

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BORDER ACT OF 2024—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 397, S. 4361.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 397, S. 4361, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for border security and combatting fentanyl for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

BORDER ACT OF 2024

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first let me add my greetings to our Chaplain from South Dakota and welcome him under JOHN THUNE's auspices. So welcome, Pastor. Pastor, welcome.

Three months ago, something truly stunning happened here on the Senate floor. Senate Republicans filibustered the strongest, most comprehensive border security bill Congress has seen in a generation. And they did it because Donald Trump wanted to exploit the border for political gain on the campaign trail.

Well, today, we are going to try again. We will vote to move forward on a border security bill that Democrats and Republicans spent months on together. I hope our Republican colleagues join us to reach a different outcome.

We all know the situation at the border is unacceptable and demands attention from Congress. Democrats believe that, our Republicans have been saying it, and that is why 3 months ago we sat down with them to write a strong and necessary and bipartisan border security bill.

Poll after poll shows that a large majority of Americans across party lines support our position of getting a bipartisan bill done, and only 8 percent are in opposition.

When Republicans like Donald Trump say: Don't support a bipartisan bill, wait till next year, they are in a distinct minority with the American people from one end of the country to the other.

People want us to get things done. People want us to come together. And when they hear that the only reason Republicans backed away from this bill is not that it wasn't strong enough but that Donald Trump said he wanted chaos at the border, they don't like that.

This is our bill. The public is on the same page, and in polling data, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents are all on the same page: act on a bipartisan bill; get something done; don't play political games.

And this is a bill that will hire thousands of new border agents, a bill that will finally reform asylum, a bill that will commit billions to stop the flow of

fentanyl, a bill endorsed by the National Border Patrol Union, the Chamber of Commerce, and the very conservative Wall Street editorial page.

So to my Republican colleagues, you wanted this border bill. Today, we vote on this border bill, and it is time to show you are serious about solving the problem.

Look, I understand that today's bill is not going to win every single Democratic vote or every single Republican vote. That was never the goal of this bill. The goal was rather to come up with something that could get 60 votes, a majority on both sides of the aisle. That is how it was crafted.

And it is far different than what the Republicans have done. Look at what happened to H.R. 2. It didn't get a single Democratic vote here in the Senate. It did not even get the support of every Senate Republican.

If anything is political theater, it is H.R. 2. It is not designed to solve the problem. It is designed to make a political point. The bill we are bringing up was designed to solve the problem. And Republicans and Democrats labored together in good faith to get that done, and it would have gotten done had Donald Trump not said: I don't want this done. Blame it on me. I want chaos at the border so I can win reelection.

That is not what the American people want, as I mentioned. The polling data is clearly on our side.

The bipartisan border bill is something so different than H.R. 2 because it is a serious attempt at legislation that Republicans helped put together.

Now, people might forget, but there was actually a lot of bipartisan interest in getting this bill passed before Donald Trump killed the bill and told the country, "Please blame it on me." That is what he said, blame it on him.

My friend the Republican leader openly admitted that "it's actually our side that wanted to tackle the border issue. We started it." That is what Leader MCCONNELL said.

My friend, the Senator from Texas, similarly said: "It makes no sense to me for us to do nothing when we might be able to do things better."

That is just what we are doing today, I would say to my friend the Senator from Texas.

A few weeks before our bill was released, our colleague from Iowa warned:

We stand the risk of losing the chance to actually get something done on the border now, because I don't see this opportunity coming up again any time soon.

Again, that is what we are doing, just what our Republican Senators asked us to do for months. And I would be remiss not to include the good observation of my friend from South Carolina.

He said:

H.R. 2 was unable to get any Democratic support in the House; we lost one Republican in the Senate. So to the conservative world: you have a unique opportunity to get border security reform.

And he added:

This moment will pass. Do not let it pass.

I can't say it any better. And what they said then is perfectly applicable now. What made them change when they had such conviction that we had to get something done in a strong bipartisan way? One thing. Donald Trump said turn around, reverse yourself, 180-degree reversal, and they did.

The words I have mentioned are not the words of Senators who think this was all political theater. They sound like the words of Senators who were hoping to get something done. But as I mentioned, it wasn't until after Donald Trump swooped in that they changed their tune.

So we are going to try again today. I hope Republicans join us on today's vote to reach a different outcome than the one in March. If Republicans were truly serious about calling the situation at the border an emergency, they shouldn't delay any longer. You can't call something an emergency one day and then suddenly kick the can down the road the next day.

Let me finish with this: America is proud of its immigrant tradition. We always have been—and always will be—a nation comprised of people who come from across the world looking for an opportunity here in this country, knowing that there is no place better than America. If you work hard, you can provide a good life for yourself and your family. That is what has importuned people for generations. We should never let go of that.

We must always work to give people more opportunity to come here to treat them humanely and embrace people who want to contribute to our economy. There is nothing more American than that.

Immigration has been one of the great causes of mine since my earliest days in the Senate. Over 10 years ago as part of the bipartisan Gang of 8—led by myself and my late friend, the late John McCain—that wrote comprehensive immigration reform.

We passed that historic bill because both sides were able to work together. The lesson of that bill is—passed the Senate with 68 or 69 votes bipartisan—we can only do these things in a bipartisan way, only.

So today, knowing that lesson, we need to try and work again together. We know our Nation is stronger because of immigration. We know that the status quo at the southern border is unacceptable, the results of decades of neglect going back administrations on both sides. So to all those who said for years we must act on the border, this is the chance to show you are serious about fixing the problem.

This is our chance to show the American people that we are willing to reach across the aisle and work to solve one of the most vexing problems that affects our country and what the public overwhelmingly wants in poll after poll.

I urge my colleagues on both sides to join us in moving forward today. A

chance like this, sadly, only comes once in a blue moon.

To my Senate Republican colleagues: Please, do not let this moment pass.

BIG OIL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it is a disturbing tale as old as time: While Big Oil companies bask in record-breaking profits, hard-working Americans are feeling the pinch of high prices at the pump. Instead of working to lower gas prices for Americans ahead of a busy Memorial Day weekend, Big Oil executives seem to be huddling to find ways to keep gas prices high and keep profits soaring.

One of those ways included Big Oil executives spending their time cozying up to Donald Trump who, as we all know, is no enemy of Big Oil. A few weeks ago, the Washington Post released a disturbing account of a meeting Donald Trump held with Big Oil executives at Mar-a-Lago, where Donald Trump promised Big Oil Executives that he will gut the clean energy investments and jobs made possible by the legislation we Democrats passed in exchange for \$1 billion for his reelection efforts.

This is sickening. Donald Trump would quite literally be bought by the biggest polluters in the world and be totally beholden to the fossil fuel agenda and Americans will pay the price at the pump. Donald Trump is not even hiding it. Sadly, Big Oil's greediness doesn't stop with Donald Trump.

A recent report showed that big oil companies were also among the biggest perpetrators of stock buybacks, using their soaring profits to further line the pockets of wealthy executives and shareholders.

Stock buybacks aren't good for the economy. Stock buybacks aren't good for workers. Stock buybacks aren't good for anyone but the wealthy oil executives and shareholders. It shows that instead of investing and finding new energy—which we would hope they would do it with clean energy—they are instead just raising their stock prices.

There is something deeply wrong with big oil companies continuing to rake in the cash at the expense of the American people. So Democrats will keep working to shine a spotlight on oil companies' unfair practices and hold them accountable.

RIGHT TO CONTRACEPTION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on choice, next month America will mark a dark and somber anniversary. June 24 will be 2 years since a radical MAGA majority on the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. It was one of the worst—if not the worst—Supreme Court decision of modern times. In one fell swoop, MAGA justices pulled off one of the most draconian reversals of individual liberty ever.

Today, at least 20 States have near-total bans or severe restrictions on abortion.

Senate Democrats will put reproductive freedoms front and center when we return after the Memorial Day State work period.

Two days ago, I began the process for the Senate to consider the Right to Contraception Act, led by Senators MARKEY and HIRONO. We will consider that bill in June, and there will be more action to come after that.

At a time when tens of millions of Americans are worried about reproductive health—tens of millions of American women are worried about reproductive health, although many male Americans are worried as well—Senate Democrats will focus on protecting fundamental freedoms like the right to vote, access to IVF, continued access to contraception, and more. Democrats will never relent until we reverse the immense damage that the Supreme Court has inflicted on this country, and the American people have the right to know where their elected officials stand on protecting the rights and reproductive care.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we are nearing the end of President Biden's term, and the American people's patience for his failure to secure our southern border is running thin. After 3 years in office, nearly every conceivable metric has distinguished the Biden administration from its predecessors for all of the wrong reasons. Since the President took office, Customs and Border Protection has seen the highest annual total for border encounters on record. CBP has reported more than 7.8 million encounters with illegal immigrants at the southern border, and this doesn't even count the 1.6 million known "got-aways."

Fentanyl and other lethal drugs pushed by China through Mexico and across our border are the primary cause of death among American adults between ages 18 and 45.

And reports of individuals on the Terror Watch List trying to sneak across the southern border have literally soared on President Biden's watch. Five years ago, CBP didn't encounter a single individual on the list between southern border ports of entry. Last year, they encountered 169.

This is what broken borders look like. This is humanitarian and national security failure of the highest degree.

And it is no mystery how we got here. President Biden and Vice President HARRIS were promising open borders 4 years ago on the campaign trail, and they started following through, literally, on day one. The Biden administration rescinded policies like "Remain in Mexico" that helped CBP hold the crisis at bay. They froze construction of physical barriers at the border out of spite for their predecessor, a move that most Americans now say they want to see reversed.

Every Senate Democrat voted to let President Biden repeal title 42, a pandemic-era policy that represented border officials only meaningful tool to stem the flow of illegal arrivals.

The administrations supposed border czar traveled widely to discuss the root causes of migration, but for months, she couldn't find time to visit the border itself. And for years, Washington Democrats have refused to call the situation what it obviously is: a crisis.

At every step, the American people have been left, literally, scratching their heads. In some cases, they have been left with unimaginable grief, like the family of Laken Riley, the student murdered by a man who shouldn't have been allowed into the country in the first place. And in every case, they have wondered why their elected leaders are missing in action.

Families are wondering why Senate Democrats opposed Senator BLACKBURN's proposal to allow State and local law enforcement to cooperate with ICE to detain and deport criminals; why they voted down Senator BUDD's legislation that would have prohibited granting legal status or citizenship to individuals who have assaulted a law enforcement officer; why they blocked the proposal that would have required that individuals DHS deemed to be "special interest aliens"—potential national security risks—are detained at the border and not released into the interior by the thousands. They are wondering why leftwing groups are exploiting the crisis to line their own pockets.

But one thing the American people don't have to wonder about is why Washington Democrats are suddenly chomping at the bit to convince their constituents that they care about border security. After all, working families are the ones telling pollsters the border is their very top election-year concern. The American people aren't fooled. They know that the President's summary reversal of commonsense border authorities is what started the crisis, and they know the solution is not cynical Senate theater.

The solution is a President who is willing to exercise his authority, to use the tools he already has at his disposal, and to start cleaning up this mess. If Senate Democrats wanted to start fixing the crisis tomorrow, they would be urging the President to do exactly