

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I just want to start off with this. This is Valentine's Day, and there are different days of the year that are more special to us than others—other than Thanksgiving and Christmas. I even like Halloween. But I think Valentine's Day is very special.

For our loved ones, our spouses or significant others, and our children, we love them, and I hope they know that. But to the people who work here day in and day out, the folks who are here when it is a weekend, when other folks are maybe heading out for the holidays to visit their families across the country, we don't say thanks enough. So to all of them, from my heart and from my staff, and, I think, from all of us—Democrats and Republicans in the Senate—we want to say thank you and happy Valentine's Day.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I want to talk a little bit about John Dingell this evening, but before I do that, I just want to comment on the fact that we passed spending bills to fund our government for the balance of this fiscal year. That is a good thing—a good, good thing. I wish we had done it last year. In fact, we did—months ago. Democrats and Republicans joined together here almost unanimously to pass a spending plan for the balance of the fiscal year—all 13 appropriations bills, and they looked a whole lot like what we passed here today. Yet we went through a shutdown which created a lot of havoc and turmoil, not just for Federal employees but for the people whom they serve and we serve.

I have apologized for that, and I know other colleagues have as well. Hopefully, in the months ahead, we can make it up to the people who were inconvenienced. In many cases they were not just disadvantaged but treated very badly.

The President apparently is going to sign the spending bills we passed with broad bipartisan support, and I understand he is going to declare a state of emergency to be able to do additional things down at the border with Mexico.

Tomorrow morning at 6 a.m., I will lead a bipartisan delegation, with House and Senate Members, and we will not be going to the border. I have been there any number of times as chairman of the Homeland Security Committee. We are not going to go to the border this time.

The President was down there a couple of weeks ago, and standing at the border he said: There is a human catastrophe or tragedy going on at the border.

I thought to myself: Well, what is going on at the border is very unfortunate, but the real human tragedy is what is going on in three countries: Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. The illegal immigration, to my sur-

prise a couple of years ago, is not just coming from Mexico. In fact, today there are more Mexicans going back into Mexico from the United States than there are going the other way. I was surprised to learn that, but that is the case today.

Illegal immigration in our country is down about 80 percent from the year 2000, and the folks coming across the border illegally are coming from three countries—Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Each year in the last decade or so, they have vied for the title “Murder Capital of the World.”

Their lives are made miserable because of our addiction to drugs. So having been complicit in their misery, the thought occurred to a number of us, including the last administration's President and Vice President and some of us in the House and the Senate, that maybe we should see why all of those people are coming out of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and trying to come into the United States.

I will tell a true story. Some of them come to Delaware. We have three counties in my State. The southernmost county, Sussex County, is a big county that raises a lot of corn, soybeans, and raise a lot of chickens. We process a lot of chickens. Over the years, a lot of folks come up from Guatemala to work in the agriculture and poultry industry.

About 2 or 3 years ago, we had an increase—a blip in migration—especially from Guatemala. I was in Sussex County, in Georgetown, the county seat, right in the middle of all of this poultry business. There are three chickens for every person in Delaware, to give you some idea of the extent of it.

I met with the folks at La Esperanza. That is Spanish for hope. It is a nonprofit. Their job is to try to help people who do make it across the border into our country and who have families, and they try to do some reconnection with their families.

But, anyway, I heard this story. There was a young man in Guatemala, a teenager, who was recruited by a gang there. He said he had to talk to his parents. He went to talk to his parents, and they said: We don't want you to join any gangs.

He went back, and the gang found him and approached him a couple of days later and said: Well, what do you think? Do you want to join our gang? He said: I talked to my parents, and they don't think it is the right thing for me to do now.

They said: Well, think about it some more.

A week or so later, they found him again and said: Well, what do you think? Are you ready to join our gang?

He said: No, I don't think I am going to do that now.

They said: If you don't join our gang, somebody in your family is going to die. Somebody in your family is going to die.

He went home, and he told his parents. They talked it over, and he joined the gang.

One of the things they do in these gangs—they have to go through an initiation. Part of his initiation was a requirement that he rape his 13-year-old sister. The son was like 15 years old, and one of the rites of passage is he had to rape his 13-year-old sister. He went home and told his parents what was expected of him. Within a week or two, the sister and the brother were on their way out of their country to try to be reunited with other relatives in the United States, and they ended up in Delaware. That is a human tragedy. I think if they had stayed there, it would have been probably an even greater human tragedy.

I am a big believer in root causes. Don't just address the symptoms of the problem. The symptom of the problem is people trying to get into our country and cross our borders illegally. That is a problem. That is a challenge. We need secure borders, but the root cause is what is going on in the countries that they are fleeing from—lack of rule of law, impunity, police who don't police, prosecutors who don't prosecute, judges who don't really administer the law, prisons that don't—correctional institutions that don't really correct behavior. Instead of turning out better people, they turn out better criminals. That has been a problem, and it has been a problem for some time.

Whenever we face a situation like this where an issue is really hard to deal with, what I like to say is, let's find out what works.

I am an old Governor. I used to be chairman of the National Governors Association. My last year as Governor, I chaired something in the NGA. In addition to being the Governor of Delaware, I chaired something called the Center for Best Practices. The idea was, how do we share solutions among Governors and among States for all the problems we face—some of the problems we face?

In trying to figure out how we help Guatemala and El Salvador sort of become less violent places, places with hope and opportunity—how can we help in that? So we looked around the world. We don't have to look too far, but if we look south of Central America, we find Colombia.

Colombia is a place where about 20 years ago, there were leftist guerillas trying to bring down the government, and there were drug lords trying to bring down the government. One day 20 years or so ago, a bunch of thugs rounded up the supreme court of the country—rounded them up, took them into a room, shot them all to death, killed them all.

Colombia was teetering, and it was not clear whether it was going to really make it as a nation. Some very brave people stood up and some of the leaders of Colombia stood up and said: We are not going to let these guys—whether it is the FARC, the leftist guerillas, or the drug lords—take over our country and take it down. We are going to fight back.

The United States, led by then-President Bill Clinton and by a guy who was serving as the chairman, I think, of the Foreign Relations Committee, Joe Biden, sort of made common calls with the President of Colombia, who was a very brave person, and said to the Colombians: You can do this. Stabilize your country. Make it a more livable, decent place to live. We can help because we are complicit in their misery, too, given our addiction to drugs.

Well, guess what. They started something called Plan Colombia, and for 20 years it has worked slowly. Slowly. An example of what we did is we provided Apache helicopters. Why did we do that? So that the Colombian police and the Colombian military would have the mobility they need to go across the country and go after the bad guys and take them on. That was just one of the many things that was happening in Plan Colombia.

But again, it is like Home Depot. You have Home Depot, Madam President, in your State, and we have them in mine. What is their saying? "You can do it, and we can help." So we said: Colombia, you can do it, and we can help. We are complicit in your misery, and we can help. And we have.

About a year or so ago, the President of Colombia won a Nobel Peace Prize. The leftist guerillas are—it is not perfect, but they are part of the government. Are drugs still a problem there? Yes, they are, but not like before. It is a country with a relatively bright future and one that we can be proud to call our friend and ally.

When we looked for a way to help in Central America—the Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador—we went to Colombia, and we said: Maybe it is possible to have a Central American version of Plan Colombia. And now we have that.

What we have done over the last 3, maybe 4 years, we funded those three countries in efforts to address some of the deficiencies that I just described—police who don't police, prosecutors who don't prosecute, judges who don't administer justice, and correctional institutions that don't really correct behavior. We have been doing this now for about 3 years, and our congressional delegation is going to go down there tomorrow and do a little bit of oversight and find out what is working in those three countries and what is not, whether they are meeting their responsibilities, and whether we are meeting our responsibilities.

You know, we can build a wall from sea to shining sea and from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. It can be 30 feet tall. But unless somehow the root causes of that migration—and it ain't coming from Mexico—some but not much. Again, more Mexicans are going back into Mexico than are coming the other way.

We really want to help the people of the Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador address those root causes. You know, they are going to keep coming

up here, and if we lived there, we would want to come too.

You know, for what it is worth, we have had about 80 Presidential declarations of emergencies, I guess, in maybe the last century, and they were for Pearl Harbor, Katrina, 9/11, other disasters, some of them natural disasters, others. Since 2000, there has been an 80 percent reduction in illegal migration at the borders. Most of it is coming from these three countries, not Mexico. So we will see what happens with the declaration of emergency that the President is going to declare.

I think you have to be careful. To my Republican friends, I say this lovingly to you on Valentine's Day: The idea of a President invoking his powers, using his powers in this way, I am frankly not convinced that—while there certainly are challenges at the border, I have explained where I think the real challenges are, the real causes.

Someday, we will have a Democratic President, and he or she will be considering a range of options of what to do, and somebody is going to suggest: Well, in the earlier administration, the Trump administration, they declared it. So they will say: Well, I will just declare a national emergency and do what I want to do. That is a slippery slope, and I think that is one we need to be very careful about going on.

REMEMBERING JOHN DINGELL

Mr. CARPER. The last thing I would like to do, if I could, is I want to talk a little bit about John Dingell. I don't know if our Presiding Officer ever had a chance to meet him or know him. She says no—nods no.

I had the pleasure of knowing him I guess since 1982, 1983, when I was elected to the House. I was a Representative, and he was already there. I was the new guy, and I had been a treasurer of Delaware and a naval flight officer before that, and I finally retired from the Navy as a captain a few years ago.

He was so nice to me. He was a big guy, a giant of a man and kind of gruff. He was kind of gruff, and I can't imagine how the pages would have reacted to him if he yelled at them or frowned at them or growled at them. But for reasons that aren't all clear, he was really kind to me. I think in his heart that is what he was.

I like to work out. I like to run. I like to work out in gyms. They have a gym over at the House in the basement of the Rayburn Building. It is a pretty nice gym. We have one here. It is small by comparison. It is modest. I usually go home at night, but occasionally I would spend the night in DC when I was in the House, and the next morning I would go to the gym, and I would either go run out on the Mall, or I would lift weights or ride the bike or something in the gym. When I finished up, before I took a shower and got dressed, I would go in the steam room—the gym had a steam room in it—and a lot of times, John Dingell was in there.

I remember sitting there with him repeatedly over the years—not hundreds of times but many times. Sometimes there were several people there. We talked. Sometimes it was just the two of us. He gave me really good advice. He was like a mentor.

The day I was sworn in as a Congressman from Delaware, I was the dean of our delegation because we only had one, so I didn't really have like a big brother or a big sister in my delegation to look up to in the House. There was nobody else but me. I was brand new. John Dingell was nice, along with a bunch of other folks too. They kind of stepped up and gave me some of the guidance that I needed.

He was an interesting fellow because he chaired the Energy and Commerce Committee the whole time I was in the House and a long time after that, and he always looked out for his bread and butter. In Michigan, that is automobiles. This was a big deal. It was then, and it still is. So he always wanted to make sure that they had the predictability that they wanted and needed and that they could be successful. If I were the Senator or Representative from Michigan, I would want that too. But he also was really good on clean air issues, clean water issues, natural resource issues, open space issues, and agricultural issues.

I remember once on one of those mornings, we were talking about whether it is possible to be a good steward of the environment, mindful of air, water, open space, public health—is it possible to do all those things and also look out for job creation and job preservation, whether it is in Michigan or some other place?

My staff has heard me say this, I am tempted to say, a million times. Folks on the Environment and Public Works Committee, where I am a senior Democrat now, have heard me say this more often than they want to. I have always said it is possible to have clean air, clean water, better public health, do good things for our planet, and create jobs. They go hand-in-glove.

One of the first people who reminded me of that a long time ago was John Dingell. He supported the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. He supported the Clean Air Amendments in 1990, on which he was nice enough to let me offer a provision that was incorporated into the law. He did a lot to help preserve the auto industry not just in his State but in this country. He was an amazing guy.

Either the day he passed away or before he passed away, with his wife Debbie by his side—she is now a Congresswoman in his old seat—he shared with her some thoughts that he wanted to leave as part of his legacy at 92, and those words—I am not going to read them here today. I think they probably have already been read on the floor or introduced into the RECORD.

I ask unanimous consent that those words be printed in the RECORD.