

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.