

The night we released that bill, Senator DURBIN, I thought that we were on a path to passage. But it was President Trump who intervened and said, plain and clear, as Senator MCCONNELL has admitted: I want nothing to pass before the election. He said I want nothing to pass before the election, because President Trump's team decided that it would be better for the border to be a mess to help his political prospects instead of solving the problem.

I hear Senator GRAHAM when he says: Well, we don't trust the Biden administration. Well, we didn't trust the Trump administration. That is a road to nowhere.

If we don't pass reform legislation when the other party's President is in power, we will never do the business of the people. We had a chance to do that until the intervention of President Trump.

I wish—I wish—that instead of choosing his political prospects this November, we were choosing to secure the border in a bipartisan way.

Mr. DURBIN. At 2 o'clock this afternoon, we are going to have a vote on that bipartisan measure. It will be an opportunity for those who have amendments to come forward with those amendments after we pass it; is that not correct?

Mr. MURPHY. That is correct. And, of course, this is a motion to just proceed to debate.

So this isn't final passage. If Members think there are imperfections in this bill, if they want additional restrictions on parole authority, they could vote to proceed, and then we could get into a process by which we could try to solve any remaining differences that have arisen since the announcement of the bipartisan bill with Republican leadership with their designated negotiator.

I wish we could just get onto this bill so we could try to sort this out instead of allowing this issue to become a perpetual political football, as seems to be the interest of many of my Republican colleagues.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I have found this conversation so interesting.

I will remind my colleagues that H.R. 2, a border security bill, actually did come to the Senate, and it has been here since May 15 of 2023—an actual border security bill—and the fact that the provisions in front of us are not border security provisions are things that are of concern.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1843

Mr. President, I have come to the floor to talk about the Biden administration ending a policy that we had during the Trump years, and it was familial DNA testing at the southern border.

Now, they chose to end this. Nobody has benefited more from this reckless decision of the Biden administration

than these cartels that are abusing and recycling minors to help illegal aliens. Yes, indeed, they are recycling children. They are recycling children who have no relationship to the adults that are bringing them in, because these illegal aliens, being pushed by the cartels, are attaching children to the adults so that they appear as a family unit at the border, and that will help them to get asylum.

While more than 400,000 migrant children have crossed our border under this administration, reports show us that as many as 30 percent of those children that are DNA-tested by border agents are not related to the illegal aliens who are posing as their family members.

So I come to the floor to call for a motion to proceed to S. 1843, the End Child Trafficking Now Act, to restore familial DNA testing at the border. The bill would criminalize child recycling. It would require DHS to deport illegal aliens who refuse a DNA test. It would mandate a maximum 10-year sentence for illegals who fabricate family ties to a minor and require HHS to process such children as unaccompanied minors.

Protecting migrant children should not be controversial. If my Democrat colleagues object, they are making their position clear on this issue.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session; further, that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 1843 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I understand this bill is intended to "require a DNA test to determine the relationship between" asylum-seeking adults at the border and "any accompanying children." However, it fails to accomplish this goal, and our current laws already include provisions to allow for DNA testing.

Under current law, as written, DHS and the State Department already have the necessary authority to collect DNA when there is any question about the familial relationship between a noncitizen and a minor child traveling with them.

At the southwest border, the Department of Homeland Security currently conducts DNA testing when there is any question about the validity of the parent-child relationship, and additional scrutiny is placed on individuals who are not related to the child to ensure that a child is not being trafficked.

Due to what I assume is a drafting error in this proposal before us, I have to note that this bill will not even apply to families seeking asylum at the border. As it is currently written, this bill only applies to someone who is "admitted" to the United States, but under our immigration laws, asylum

seekers at the border "enter" the United States but are not usually "admitted." There is a big distinction here. That means that this bill would apply to any noncitizen family coming to the United States through our legal immigration system but not families crossing the border to claim asylum—exactly the opposite of what the Senator says she wanted to achieve.

The family relationships of those who are coming to our country through the legal immigration system are usually validated by multiple agencies before applicants are issued a visa. For example, assume that a family from Mexico wanted to come to Disney World in Florida and applied for visitors visas for that purpose for themselves and their children. They would need to prove at the airport, under this bill, that they are the relatives or guardian of the children or submit to a DNA test. Is that what we are going to expend our energy on? If the family refuses, the adults may be arrested. The children would be treated as unaccompanied children and placed in custody. Is that what we want to achieve?

This bill would require every such family to prove their relationship with their children at the airport or other ports of entry. The burdensome requirements in this bill could bring our system for processing lawful travelers to a halt and deter legitimate trade and tourism in the United States.

As the Senator from Tennessee knows, protecting kids has been one of our top priorities in the Judiciary Committee. Last year, we held two hearings on the safety and well-being of children seeking refuge in the United States. We heard from child trafficking experts and government witnesses. Following up on these hearings, the committee is in the midst of ongoing investigation into the issue.

We all agree that no child should be abused, exploited, or trafficked, whether the President is a Republican or a Democrat.

I vigorously opposed the Trump administration's inhumane family-separation policy, and I have demanded that the Biden administration do more to protect migrant children.

It is easy to criticize the executive branch, but let's take a look at the reality of the situation. We need to look in the mirror. It has been decades—over 30 years—since Congress passed meaningful immigration legislation. In less than an hour, at 2 o'clock, every Senate Republican and Democrat will have a chance to make history, to start us on a bipartisan conversation for a better immigration system.

Instead of lobbying pro-partisan attacks, let's come together across the aisle to fix the broken immigration system. We should provide funding for enforcement against child labor violations and ensure child migrants have the services they deserve.

I have introduced legislation to improve sponsor vetting and placement,

help children navigate our legal system, and better protect minors in government custody. I welcome my colleagues from either side of the aisle to join me. I would be more than happy to sit down with any of my colleagues to discuss solutions that would prevent child trafficking. Sadly, this bill does not accomplish that goal at all.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I think the esteemed chairman of the Judiciary Committee is misreading the bill because this would apply to people who are entering the United States. It would apply to those who are coming to the southern border.

This is a process that had been in place. The Biden administration chose to stop this process. What we understand is that they chose to stop this because the test takes 45 minutes—45 minutes to determine if that child is or is not related, 45 minutes to determine if that child should be left with those adults. Thirty percent of the children that are DNA-tested at that southern border are found to not be related to the adult who is holding them by the hand, who is bringing them into the country.

So I would ask my colleagues, is 45 minutes too much time to take to be sure that a child is secure?

We have had 10 million people come to that border. We have had 400,000 of those children. Don't we want to provide the best for these children and separate them from traffickers?

By the way, HHS has lost track of 85,000 of these children. They can't tell the Presiding Officer's committee where those children are. They can't tell the Judiciary Committee where those children are—85,000 children. We do not know if they are dead or alive. We do not know if they are being labor trafficked, sex trafficked. We do not know what is happening.

DNA testing is a way to help save some of these children. We should return to this policy.

By the way, again I will mention that H.R. 2 has been in here. The Homeland Security Committee has had 374 days to have a markup on a border security bill. They chose not to. The Judiciary Committee could have had a markup on a border security bill. They did not do it. But they are bringing a political stunt bill to the floor today to try to push it through to give cover to vulnerable Members of your party.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my unanimous consent request, the following Senators be allowed to speak prior to the scheduled rollcall vote: Senator LANKFORD for up to 5 minutes, Senator SINEMA for up to 7 minutes, and Senator MURPHY for up to 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4175

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, for over three decades, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act—or RECA, as it is frequently described—has stood as a testament to our Nation's enduring commitment to righting the wrongs of the past. Where it has hurt someone, it wants to do something about it.

Since 1990, this vital program has distributed over \$2.4 billion to more than 38,000 individuals adversely affected by the fallout from atomic weapons testing and the uranium industry labor. These Americans suffered due to Federal activities and decisions beyond their control, enduring illnesses that spanned generations.

Yet, as we speak, RECA is on the brink of expiration. On June 10, just 18 days from now, unless we act, the Sun will set on a program that has provided essential relief to those still living with the horrific consequences of radiation exposure.

Among these are not only just the downwinders affected by nuclear tests but also the hard-working uranium miners, mill workers, and transporters contracted by the Federal Government in connection with Federal activities. Their suffering was part of the price of our national security during the Cold War, and their plight must not be forgotten.

So while we debate the merits and the potential expansions of RECA, it is unthinkable that we would interrupt access to aid for those currently suffering, those current beneficiaries, those currently eligible for RECA compensation. They consist of people whom no one disputes have been harmed. So we don't want to interrupt coverage to them simply because we are talking about who else might also need to be covered under this program.

The bill I propose is a clean extension of the existing program. It maintains the existing RECA framework, ensuring no disruption in access to compensation while we deliberate on how best to enhance and extend its reach. I don't dispute that it is appropriate to expand and extend its reach in certain respects because there are some people not currently covered by it, but, again, we don't want to harm those who are the current beneficiaries, and there is no reason why their coverage should lapse.

The proposal previously passed by the Senate to expand RECA includes regions and additional compensation claims in a variety of jurisdictions. In some of those instances, they are abundantly backed by data; in others, they are not. In some of those areas, there may be victims who are covered by other programs; in others, there may not be. Some of them are clearer than others. I think some of the clearest cases are those involving victims in the State of Missouri and in the State of New Mexico, and we will talk more about those in a little bit.

The current bill does have some challenging aspects to it—challenging from

the standpoint of moving forward toward passage. The bill as it stands risks inflating the deficit by at least \$60 billion—that is at the low end—and it may jeopardize the longevity of access to necessary resources for Americans who depend on RECA compensation for the reimbursement of costs associated with medical care or survivor benefits in the event a family member tragically passed away due to exposure.

That I will not do, and I am not alone. You see, the House of Representatives has thus far declined to take up and pass Senator HAWLEY's previous bill, with some signaling concern and raising some of the concerns that I just restated.

It is deeply troubling that amidst urgent need, we might find ourselves entangled in one form or another of brinkmanship, sitting on our hands, waiting for an unjustly expansive and unattainable bill—one that no one believes can be passed by the House. Expecting that that bill will be passed at the eleventh hour puts real lives at risk if what that means is that the existing RECA structure can't be reauthorized.

So I refuse to stand by and let the program lapse while we continue to search for a solution for legitimate victims in Missouri and New Mexico. We can't allow access to RECA's benefits to be held hostage during those negotiations.

Now, I, too, am in favor of some of the expansions, including and especially the expansion for New Mexico and for Missouri. I think those categories of would-be beneficiaries do need to be added. But we can't allow access to the benefits for the existing RECA beneficiaries to be held hostage during those.

But until we can iron out some of the details more carefully, it is no less imperative that we pass a straightforward extension that will allow support for the existing beneficiaries to continue without interruption. Those people haven't done anything wrong. There is no reason why they should be punished based on the fact that we haven't yet found a solution that can pass through both Houses of Congress and make it to the President's desk.

With the clock ticking down to just 18 days, less than 3 weeks before RECA expires, every moment that jeopardizes benefits for those suffering the consequences of our Nation's past actions is significant, and we should find that troubling. Now, these individuals do not have the luxury of time that seems at times so abundant in Washington. They need our help now, and they deserve swift and unencumbered continuation of access to the support that RECA provides while we work out the other issues.

I urge my colleagues in Congress to not allow RECA to lapse. Let's pass this clean reauthorization. Let's do it right now, and let's send a clear message that America takes care of its own.