn't start with the leadership here in the U.S. Senate, rank-and-file Members of the Senate can do something about it. We can force the leadership—the White House and the Congress—to accept their responsibilities and do something about the devastation and death that is occurring as a result of these uncontrolled borders. 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. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1672

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, just last week, a Federal judge ruled that the First Amendment prohibits the Biden administration from colluding with Big Tech to censor Americans' speech. So the court ordered Biden administration officials and Agencies not to coordinate with Big Tech platforms in order to suppress American speakers and Americans' viewpoints that they disagree with.

This seems obvious. The First Amendment would mean little if government simply used Big Tech to get around it. Who disagrees with this basic principle that government-directed censorship is un-American and unconstitutional? Well, I can tell you who disagrees with that. The Biden administration disagrees with it. The Justice Department, almost immediately, asked the court of appeals to stay this ruling to allow it to continue to censor Americans while it appeals.

In recent years, increasing evidence has emerged regarding a disturbing alliance in which Big Government and Big Tech work together to censor speech that they don't want Americans to see nor to hear. Published emails among Twitter executives reveal the extent to which the company worked to prevent Americans from seeing a New York Post news story just weeks before the 2020 election. The extent of the suppression was breathtaking. Indeed, the Twitter executives locked the Twitter account of the White House Press Secretary simply for mentioning this New York Post story.

Facebook admits that it, likewise, limited the spread of the story based on a general warning from the FBI about it being propaganda. This is even though the FBI had verified the authenticity of the laptop in question.

This censorship activity has carried over into the Biden administration. In 2021, then-Press Secretary Jen Psaki stated that the government is "in regular touch with social media platforms" and "flagging" problematic posts for Facebook that spread what she called "disinformation."

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, disclosed that it had communicated with more than 30 Federal officials about content moderation on its platform, including senior employees at the FDA, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, and, of course, the White House. YouTube, which is owned by Google, disclosed that it had such communications with 11 Federal officials.

The disturbing truth is that when Biden administration officials don't like what Americans are saying, they simply reach out to their allies at Big Tech to silence it. Government using its power to coerce censorship of disfavored information is what the Chinese Communist Party or the North Korean regime would do. It is not only fundamentally un-American; most often, it is unconstitutional.

The other day, a Federal court confirmed that the government cannot use Big Tech as a tool to end-run the First Amendment. The judge wrote that the case "arguably involves the most massive attack against free speech in United States' history."

Americans deserve to know when their government and Big Tech platforms are trying to manipulate what they can say or what they can read. I introduced legislation last Congress and again this past May to require this transparency. The Disclose Government Censorship Act would require that government officials publicly disclose communications with Big Tech regarding actions to restrict speech. The act contains appropriate exceptions to protect legitimate law enforcement or national security activity.

Our Nation was founded on the idea that protecting citizens' speech from government censorship under the First Amendment would protect the people's right to govern themselves by preventing government from controlling information and ideas. Americans deserve to know when their government is covertly trying to accomplish what the First Amendment prohibits.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 1672 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. 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 Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I certainly appreciate Senator HAGERTY's concerns. The freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of the press are all very foundations of our Nation.

But I am also concerned about the power of large tech companies, which we must—must—hold accountable. The Homeland Security Committee, which I chair, has held a series of bipartisan

oversight hearings on social media, including bringing in top executives to testify and to answer tough questions.

I am deeply concerned, however, that the legislation that we are discussing today could have serious unintended consequences, including undermining our national security. This bill could damage our national intelligence and law enforcement operations by requiring Agencies to disclose every interaction with a social media platform about the activity of a terrorist or a criminal on their platform. This can involve sensitive ongoing investigations and enforcement action, including the terrorist use of social media to recruit Americans to carry out attacks against our homeland.

The bill could also chill effects by executive and legislative branch employees who are working to address online threats and hate speech directed at Americans and communities all across our Nation. In addition to creating new redtape for staff trying to address these very difficult issues, it threatens them with a year in jail for not meeting paperwork deadlines.

Certainly, we must all protect our Nation's First Amendment and the right to speak freely. However, this bill will not accomplish that goal, while potentially undermining our national security.

Mr. President, therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I appreciate the sentiments my Democratic colleague expressed, and I very much appreciate his work and his concerns with respect to Big Tech. I share those concerns.

And I share some optimism today that we will find common ground to work together. The legislation I have put forward simply allows Americans to see when the government is trying to censor them. My colleague suggests that this is because of concern over protections for law enforcement and national security work.

I would like to say this. My legislation contains appropriate exceptions to protect legitimate law enforcement or national security activity and preserve the confidentiality of those communications. But in assuming that the details of those protections are my colleague's only concern, I am happy to work with my colleague to address those concerns and ensure that the core of this legislation, which requires disclosure of government censorship efforts, is quickly enacted.

I hope that Senator PETERS and I can work together and do this because it is too significant to ignore. Our government, at the end of the day, works for the American people, and to ensure that this continues, the First Amendment prohibits the government from controlling what Americans can say or read. But now government is using Big Tech to accomplish such censorship, and without disclosure of such commu-

nications, Americans' free speech rights become a dead letter because there is no way to address improper government efforts to ban speech.

My legislation would preserve these rights by allowing Americans to see when government is trying to silence them. It is a basic element of self-government. I look forward to working with Senator PETERS and his committee to try to make this something that can be acceptable to all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

#### GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as our Nation celebrated on July 4th, our birthday, with festive block parties, in one example in Baltimore, it turned into tragic gun violence in our own backyards and across the country.

It has been a deadly summer so far, and we have only made it to the middle of July. In my home State of Maryland, in Salisbury, 14-year-old Xavier Cordei Maddox was killed and six others injured during an overnight July 4th block party.

It came just after a horrific mass shooting on July 1st at an annual block party in the South Baltimore Brooklyn neighborhood, which claimed the lives of a young man and a young woman, while injuring 28 others, many of whom are teenagers. Twenty-year-old Kyliis Fagbemi died at an area hospital, and 18-year-old Aaliyah Gonzalez was pronounced dead at the scene.

Just weeks before the shooting, Gonzalez graduated from Glen Burnie High School in Anne Arundel County. Gonzalez had recently decided to enroll at Anne Arundel Community College to stay closer to her family, according to news reports. Now she is dead.

I joined Governor Wes Moore and Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott in a visit to the Brooklyn neighborhood on Independence Day. As I said at that time, this is a dark moment for our community and our country. People who shouldn't have guns have guns, and they are causing irreversible harm.

Public safety always must be our top priority. Sympathy and words are not enough. A comprehensive approach to reducing violence includes cracking down on illegal guns, many of which flow from other States into Maryland. We must also enact stricter regulations on legal gun purchases.

Mayor Scott of Baltimore summarized the need for action:

You're talking about a country where it's easier for a 14-year-old kid to order pieces to put a gun together and go out and use it and commit a crime than it is for me to get Claritin D from CVS. That's what we should be talking about every day in this country.

Maryland has been working on this. The general assembly, with Governor Moore's signature, recently enacted legislation in Annapolis to strengthen gun safety rules regarding carrying concealed weapons, restrict the carrying of firearms in sensitive locations such as schools and healthcare facilities, strengthen safe storage require-

ments for firearms, and raise the age from 18 to 21 to qualify for a handgun permit.

Following the Brooklyn shooting, Mayor Scott stood up a coordinated neighborhood stabilization response within the community under the auspices of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement. This response focused on addressing trauma and stabilizing the neighborhood, in partnership with community-based organizations and city agencies.

Our Federal partners also have been working to make Baltimore safer, with a focus on reducing violent crime and the homicide rate, particularly gun crime. U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland Erek Barron recently noted that overall homicides and nonfatal shootings in Baltimore are continuing to trend down significantly. While this is little consolation to the victims of the recent shootings and their families, as of the half-year mark in 2023, homicides were down over 22 percent and nonfatal shootings were down over 12 percent.

In Congress, our Maryland delegation has worked to increase resources and investments to improve public safety in Baltimore and throughout our State. This has included direct resources to local governments, community organizations, colleges, universities, and others.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation to end cyclical violence and protect crime victims and have sponsored legislation that boosts Federal assistance for State and local witness protection programs. I continue to urge the U.S. Justice Department to provide additional resources to combat violent crime in Baltimore and throughout the State of Maryland.

It is important to understand that the horrific and seemingly endless instances of gun violence are not limited to our State. Sadly, over the July 4th holiday, there were at least 538 shootings, in which 199 people were shot and killed, and 520 were shot and wounded, across a total of 43 States and the District of Columbia. This is a national problem that must be addressed at the Federal level in conjunction with State and local measures.

President Biden is correct that we have the power to make a change and end the cycle of violence caused by guns in our society. He recently stated that "as we have seen over the last few days, much more must be done . . . across America to address the epidemic of gun violence that is tearing our communities apart."

When I heard that half the victims in the Brooklyn shooting were under 18 years old, it bought back memories of last summer when a masked shooter in Uvalde, TX, killed 19 children and 2 teachers.

Following that tragedy, Congress formed a bipartisan working group and within a month of the shooting passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. President Biden signed this legislation