

The impact of the crisis in Syria is immense and potentially destabilizing and requires our support to maintain the peace.

Finally, this bill takes critical steps to address the ongoing war and humanitarian crisis in Syria by providing aid to impacted communities and condemns the heinous human rights violations committed by the murderous Assad regime.

Until this horrendous conflict is resolved, new sanctions will be imposed on anyone who supports Syria either financially or militarily.

It is true that this bill will not solve all the problems in the Middle East. It will not, for example, provide justice to innocent civilians killed by the Assad regime. It will not rebuild the communities treated as collateral damage throughout this crisis. But it is a step to ensure our allies are prepared to fight for and defend our shared national security interests.

Senate Democrats have indicated, unfortunately, that they are likely to block this legislation from coming to the floor, as their discussions with the President on border security remain at an impasse. Leader MCCONNELL, though, has made it clear that the Senate will not waste time holding show votes on legislation that the President will not sign, so we continue to wait for Speaker PELOSI and Minority Leader SCHUMER to take serious, credible action to break that impasse. Until that time, there is a lot of work we can and should do, such as debating and voting on this legislation, which will protect our national security interests in the Middle East.

Twenty-five percent of our government has already been shut down because of this impasse. I urge our Democratic colleagues in the Senate not to shut down the work of the Senate too.

I want to thank the majority leader for scheduling this important debate and vote, and I look forward to voting yes when the time comes.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as I mentioned, this partial government shutdown continues, now on its 18th day. But 18 days in, not much has changed. The newly elected Democratic House refused to come to the negotiating table with a serious offer or to negotiate in good faith.

This entire debate has been surreal. I would say it has been a joke, but it is really not funny. It has now degenerated into a game of silly semantics, while losing sight of just how much is at stake for the people affected.

A secure and vibrant border is critical to the safety and livelihood of our entire country, and it, of course, plays a vital part in the daily life for many Texans, especially those who live and work in the border region. If you visit El Paso, for example, out West, you will see firsthand how interconnected the city is with its neighbor, Juarez.

Mexico is literally on the other side of the international bridge. Each day at that single port of entry, an average of 20,000 people cross the border on foot legally—going to work, going to school, visiting friends and family, or shopping. That is in addition to the 35,000 car crossings and the 2,500 cargo trucks that cross each day just at the El Paso port of entry.

I often compare the United States and Mexico to an old married couple who have occasional differences but who can't get divorced. We depend on one another, and we depend on a safe, secure, and efficient border to allow both countries to live in harmony.

Not everyone or everything attempting to cross the border is in our country's best interest. Transnational criminals, drug smugglers, and human traffickers try to take advantage of any opportunity, any gaps in our border, and they use it to infiltrate, threaten, and endanger our communities.

For too long, our frontline officers and agents haven't had the tools and resources they need to do their job. Whether it is outdated infrastructure, personnel shortages, or technology, the fact remains that we need additional border security funding to empower these hard-working officers and agents to complete their mission at both our ports of entry and between those ports of entry.

After talking to the experts—Border Patrol officials in Texas, as well as local stakeholders—I introduced legislation in the fall of 2017 to address a number of their concerns. That legislation, called the Building America's Trust Act, would have authorized approximately \$15 billion over 4 years for a long-term border security and interior enforcement strategy. Notably, the bill provided a great deal of discretion to the Department of Homeland Security's experts on the ground to determine what tactics were needed and where.

As my friend Manuel Padilla, former Chief of the Border Patrol's Rio Grande Valley Sector, once told me—he said: The answer to border security from the Border Patrol's perspective is finding the right balance of three things: personnel, technology, and infrastructure.

The landscape along the U.S.-Mexico border—particularly the 1,200 miles of common border between Mexico and Texas—the geography varies significantly, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to border security. That is why it is important to listen and learn from law enforcement and key stakeholders how to adapt the right mix to each area. That way, we can ensure we are deploying the most effective and practical solutions to achieve operational control along the southern border.

Yes, we need physical infrastructure in places—a fence, a wall, a vehicle barrier, for example—because the hard-working agents and officers on the ground tell us that it works, and we

would benefit from more of it. But we also need personnel to enforce the laws along the border and ensure our ports of entry are operating efficiently. And, yes, we need technology, things like scanners to scan for drugs that are embedded in shipments that come across the border. We need drones, radar, and sensors to help maximize border security, as well as access to the Rio Grande for Border Patrol agents so they can police the border for illegal entry.

This shouldn't be a partisan debate, and historically, our differences on this topic have not been so polarizing. I think the nature of our political system today makes it easy to forget that not too long ago, border security was something supported by both political parties.

In 2006, the Senate passed the Secure Fence Act by a vote of 80 to 19. That is what I would call a bipartisan victory. Among those who voted for that bill include many current and former leaders of the Democratic Party, including Minority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER, then-Senator Barack Obama, and then-Senator Hillary Clinton. They didn't believe that fences and walls and physical barriers were immoral, as apparently the current Speaker of the House of Representatives does. Not only did that legislation call for more than 800 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border, it also authorized the other important components of border security that I talked about, things like technology and personnel. That was in the 2006.

In 2013, more recently, all 54 Democratic Senators voted for \$46 billion in border security—every single one—and now President Trump's request for \$5 billion is somehow a nonstarter.

The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act provided funding for, yes, infrastructure, personnel, and technology. That is exactly the right mix that Chief Padilla mentioned, which I referred to a moment ago. These are really the same types of issues we are talking about today. These are not radical ideas. We need a sensible combination of physical barriers, technology, and personnel.

My Democratic colleagues supported border security during the Bush administration. They supported border security during the Obama administration. Now I urge them to come to the table with a serious proposal to help secure our border and end this standoff and to stop the foolishness and the political games.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.