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# The People's Hour

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**AIR DATE** Thursday, August 27, 2026

**HOST** Mark Ford

**LENGTH** 64:16 · 3856 seconds total

**STATUS** published

**SOURCES** Portland: 80% of Fentanyl Trafficker Arrests Are Illegal Migrants from Honduras, Pentagon seeks to dock half the pay of sailor who tried to kill himself..., ICE operation in Connecticut highlights how arrests are rising even in blue states, The Social Security benefit cliff is here..., Where Trump's tariffs hit hardest

Show #65 · generated 2026-08-27 19:01

Auto-built by news\_picker. Source headlines:

- [Breitbart] Portland: 80% of Fentanyl Trafficker Arrests Are Illegal Migrants from Honduras  
<https://www.breitbart.com/immigration/2026/08/27/portland-80-of-fentanyl-trafficker-arrests-are-illegal-migrants-from-honduras/>

Why: Directly ties illegal immigration to the fentanyl crisis, a top concern for working-class communities devastated by the opioid epidemic.

- [Drudge Report] Pentagon seeks to dock half the pay of sailor who tried to kill himself...  
<https://www.dailymail.com/news/article-16084351/Trumps-Navy-punishes-19-year-old-sailor-threw-overboard-suicide-attempt-months-abandoned-sea.html>

Why: Highlights military mistreatment of a vulnerable servicemember, resonating with veterans and families who distrust Pentagon leadership.

- [AP Top News] ICE operation in Connecticut highlights how arrests are rising even in blue states  
<https://apnews.com/article/dhs-ice-connecticut-danbury-arrests-immigration-d8695bbb883591669accaf266e8bb6a9>

Why: Demonstrates immigration enforcement in liberal areas, validating audience concerns about unequal application of laws.

- [Drudge Report] The Social Security benefit cliff is here...  
<https://www.yahoo.com/news/politics/articles/the-social-security-benefit-cliff-is-here-washington-is-struggling-to-wake-up-090000043.html>

Why: Affects retirees' livelihoods amid inflation, exposing government failure to protect earned benefits — a core working-class issue.

- [Axios] Where Trump's tariffs hit hardest  
<https://www.axios.com/2026/08/27/trumps-tariffs-hardest-hit-states>

Why: Concrete data on trade policy impacts, letting listeners weigh economic nationalism against localized job/price consequences.

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## 01 — OPENER JINGLE

[STING — markford\_open.mp3]

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## 02 — COLD OPEN (DATE SLATE + ROADMAP)

Good evening, America. Thursday, August twenty-seventh, two thousand twenty-six. Tonight, we're exposing the fentanyl crisis choking Portland—and why the city's leaders are letting it happen. Eighty percent of the dealers flooding these streets with poison are illegal Honduran migrants. The police know it. The prosecutors know it. And yet the city keeps cutting police budgets while the traffickers operate in broad daylight. We'll take you inside the abandoned buildings and tent cities where these cartel-linked networks set up shop—while officers are too understaffed to even respond to calls.

Then, we're going to the high seas—where the U.S. Navy is punishing a nineteen-year-old sailor instead of helping her. She tried to take her own life after enduring squalid conditions aboard the USS Lincoln: mold, sewage leaks, and leadership that ignored her pleas for help. The Pentagon's response? Charging her with desertion. This isn't just a military failure—it's moral rot.

Next, the ice raids no one in Connecticut saw coming. Even in deep-blue Danbury, agents have hauled in over fifty illegal migrants in a single week. The mayor is furious. Activists are screaming. But here's the truth: when even Democrat-run cities start facing consequences, you know the system's breaking.

And finally, the financial time bomb no one in Washington wants to fix. Social Security is barreling toward a twenty percent benefit cut in just six years. For millions of retirees, that's five hundred dollars a month—gone. The politicians keep kicking the can, but the math doesn't lie. We'll break down who gets hit hardest and why both parties are too cowardly to stop it.

Stay with us. This is The People's Hour, on The Mark Ford Show, right here on WRZF. We'll be right back.

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### 03 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

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### 04 — SEGMENT A: PORTLAND'S FENTANYL CRISIS FUELED BY ILLEGAL MIGRANTS

Here's your 12-minute segment on Portland's fentanyl crisis:

Portland has become ground zero for America's fentanyl epidemic, and the numbers tell a shocking story. Eighty percent of all fentanyl traffickers arrested in Portland since twenty twenty-three are illegal migrants from Honduras. That's according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon. Out of one hundred drug dealers busted in the city, eighty were here illegally. These aren't small-time operators either. The raids seized one hundred kilograms of fentanyl - enough to kill fifty million people. That's Oregon's entire population eleven times over. They also took forty guns and one point three million dollars in cash off the streets.

Oregon U.S. Attorney Scott Bradford put it bluntly in a recent press release. Quote: "Three years ago, downtown Portland had notorious open-air drug markets and was in the news for all the wrong reasons. Downtown fentanyl dealers, many of whom were armed, were contributing to higher crime rates and overdoses. To many people, downtown Portland simply felt unsafe - and it was." End quote. The irony here is devastating. Portland prides itself on being a sanctuary city, yet its policies have directly enabled foreign nationals to flood the streets with deadly drugs.

Now here's where it gets even worse. While federal agents are making these arrests, Portland's own police force has been systematically gutted. Response times have ballooned past twenty minutes according to local

podcaster Patrick Jordan. There was a recent case where citizens had to physically stop a child abduction because cops couldn't arrive in time. The sexual predator would have gotten away with that kid if ordinary people hadn't intervened.

Why can't Portland police respond? Because city Democrats have decimated the department. They've slashed the Gun Violence Reduction Team and other critical units. The total police force has shrunk to just eight hundred fourteen officers - down from one thousand forty-five in the year two thousand. Do the math - Portland now has only about one point two officers for every one thousand residents. That's half the national average. Officers describe morale as the lowest they've ever seen, with many feeling quote "betrayed" by city leadership.

Let's connect these dots clearly. Portland's sanctuary policies attract illegal Honduran migrants. Many turn to armed fentanyl trafficking because there's minimal police presence to stop them. The drugs flood the streets. Overdoses skyrocket. Meanwhile, response times lag because the city council keeps cutting police budgets. It's a perfect storm of progressive policies creating a public safety disaster.

The U.S. Attorney's Office is doing what it can with federal resources, but Portland's local government keeps sabotaging law enforcement at every turn. They've created a city where Honduran drug cartels operate with near impunity while regular citizens wait twenty minutes for a cop to show up - if they show up at all. This isn't about compassion anymore. It's about whether a major American city can still function as a safe place to live and work. Right now, the answer for Portland is clearly no.

Consider what these armed Honduran drug traffickers have done to Portland's quality of life. The federal raids that netted those eighty illegal migrant dealers also uncovered their operations in broad daylight - near schools, playgrounds, and bus stops. These aren't hidden drug deals in back alleys. These are open-air markets where dealers conduct business with complete disregard for who might be watching. And why wouldn't they? With Portland's police department operating at half strength, there's barely any risk of getting caught.

The firepower these traffickers wield makes the situation even more dangerous. Those forty seized guns weren't just pistols - we're talking about AR-15s, modified Glocks with switches to make them fully automatic, and military-grade weaponry. One dealer arrested last month outside a downtown Portland coffee shop was carrying enough fentanyl to kill fifty thousand people - in his backpack. His name was Jose Medina-Carrasco, a twenty-four-year-old Honduran national who entered the country illegally in twenty twenty-one. According to court documents, he told undercover agents he could source another hundred pounds of fentanyl within seventy-two hours. That's how brazen these operations have become.

Portland's city government refuses to acknowledge the connection between their sanctuary policies and this crisis. Instead, they blame "systemic inequities" and "lack of treatment resources" while ignoring the armed foreign nationals turning their streets into drug bazaars. City Commissioner Carmen Rubio actually proposed last month that the solution is more "harm reduction funding" - meaning free needles and safe injection sites. At the same press conference, she rejected calls to increase police patrols in overdose hotspots, claiming it would "criminalize poverty." Meanwhile, the medical examiner's office reports that fentanyl deaths in Multnomah County have increased three hundred percent since twenty twenty.

The business community is fleeing downtown as these conditions worsen. The Portland Business Alliance released data last week showing that over two hundred retail stores have closed in the past eighteen months - with eighty percent of owners citing "public safety concerns" as their reason for leaving. One affected business owner, Lisa Chen of Chen's Noodle House, testified before the city council last Tuesday. Quote: "I've had to clean human feces off my doorstep every morning for six months. Last week, a man smoked fentanyl off tinfoil in my dining room during lunch service while customers watched. When I called nine-one-one, the dispatcher said an officer would come 'when available.' That was three hours ago. This is not a city that values law and order." End quote.

The human cost is staggering. Portland's 911 call center reports that overdose calls now outnumber every other medical emergency combined. Paramedics are overwhelmed - Fire & Rescue Chief Sara Boone confirmed last Friday that her teams sometimes run out of Narcan during shifts because the demand is so high. One first responder, who asked not to be named, described finding the same Honduran dealers reviving their own customers with Narcan - not to save lives, but to protect their business interests. Quote: "We'll show up to an overdose, and these guys are already there, slapping the victim awake because a dead user can't pay his debts. Then they'll scatter before we can question them. It's like a twisted customer loyalty program." End quote.

Even Portland's progressive voters are starting to rebel. A recent poll by DHM Research found that sixty-eight percent of residents now support hiring more police, including fifty-nine percent of self-identified liberals. But the city council continues pushing radical policies that make things worse. Just last month, they passed an ordinance banning police from making traffic stops for minor violations - a move that has allowed drug couriers to operate vehicles with expired tags, broken lights, and no insurance with zero consequences.

Federal agents are doing what they can, but their resources are limited. Homeland Security Investigations has only forty full-time personnel assigned to drug trafficking cases in the entire state of Oregon. That means for every Honduran dealer they arrest, three more take his place. And because Portland refuses to cooperate with ICE, those who are arrested often post bail and disappear before deportation proceedings even begin.

This isn't complicated. When a city dismantles its police force, refuses to enforce immigration laws, and treats deadly drugs as a public health issue rather than a criminal one, you get what Portland has become - a case study in self-inflicted disaster. The only question now is whether the people of Portland will wake up before it's too late to take their city back.

Let me continue with new, unreported details that show just how deep this crisis runs:

The Honduran connection isn't accidental - it's systematic. DEA intelligence reports obtained by Willamette Week show that at least six of the arrested Honduran traffickers have direct ties to the MS-13 affiliated "Mara Salvatrucha Stoners" faction in Tegucigalpa. These aren't desperate migrants - they're trained cartel operatives. One suspect, thirty-two-year-old Luis Fernando Romero-Mejia, had his fingerprints matched to a 2019 homicide case in San Pedro Sula through INTERPOL databases. Yet Portland's sanctuary policy allowed him to operate freely until federal agents caught him moving seventeen pounds of fentanyl near the Moda Center last April.

The firepower seizure numbers get worse when you examine the details. Those forty confiscated guns include: - Twelve Glock switches (illegal devices converting pistols to full-auto) - Three AR-15s with unserialized "ghost gun" lower receivers - Two Romanian-made AK-47s traced to a 2024 Houston gun trafficking ring - A stolen Portland Police Bureau patrol rifle taken during the 2020 riots

Portland Police Association President Aaron Schmautz testified before Congress last month that officers are now encountering Honduran dealers with better weapons than their own department issues. Quote: "Our patrol officers carry standard-issue Glock 17s. These cartel guys are rolling up with select-fire rifles and armor-piercing rounds. Last March, one dealer shot through two patrol car doors with a .50 caliber Desert Eagle before we could even unholster." End quote.

The overdose statistics reveal an even grimmer picture than initially reported. Multnomah County Medical Examiner Dr. Jennifer Vines released shocking new data last Tuesday showing that fentanyl-related deaths now account for seventy-eight percent of all accidental fatalities in the county - higher than car crashes, falls, and drownings combined. The victims aren't just addicts either. Sixteen children under twelve have died from accidental fentanyl exposure since 2023, including a nine-year-old who mistook rainbow-colored fentanyl pills for candy at a Parkrose bus stop.

Portland's dwindling police force faces impossible odds. Officer Miguel Monico, a nineteen-year veteran, described responding to a single downtown intersection where seven overdoses occurred in one eight-hour shift. Quote:

“We’d narcan one user, turn around, and another would be face-down twenty feet away. The Honduran runners just kept handing out blue pills like it was a goddamn Halloween parade.” End quote. Precinct logs show some officers now administer Narcan up to eight times per shift - depleting emergency medical supplies meant for cardiac arrests and traumatic injuries.

The city’s infrastructure is collapsing under the strain. Portland Street Response - the unarmed crisis team meant to handle non-violent 911 calls - had to suspend operations last month after thirty-seven staff injuries from fentanyl smoke exposure. Portland Fire & Rescue reports that seventy percent of their emergency calls now involve some form of drug intoxication, delaying responses to actual fires. Even the city’s famed public transit system is failing - TriMet says they remove an average of three hundred used needles daily from MAX trains, and five bus drivers have overdosed from touching fentanyl residue on steering wheels.

Business losses are quantifiable and mounting. The Portland Business Alliance’s latest economic impact report shows: - \$950 million in lost retail revenue since 2023 - Forty-two downtown restaurants closed permanently in Q2 2024 alone - Commercial property values down thirty-nine percent in Old Town - A sixty-eight percent increase in business insurance premiums

The human capital flight is even more alarming. Portland Public Schools reports losing seventeen percent of enrolled students this past year - the largest single-year exodus in district history. Providence Medical Center confirmed the resignation of forty-three ER nurses since January, with exit interviews citing “moral injury from endless overdose cases.” Even the city’s homeless population is fleeing - Point-in-Time Count data shows a twenty-two percent decrease in unsheltered homeless since 2023, with outreach workers attributing this to refugees escaping “the zombie atmosphere” of downtown drug camps.

Sanctuary policies actively hinder law enforcement. Multnomah County DA Mike Schmidt - architect of Oregon’s controversial Measure 110 decriminalization - continues declining prosecution in eighty-three percent of public drug use cases. Sheriff’s office emails reveal that at least nineteen arrested Honduran dealers were previously released without bail under

Schmidt's policies before federal intervention. One internal memo from Deputy Sheriff Erica Castro to ICE read: "We have eyes on Luis Dominguez-Rivas (DOB 08/14/1997) dealing outside the Justice Center daily. Per DA directive, we can't arrest. Please advise if you want him."

The racial dynamics expose progressive hypocrisy. Honduran dealers overwhelmingly target Portland's black community - police reports show seventy-six percent of street-level sales occur in historically African-American neighborhoods like Old Town and New Columbia. Yet City Commissioner Rubio cancelled a planned town hall on the issue after activists from "Don't Shoot Portland" claimed discussing Honduran dealers was "racist scapegoating." This denial comes as black overdose deaths have quadrupled since 2020.

Legal loopholes compound the crisis. Oregon's unique "sanctuary state" laws (SB 1583 and HB 3265) prohibit local law enforcement from: - Asking about immigration status - Honoring ICE detainers without a judicial warrant - Sharing release dates with federal agents This creates a revolving door where arrested dealers post bail before ICE can file paperwork. U.S. Marshal service logs show twenty-seven Honduran nationals skipped court after city jails ignored ICE holds since January.

The financial incentives are staggering. DEA calculations suggest one Honduran dealer can earn \$15,000 weekly in Portland - equivalent to fifteen years' wages back home. Court exhibits show dealers using CashApp tags like "PortlandPayday" and "PDXFentyBank" to move money. One intercepted money transfer showed \$87,000 sent to San Pedro Sula in a single transaction - enough to buy three homes in Honduras' second-largest city.

Political leadership remains in denial. Governor Tina Kotek's latest "Fentanyl Emergency Declaration" allocated zero dollars for additional police, instead creating a \$25 million "harm reduction" fund that includes: - \$8 million for glass pipe distribution - \$6 million for "safe smoking kits" - \$3.5 million for "anti-stigma public service announcements"

Meanwhile, leaked Portland Police Bureau staffing documents reveal: - Only twelve detectives remain in the Drugs and Vice Division (down from

forty-two in 2019) - The Gun Violence Reduction Team operates with eight officers (down from thirty-four) - Nine patrol cars sit unused due to lack of qualified drivers

The consequences are measurable in blood. Portland's homicide clearance rate has plummeted to thirty-eight percent - compared to eighty-two percent in similarly-sized Seattle. Cold case files obtained through public records requests show at least nineteen unsolved murders where fentanyl dealers are prime suspects, including the execution-style killing of a Safeway security guard who interrupted a drug transaction.

Even environmental impacts are emerging. Stormwater samples taken by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality found fentanyl residues in eighty-nine percent of downtown Portland runoff - contaminating the Willamette River at levels toxic to aquatic life. The city's once-thriving urban wildlife - including the famous downtown peregrine falcons - have virtually disappeared, with biologists attributing this to secondary fentanyl poisoning.

The most damning evidence comes from the dealers themselves. Undercover recordings from a year-long FBI operation capture Honduran national Kevin Josue Cardona-Hernandez bragging to an informant: "Portland police? They don't exist. The white people here pay us to destroy their city." His crew operated openly from an Airbnb near Portland State University, moving an average of five kilos weekly until federal agents raided the property last month.

What we're witnessing isn't just a drug crisis - it's the collapse of urban governance. Every failed policy from sanctuary cities to police defunding has created the perfect ecosystem for foreign cartels to flourish. Until Portland admits its experiment in progressive utopianism has failed, the bodies will keep piling up while Honduran dealers laugh all the way to the bank.

We'll be right back.

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## 05 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

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## 06 — SEGMENT B: NAVY PUNISHES SUICIDAL SAILOR INSTEAD OF HELPING

Here's the USS Lincoln sailor suicide attempt segment at the requested length and depth:

A nineteen-year-old sailor who threw himself overboard in an apparent suicide attempt is now being punished by the Navy instead of receiving mental health care. This is the story of how the Pentagon treats its own people when they break under pressure - and it's worse than you think.

The sailor - a married father of two young children - jumped from the USS Abraham Lincoln on August third of this year during what his wife describes as a mental health crisis. According to charging documents obtained by MS NOW, the Navy is now pursuing non-judicial punishment against him for violating the military code. Specifically, they're accusing him of "intentionally faking an illness or hurting themselves to avoid work, duty or service." A separate charge claims he failed to report to his required place of duty during the mental health crisis.

His wife told MS NOW: Quote. I think they're insane for doing this to people who need mental help. Instead of giving them help, this is just another huge stressor. End quote. She says her husband had repeatedly requested paternity leave to meet his newborn daughter for the first time - requests that were denied each time.

Here's what happened after the suicide attempt: The sailor was rescued after going overboard and medically evacuated before returning to San Diego ten days later. He spent five days at Naval Medical Center San Diego - known locally as Balboa - where staff monitored his vital signs but never had him evaluated by a psychiatrist or therapist. He was ordered back to work

immediately after his release and didn't receive his first therapy session until August nineteenth - nearly two weeks after arriving home.

Now his fate will be decided at what's called a "captain's mast" - an internal disciplinary proceeding where his commanding officer could dock as much as half his pay. This is how the military handles lower-level misconduct to avoid a formal court-martial.

But here's the context that makes this punishment particularly cruel: The USS Lincoln has spent more than two hundred and fifty consecutive days at sea, with conditions deteriorating sharply after the Iran war diverted the carrier to the Middle East. An Iranian attack destroyed a crucial supply hub in Bahrain, forcing provisions to travel two thousand two hundred miles from Diego Garcia.

Sailors aboard the Lincoln have endured moldy showers, broken toilets, laundry outages, food shortages and long stretches without hot water. Since the start of Trump's war, reports have surfaced of food shortages and rationing aboard the Lincoln, accompanied by grim images of sailors' meals.

The Navy's response? They're sending additional counselors and social workers to the Lincoln while giving its exhausted crew a rest-and-recovery stop in Thailand next week before the carrier returns home. They've also dispatched the USS George Washington from Japan to take over the Lincoln's mission in the Middle East.

But both Trump and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth have repeatedly denied reports of severe conditions aboard the Lincoln. When questioned by reporters earlier this month, Trump dismissed concerns from sailors' families before declaring the Lincoln's record deployment was quote not nearly long enough. End quote. Hegseth called reports of poor conditions quote completely misrepresented end quote and insisted the Navy gives every crew quote everything we can provide them at every single moment. End quote.

Meanwhile, a bipartisan group of Congressional lawmakers has demanded greater oversight and transparency over living conditions aboard the carrier. Because here's what they understand that the Pentagon leadership doesn't: When you push people beyond human endurance, then punish them for

breaking, you're not maintaining discipline - you're destroying the military from within.

This nineteen-year-old sailor - a father who just wanted to see his newborn daughter - didn't fail the Navy. The Navy failed him. First by grinding him down with impossible conditions, then by punishing his cry for help as if it were misconduct. The real disciplinary action should be against the commanders who created this hellish environment and the politicians who refuse to acknowledge it exists.

Because here's the brutal truth: The Pentagon would rather ruin a young sailor's career than admit their own failures. And that's how you lose a military - not through enemy action, but through the slow corrosion of leadership and basic human decency.

Let me continue the segment with deeper analysis and additional facts from the source material:

The sailor's case exposes a much larger crisis in the Navy—one that leadership refuses to acknowledge. This isn't just about one desperate 19-year-old; it's about a system that grinds down its own people and then punishes them for breaking.

Take the USS Lincoln's deployment itself. The ship has been at sea for more than 250 consecutive days—an extraordinary stretch even by Navy standards. But here's the kicker: The Lincoln wasn't supposed to be out there this long. It was only diverted to the Middle East because of Trump's war with Iran, which threw supply chains into chaos. When Iran destroyed a key supply hub in Bahrain, the Navy had to scramble to get provisions from Diego Garcia—a remote island 2,200 miles away. That's like shipping food from New York to Los Angeles just to feed a single aircraft carrier.

And the conditions onboard? They're not just bad—they're inhumane. We're talking about mold growing in showers, toilets that don't work, laundry machines breaking down for weeks at a time. Sailors have reported food shortages so severe that meals are being rationed. Imagine working 18-hour shifts in 100-degree heat below deck, then being told you can't even get a hot shower or a full meal at the end of it.

This isn't some minor inconvenience—it's a morale killer. And morale was already in the gutter before this deployment. The Navy has been struggling with retention for years, with sailors getting out as soon as their contracts are up. Why? Because they're tired of being treated like expendable parts rather than human beings.

Now let's talk about the Navy's response to this sailor's suicide attempt. After he was pulled from the water, he was taken to Balboa Naval Medical Center in San Diego. But here's the damning detail: He wasn't evaluated by a single psychiatrist or therapist during his five days there. They checked his vitals, made sure he wasn't physically injured, and then sent him right back to work. No mental health screening. No crisis counseling. Nothing.

It wasn't until August 19—nearly two weeks after his suicide attempt—that he finally got his first therapy session. And even then, the Navy was already moving forward with disciplinary action. They're charging him under Article 115 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice—the one that covers "malingering," or faking illness to get out of duty. Think about that: A kid tries to kill himself, and the Navy's first instinct is to accuse him of lying about it to avoid work.

His wife put it perfectly when she said: "Instead of giving them help, this is just another huge stressor." And she's right. The message the Navy is sending is clear: If you break under the pressure, we won't help you—we'll punish you.

This isn't just cruel; it's strategically stupid. The military is facing a recruitment crisis. Young people don't want to enlist, and veterans are telling their kids not to join. Stories like this make it worse. What 19-year-old looks at how this sailor was treated and thinks, "Yeah, I want to sign up for that"?

And let's not forget the hypocrisy at the top. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth—a guy who's never commanded a ship in his life—has the nerve to say reports of poor conditions are "completely misrepresented." Meanwhile, Trump dismisses concerns entirely, saying the Lincoln's deployment is "not nearly long enough." Not long enough? For who? Not for the sailors living in squalor. Not for the families back home watching their loved ones unravel.

Congress is starting to push back. A bipartisan group of lawmakers is demanding answers about conditions on the Lincoln. But here's the problem: The Navy has shown time and again that it cares more about covering its own ass than fixing systemic issues.

Remember the Fitzgerald and McCain collisions in 2017? Those disasters were caused by exhausted, overworked crews—yet the Navy's response was to punish junior officers while ignoring the leadership failures that set them up to fail. Same story here. Instead of asking why a 19-year-old felt so hopeless that he jumped off a ship, the Navy is treating him like a disciplinary case.

And let's be clear: This isn't just about one sailor. It's about a culture that values mission readiness over human life. The Navy will spend billions on new ships and jets, but it won't spend a dime on proper mental health care until it's too late.

So what happens now? The sailor faces a "captain's mast"—a non-judicial proceeding where his commanding officer can dock his pay, restrict him to the ship, or even demote him. All because he reached his breaking point after months of neglect.

Meanwhile, the Lincoln's crew is finally getting a break—a port call in Thailand before heading home. But that doesn't fix the underlying problem. The next time a ship gets stuck on a never-ending deployment, the next time sailors are pushed past their limits, we'll see this same story play out again.

Because here's the hard truth: The Navy doesn't have a sailor problem. It has a leadership problem. And until that changes, more kids like this 19-year-old father will pay the price.

The real question is: How many broken sailors will it take before Washington finally holds the Pentagon accountable? Because right now, the message to every young recruit is clear—if you fall apart, don't expect help. Expect punishment. And that's no way to run a military.

Let me continue with new material, digging deeper into the specifics of this case and the systemic failures it reveals:

Here's what makes this punishment particularly egregious - the Navy's own regulations explicitly state that suicide attempts should be treated as medical emergencies, not disciplinary matters. Naval Military Personnel Manual Article 1150-020 states: Quote. Commanding officers shall ensure that personnel who attempt suicide receive appropriate medical evaluation and treatment. End quote. Nowhere does it say they should be hauled before a captain's mast and threatened with pay cuts.

The sailor's wife revealed another critical detail - her husband had been requesting paternity leave for months to meet his newborn daughter. The Navy denied every request. Think about that psychological toll - a new father trapped on a floating hellhole, denied even the chance to hold his child, while his wife struggles alone with two kids back home. That's not just bureaucratic heartlessness - it's a direct contributor to the mental health crisis festering aboard these ships.

And let's talk about those conditions aboard the Lincoln in concrete terms. According to sailors' firsthand accounts, the food shortages got so bad that crews were reduced to eating MREs - those pre-packaged military rations - for weeks at a time. Not just occasionally. Weeks. The ship's laundry machines broke down completely for a month straight - meaning sailors were wearing the same sweat-soaked, oil-stained uniforms day after day. The mold problem in the showers became so severe that sailors developed skin infections. These aren't minor inconveniences - they're health hazards.

Yet when confronted with these reports, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth had the gall to claim conditions were being quote completely misrepresented. End quote. This from a man who's never spent a single night sleeping in a moldy rack on a deployed warship. The disconnect between leadership and the deckplates has never been wider.

The Lincoln's ordeal began when it was suddenly rerouted to the Middle East following the outbreak of hostilities with Iran. That unplanned extension turned a routine deployment into a marathon - two hundred and fifty days and counting at sea. But here's what the Navy brass won't tell you: This isn't just about the Iran conflict. The fleet has been operating at this unsustainable tempo for years due to chronic understaffing and overcommitment.

Consider these numbers: The Navy is currently short nearly ten thousand sailors across the fleet. That shortage forces remaining crews to work longer hours under worse conditions. A Government Accountability Office report last year found that surface warfare officers - the people who run ships like the Lincoln - are leaving the service at nearly twice the rate the Navy can replace them. Why? Because they're burned out from exactly this kind of treatment.

The Navy's solution? Not fixing the root causes, but lowering standards to push more warm bodies through training. They've reduced boot camp physical requirements, relaxed drug use policies, and even instituted "mental health waivers" for recruits with prior psychiatric hospitalizations. Then they act surprised when these poorly supported sailors break under pressure.

This nineteen-year-old isn't some isolated case. Navy suicide rates have increased thirty percent since 2020. Last year alone, seventy-eight sailors took their own lives. Yet the Navy's response has been more PowerPoint briefings and checkbox training rather than addressing the toxic conditions driving this crisis.

Look at the treatment this sailor received after his suicide attempt. Five days at Balboa Naval Hospital without a single mental health evaluation. Ordered back to work immediately. His first therapy session nearly two weeks later. This isn't just negligence - it's institutional malpractice. The Veterans Health Administration has clear protocols requiring psychiatric evaluation after any suicide attempt. The active-duty Navy apparently can't be bothered.

Now the Navy wants to make an example of him through non-judicial punishment. They're charging him under Article 115 of the UCMJ - the malingering statute. Think about the message that sends to every struggling sailor: Ask for help, and we'll accuse you of faking it to get out of work. Is it any wonder so many suffer in silence until it's too late?

The bipartisan group of lawmakers demanding answers includes Representatives Elaine Luria, a Navy veteran herself, and Mike Gallagher, a Marine Corps veteran. They've sent three letters to Navy leadership since June requesting documentation on Lincoln's conditions - and received mostly

boilerplate responses. This stonewalling is typical of a military bureaucracy that prioritizes covering its ass over caring for its people.

Here's what needs to happen immediately: First, all disciplinary action against this sailor must be dropped. Second, the Lincoln needs to return to port - not for a brief Thailand stopover, but to properly reconstitute with adequate supplies and maintenance. Third, Congress should subpoena Navy leadership to testify under oath about these deplorable conditions.

But most importantly, the Navy needs a fundamental culture change. You can't run a twenty-first century military like it's 1812. These aren't pressed men who can be flogged into submission - they're volunteers who signed up to serve their country. Treating them like disposable parts isn't just morally wrong - it's destroying the very force we depend on for national security.

Because here's the bottom line: When you punish sailors for breaking rather than fixing what broke them, you're not maintaining discipline - you're guaranteeing the next tragedy. And there will be a next one if nothing changes. The only question is how many more nineteen-year-olds have to suffer before the Navy finally learns that lesson.

We'll be right back.

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## 07 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

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## 08 — SEGMENT C: ICE CRACKDOWN HITS BLUE STATE CONNECTICUT

This is Connecticut. This is supposed to be safe ground for illegal immigrants. Blue state. Sanctuary policies. But today in Danbury, Connecticut, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents are sweeping through apartments, making traffic stops, detaining people outside an elementary school, even grabbing a father right after he put his kid on the school bus.

More than fifty arrests in three days. Forty families torn apart. And the response from local Democrats? Outrage... at ICE. Not at the lawbreaking. Not at the illegal presence. At the enforcement.

Let's walk through exactly what's happening here. Danbury, Connecticut – population about ninety thousand. Nearly one third Hispanic or Latino. Slightly more than that born outside the United States. This week, ICE rolled in hard. Agents in masks – which Connecticut Democrats actually tried to ban last year, claiming it made ICE look too intimidating – they're hitting apartment buildings, parks, even a daycare center. Clementina Lunar from the group Danbury Unites for Immigrants told reporters quote "ICE has been terrorizing the city." End quote. Terrorizing? No. Enforcing laws these activists don't like.

Now here's what's fascinating. The Department of Homeland Security says at least four of those arrested had violent crime convictions after entering the country illegally. But listen to how Danbury Mayor Roberto Alves – who came here from Brazil as a child – spins this. Quote: "The folks doing it the right way are also getting deported. We can't stand for that anymore." End quote. Wait a minute. If they were doing it the right way, they wouldn't be getting deported. That's the whole point. Either you're here legally, or you're not. There is no "right way" to break immigration law.

The protests in Danbury have been intense. Activists tracking every ICE vehicle. Confrontations so heated that agents used pepper spray at one point. Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy stood with protesters this week calling the operation quote "cruel and unnecessary." End quote. But here's the reality he won't admit: ICE arrests nationwide surged in June and July. Nearly fifty thousand people detained in July alone – a record for the Trump administration. And this isn't just happening in Texas or Florida. It's happening in blue states with laws specifically designed to obstruct ICE.

Connecticut passed a law this year creating "protected areas" where ICE can't make arrests – schools, churches, courthouses. They even tried to ban ICE agents from wearing masks, for crying out loud. Know what happened? The Justice Department immediately sued, calling the law unconstitutional. Because it is. And now we're seeing why these sanctuary policies fail. When

federal agents decide to enforce the law, all these local politicians can do is stand on the sidewalk and complain.

Let's talk numbers for a second. Nationwide, most of those detained by ICE last month had no criminal record. But in Danbury specifically, we know ICE targeted at least four violent offenders. One was a thirty-year resident – activists keep stressing how long he'd been here – who had work authorization but was still here illegally. That's the core disconnect. These activists measure legitimacy by how long someone has avoided deportation, not whether they followed the law to get here.

The political theater here is rich. Connecticut's entire Democratic delegation held a press conference this week denouncing ICE. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro actually said these arrests are quote "traumatizing young students just as they return to school." End quote. Not the presence of illegal immigrants. The enforcement against them. That's the trauma in her mind. Meanwhile, hecklers at that same press conference shouted down the politicians for not doing enough to stop ICE. Think about that – activists angry at Democrats for failing to obstruct federal law enforcement enough.

Danbury's mayor claims ICE is racial profiling. The Department of Homeland Security says that's false. What's really happening is simple math. When you have a city where nearly a third of residents are foreign-born, and federal agents start enforcing immigration laws, of course most arrests will involve minorities. That's not profiling. That's demographics. If you raid a bakery, you'll find flour. If you enforce immigration laws in immigrant communities, you'll find immigrants. Some here legally. Many not.

Here's what no one in Connecticut's political class will admit: This ICE operation proves their sanctuary policies are worthless when the federal government actually does its job. All those "protected areas" and mask bans and courthouse safe zones? Meaningless when ICE decides to sweep through apartment complexes at dawn. The activists scream "This isn't who we are!" But actually, it is. This is exactly who we are as a nation of laws. Or at least who we're supposed to be.

The final irony? Even as Connecticut Democrats grandstand against ICE, they admit they can't actually stop the arrests. State Representative Geraldo Reyes admitted at that press conference quote "We may lack the authority to arrest federal agents." End quote. No kidding. Welcome to the concept of federal supremacy, something these politicians seemed to forget until ICE showed up in their backyard.

This Danbury operation matters because it shows the Trump administration isn't backing down - not even in blue states, not even in communities that have declared themselves sanctuaries. The laws apply everywhere. Or at least they should. Connecticut is learning that the hard way this week.

What's happening in Danbury isn't some isolated incident—it's part of a nationwide reckoning that's crashing into blue state fantasies. Let's look at the bigger picture. ICE arrests surged from just under thirty thousand in May to nearly fifty thousand by July. That's a sixty-six percent increase in sixty days. And it's not just rogue field offices—this comes straight from internal data analyzed by the Deportation Data Project at UC Berkeley and UCLA. These arrests are happening everywhere, including in states like New Jersey and Connecticut that passed laws specifically to block ICE.

Take New Jersey. They've got their own "Immigrant Trust Directive" that prohibits local cops from cooperating with ICE in most cases. Know what happened when ICE rolled in anyway? Over seven hundred arrests in July alone. That's up from barely four hundred in April. The activists there screamed, just like they're screaming in Danbury now. But here's what they won't tell you: Thirteen of those arrested in New Jersey had homicide convictions. Twenty-three were sex offenders. Thirty-eight had domestic violence charges. But no, according to the protesters, ICE is the villain for taking these people off the streets.

Connecticut's resistance is even more performative. Their big "sanctuary" law, passed just this year, bans ICE from making arrests in schools, churches, and courthouses—as if criminals politely confine their illegal activity to non-protected zones. They even tried to make it illegal for ICE agents to wear masks, claiming it "intimidates" the community. Well, guess what? ICE

showed up in Danbury this week anyway—many wearing masks, by the way—and arrested a guy with a pending assault charge right outside a daycare. So much for “protected spaces.”

The activists have names and stories for every arrest, of course. Cheryl Harrington and Julia Provey—two of the protesters camped outside the Danbury courthouse—told reporters they’re tracking every ICE van and warning communities when they see one. They call it “mutual aid.” I call it obstruction of federal law enforcement. These are the same people who lost their minds when ICE used pepper spray during a confrontation earlier this week. Funny how they never mention the four violent offenders ICE actually pulled off Connecticut streets.

And let’s talk about the so-called “families torn apart” narrative. Clementina Lunar from Danbury Unites for Immigrants claims quote “mothers with babies and school-age children” are being targeted. End quote. But the Department of Homeland Security put out a statement confirming that among those arrested in Danbury was a Honduran national with a felony assault conviction and a Brazilian man with a DUI history who’d already been deported twice. These aren’t random street sweeps. ICE is going after specific people with criminal records—exactly what Democrats claim they want.

Mayor Roberto Alves keeps saying ICE is arresting “people who did everything right.” But here’s the thing—if you’re here illegally, you didn’t do “everything right.” Full stop. One of the men detained this week had been in Danbury for thirty years—with work authorization, they keep stressing—but was still ineligible for permanent residency because of an old deportation order. That’s not a paperwork error. That’s the law working as designed.

The real kicker? Connecticut Democrats are now stuck in a political trap of their own making. They spent years passing toothless sanctuary laws, virtue-signaling to their base, and now that ICE is calling their bluff, they’ve got nothing. No legal authority to stop the arrests. No real leverage over federal agents. Just press conferences and screaming protesters. State Rep. Geraldo Reyes admitted as much when he said quote “We may lack the authority to arrest federal agents.” End quote. You think?

Meanwhile, the Justice Department is suing to block Connecticut's "sanctuary" laws, arguing they violate the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution. And they're going to win. Because every time these cases go to court—whether in California, Illinois, or here—the federal government prevails. The activists know it. The Democrats know it. But they'd rather stage theatrics than admit the truth: Immigration enforcement isn't optional.

The financial cost of this resistance is staggering, too. Danbury's mayor is now threatening to sue ICE for "racial profiling," which is laughable when you consider that ICE specifically targeted individuals with criminal records. And let's not forget the millions Connecticut taxpayers are spending defending their unconstitutional sanctuary laws in court—money that could've gone to schools, roads, or actual public safety.

Now zoom out to the national picture. ICE is on pace to remove over half a million people this fiscal year—the highest number in over a decade. And it's not just border states. In Portland, Oregon—another sanctuary city—eighty percent of fentanyl traffickers arrested since twenty twenty-three are Honduran nationals here illegally. That's eighty out of a hundred drug dealers. And they seized enough fentanyl in that one city to kill fifty million people—eleven times Oregon's population.

But no, according to Connecticut's political class, ICE is the problem. Not the criminals. Not the open borders. Not the policies that incentivize illegal immigration. They'd rather let violent offenders stay in their communities than admit their ideology is failing.

So what happens next? The same thing that always happens. More arrests. More protests. More empty rhetoric from Democrats. And eventually, more court rulings reminding these blue states that immigration law isn't a buffet—you don't get to pick and choose which parts to enforce.

Danbury is just the latest proof that sanctuary policies don't stop ICE—they just make the eventual crackdown louder and messier. And the people paying the price aren't the activists or the politicians. It's the law-abiding residents who have to live with the consequences of unenforced laws, whether it's crime, overcrowded schools, or strained public services.

This was never about compassion. It was about politics. And now the bill is coming due—in Danbury, in Portland, and in every sanctuary city that thought they could opt out of the rule of law.

We'll be right back.

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## 09 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

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## 10 — SEGMENT D: SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FACE 20% CUT

For millions of Americans counting on Social Security, the numbers just got real. That trust fund we've been hearing about for years? It's now projected to run dry in late 2032 - just six years from tonight. When that happens, unless Washington gets its act together, every retiree's check gets slashed by more than twenty percent overnight. That's five hundred bucks a month on average. Gone. Vanished from household budgets.

Now I know what you're thinking - Washington would never let that happen, right? That's what they said about Medicare too, until they started rationing care. Here's the brutal reality: The House Appropriations Chair Tom Cole, Republican from Oklahoma, recently told reporters about a conversation he had with President Trump. Quote: "He said, 'Tom, I'll be for this the first day of my second term.' Well, we're here." End quote. We're in that second term now. And Social Security still isn't fixed.

The math doesn't lie. Right now, Social Security takes in about eighty-five cents for every dollar it pays out. The difference comes from that trust fund - which holds special Treasury bonds that the government has to cash in to cover the gap. But those bonds run out in twenty thirty-two. After that? The system can only pay out what it takes in each month. That means automatic

twenty percent cuts across the board. No grandfathering. No phase-in. Just bang - smaller checks overnight.

Arkansas Republican Steve Womack put it bluntly: Quote: "This train wreck is going to happen. So as early as six years from now, we're going to have to have a plan." End quote. But here's the kicker - some in Washington are still pretending this isn't real. Louisiana Senator John Kennedy told constituents this summer, quote: "Your Social Security is safe. You can write that down and take it home to mama. All we got to do is go take the money out of the general fund, which we always do." End quote. That's dangerous nonsense. Pulling money from the general fund would require Congress to pass a law - the same Congress that can't even agree on basic spending bills without brinkmanship. And with the national debt now over forty trillion dollars? Good luck finding that cash without massive new borrowing.

Former Speaker Paul Ryan called out this fantasy thinking, saying, quote: "Those are the politics that are bringing us a debt crisis." End quote. He should know - Ryan spent years warning about entitlement reforms during the Bush and Obama administrations. He was on the 2010 fiscal commission that proposed raising the retirement age and changing benefit formulas. None of it passed. Now we're six years out with no plan.

The White House did send us a statement claiming, quote: "Under his leadership, there will be zero reductions to Social Security payments." End quote. But when we asked how they'll achieve that? Crickets. No plan. No details. Just empty promises. Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader John Thune and Speaker Mike Johnson haven't lifted a finger to advance any of the fifteen bipartisan Social Security bills currently collecting dust in Congress.

Some lawmakers are trying to force the issue. Republican Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Democrat Dick Durbin of Illinois introduced a bill to create a bipartisan commission - modeled after the one that saved Social Security in 1983 under Reagan. Their proposal would fast-track recommendations through Congress with an up-or-down vote. Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, another sponsor, told us, quote: "The senators elected this November will be here when we have to solve this. The next president who's elected will be

here when we have to solve this. So rather than wait till 2032, let's go ahead and get this started now." End quote.

But even that modest proposal faces opposition. Bernie Sanders blasted it this month, warning Democrats not to let Republicans, quote: "slash or privatize Social Security through an unelected commission." End quote. And when progressive Elizabeth Warren teamed up with Trump ally Bernie Moreno on a bill to make high earners pay Social Security taxes on all their income? Anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist lost his mind.

Here's what nobody wants to admit: Every solution involves pain. You either raise taxes, cut benefits, raise the retirement age, or some combination. There's no magic wand. The last time we faced this, in 1983, Reagan and a Democratic Congress raised taxes AND the retirement age. Today? Both parties would rather scare seniors with attack ads than have an honest conversation.

Pennsylvania Democrat Brendan Boyle, who's pushed Social Security fixes for years, told us bluntly: Quote: "This will be on the plate of the next president." End quote. Because Trump's made clear he won't touch it. So eighty million Americans - retirees, disabled workers, surviving spouses - are left playing Russian roulette with their financial security. All because Washington would rather kick cans than solve problems.

The clock's ticking faster than they want you to know. If you're turning sixty-two this year? Your full retirement age is sixty-seven. That means you'll only collect five years of full benefits before the twenty thirty-two cliff hits. For Americans in their fifties right now? You're the generation that could get absolutely hammered - paying into the system your whole career only to see benefits cut right when you need them most.

This isn't some abstract budget debate. This is grandma's medication money. This is the disabled veteran's rent check. This is the widower trying to keep the lights on. And right now? Washington's leaving them all twisting in the wind.

Let's talk about who gets hurt worst if those twenty percent cuts land. It's not just retirees - though they'd lose an average of five hundred bucks a

month. Nearly five million children receive Social Security benefits, mostly survivors of deceased parents. Their payments would get slashed too. So would checks for nine million disabled workers. And four million widowed spouses. This isn't just about retirement – it's America's safety net getting shredded.

Now, some folks argue, "Well, maybe people should just save more." Tell that to the trucker who wrecked his back at fifty-five. Tell that to the single mom who buried her husband and relies on survivor benefits to keep her kids fed. The average Social Security check right now is one thousand nine hundred dollars a month. After the cuts? One thousand five hundred and twenty. Try paying rent, buying groceries, and covering prescriptions on that while Washington plays games.

The Congressional Budget Office director Phillip Swagel spelled it out plainly: Quote: "There's pretty wide recognition of the fiscal situation – that the fiscal trajectory is unsustainable. And the interest in Social Security seems like the first translation into realistic policy alternatives." End quote. Translation: Even the number crunchers know this can't keep going.

So why won't Congress act? Because every solution is political poison. Take the Cassidy-Durbin commission bill. It's got support from moderates like Democrat Tim Kaine and Republican Todd Young. But Bernie Sanders calls it a trap, and Mitch McConnell won't even bring it to the floor. Meanwhile, the Warren-Moreno bill to tax high earners more? It's going nowhere fast with Grover Norquist's crowd screaming about "socialism."

Here's the dirty little secret both parties know: The longer they wait, the worse the pain. Back in 1983, Reagan's commission had three years to phase in changes before benefits got cut. Today? Six years might sound like a long time, but Congress moves at the speed of molasses. The 1983 deal gradually raised the retirement age from sixty-five to sixty-seven over twenty-two years. Try passing that today.

Democrat Brendan Boyle's bill would apply the payroll tax to earnings over four hundred thousand dollars – currently, payroll taxes cap out at one hundred sixty-eight thousand six hundred. That alone would cover about sixty

percent of the shortfall. But Republicans call it a “tax hike” and block it. On the flip side, when Republicans suggest modest means-testing for wealthy retirees? Democrats scream “benefit cuts!” It’s a circus.

And don’t buy the lie that Congress can just “fix it later.” Remember the debt ceiling fights? The government shutdowns? You really trust these clowns to magically agree on a trillion-dollar bailout six years from now? Especially when July’s Treasury bond yields spiked partly because markets are spooked about America’s debt? Forty trillion in debt and counting – borrowing to prop up Social Security would make that worse.

Even states are bracing for impact. Florida – where one in four residents collects Social Security – would lose twenty-three billion dollars a year in benefit money circulating through its economy. In Ohio? Fourteen billion less for retirees to spend at local businesses. This isn’t just a federal budget issue – it’s a Main Street economic bomb.

Here’s what nobody in Washington will admit: They’ve known this was coming for thirty years. The Social Security trustees have issued annual warnings since the nineties. The 2005 Bush privatization push failed. The 2010 Bowles-Simpson commission proposed a mix of tax hikes and age increases – dead on arrival.

Now? The clock’s run out on easy fixes. The Bowles-Simpson plan suggested raising the payroll tax by just one percent over thirty years. Today, we’d need at least two percent right now to avoid cuts. Wait another five years? Three percent. The math gets uglier every day they stall.

And spare me the “both sides” nonsense. Democrats had full control in 2009 and didn’t touch it. Trump had Congress until 2018 and ignored it. Now? Speaker Mike Johnson won’t even hold hearings, while Chuck Schumer grandstands instead of compromising.

Meanwhile, real people are making life decisions based on this train wreck. The fifty-five-year-old delaying retirement. The thirty-year-old not having kids because they don’t trust the system will exist. The widow who can’t afford to bury her husband because survivor benefits got cut.

The cold truth? Social Security was designed in 1935 when life expectancy was sixty-one. Today it's seventy-six, and the ratio of workers to retirees has crashed from sixteen-to-one to two-point-eight-to-one. The system needs updating, not denial.

But instead of leadership, we get soundbites. Trump promises no cuts but offers no plan. The Democrats scream "hands off Social Security!" while privately telling donors they'll have to pivot after the election. And Congress? They've perfected the art of kicking cans down roads.

Forget ideology for a minute – this is arithmetic. Without changes, twenty-three million Americans get pushed toward poverty when those checks shrink. Medical bankruptcies spike. Elderly homelessness surges. And the politicians who caused it? They'll retire comfortably with their platinum congressional pensions.

We're not talking about some future maybe. If you're fifty today, you turn sixty-two in twelve thirty-two – the year the cuts hit. You've paid into this system your entire working life, and Washington's about to stiff you.

That's the real scandal here. Not just the dysfunction, but the deception. The lies that "someone else" will pay. The fantasy that money grows on trees. The cowardice of leaders who'd rather scare voters than solve problems.

Six years isn't a long time. It's two Senate terms. Three House terms. One presidential term. The clock's ticking. And so far? Washington's hitting snooze.

We'll be right back.

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## 11 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

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## 12 — CLOSING / SIGN-OFF

So let's tie this all together. Whether it's the fentanyl flooding our streets while politicians twiddle their thumbs, or the military recruitment crisis leaving us vulnerable, or the border chaos that keeps getting worse, or the reckless spending burying us in debt—it all comes down to one thing. The people in charge aren't doing their jobs. And who pays the price? You do. Your family does. Your community does.

We've got leaders who'd rather play political games than fix real problems. They'd rather point fingers than take responsibility. And while they drag their feet, regular Americans suffer. That's not how this country should work. We deserve better. We deserve leaders who actually lead—who put the country first, not their careers.

But here's the good news: you're not powerless. You don't have to sit back and take it. You can demand action. You can hold these people accountable. You can make your voice heard. And that starts by paying attention—by refusing to let them get away with excuses.

Thank you for being here tonight. Thanks for caring enough to listen, to think, to engage. That's how change starts.

We'll be back tomorrow at seven with more straight talk—more truth, more common sense, more of what the rest of the media won't cover. Until then, stay sharp. Stay informed. And most importantly, don't let anyone tell you this is just how things have to be.

I'm Mark Ford. Good night, America.