

then the Governmental Affairs Committee, and many of us inevitably crossed paths with the smart and level-headed national security adviser for Majority Leader Bill Frist.

So, when President Trump first nominated Dr. Esper to be Secretary of the Army 2 years ago, my colleagues and I were well acquainted with his expertise, his professionalism, and his patriotic dedication to the men and women who serve to keep us safe. It is no wonder that this body confirmed him to that post by an overwhelming bipartisan margin. Since then, Secretary Esper has continued to impress. He has continued to earn the praise of experts and colleagues from every corner of the national security landscape.

“He’s highly regarded inside the Army. Soldiers like him.”

He is “someone who can work across the aisle . . . somebody who can work with Congress.”

Additionally, he is “superbly well qualified by experience and temperament for the position.”

Another quote: “The nation would be lucky to have Mark serve in any capacity . . . He is particularly well-suited to step into one of the most important jobs in the world.”

This is high praise from former Pentagon officials of the Obama years and from widely recognized national security professionals. Just last week, our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee offered a ringing endorsement of their own by voting by voice to favorably report his nomination to the floor.

It would be hard to draw up a more compelling case than the one in front of us for confirming Dr. Mark Esper, and it is hard to imagine a more persuasive argument for doing it right away—with no further delay—than the front pages of newspapers all around the world every day.

The world is full of serious threats to America, to our allies, and to our interests. Not the least among them, obviously, is Iran’s insistence on continuing to ratchet up tensions in the Middle East. Having a Senate-confirmed Secretary of Defense, especially one of this quality, could not have come a moment too soon.

In closing, when Secretary Esper took his last job, he wrote Army personnel a letter that laid out three priorities: readiness, modernization, and reform. Since then, he has played an active role in this administration’s efforts to restore the primacy and lethality of America’s fighting forces, and the success of defense authorizations and ongoing operations abroad bear his fingerprints.

We are reminded every day that this work continues, and we are reminded why. My colleagues should be proud to join me today in voting to advance the Esper nomination and in putting the right man on the job.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, over a week ago, I traveled to the Texas-Mexico border with the Vice President, as well as the Presiding Officer and other Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee. We visited McAllen, which is located in the heart of the Rio Grande Valley, which is a beautiful region with a thriving economy, but folks in the region continue to struggle to manage the growing humanitarian crisis caused by the massive influx of migrants arriving at our southern border.

The Rio Grande Valley has been disproportionately impacted by this migrant crisis, with 46 percent of all apprehensions last month occurring in that sector. It has taken a toll, as you might expect, on the Border Patrol, the Department of Health and Human Services, local communities, and the nongovernmental organizations working to provide care for these migrants.

Our trip provided the opportunity for the Vice President and members of the Judiciary Committee to meet with the men and women who are on the frontlines of this crisis and hear about the challenges they face every day. We also discussed what Congress needs to do to help them address this crisis.

Chairman LINDSEY GRAHAM invited all the members of the Judiciary Committee, both Republicans and Democrats, to go on the trip, but unfortunately none of our Democratic colleagues accepted that invitation. Instead of going on a bipartisan basis, Senate Democrats chose to wait a week and go on what was clearly a partisan messaging mission.

The minority leader said the purpose of the trip was to “investigate, inspect and evaluate conditions for migrants at facilities on the border.” They traveled to McAllen—exactly where we were 1 week before—and they had a very similar itinerary, but they had a very different mission. Our mission was to find out what Congress needed to do to help fix the problem; theirs was to shine a light in a partisan fashion on conditions of migrants, which are largely of Congress’s own making as a result of congressional inaction on dealing with the underlying causes.

We both met with Chief Patrol Agent Rudy Karisch, toured the Donna holding facility, heard from Border Patrol agents, and had the chance to speak to the migrants themselves, but our takeaways from these nearly identical trips were quite different. This was like ships passing in the night.

I left that trip feeling immense gratitude for our professional Border Patrol agents, whom we met, working tirelessly to fulfill their duties with the utmost professionalism and compassion. As this crisis has grown, they have been asked to do more and more with less and less. They go to work each morning not knowing exactly what the day will bring. Will they encounter a group of hundreds of migrants? Will they find abandoned chil-

dren left for dead by smugglers? Will they rescue a drowning family from the Rio Grande or, worse, find the remains of those who have succumbed due to the dangerous journey in very hot weather?

This growing crisis is not the fault of our professional law enforcement officials working along the border, and despite what our colleagues across the aisle claim, it is not a side effect of the 2016 Presidential election either. This migrant crisis has been bubbling up for years. We got a glimpse of how bad it could be in 2014 when then-President Obama announced there was a “humanitarian and security crisis”—his words—on the southern border. In May of 2014—the height of apprehensions that year—nearly 69,000 people were detained at the southern border. In May of this year, that number more than doubled to 144,000 in 1 month alone. So President Obama called it a “humanitarian and security crisis” in 2014, and the problem has roughly doubled since that time.

If there is one thing I hope our colleagues found on their trip, as the minority leader said, to investigate, inspect, and evaluate, I hope it is this: I hope their investigation confirmed what they have reflexively denied for months on end—that there is, in fact, a crisis at the border. I hope their inspection revealed that the problem isn’t with the administration’s policies or with the actions of our Border Patrol; it is our broken immigration system. And I hope they evaluated that without some type of action—real action—by Congress, the situation along the border will only continue to get worse.

As this senseless partisanship over border security carries on, people living and working along the border are also hurting. When we were in McAllen a week and a half ago, we heard from one Border Patrol agent, Oscar Escamilla, who talked about the role Border Patrol plays at the centralized processing centers. He said:

We wear different hats. Sometimes we’re fathers, sometimes we’re mothers, brothers, sisters, play pals, and even counselors. We do this because we care. We do this because there is a real need.

There is certainly a need.

Last month, we passed bipartisan legislation to send much needed humanitarian relief, which will provide some temporary help. That bill also included funding for the departments and agencies that have depleted their resources trying to manage this crisis the best they can, and it made \$30 million available for impacted communities to apply for reimbursement from the Federal Government. In other words, they have had to pay out of their own pockets for something that is the Federal Government’s responsibility, and I am glad that at least we provided \$30 million for reimbursement.

This was a long-overdue and important step to support those who have been working day in and day out, hour

by hour, minute by minute, to manage this crisis, but, as the folks we talked about in McAllen reiterated, the underlying problem still exists. In other words, you can treat the symptoms, or you can treat the cause. But we shouldn't be confused. We have been maybe addressing some of the symptoms; we have done nothing to address the underlying cause.

These officers and agents work incredibly hard to enforce our laws and provide compassionate care for those in their custody, but without meaningful action from Congress, we are sending them into a losing battle. Without fixing the loopholes and repairing the broken system that facilitated this humanitarian crisis in the first place, we will find ourselves experiencing *deja vu* every few months. If you think \$4.5 billion was needed for this emergency just a couple of weeks ago, wait for 6 more months, when there will be another \$4.5 billion required and thereafter and thereafter and thereafter.

Well, what is the answer to the underlying root cause? What does Congress need to do in order to fix it and to staunch this flow of humanity across our border?

Well, there is only one bill out there with bipartisan support—with support both in the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate—that would provide relief along the border, and that is the HUMANE Act. It is an honest, non-partisan attempt to fix the problem—no poison pills, no radical proposals, just reasonable policy designed to solve the problem.

This bill would close what has become known as the Flores loophole, which is often exploited by human smugglers as a way to gain entry into the United States. This is an effective way to stem the flow of those trying to game—to game—our immigration system without inhibiting legitimate trade or travel.

In addition, the HUMANE Act would improve the way we process individuals entering into our country. We got the recommendation for the legislation from the bipartisan Homeland Security Advisory Committee. It would, for example, establish regional processing centers, which would have personnel on hand from across the government to assist, including medical personnel and asylum officers right there at the border in regional processing centers.

Finally, it would improve standards of care for individuals in our custody—something we all want to see happen. It would require the Department of Homeland Security to keep families together during court proceedings and ensure that migrants have timely access to medical assistance, as well as recreational activities, educational services, and even legal counsel.

The HUMANE Act also requires additional training for Customs and Border Protection and ICE officers, otherwise known as Immigration and Customs Enforcement—in other words, everyone who deals with children.

The HUMANE Act is the only bipartisan bill currently proposed, and I would urge all of our colleagues to give it serious consideration.

I can only hope that this trip our Democratic colleagues took convinced them that it is time to quit playing games and get serious about finding a solution to the humanitarian crisis on our southern border.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Mark T. Esper, of Virginia, to be Secretary of Defense.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, 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. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

TRIBUTE TO JUDY SCHNEIDER

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I rise to recognize and thank an extraordinary public servant, one who has contributed greatly to the U.S. Senate.

Next week, my constituent Judy Schneider will retire after a long and very distinguished career serving the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, and the Congressional Research Service, where she has earned a reputation as one of the Nation's top experts on the workings of the Congress. She has joined us in the Gallery today, so I hope all my colleagues will make sure we pay attention and play by the rules.

When I was a new Member of Congress, a Member of the House of Representatives, one of my very first meetings was with Judy Schneider. I was proud Judy was my constituent in Maryland's Eighth Congressional Dis-

trict, and I was glad to have the benefit of her advice. Since then, I have sought her counsel many times during my years in the House and the Senate.

Judy's service at the Congressional Research Service has been nothing short of extraordinary. Over the past four decades, she has educated hundreds of Members of Congress and their staff on congressional operations and procedures. As the author of numerous articles and the coauthor of the "Congressional Deskbook: The Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Congress," Judy's expertise on the intricacies of congressional structures and procedures is unmatched. Judy is known equally well for the positive personal impact she has had on each of her students. From giving lectures to countless conferences, to her "Direct Connect to Congress" series, Judy's impact has been far-reaching. Through her dynamic, informative, and humorous style, she has been described as having a life-changing impact on her students.

For her remarkable work, Judy Schneider has received a number of well-deserved and prestigious awards. She received the 1988 PLEN Mentor Award for her work educating and training women in public policy, a fellowship in the 108th Congress through the Stennis Center for Public Service Leadership, and the Distinguished Member Award from Women in Government Relations. In 2015, Women in Government Relations created the Judy Schneider Fellowship in recognition of her efforts to educate women about congressional procedure and policy. Judy has mentored thousands of women, and this fellowship will ensure that her legacy is felt by many more.

Last year, Judy received the Lifetime Achievement in Democracy Award from the Congressional Management Foundation in recognition of her outstanding impact and important work in Congress. This award truly exemplifies the role Judy Schneider has played for so many of us. Her mission has always been clear. Because of her deep love for this institution and for our country, she has used her unique talents to try to help make our democracy work better. She has trained generations of staff and Members, including a number of staff who later became Members of Congress themselves.

She represents the very best of public service. She exemplifies the spirit of service in a way few have, bringing the legislative process to life with humor and passion. Her presentations—packed with information and insight and delivered with wit and humor—were designed to train Members of Congress and their staff so we as a body function better and, consequently, so our democracy functions better. If some of us are finding that the Senate is not functioning particularly well at the moment, we can't say we weren't taught better. As they say, you can lead a Senator to "Riddick's Senate Procedure," but you can't make him or her read.