

I am a journalist's kid and very proud of it. My dad was a first-generation Jewish kid. He taught himself English and was a journalist. He always said: "Ron, the journalist's job is to ask the tough questions—the tough questions that really matter."

Robert Pear asked the tough questions, no doubt about that, but he always did it in a very unique way, a fair way, a thoughtful way, a way that embodied the gold standard for journalism that I have described.

So yesterday was particularly sad. We got the news in the morning. We had that healthcare hearing, which started about an hour after we got the news. The first thing I thought of as I came into the room was how hard it is going to be—and it is not going to stop hurting for a long time—to imagine that seat at the end of the press table not having the thoughtful, informed Robert Pear sitting there so he could get the facts to the American people.

So I just want to close today—we have had a number of colleagues speak already—to say, Robert, Robert Pear, you were the consummate professional. You were fair to the bone. It was an honor—an honor to get to work with you over the years in healthcare. We say goodbye to someone who was a true mensch, and this afternoon with heavy hearts, we think of Robert Pear and want the country to know what an extraordinary person he was.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I recognize the Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I come to speak on another matter, but I want to thank Senator WYDEN for the kind words he had to say, as well, about a very distinguished journalist.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BARR

Madam President, yesterday, the House Judiciary Committee voted to hold Attorney General Barr in contempt of Congress. Mr. Barr has been transparent. He made the Mueller report available to them—99 percent unredacted in the obstruction section of that report. Instead of reading it, the Democrats, who voted for contempt, moved like lightning straight to the charge of contempt. To me, that is not good-faith negotiation.

In a similar situation, now a few years ago, in a Democratic administration, with a Democratic Attorney General, with a House of Representatives held by Republicans, the House only held Attorney General Holder in contempt after many months of negotiation over documents that were withheld on bogus grounds; and just for connecting that to an issue, that was the Fast and Furious investigation that I was involved in as well. We had a very good case against Holder. We attempted to negotiate with Holder for a long period of time before the other body held him in contempt.

This particular issue of contempt of this Attorney General is not a good case. I would like to say, as a person who promotes congressional oversight

of every Democratic and every Republican President to make sure they faithfully execute the law, that what the House Judiciary Committee did yesterday, just a few days after Mr. Barr didn't do exactly what they wanted him to do and comparing that with the negotiations we had with the executive branch of the Obama Attorney General on Fast and Furious, is going to make it very difficult in the future for Congress to conduct its constitutional role of oversight because future Presidents are going to use this as an example of a bad-faith attempt to negotiate with the executive branch of Government to get what you want. Maybe what they want isn't real information or real congressional oversight; they may be trying to make political points.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative 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 (Mr. YOUNG). Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday, the Judiciary Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration that I chair held a hearing on the humanitarian and security crisis along the southern border. One of the witnesses we heard from was Border Patrol Chief Carla Provost, who leads the dedicated law enforcement officers who safeguard our Nation's borders every day. She has been with the Border Patrol for 25 years, and she has witnessed firsthand the ebb and flow of border crossings during that entire quarter century.

Chief Provost announced the most recent data that shows how dire the situation along our southern border is. She described these numbers as off the charts, which I think is a gentle way of putting it.

Before I get to the numbers, let me provide some context. In October 2018, the start of the fiscal year, Customs and Border Protection encountered nearly 61,000 migrants at the border. That is higher than any month in the previous fiscal year. At the time, we were all alarmed by the increase, but last month's numbers completely eclipsed those levels. Chief Provost announced at our hearing yesterday that in the month of April, CBP encountered more than 109,000 illegal immigrants along the southern border. From October to April, we jumped from roughly 61,000 to 109,000 per month, a 78-percent increase over just the 6-month period.

In addition to that enormous monthly total, she told us about the record-breaking daily total last week. Border Patrol apprehended 5,200 people in a single day—the highest number on record. The problem is that we can't

simply send these migrants home under the current state of the law. So the more individuals we apprehend, the more detention space we need. If we don't have the detention space, these individuals would simply just be released into the American population. We will never hear from most of them again, unless they commit some other crime.

But the fact of the matter is, we are overtaxing the capabilities of the Border Patrol, of Customs and Border Protection, of the local communities, and of the nongovernmental organizations that try to assist these migrants while they are in our country and in our custody. On certain days over the last month, CBP has had more than 14,000 people in custody, far greater than the capacity they are able to hold.

People may ask: Why do we have to detain people? Why can't we just let them go and tell them to show back up for a future court date?

We know from sad experience that the majority will not return for that court date, even if they have legitimate claims for asylum. We now know that there are more than 700,000—I think approaching 800,000—backlog immigration cases waiting to be heard by an immigration judge. This, again, is overwhelming our capacity to deal with these on an individual basis.

Back to the numbers, earlier this week the Rio Grande Valley Sector announced that their stations and processing centers were holding more than 7,000 illegal immigrants, and that is just one Border Patrol sector. In a recent television interview, Acting DHS Secretary Kevin McAleenan accurately described these facilities as being similar to police stations. Suffice it to say that CBP does not have the facilities or resources to manage that many people in a police station-like environment.

If you think that sounds pretty grim, just wait because it gets worse. We aren't only overwhelmed by the number of individuals coming across the border but by the types of people who are arriving. I am talking about children and families who are mostly from Central America. We were told that, all told, Border Patrol encounters, in a given year, individuals from 140 different countries.

Since the criminal organizations that smuggle people into the United States are open for business, they are more than happy to take a Bangladeshi, a Yemeni, somebody from Iraq or from Afghanistan or, for that matter, from Iran and bring them across the border into the United States.

When our detention facilities were built, they were designed to hold single adults for a short duration, which used to account for the majority of people apprehended. That is simply not the case anymore. The human smugglers and criminal organizations that charge \$5,000, \$6,000, \$7,000 a head to bring people into the United States have studied our laws and have learned how to exploit the loopholes and the gaps. That