

He has a number of people in the statehouse who served with him, in a chamber where I was speaker of the house. They are mourning his death today. I couldn't be there in person because we have to be here for the votes that we are taking up this afternoon, but I wanted the Jones family to know, and all the people in Eastern North Carolina, how much I cared for and loved Walter Jones.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, one of the reasons why I continue to be here in Washington rather than visiting with family and friends of Congressman Jones is that we have a very important vote that we expect the Senate to take up here sometime this afternoon.

It is a vote that is borne out of compromise. To quote Winston Churchill—I think it was—it is the worst possible option except for all the other options considered up to this point.

It is not perfect, but it is important that we get the votes and that we encourage the President to sign this bill into law.

Now, I walked through the hallway this morning, and I had the press come up to me. Some in the press probably want to report honestly, but others want to create a narrative.

So the latest narrative is this: Senator, how do you feel about a bill that just got published last night—1,200 pages—and you are going to be asked to vote on it today?

I told them, specifically, because I have been following this measure since the last Congress. I said: Are you referring to the almost-1,200-page bill, of which all but 41 pages were matters that were taken up in the Appropriations Committee, voted out of committee unanimously in all but one case and with 26 votes in the other case? Are you referring to that bill?

If the Senators are doing their job and the Congressmen are doing their job, they read that months ago when they were passed out of the Appropriations Committee. Most of this is not new information. About 41 pages of it relates to the compromise that ultimately—because we couldn't get a compromise back in December—resulted in the government shutdown.

It absolutely funds some of the President's priorities for border security. There are people that get caught up on either end of the spectrum. It reminds me of how my kids used to fight in the back of the minivan when we used to take them on vacations. It is a childish argument: It is a wall.

No, it is not.

It is a wall.

No, it is not.

Look, it is steps taken forward in a positive way for border security. It is a structure that makes sense. It is technology. It is personnel. It is what we need to ultimately secure the border.

Some people can call it a wall because you could argue that in total it

is. Other people could say it is not a wall. I don't care as long as you ultimately recognize that voting for this measure and sending the signal to the President that we have his back, that we understand his priorities, and that we will continue to work on other measures on a bipartisan basis makes sense.

So I intend to support it today. It is not a vote that I am going to enjoy, but sometimes we have to do things here to make progress, to compromise, and to move on. We owe it to the American people to keep the government open. We owe it to border security to listen to their recommendations to fund people, technology, and infrastructure. This is a step in the right direction.

VALENTINE'S DAY

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, it was a year ago today that I was presiding and something occurred to me. One is that in the 12 years that I have been in public service, I have virtually spent none of those Valentine's Days at home. Last year, I was thinking about how I messed up. I didn't even order flowers or do the things that I would normally do, although, I usually get flowers on Valentine's Day.

But then I started contemplating the Senate rules, and I know that there are a number of, well, things you just can't do on the floor.

I determined, for example, that you can't do an ad hoc prop and say something because it would be a violation of the rules. So although I thought about putting this heart up and presenting this and saying, "I love my wife Susan Tillis of 32 years," I am not going to do that because I think it would be a violation of the rules.

But in the event that someday we do change the rules and we are able to come to the floor and express our love for our spouses and people who sacrifice as much as we do, I hope someday to be able to give that speech on the Senate floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about an experience I had this weekend that was extremely memorable to me.

I used to live in Texas. I used to be involved in businesses in the Valley, as they call it there—from Brownsville to Weslaco, to Edinburg, to McCowan. This past weekend, a good colleague of mine, Senator STEVE DAINES from Montana, and I traveled to the southern border to visit the Customs and Border Patrol people, to visit with ICE people, and to see firsthand what goes on in a typical night. We were there overnight on Sunday night. We had a remarkable evening, and we saw firsthand what these people are up against.

Before I make my comments, I want to say that from Deputy Chief Ortiz all the way down in the organization in that sector—the McCowan sector that we were in—the best of America is in uniform right now, every day and night, protecting our rights and privileges here in the United States. I was proud to meet these people and to be a part of this trip.

What we saw this weekend is disturbing on many levels. We spoke directly to Border Patrol agents. We went to the retention center. We saw firsthand that we have not just illegal immigration there, but we have a national security crisis. We saw it firsthand.

This is a situation that the border agents face every day, and it is a grim situation. It is shameful that we here in Congress have not given Border Patrol agents adequate resources to do their jobs.

First, the real tragedy at the border is the dramatic increase in illegal drug trafficking. Even though the conversation in this room deals mainly with illegal immigration across that border, in this sector, the drug traffic increases are remarkable.

This year alone, fiscal year 2018—this is from October 1 to today—we had a 22-percent increase of heroin seized at the southern border, a 38-percent increase of methamphetamine and a 73-percent increase in fentanyl.

The amount of fentanyl seized by ICE so far this year is enough to kill every American citizen by overdose. Let me say that again. The tonnage of fentanyl seized is up 73 percent this year across the entire southern border, and that is not 100 percent of what is crossing that border. That is a 73-percent increase over the last year. The tonnage that has been seized this year is enough to kill every American citizen by overdose.

What is so remarkable is the estimate that only 7 to 10 percent of the drugs that they are attempting to bring across the border are actually interdicted—less than 10 percent. That is consistent with what our SOUTHCOM combatant commander tells us repeatedly year after year. By the end of fiscal year 2019, CPB—Customs and Border Patrol—will have seized 1.7 million pounds of narcotics at the border.

The Border Patrol agents we spoke to estimate that they are only able to stop, again, about 10 percent, and that is because they don't have the resources.

The movement of drugs from Mexico to the United States at the southern border is the greatest drug threat to our country. These drugs pouring across the border are destroying communities across the Nation. Congress has to act to give these Border Patrol agents and our ICE agents the infrastructure they need to address this dramatic spike in illegal drug trafficking.

I know that the illegal immigration topic is a hot topic. I don't disagree