

I also asked the DHS Acting Inspector General to investigate these Border Patrol facilities. Last week, the Inspector General's Office at DHS released a report detailing the inhumane and dangerous overflow of migrants at the El Paso port of entry. The Inspector General's Office found that overcrowding was "an immediate risk to the health and safety of detainees and DHS employees."

While we fail to even debate this issue here in Washington, we cannot overlook the inhumane conduct that is occurring at the border. We are better than that.

This notion of zero tolerance, where we separated 2,880 infants and toddlers from their parents, some of whom it took months to bring back together—to me, that does not speak well of who we are as a nation.

Look at this picture that was taken by the IG at one of the cells. Their faces are blanked out, but it gives an idea of the mass of humanity I counted—the IG found 76 women were in a cell for 12 people.

The Inspector General's report said that the Department of Homeland Security has been aware of the situation in El Paso for months but has not identified a process to alleviate overcrowding. Meanwhile, weeks ago, months ago, Congress passed an emergency appropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars for humanitarian care of these people at the border. It isn't as if we haven't given the administration resources to deal with at least the immediate crisis on their hands. The IG report said that DHS has been aware of this situation for months, but they haven't taken measures to deal with it. This report called on them to take immediate steps.

The Department of Homeland Security gave a target completion date of November 30, 2020—a year and a half from now—for the completion of a centralized processing center in El Paso. The Inspector General found this response completely inadequate, and so do I.

Democrats are serious about addressing this situation. There are some bottom-line standards that I think we all should look to.

First, we need border security, there is no doubt in my mind. In an age of terrorism, with the worst drug epidemic in the history of the United States, I want to know who is crossing our border and what they are bringing. Every American should want to know.

Secondly, there is no excuse for allowing a dangerous person to come into this country. If we know they are dangerous, they are not welcome. And if they are here in any questionable status and a danger to America, they have to go.

Third—and it pains me to say this as the son of an immigrant woman, but it is a fact—we cannot absorb all of the people in the world who want to come to the United States. It is not economically or even physically possible for

that to happen. We have to have standards when it comes to immigration.

Once we have established those three standards, shouldn't we come together, Democrats and Republicans, and rewrite our immigration laws, this broken system that has led to this point? It will not be solved by threats of walls, by threats of closing the borders, by threats of cutting off foreign aid. That makes the situation even worse, and, sadly, President Trump has proven that point in the 2-plus years he has been in office.

I am serious about addressing this, deadly serious about what it means to Dreamers and people here in temporary protected status. In February, after the President finally ended his government shutdown, I helped write an omnibus appropriations bill. We put \$564 million in the bill for inspection equipment so we could scan and x ray every car and truck coming into the United States and grab the narcotics at the border before they make it to my hometown and yours. I hope we all agree on that. There was \$414 million in that bill for humanitarian assistance. I can't tell you how that is being spent.

We could do more to make sure that even in the midst of political controversy, our border is secure and our treatment of these desperate people is humane and that we will be able to answer to history for how we are conducting ourselves.

Democrats have introduced the Central America Reform and Enhancement Act as a comprehensive response to this problem.

We need to address the root causes in the Northern Triangle countries that are driving these migrants here.

We need to crack down on the cartels and traffickers who are exploiting these migrants.

We need to provide for in-country processing, which the Obama administration provided for and the Trump administration eliminated. What it meant was that residents in those three countries did not have to make a dangerous and expensive trip across Mexico to our border to find out if they were eligible for asylum; they could do it in their home country. The Obama administration had that program. The Trump administration eliminated it, and people started making that trip across Mexico to test whether they were legally eligible to stay in this country.

In that Democratic bill, we eliminate immigration court backlogs so that asylum claims could be processed more quickly.

We stand ready to work on smart, effective, and humane border security policies. But the President needs to be part of the solution. If this is about his reelection, appealing to his base, and being tougher and tougher, I could tell him: It is not working, Mr. President. It is not working for the good of this country. Perhaps your political base finds it appealing, but I think the American people are now looking for

solutions. They want us to work on a bipartisan basis. We have a chance and an opportunity.

The House of Representatives' action yesterday, I hope, is the beginning of a meaningful dialogue to deal with this crisis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from South Dakota.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, our economy has made tremendous strides over the past 2 years. Americans on the whole have access to more jobs, higher wages, and more opportunities. Unfortunately, our Nation's agricultural economy is trailing behind the broader economy.

A combination of low commodity prices, protracted trade disputes, and natural disasters and weather-related issues have left many farmers and ranchers struggling. Nationwide, net farm income is about half of what it was in 2013—half.

In my home State of South Dakota, farmers and ranchers are currently facing the fallout from severe winter storms, heavy rainfall, bomb cyclones, and spring flooding. Less than half of this year's acreage intended for corn has been planted. Compare that to this time last year, when 96 percent of our State's corn was in the ground and growing. Today, just 14 percent of South Dakota's soybeans have been planted, compared to 83 percent this time last year. To make matters worse, for many farmers, this year's planting season is already over, as their land is completely flooded and will not dry out in time for anything to be planted. Other States that produce the bulk of our country's corn and soybeans are facing similar planting challenges.

There have been some recent wins for farmers and ranchers. The administration's announcement that it is lifting the ban on the year-round sale of E15—15 percent ethanol-blended fuel—is great news for corn producers in South Dakota and around the Nation. It is a big win for consumers, too, who will have access to this cleaner, lower cost fuel during the summer driving season for the first time. I have spent nearly my entire time in the Senate advocating for higher blends of ethanol, and I am pleased the Trump administration has followed through on its commitment to address this issue.

Another recent win was Japan's announcement that it was lifting age limits on U.S. beef imports, giving America's ranchers full access to the Japanese market. CNBC reports that the U.S. Meat Export Federation predicts that Japan's move could increase U.S. beef sales to Japan by \$150 million to \$200 million per year.

While these victories are important, there is a lot more work to be done to get our Nation's farmers and ranchers back on their feet. I hear regularly from South Dakota ag producers about the challenges they are facing, and I constantly share their concerns with

the administration, whether I am meeting with the President or other officials.

One of the biggest things we can do for our Nation's farmers and ranchers is secure trade deals that will open new markets for American agricultural products.

I support the President's efforts to secure more favorable treatment for American products and his determination to ensure that China honors the trade commitments it has made, but I believe we need to wrap up negotiations on these various agreements we are discussing as quickly as possible. Along with increased market access, farmers and ranchers need certainty about what international markets are going to look like.

I am committed to doing everything I can to advance trade agreements with Japan and with the European Union. I am also doing everything I can to move the United States-Mexico-Canada free-trade agreement through Congress in the near future. This agreement would benefit American agriculture, create jobs, and grow our economy, and we should pass it as soon as possible. We should be wary of any action that might jeopardize this trade agreement and the markets it will open for our producers.

Another issue of concern to farmers and ranchers is the implementation of the 2018 farm bill. Getting a pro-agriculture, pro-farmer bill to the President was one of my top priorities last year, and I am proud of the bill we delivered.

I took ideas and suggestions from South Dakota farmers and ranchers and developed more than 40 proposals aimed at making life better for American agricultural producers. Nearly 20 of my proposals were included in the final bill, including my new short-term, soil-building conservation program for farmers who don't want to tie up ground for 10 years or more in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Now that the farm bill is law, we have to make sure that it is implemented in a timely manner and as Congress intended. I have spent years pushing for an increase in the Conservation Reserve Program's acreage cap, and we finally got a substantial increase in last year's bill.

The Department of Agriculture needs to expedite both general and continual CRP signups to allow farmers to take full advantage of that cap increase. I have been strongly urging the Department to make sure that farmers can sign up in a timely manner. Taking millions of acres of environmentally sensitive land out of crop production in the next year could have a big impact on the farm economy by driving up commodity prices and increasing farmers' profits, but in order for this to happen, we need to make sure that farmers can get their least productive land enrolled in the CRP program and out of crop production by next year.

South Dakota farmers and ranchers are the lifeblood of our State, and I am

committed to doing everything I can to address their needs here in Washington. In addition to working on trade issues and farm bill implementation, I am working with the Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency to ensure that our farmers are treated fairly under crop insurance prevent plant and cover crop rules.

I have been working with the Agriculture Department to make certain the recently announced second round of Market Facilitation Program payments do not affect this year's planting decisions. I have also requested that this second round of MFP payments provide equitable assistance to all producers, especially those with failed and damaged crops or who were prevented from planting this year's crops due to adverse weather.

And, as I said, I will continue to push for trade agreements with China and other countries so that our Nation's farmers receive a check from the sale of their products overseas instead of from the Department of Agriculture.

I also recently led a letter to the President in support of Governor Noem's request for a major disaster declaration in South Dakota, and 2 weeks ago I voted in favor of the Additional Supplemental Appropriations Act, which would provide additional disaster funding for States and Territories harmed by last year's hurricanes and wildfires and this year's flooding. The bill also includes \$3 billion to provide assistance for farmers' crop losses from the 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

Our Nation's farmers and ranchers have a tough, backbreaking job. Instead of air-conditioned and heated offices, they labor in the hot Sun, the cold rain, and the snow. They start their days before the Sun rises and often end them long after the Sun falls. Most Americans never think about the blood, sweat, and tears that have gone into that loaf of bread or that gallon of milk that they grab off the grocery store shelf, but we are all the beneficiaries of the hard work and the dedication of our Nation's farmers and ranchers. It is an honor to represent so many of these hard-working people here in the Senate.

To South Dakota's farmers and ranchers, I want to say I hear you. I know that things have been incredibly tough for you all over the past few years. I know that you are fighting through a lot of challenges, and I am committed to making sure that Washington addresses your priorities, and I will do everything that I can to make sure that you have access to the support and the resources you need to continue feeding our Nation and the world. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, this weekend another community was torn apart by gun violence. Once again, politicians do what so many politicians in this body do. They offer thoughts and prayers to the people of Virginia Beach, and then they move on. It is tragic, and it is obscene how routine this has become in our country and how routine that reaction from far too many politicians—from the White House on down—has become.

This month we mark Gun Violence Awareness Month, but in our country every month, every week, and every day we endure senseless gun violence. Congress has ignored for too long the millions of Americans who want reasonable gun safety measures instead of doing the bidding of the gun lobby.

We cannot say we are doing what it takes to keep our country safe until we are finally willing to pass common-sense laws to protect all Americans from gun violence. Many of us have tried.

I supported the original Federal assault weapons ban in 1994. I joined with many of my colleagues to vote to renew it after Sandy Hook. Weapons of war and assault weapons do not belong on our streets.

We have tried to pass legislation to close loopholes in our background check system so that people who buy guns on the internet or at gun shows have to go through the same background checks as law-abiding gun owners who buy their guns at stores in Ohio.

After the tragedy at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, we tried to pass legislation to prevent people on the terrorist watch list from buying guns. If you are too dangerous to get on an airplane—if the government says you can't ride in the plane because you are on the terrorist watch list—it should be too dangerous for you to buy a deadly weapon. But this body is so, so in the pocket of the NRA that they will not even pass legislation like that. The gun lobby, again, stood in the way. We know what happened each and every time. They stood in the way, despite the fact that the laws we are talking about would not undermine the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

I respect the rights of hunters, of collectors, and of responsible law-abiding gun owners. No one is trying to take away their guns. When our students aren't safe in our schools, it is clear that something has to be done. When workers aren't safe on the job, it is clear that we have to do something. When too many Americans don't feel safe going about their daily lives in their communities, we can't sit here and do nothing.

We will not give up on making our country safer. We will keep working until we get weapons of war out of our schools, out of our workplaces, out of our neighborhoods, and out of our