

cannot solve that problem. Tom Cousins proved that any problem, no matter how great, is solvable if you are willing to dedicate yourself to doing so.

Second, it takes a holistic approach—not just schools, not just playgrounds, not just housing, not just jobs but everything. The transformation of East Lake Meadows was a holistic approach for the entire community. Lastly, mixed-income housing was important to bring employed people back into the neighborhood. So they had mixed-use housing all throughout East Lake Meadows.

The result was a purpose-built community that is now home to the PGA FedEx Championship, a restored East Lake Golf Club, and a community that is proud of itself and one of the shining stars of the city of Atlanta.

Because a man with purpose, Thomas G. Cousins, invested his money, public purpose-built communities are now all over the country being started as renovation projects in Indianapolis, New Orleans, and in cities around the United States of America.

So we should all pause to give thanks for those who have done so much to make our States and our country better. I pause to thank Thomas G. Cousins for the great investment he made in the city of Atlanta, the children of our State, and the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this week the Republican-led Senate will keep a promise we made to the American people. If they entrusted us with the leadership and the majority in the last election, we told them we would vote to repeal ObamaCare—the largest Federal overreach in recent history. It has been disastrous to thousands, if not millions, of people.

Unfortunately, the President's ill-advised health care law and the partisan push that made it law came with a lot of burdensome regulations. Both the law and those regulations have hobbled the American economy because they simply added additional burdens onto the small businesses that we depend upon to create the jobs so people can find work and provide for their families. It has hobbled those small businesses by burdening them with unmanageable costs, and it has failed the American people at every turn.

When the President said “If you like what you have you can keep it,” that was not true. Millions of Americans lost their preferred health insurance providers and the doctors who accepted that coverage. Instead of providing people with more affordable access to health care, millions of people faced higher premiums and higher deductibles. For all practical matters, the higher deductibles that come along with most ObamaCare health care policies make millions of Americans effectively self-insured.

More than 5 years after it became law, it is no surprise that a recent poll found that only 37 percent of the respondents approved of ObamaCare. ObamaCare is a textbook example of how bigger government does not necessarily lead to more choices or real solutions. Indeed, what it demonstrates is that it can lead to higher costs, inefficient health care delivery, and millions of Americans being let down by a system that was a partisan vote here in the Senate.

I remember being here on Christmas Eve in 2009 at 7 o'clock in the morning when Senate Democrats pushed through the ObamaCare legislation in the Senate. Again, without any sort of bipartisan commitment to actually improve health care choices and make health care more affordable for the American people, it was purely a partisan undertaking.

This bill that we are voting on to repeal ObamaCare will not only provide relief and more choices and the opportunity for the market to give people the health care they want at a price they can afford, but it also represents keeping a promise we made to the American people that we would deliver on if they gave us the majority. We will do that this week.

HUMANE ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, there is another subject I want to raise because it is a matter of great concern. It is not only because I come from Texas and we see thousands and thousands of unaccompanied minor children continuing to cross our border, but you will recall in the summer of 2014, I believe the President himself talked about the humanitarian crisis as a result of the thousands and thousands of unaccompanied children—some with a single parent—who were streaming across the border in an overload of the capacity of local communities in the Rio Grande Valley and elsewhere to be able to deal with these children in a humane and acceptable sort of way.

While the memory here in Washington, DC, may have faded about this humanitarian crisis, I can tell you that most Texans remember it vividly. The picture was stark: tens of thousands of unaccompanied children coming from Central American countries that had set out to cross Mexico and to cross the border into the United States. Virtually all of these children had seen

their lives placed in the hands of violent criminals to get here. To say the journey was a perilous one is a gross understatement.

We recently had a hearing of the international drug enforcement caucus in the Senate. I asked one of the witnesses: Isn't it the case that the same criminal organizations that smuggle people into the United States for economic reasons are the same people who smuggle children for human trafficking purposes, that these are the same people and the same organizations that smuggle illegal drugs and perhaps dangerous and other hazardous materials into the United States? Without hesitation, the witness said yes.

It may have been some bygone era when an individual coyote, as we call them in South Texas, smuggled people in for the fee they could charge, but now this is big business. This is a business model that is being exploited day in and day out by the transnational criminal organizations, but that all seems to be lost on the administration.

I saw how this tragedy was unfolding firsthand in McAllen where I visited these children who made the journey—sometimes alone—only to end up here in this country by themselves, looking for a friendly face or somebody who might help them. It was heartbreaking to see young children without their parents and extremely heartbreaking to hear the horrific stories about the trips they made. Again, coming from Central America, across Mexico, perhaps on the back of a train they called The Beast, physically assaulted, some murdered and many robbed and otherwise mistreated.

The pressing question in that summer of 2014 was, Why now and why here? Why was all of this happening? How could we stem the tide of this seemingly endless migration of unaccompanied children from Central America?

You don't have to look much further than the President's own Department of Homeland Security. One internal memo analyzing the surge of child and female migrants flooding the southwest border stated: “The main reason the subjects chose this particular time to migrate to the United States was to take advantage of the ‘new’ U.S. ‘Law’ that grants a ‘free pass’ or permit.” I think they call them permisos in Spanish. In other words, they came here because of the widespread perception that these unaccompanied children and women traveling with children would be allowed to stay here in defiance of our immigration laws, even after they crossed the border illegally.

A similar study by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Science and Technology Directorate concluded that the unaccompanied minors “are aware of the relative lack of consequences they will receive when apprehended at the U.S. border.” Apparently, at the time, these minors and their parents believed there would be no or little consequence to illegally

coming into the United States, and tragically, sadly, they were right.

In the wake of that crisis last summer, it became clear that the President's failed immigration policies, including his deferred action program and his overall lack of seriousness when it came to immigration enforcement, played a role in inducing thousands of families to risk their lives to travel to the United States.

Until recently, we had perhaps been lulled into the misconception that this flood of migrants had stopped. But over the weekend, I was startled by news reports—perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised but I was—that suggest this downward trend has started to reverse and in a big way. According to these reports, smugglers were again bringing hundreds of women and children into the United States across the Rio Grande.

One from the New York Times noted that according to official data, "border Patrol apprehensions of migrant families . . . have increased 150 percent" from last year. The number of unaccompanied children has more than doubled.

The bottom line is that, clearly, there is virtually nothing being done to deter these children and their families from illegally crossing the border and little or no consequences when they do.

I have to point out that the administration has done virtually nothing to make sure these children are not exposed to the same criminal organizations operating in this country. In fact, current law requires these children to be released by the Department of Health and Human Services to sponsors without any assurance or systemic protections that they are being sent to a safe environment. There are no criminal background checks. They are not required to be actual family members, and they could well be some extension of the same criminal organizations that smuggled them into the United States in the first place.

It is shocking to me that the Senate would not be moved to act on this because, of course, we passed a large anti-human trafficking law this last spring with a 99-to-0 vote. But to sit quietly while these children continue to stream across our border and are placed in the hands of potentially dangerous individuals is unacceptable.

Earlier this year, four individuals were indicted for their involvement in a trafficking ring that smuggled unaccompanied Guatemalan children into the country and forced them into slave labor at a farm in Ohio. These children were not only forced to work long hours, but they were abused and threatened and exploited. Many of them could have been spared if the Federal Government and Health and Human Services had an adequate system for screening and vetting the sponsors of these unaccompanied minors.

We have to do a better job of protecting these children, which is why I recently joined a letter with the chair-

man of the Senate Judiciary Committee demanding answers from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services.

It is clear that the Federal Government needs to step up and create a more effective review process before releasing these children to strangers and perhaps criminals. Our government has a duty to protect them once they are here and to ensure that they are no longer preyed upon by criminals and human traffickers.

Given the administration's inability to deter illegal immigration and the Federal Government's failure to deal with them reasonably, rationally, and humanely when they get here, we have every reason to believe that illegal immigration surges of this nature will continue and will grow until we reform this system. That is why I intend to introduce a piece of legislation called the HUMANE Act, which will reform the system to end the practice of automatic catch-and-release to nongovernmental sponsors. It would enhance the screening of these children to determine if they are victims of crime or in need of some specialized care. It will make sure they get a swift and fair court determination on whether or not they are eligible for any protected status under our immigration laws.

The HUMANE Act would also help ensure that if these children are in need of humanitarian assistance, they will never be released to sex offenders, criminals, or others who will seek to harm them. Of course, preventing these surges is not just a humanitarian issue; it is a national security issue as well. By tying up our law enforcement, customs, and other security officials with humanitarian care obligations, the cartels and other transnational criminal organizations create an environment where it is much easier to traffic drugs, weapons, and other contraband.

We know there are increasing ties between terrorist organizations and drug cartels, so the threat that they will work together to exploit another humanitarian crisis is very real. For instance, last year before the Senate Armed Services Committee, SOUTHCOM's commander, John Kelly, stated that he was "troubled by the financial and operational overlap between criminal and terrorist networks in the [Central American] region."

He went on to say: "Although the extent of criminal-terrorist cooperation is unclear, what is clear is that terrorists and militant organizations easily tap into the international illicit marketplace to underwrite their activities and obtain arms and funding to conduct operations."

I am not just talking about economic migrants. I am talking about immigrants from around the world who can potentially get through our southern border virtually at will. I am talking about transnational criminal organizations determined to spread violence and import narcotics into the United States.

I hope the administration will take these most recent reports seriously, before we experience once again the horrifying humanitarian disaster we experienced in 2014. But nothing short of real improvements to border security and our laws will work.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

BURUNDI

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to call for urgent action to prevent widespread violence and mass atrocities in Burundi. Let us not allow Burundi to become the next Rwanda or Darfur. We are at a critical juncture. I call upon the Burundian Government and opposition to respect the spirit of the 2000 Arusha agreement and immediately stop all violence, disarm militias, including youth militia aligned with the government, and urge all legitimate stakeholders to agree to participate in an inclusive dialogue to determine a path forward for their country.

As my colleagues may know, the country has been in turmoil since April, when President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to run for a third term. His decision, which many feel violated the spirit of the very agreement that ended the Burundi 12-year civil war and the Burundian Constitution itself, has led to widespread violence. An attempted coup in May revealed an alarming split in the militia's military ranks, and I came to the floor in June to discuss my concern that the situation could escalate. Unfortunately, I was correct. It has. At that time, 90,000 people had fled the country, and now there are over 200,000 refugees. In June, an estimated 21 people had died during the protest. The U.N. now estimates that nearly 250 people have been killed since April, some at the hands of the security forces and others in a series of tit-for-tat targeted assassinations and killings.

The violence has taken on troubling overtones. Bodies of those who have been clearly victims of execution-style killings are found daily in the streets of Bujumbura, Burundi's capital. The families of political opponents are now being targeted and killed. Government officials have been murdered.

In November, Burundian officials engaged in alarming rhetoric reminiscent of language used to incite and carry out the genocide in Rwanda. The government was forced to issue a letter that claimed that the statements made by the President and the president of the senate were not intended to foment such actions. Intended or not, such comments are deeply disturbing.

The international community has engaged, but I fear our efforts may not be enough. I was very pleased to see the African Union Peace and the Security Council's October 17 communique, which urged dialogue, called for deployment of additional human rights monitors, and threatened targeted