

attention to the devastating fentanyl fallout, made significantly worse by 4 years of failed Democrat open border policies and to note the return of commonsense border security policies led by Senate Republicans and President Trump.

In March, Border Patrol agents encountered just 7,181 illegal immigrants attempting to cross the border—the southern border, 7,181. This is in stark contrast compared to just 1 year ago, when, under President Biden, the total encounters for the month of March totaled 137,473. That represents a 95-percent decrease in crossings, from over 137,000 to about 7,000.

This sharp drop of illegal encounters is thanks to a new administration and a new Republican majority in the House and Senate, which has prioritized securing our border by resuming policies that brought historically low encounters just 4 years ago. And, I mean, policies that we put in place 4 years ago that worked then, we have put them back in place. They are working now.

So all that discussion on the part of the Biden administration saying, oh, my gosh, they needed some new law somehow, just isn't so; is it? The numbers make that abundantly clear.

And, of course, that means reinstating the migrant protection protocols, or the "Remain in Mexico" policy. Again, commonsense policies. Reinstating these policies helped curb illegal entries of individuals at our border and has begun the process of making our country safe again.

But the work is not done. While taking advantage of the failed border policies of the prior administration, cartels and other transnational criminal organizations, or TCOs, flooded the border and gained a criminal foothold in our country. The presence of the cartels and other bad actors operating within our borders led to criminal acts like drug trafficking, human smuggling, and other illegal activities.

On his first day in office, President Trump signed a series of Executive orders addressing the border crisis that had been affecting our country and began the process of removing criminals who had illegally entered under the previous administration.

These Executive actions have served as the first steps in reversing the catch-and-release policies that allowed members of cartels, gangs, and violent transnational criminal organizations, like MS-13 and Tren de Aragua, to remain in the United States while operating criminal enterprises.

By declaring an emergency at the border, DHS, DOD, and DOJ were able to take a whole-of-government approach and begin working together to identify the criminals that were illegally operating these networks within our country.

The result of these harmful Democrat open border policies has been felt by us all and has turned every State into a border State.

Leadership for the DEA Omaha Division, which includes my State, said it plainly and simply—the repeated presence of fentanyl in our communities is due to outside forces.

The precursor chemicals are coming from China. They go down to Mexico and from there, they're pushed up into our communities.

The numbers reflect this. In 2023, officials in North Dakota seized 21,000 more fentanyl pills than the year before, 30 pounds more meth, and 2½ times more pounds of cocaine.

Last month, the Republican majorities in both Chambers, the House and the Senate, voted to continue funding for key programs at DHS and DOJ that combat the rise in illicit drugs like fentanyl. Unfortunately, our colleagues across the aisle voted against that effort.

While the United States stands prepared to take on the scourge of fentanyl that is impacting our citizens, other countries must step up as well.

As a result of the actions taken by this administration, both Canada and Mexico have begun to be engaged partners on this issue.

In February, the President of Mexico agreed to send 10,000 National Guard troops to help secure its northern border with the United States.

The Canadian Government has named a fentanyl czar, listed Mexican cartels as "terrorist groups," and launched a Canada-U.S. joint strike force to combat organized crime, fentanyl, and money laundering. Additionally, the Canadian Government increased its law enforcement presence at the border, with a 56-percent increase in border personnel at land borders and ports of entry.

CBP officers, Border Patrol agents, and State, local, and Tribal law enforcement are stepping up to take on the fentanyl crisis at our borders.

I urge our Democrat colleagues in a bipartisan way to join us and support the effort to continue securing our border and to go after the criminals that have illegally entered our country and continue to do harm.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator WYDEN and I both be able to complete our remarks before the vote.

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

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I do appreciate so much my colleagues coming to the floor just to be able to talk about the scourge of fentanyl and what it is really doing in our communities. Senator RICKETTS, Senator MOODY, Senator BUDD, and Senator HOEVEN spent a lot of time laying out the challenges we really face.

I think most Americans know it and have seen it, and they just don't realize how fast it is really moving. Ten years ago, we had 700 deaths in the country due to fentanyl. Last year, we had

87,000. That is the acceleration we have seen in a decade.

A vast majority of fentanyl used to come across the border from, quite frankly, China. It was being mailed in. Active work was done to be able to shut that down. It started to come through Mexico—that is progressively. We are taking that on. The cartels and the criminal organizations are shifting more and more to Canada to be able to find ways to be able to move it in. The Canadians have seen that and they have noted that as well by the aggressive actions they have taken.

Just to give you a quick glance at this, dealing with just the fentanyl issue, in 2020, the Canadians interdicted 1,000 pounds of fentanyl precursors; in 2021, it was 11,000 pounds. That is the acceleration that is also happening for these criminal organizations that are trying to be able to move fentanyl into our country and, quite frankly, into Canada as well.

So we are grateful for their partnership, but we definitely see this as an emergency. A decade ago, the United States did not move fast enough to be able to stop the movement of fentanyl into our country. We lost tens of thousands of Americans. President Trump is determined, and, quite frankly, this Congress is determined. We are not going to be asleep on that again. We will take it very, very seriously. It is a very big emergency.

So I thank my colleagues for coming here to be able to talk about it today.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 1156

Mr. President, I also want to be able to spend some time talking about an issue that we have that we also have to address. It is a totally different subject, but it is dealing with unemployment insurance that was actually done during the pandemic.

This may not seem like a big issue to some who say: That was a long time ago that we were dealing with the pandemic. Thankfully, it is more and more in our rearview mirror.

But during the pandemic, we had billions of dollars of unemployment fraud that occurred during that time period—billions. Criminal organizations saw that America was moving fast to be able to stop the unemployment problem that was in our country, obviously, during the pandemic itself. The United States quickly ramped up to be able to provide benefits, and criminal organizations ramped up just as fast to be able to go after it.

During that time period, as far as the inspector general has seen at this point, the inspector general identified \$191 billion—with a "b"—\$191 billion of unemployment insurance that was inappropriately distributed—\$191 billion.

You may say: What is the issue with that, and why are we bringing it up now?

Unemployment fraud is a criminal action. There is a 5-year statute of limitations on that. The first of the unemployment benefits were actually put out 5 years ago this week. That means

criminal organizations that moved quickly to actually try to go after unemployment insurance that did not qualify for it—5 years ago this week. If we have not actually started that prosecution of them, they are going to get away with it.

Do you know what. Next week, there is another group. The next week, there is another group. The next week, there is another group. Until this body determines that we need to stop unemployment fraud and that we should not allow criminal organizations to get away with \$191 billion of tax dollars, they are going to continue to get away with more of it every single week.

Mr. President, what I bring is actually a solution to this. It is a simple extension of the statute of limitations for the unemployment insurance. This is simple. This is straightforward. This has already overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives. It passed with a vote of 295 to 127. That is 83 House Democrats voting for this bill.

This is a very bipartisan bill, and this is just a straight extension of this so that we stop the fraud that we know 100 percent and our inspectors general have already identified and say this has occurred to the tune of \$191 billion that we know of.

As if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 29, H.R. 1156. 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?

Mr. WYDEN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, first of all, I want it understood that we take a backseat to nobody—nobody—when it comes to fighting this fraud. That is why I negotiated a bipartisan package in the last Congress dealing with a host of issues relating to addressing fraud and making improvements to unemployment insurance. I negotiated that bill with our ranking member, now the chairman of the Finance Committee.

I am a little struck by what is going on here because my colleague, my friend from Oklahoma, was a cosponsor of that proposal. In other words, we did what the American people say they want, which is to have people find common ground on commonsense matters like fighting fraud.

Our bipartisan proposal went after pandemic-era fraud by extending the statute of limits on prosecution. It would help to prevent fraud in the future. It would help States improve their unemployment insurance programs to get benefits out on time in the event of a big economic crash shall like we saw in 2020. It would make better use of data to prevent abuse. It would protect people who got overpayments entirely due to somebody else's

mistake, who may not even know it to this day.

I will tell you, I think it is odd at best but certainly disappointing that our Republican colleagues have decided to walk away from a really good bipartisan agreement. The proposal they brought to the floor is much smaller, is much narrower. In fact, instead of looking forward, it is looking backward—no improvements to unemployment insurance, no fraud prevention looking at the future. In fact, the bill before the Senate actually cuts \$5 million of crucial fraud-prevention funding that Democrats secured after the pandemic.

So you ask yourself, why are Republicans attempting to make this cut? The nonpartisan experts at the Congressional Budget Office, looked at this narrow proposal my colleagues have brought forward, and they said if Congress were to pass this bill, Republicans would spend more money—more money—trying to track down fraud than they would actually recover from the fraudsters.

Government efficiency is something we are all interested in. You had me at hello on the concept of working on those kinds of issues in a bipartisan way. But here is a Republican anti-fraud proposal that loses taxpayer dollars overall, and to pay for it, they cut future fraud prevention. That just strikes me as defying common sense.

Another issue with this approach I want to highlight is that the bill now before the Senate fails to provide any protection for workers who got overpaid through no fault of their own. Colleagues may remember that when the pandemic UI program was created, it was in the midst of the COVID crisis—highest unemployment since the Great Depression, tens of millions of Americans out of work, entire sectors of our economy essentially mothballed.

Congress scrambled to create an unemployment insurance program for Americans who weren't eligible for traditional unemployment insurance. Without it, a whole lot of people would have gone hungry and lost their homes.

In the rush to get urgently needed relief to those out of work, some States made mistakes, provided a number of workers more in unemployment than they were entitled to. These workers didn't defraud anybody. A lot of those people who received overpayments had no idea they had gotten more money than they should have.

The issue is that some States are running their unemployment insurance programs with decrepit, old systems that can barely keep up, and they made mistakes.

Now 5 years down the line, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to claw back these payments—even from people who did nothing wrong. In fact, some of these people to this day aren't even aware they were overpaid. They certainly aren't fraudsters.

States made mistakes in the heat of an economic crisis, and Congress

shouldn't be punishing individual workers who had no idea in the first place what was going on.

Final issue with the proposal: The Trump administration has made a mockery of fraud prevention by illegally firing the Department of Labor inspector general.

The inspector general's office successfully oversaw unemployment fraud investigations throughout the pandemic. In my view, firing the inspector general is a big setback in the fight against fraud in the unemployment insurance program.

The Trump administration has also given DOGE unfettered access to unemployment insurance claims data. The bill before the Senate would allow DOGE to falsely accuse innocent workers of fraud years after unemployment insurance helped them keep food on the table during the pandemic. That is not being tough on fraud. That is making innocent people victims.

Democrats are all in—all in—on bringing criminals who defrauded the UI system to justice and building a more reliable, durable unemployment insurance system for the future. That is why, colleagues, we negotiated a really strong, bipartisan antifraud package. For the life of me, I don't understand walking away from that package now, especially in favor of a narrower proposal that would lose taxpayer dollars and sacrifice the effort to fight fraud.

Therefore, I would ask the Senator to modify the request so that the Wyden substitute amendment, which is at the desk and is a text of the Wyden-Crapo Unemployment Insurance Integrity and Accessibility Act, be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the modification?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Reserving the right to object, my friend from Oregon—and we are friends, and we had the opportunity to be able to serve together, and we have worked on a lot of issues. He is correct, and I am glad to be able to see a larger proposal to deal with unemployment insurance. It has been an issue for a long time, but this is one of the most classic examples of saying the perfect is the enemy of the good.

Today, we have people getting away with fraud—today—and we can do nothing about it because the statute of limitations has run out. The House has passed a bipartisan bill by a wide majority to deal with this one problem, and they have come to an agreement by a wide, bipartisan majority to say let's at least solve this part and then we will work on bigger solutions later.

What my friend is recommending is to say: No. Let's force everyone to work on the bigger solution, and every single day, let more people get away

with fraud until we come up with a bigger solution and can agree on it.

We should stop as much fraud as we can today and keep working on the bigger solution to be able to get the bigger issues done.

If I can also say to my friend, he also knows this bill well. This is not about incidental actions that have happened through someone who accidentally filled out something or a State did something inappropriately. This bill is very clear. That is why it had such strong bipartisan support out of the House. This is about criminal actors. These are people who criminally engaged in large-scale fraud deliberately. It is \$191 billion out there that the inspector general under the Biden administration even identified.

I want to do as much as we can on the unemployment insurance side, but let's do things as quickly as we can to be able to stop criminal activity and be able to prosecute those individuals.

So, in knowing that, I will not modify my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection to the modification is heard.

Is there an objection to the original request?

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Reserving the right to object, let me make sure we are clear with my friend because we do a lot of work together, and I am looking forward to continuing it.

I don't see much to object to this afternoon. We both want to be all in on the fight against fraud. Those were the first words out of my mouth: Let's go all in on fighting this horrendous fraud. That is why we worked so long in a bipartisan way, because you are not the only Republican from the committee who worked with me and it is a large bill and it deals with a big problem. And, for the life of me, I can't figure out why we aren't dealing with the big problem and not creating innocent victims—more of them.

At this point, I guess there is gridlock today, but I want to extend the olive branch again, which I have been doing from day one. I want a big bill that goes after big-time fraud in a very aggressive way. I am still baffled by why we are not out here with a whole lot of Republicans who are cosponsors of my bill, with the Senator from Idaho as the chair, and saying: This is the way we ought to be governing.

But I object.

I hope we are back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I look forward to working on a larger proposal in the days ahead, but that larger proposal is not going to move in the House in the next month or 2 months. In the meantime, we are going to have criminal organizations getting away with it over and over and over again. So let's move as much as we can as fast as we can, but at least, at this point, let's solve what we can today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, just very briefly, my colleague says nothing is going to happen in the House to fight fraud. I have got to tell you that I don't see any fraud caucus out there in either the Senate or the House. There are no rallies for people who are committing outrageous fraud. I think we ought to move. We ought to move here.

We have done the hard work. We have done the heavy lifting. My colleague from Oklahoma knows what it is like when he is trying to put together a bipartisan bill. We have done that work. I think we ought to move here and then talk to our colleagues in the House. Why don't you now pick up on the hard work we have done and we will get serious about fraud.

So we are going to continue this conversation. I always wanted to work with my colleague from Oklahoma on these kinds of issues, and we are going to stay at it until we deal with big-time fraud in a big-time way, in the U.S. Senate, in a bipartisan way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALLS

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum calls with respect to the Sauer and Dhillon nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 46, Dean Sauer, of Missouri, to be Solicitor General of the United States.

John Thune, Mike Crapo, Roger Marshall, Shelley Moore Capito, Tommy Tuberville, Jim Justice, James Lankford, John Barrasso, Markwayne Mullin, Tim Sheehy, Mike Rounds, Todd Young, Kevin Cramer, Ted Budd, Roger F. Wicker, Katie Boyd Britt, David McCormick.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Dean Sauer, of Missouri, to be Solicitor General of the United States, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 158 Ex.]

#### YEAS—53

Banks	Graham	Moreno
Barrasso	Grassley	Mullin
Blackburn	Hagerty	Murkowski
Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeven	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Risch
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Sheehy
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young
Fischer	Moran	

#### NAYS—46

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Baldwin	Hirono	Schatz
Bennet	Kaine	Schiff
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schumer
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Shaheen
Booker	King	Slotkin
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Coons	Lujan	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Markey	Warner
Duckworth	Merkley	Warnock
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Fetterman	Ossoff	Welch
Gallego	Padilla	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	
Heinrich	Rosen	

#### NOT VOTING—1

Murray

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 46.

The motion is agreed to.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 47, Harmeet Dhillon, of California, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

John Thune, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Mike Crapo, Lindsey Graham, Tim Sheehy, John Kennedy, John Barrasso, Markwayne Mullin, Roger Marshall, Rick Scott of Florida, Mike Rounds, Tommy Tuberville, Steve Daines, Bernie Moreno, Eric Schmitt, Jon A. Husted, Roger F. Wicker.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Harmeet Dhillon, of California, to be an Assistant Attorney General, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI).

Mr. SCHUMER. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) and