

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from California for allowing me to precede her in speaking on the Senate floor this evening. I very much appreciate her courtesy.

(The remarks of Senator COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2081 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I was very interested in listening to both my colleagues, TOM HARKIN, who I thought was very passionate about the need to understand that when people do pro bono work, as Justice Roberts did, or they work for an organization, as our nominee did making the case a jury was perhaps tainted, that that not be used against them. I think he was passionate. I think Senator COLLINS makes a good point. I do wish to say she is totally right. The IRS should never, ever be used politically. We have gone through that in our lifetime, and it is absolutely wrong. I agree. But I also wish to point out that any organization taking big tax deductions which cost people money, but they are political—whether they are on the left, the right or the center—have to stop what they are doing too. I think she points out it is a careful balance.

We also don't want Members of Congress to intimidate and harass the IRS. That is wrong and a very careful balance. I look forward to looking at her bill to see if this oversight commission is something free from politics. That, to me, is the key. IRS should never be used politically.

MILITARY JUSTICE IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mrs. BOXER. I rise in strong support of the Military Justice Improvement Act. I am so proud to stand with 17 of the 20 women Members of this Senate on both sides of the aisle and with a large number of colleagues from both sides—a majority—to fight for real change in the way our military addresses the epidemic of military sexual assault.

When one is in Washington for a while—and I have been in Washington for a while. Thanks to the good people of California, I was elected to the House in 1982 and took my seat in 1983. I have seen this issue get worse and worse. The issue of sexual assault in the military is not new. Unfortunately, it is decades old.

It was 23 years ago that dozens of women and men were sexually harassed and assaulted in the halls of a Las Vegas hotel during the Tailhook Association's annual convention. The 1991 Tailhook scandal focused a national spotlight on the issue of military sexual assault, and then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney declared after it was over a zero tolerance policy.

I have to be completely blunt with everybody who may be listening to

this. The fact is, after Tailhook and all of these promises from everybody, I thought we would never see this epidemic grow as it has. I thought we stopped the epidemic of sexual assault in the military because it was heinous to see what they did when everyone said it would be over.

Let's take a look at how many Secretaries of Defense made a pledge. We will start from the bottom and work our way up to the top.

Secretary Cheney in 1993 said:

Well, we've got a major effort underway to try to educate everybody, to let them know that we've got a zero-tolerance policy where sexual harassment's involved.

So a real commitment from then Defense Secretary Cheney.

The next year it was Secretary William Perry. In 1996, he said:

For all reasons, therefore, we have zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

Then it was Secretary William Cohen. In 1997, he said:

I intend to enforce a strict policy of zero tolerance of hazing, of sexual harassment, and of racism.

Now we move to Donald Rumsfeld in 2004:

Sexual assault will not be tolerated in the Department of Defense.

These are beautiful words. But I say to those listening: Nothing has stopped this epidemic—Democratic or Republican Secretaries of Defense, it doesn't matter.

Then Robert Gates, who served both Republican and Democratic Presidents, what did he say.

This is a matter of grave concern. I have zero tolerance for sexual assault.

Leon Panetta, under President Obama:

We have absolutely no tolerance for any form of sexual assault.

I take sexual assault allegations very seriously. We have no place in the military for sexual assault.

Currently, Secretary Chuck Hagel, under President Obama:

It's not good enough to say we have a zero tolerance policy. We do.

But what does it mean? How does it translate into changing anything? I want to know.

These crimes have no place—no place—in the greatest military on earth.

We all agree with that. But here is what this shows you: Seven Secretaries of Defense, Republicans and Democrats, all these years—the first one being Dick Cheney in 1992—have all promised zero tolerance, and the problem of sexual assault in the military gets worse.

So Senator GILLIBRAND has issued a call to action. She has written a terrific bill, working with Republicans and Democrats, and we are getting a vote on the bill tomorrow—assuming we can break a filibuster, because there is a filibuster and we have to file cloture and we need a supermajority of 60 in order to get to an up-or-down vote.

So these promises to me ring hollow. I like so many of these people. I have

worked with so many of them. They are good people. They care. But these words are hollow. We have to change the way we deal with sexual assault in the military, and that is what this vote is about tomorrow. But we have to break a filibuster.

Here is what has happened to those who have come forward: Instead of justice, sexual assault survivors have faced retaliation, revictimization, and further abuse. Instead of justice, survivors have been kicked out of the military while their attackers go unpunished.

I will share some deeply troubling statistics which speak to the scope of this problem: 26,000 cases of sexual assault occurred in the U.S. military in 2012 and 1.2 percent were prosecuted.

Mr. President, I know how deeply you care about this. You were responsible for protecting justice for the people of Connecticut. What if you had a range of cases and only 1.2 percent were prosecuted? I am sure you would admit that something was very wrong. Of course, your record speaks for itself.

The point I am making is this: How can anyone defend the status quo? Yet we have a group of people here in the Senate who are defending the status quo. Yes, they are making changes around the edges. I give them that, and I am very happy with that. But they are not getting to the root cause of the problem, which is who decides whether these cases go forward. Who is the decider? That is why the Gillibrand amendment is so critical.

So I want people to keep this chart in their minds. These are all the assaults. The number prosecuted is 1.2 percent. That means that of the estimated 26,000 sexual assaults, only 302 were prosecuted. Keep that in mind—26,000 sexual assaults in the military and only 302 were prosecuted.

Let me give another troubling figure. One in five female servicemembers reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact while serving in the military. One in five female servicemembers reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact while serving in the military. There is something wrong with the culture there. These women are putting their lives on the line, and what do they get for it? One in five is experiencing unwanted sexual contact. And by the way, many of the men are too. But we have this statistic we wanted to share.

What is this misconduct that these women—one out of five women—in the military are facing, unwanted sexual contact? This means they are experiencing rape, sexual assault, and unwanted sexual contact while serving in the military. But they don't report it because they are too scared, and that is why the Gillibrand bill is so critical, and that is why we need to make sure we defeat that filibuster—because you cannot and should not filibuster justice. Let's get an up-or-down vote. How many more women and men will become victims of these heinous crimes

before we take action? For 20 years the military has had to deal with this.

I am a fairly patient person. Before I got into politics, I was not a patient person. When I got into politics, I realized, yes, change takes time. You have to be patient, you have to work hard, and you have to make the case. You have to pile up your statistics. You have to make sure you have the facts and then take action.

But 20 years of doing nothing, 20 years of commitment from all of these people—Richard Cheney, William Perry, William Cohen, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary Gates, Secretary Panetta, Chuck Hagel; it doesn't matter whether they are Republican or Democratic—all saying the same thing; they are going to stop this heinous situation. And they don't because they cannot.

We need to listen to survivors—survivors who are going to solve the crisis of sexual assault in the military because they are going to speak up, and they have. Survivors are telling us that the only way to stop this horrible epidemic of sexual assault is to take the decision about whether to prosecute serious crimes such as sexual assault out of the hands of the commanders. Give it to the professional, trained military prosecutors outside the chain of command.

There are many people who misconstrue this. They think we are going to take it completely outside the military structure. That is not what we do. What we do is we say the professionals should deal with this. Right now you have to report to your commander. We never would allow a CEO of a corporation to make the decision about whether one of his or her employees should be prosecuted for rape. If something happened in our office and someone came to the Presiding Officer or to me and said: Something horrible has happened upstairs, and we think somebody raped someone else. We wouldn't decide whether to prosecute. We would go right to the police—right to the police. And that is what we are saying when supporting the Gillibrand amendment. We are saying these legal decisions should be made by independent, experienced legal experts so the decision to go to trial is a fair one, objective, and based on the evidence.

By the way, that helps all sides—the accuser and the accused. As a matter of fact, we have some people who are worried that the accused may not get a fair trial if we don't change things because there has been so much publicity about this.

There has been a defense advisory committee on women in the services that has advised the Secretary of Defense for over 60 years. That commission overwhelmingly supports this reform, arguing that the authority of commanders to decide whether to prosecute these cases “poses an inherent conflict of interest.” It is obvious. Of course it is a conflict of interest. If the commander is faced with a situation—

remember, we are talking about people who put their lives on the line. If the commander is in a circumstance where he does not want to lose one of these guys who is, let's say, a very good fighter, he has a conflict right there. He may be friends with the guy or the gal, whoever the accused is. We have to take this away from the commander and let them focus on what they need to do.

We have been told by many commanders that they would welcome this even though the top brass is quashing it and fighting hard against them. Why? Why are they fighting against this when for 20 years they have claimed they want to solve the problem? Let's listen to retired military officers such as LTG Claudia Kennedy, the first female three-star general in the Army. This is what she said:

If military leadership hasn't fixed the problem in my lifetime, it is not going to be fixed without a change from the status quo. The imbalance of power and authority in commanders dealing with sexual assaults has to be corrected. There has to be independent oversight over what is happening.

Then we have a situation where a woman was put up for a position. This is amazing. Dr. Jo Ann Rooney was nominated to be the Under Secretary of the Navy. She was asked:

In your view, what would be the impact of requiring a judge advocate outside the chain of command to determine whether allegations of sexual assaults should be prosecuted?

Mr. President, do you know what she said? This is what she said would happen if the Gillibrand bill passed:

I believe the impact would be decisions based on evidence rather than the interest of preserving good order and discipline.

And she is against the Gillibrand bill because she put good order and discipline over justice.

Then she said:

I believe this will result in fewer prosecutions and therefore defeat the very problem I understand it seeks to address.

Many of us have said we are not going to let a vote come up on this. We have been very open about it. She is complaining that if we pass the Gillibrand bill, the decision will be based on the evidence rather than on the good old boy system. I don't get it.

We need to listen to our allies, such as Israel, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia. They have successfully made this change.

I want to say very clearly that none of us in this body should filibuster justice. And I have a very strong chart here. I am going to keep this up: “Don't filibuster justice.” That is what we are facing. We have people who are going to filibuster the Gillibrand bill and not allow a vote on it, while they would vote not to filibuster the McCaskill bill. I say don't filibuster either of these bills. Vote yes on both. Both are good. But it is only the Gillibrand bill that will make sure the system that is resulting in a disastrous record of prosecutions and a disastrous record of peo-

ple—90 percent of the people don't report. Isn't that true? Ninety percent of the people don't report because they are scared. These are men and women. If you don't report, you cannot have justice.

For over a year survivors of military sexual assault have been walking the halls of Congress and calling for these vicious crimes to be decided outside the chain of command. In other words, they support S. 1752. They don't want us to filibuster S. 1752. They don't want us to filibuster justice. These brave men and women deserve an up-or-down vote on the Gillibrand bill. They don't deserve the filibuster. That is wrong. They don't deserve two more decades of broken promises. We should be humble in their presence—humble in their presence.

You know, I hear people stand and say: Oh, this is terrible. It would be terrible. It would be awful.

Wait a minute. Why not ask the people who have been raped? Why not ask the people who survived that? Why not ask the people who did not report because they are frightened to death of the commander? We need to give these brave survivors what they deserve—an up-or-down vote on legislation that will fix our broken military justice system.

I want to tell a couple of stories if the numbers are not convincing enough. I want to put a face on it. This is the story of Stacey Thompson, who is a Californian. I stood next to her, and I literally held her hand when she first told the story publicly.

Stacey was drugged and brutally raped by a male sergeant in December 1999 while she was stationed in Okinawa, Japan. She did what she was supposed to do: She reported the rape to her superior. Her allegations were swept under the rug. Her attacker was allowed to leave the Marine Corps without ever facing trial. Do you hear what I am saying? He was allowed to leave the Marine Corps, where he went home and probably continued his activities of raping.

But what happened to Stacey? She became the target of a drug investigation, extending from the night of her rape because her attacker drugged her—drugged her that night and molested her on the ground. She was forced out of the Marine Corps with an other-than-honorable discharge. Stacey told me she still struggles with the emotional and psychological effects of being raped. She is fighting to have her discharge upgraded so she can access the benefits she earned.

So let me just synthesize this story. Here she is. She was raped. She was drugged. She was left on the ground. As a result of the drugging by her attacker, they began an investigation and she was drummed out of the military and denied any benefits. She is appealing, and she hopes to make progress on that appeal. Her accuser gets out of the military scot-free. Right?

I want to point out that half of the estimated 26,000 victims of military sexual assault are men, so I would like to share the story of Amando Javier.

Amando was serving in the Marine Corps in 1993 when he was raped and assaulted by a group of fellow marines. Ashamed and fearing for his life, he kept his rape a secret for 15 years.

When Amando finally found the courage to share his story with a friend, he decided to write it down. I would like to read some of his words at this time.

My experience left me torn apart physically, mentally, and spiritually. I was dehumanized and treated with ultimate cruelty, by my perpetrators. . . . I was embarrassed and ashamed and didn't know what to do. I was young at that time. And being part of an elite organization that values brotherhood, integrity and faithfulness made it hard to come forward and reveal what happened.

Now it is two decades later and no one has been held accountable for this heinous crime. The perpetrators are still out there able to commit these crimes again and again.

Ninety percent of the assaults are not reported. We think 26,000 is a conservative number. Think of how many perpetrators there are in the military, and then when they get out of the military they continue to commit these crimes.

I also want to share the story of Ariana Clay. Ariana graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and joined the Marine Corps. She deployed to Iraq in 2008. Following her return Ariana was selected to serve at the Marine Barracks in Washington, DC, which is a very prestigious post down the street.

At the Marine Barracks Ariana was subjected to constant sexual assault, and when she tried to report it to her chain of command, she was told to "deal with it."

In August 2010, Ariana was gang raped by a senior Marine officer and his friend at her home. Ariana bravely reported the assault, but a Marine Corps investigation determined she had welcomed the harassment because she wore makeup and exercised in shorts and tank tops.

Finally, the Marine Corps did court-martial one of her rapists but failed to convict him of rape. Instead, he was convicted only of adultery and indecent language.

Ariana's husband is a former Marine Corps officer. He joined her at the recent press conference about the importance of changing how the military handles sexual assault. Here is what Ariana's husband said:

The first step to addressing sexual assault in the military is to remove its prosecution from the chain of command. It is unfair to expect commanders to be able to maintain good order and discipline as long as their justice system incentivizes and empowers them to deny their units' worst disciplinary failures ever happened.

That was from a former Marine Corps officer who said that the first step is to remove the prosecution of these crimes from the chain of command. So we now see the whole story, and we are going to go through these charts again.

Sadly, Senator GILLIBRAND's bill—which will finally take the prosecution of these assaults outside the chain of command, keep it in the military, and give it to the trained prosecutors—is being filibustered by my colleagues. Don't you think we should have a vote on justice without having to set up a 60-vote threshold?

I say to my colleagues—none of whom are here now, and I understand since it is very late—don't filibuster justice. If you want to vote against the Gillibrand approach, vote against it but allow us an up-or-down vote. Don't filibuster justice. That is wrong. Frankly, anyone who does that ought to lose some sleep over it. I will tell you, if we get very close—somewhere in the high fifties—this change is coming, so why not make the change now.

I will put these charts back up to remind everyone of what I said. These magnificent men and women in the military are innocent. They joined the military out of love and devotion to country. They put their lives on the line. One in five women is either getting assaulted or harassed and many men—50 percent of the 26,000 cases are men. Men have an even harder time of stepping to the plate and admitting this happened.

The commanders are making these decisions. They are choosing between two people in their unit. It is akin to a CEO determining whether he or she is going to prosecute a case for a Senator and saying: You know what. It is a he said, she said, and I will decide who is telling the truth. Wrong. That is not justice in America. That should not be justice anywhere on our streets, and it should not be justice in the military.

Look at that face. This is a woman who was destroyed. I stood next to her and had to hold her hand so she could actually get the words out. Because of Senator GILLIBRAND's bill, she is empowered to speak out. Because of a movie called "Invisible War," which focused on people coming forward and telling the truth, she is empowered.

We have to change the way the military handles this or we are just a bunch of folks who come out here and sound great. No, it is time to change.

There were 26,000 cases of sexual assault in 2012. Of those 26,000 cases, 1.2 percent were prosecuted. This is an absolute disgrace on its face and anyone who will not make the changes required is accepting this because all they are doing is tinkering around the edges. It doesn't help because that is all we have done for years.

The moment of truth is coming in the Senate—and it is coming tomorrow around 2 p.m.—and Senators will have to stand here and decide if they are going to filibuster the Gillibrand bill and filibuster justice. They are going to have to decide that.

We have been listening to words and promises and baloney for 20-odd years. I was here all that time, so I know. I was here after Tailhook. Oh, this will never happen. Dick Cheney said: it will

not happen. Then we heard from William Perry, William Cohen, Gates, Pannetta, Chuck Hagel. I think they meant it when they said no more and zero tolerance, but they will not step up and support the change that needs to be made.

We made a lot of changes in the military. Many years ago they would not allow Blacks and Whites to fight side by side. Those days, thank God, are over. Gays in the military—oh, my God, that was going to be horrific and hurt morale. Thank God that is over. The military fought tooth and nail, day in and day out, and this is just part of the pattern. They protect the status quo.

Put this in your mind: There is no place for a filibuster when it comes to justice. If you don't like the Gillibrand bill, then vote no on it, but give us a chance to vote up or down. I am going to vote to allow a vote on the Gillibrand bill, and I am going to vote to allow a vote on MCCASKILL's bill.

I ask that the McCaskill people please join us. Let us have an up-or-down vote. Honestly, I know in my heart that these opportunities to make change don't come along very often, and this is our moment. We have all the facts on our side. We have every victims' rights group and every survivor group on our side. We know status quo is dangerous.

I just want to say about my colleague Senator GILLIBRAND how proud I am to stand with her. What an amazing Senator she is. She listens to advice from both sides of the aisle. Her bill reflects comments that were made by myself, Senator PAUL, Senator HIRONO, as well as other Senators on both sides of the aisle. People were so happy to sit and work with her and her staff.

Now we are down to the wire. To have people tell me to my face: Oh, yes. I am going to filibuster this because I don't like it—if you don't like it, then vote no, but give us a chance to vote up or down.

It is interesting because many of the same people who are going to filibuster this tell me they want to do away with the filibuster altogether. It is odd. They want to do away with it but not on this one.

We are at the moment of truth, and tomorrow Senator GILLIBRAND will lead us in the hour of time that we have. Senator MCCASKILL will offer her views of negativity on the Gillibrand bill. Senator GILLIBRAND will support both bills, as will I.

I truly pray tonight that people will think about this and will think about Stacey and the men and women who have come forward in such a difficult situation to open their hearts to talk about things that have been kept a secret for so long because they honestly think it will help bring about change.

If we don't allow a vote on that change, then I am afraid this Senate will not look very good when we awaken the next morning.

I thank the Presiding Officer, yield the floor, and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

VENEZUELA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we are all painfully aware of the many resource rich countries whose leaders care far more about maintaining their grip on power and enriching themselves than addressing the needs of their people. The departed Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich was a good example, and in this hemisphere Venezuela's late President Hugo Chavez and his successor President Nicolas Maduro stand out.

President Chavez, a former army officer who was swept into power in a wave of popular discontent after decades of corrupt, elitist governments, mastered the art of deception. He was a cult personality and virulently anti-United States, who dished out favors to poor communities as he ruined the country's economy, destroyed any semblance of an independent judiciary, changed the constitution so he could hold onto power indefinitely, and used the police to intimidate the press.

In the year since Chavez' death, President Maduro has tried to fill his shoes. He has adopted Chavez' divisive, anti-U.S. rhetoric, but he lacks Chavez' charisma, and the prognosis for positive change in Venezuela is increasingly bleak.

Early last month a few student demonstrations quickly spiraled into the largest public protests against President Maduro since he came to power. Having been elected by a razor-thin margin, the smallest in nearly half a century, many Venezuelans hoped the stultifying reality of widespread unemployment and economic stagnation would inspire reforms. Regrettably, President Maduro did not heed the people's message.

Instead, inflation has skyrocketed in the oil-rich country and food shortages have plagued local markets. Additionally, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report for

2013-2014 ranks Venezuela number three on its list of economies damaged by high crime rates and violence, contributing to the resolve of the thousands of Venezuelans who took to the streets in protest. From San Cristobal, to Maracaibo, to the capital city of Caracas, the demonstrations have attracted students, merchants, and middle-class professionals in a challenge to government repression and mismanagement.

For several weeks images of the protests trickled out of Venezuela through various social media platforms, offering a limited, unfiltered perspective amidst the state-run media's censorship of impartial coverage. Because of the fog caused by this lack of objective information, it took nearly 2 weeks for many major U.S. news sources to arrive in country to begin coverage.

The distorted, self-serving portrayal of the protestors as treasonous fascists by the Maduro administration and the state-run media has been compounded by the deaths of some 18 people and the arbitrary arrests of hundreds, and risks inciting a further crackdown against the opposition. Additionally, there have been reports that foreign journalists have been detained while trying to cover the protests, with up to 20 having been physically assaulted, according to a Colombian news source that has since been banned from Venezuela for covering the protests.

The U.S. State Department's recently released Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 describes the Maduro government's efforts to impede freedom of expression. The increasingly heavy-handed and violent actions over the last few weeks have exacerbated the situation.

As one of Venezuela's most important trading partners, and as a nation whose people take note of the well-being and basic rights of other peoples in our hemisphere and beyond, the United States has an interest in ensuring that human rights are not violated with impunity. I hope President Maduro will not continue to make the mistake of other messianic, autocratic leaders who demonize their opponents. In Venezuela they represent roughly half of the population. He would do far better to work with all Venezuelans to reduce tensions and find real solutions to the country's problems. The people of his country deserve nothing less.

TRIBUTE TO SHERIFF DOUG GILLESPIE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise to honor Sheriff Doug Gillespie, of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, who was recently named the National Sheriffs' Association's 2014 Sheriff of the Year.

The Ferris E. Lucas Award for Sheriff of the Year is awarded to recognize an outstanding sheriff for contributions made to improve the office of sheriff at the local, State, and national levels, and for involvement in the com-

munity above and beyond the responsibilities required. By this measure, I can think of no one more deserving than Sheriff Gillespie. His tireless service as sheriff has made the Las Vegas metropolitan area a safer and better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Sheriff Gillespie has diligently served the Las Vegas community for 33 years as a metropolitan police officer, the last 7 as sheriff. Under Sheriff Gillespie's leadership, metro has become one of only 72 intelligence-gathering fusion centers in the country. It has won the Webber Seavey Award, given for quality in law enforcement by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, for an outreach effort to strengthen police relations in the Las Vegas area. Metro is also one of only 32 departments to achieve the highest standard of accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

In addition to his position as sheriff, he has served in many leadership roles in other law enforcement organizations, such as board director of the National Sheriff's Association Executive Committee, chair of the Homeland Security Committee for the Major City Chiefs Association, vice chair of the Nevada High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force, finance committee chair for the Nevada Commission for Homeland Security, and president of the Major County Sheriff's Association.

On behalf of the U.S. Senate, I congratulate Sheriff Doug Gillespie on receiving the Ferris E. Lucas Award for Sheriff of the Year and look forward to the continuation of a career that has already made Nevada very proud.

SIMMONS COLLEGE OF KENTUCKY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor one of the oldest educational institutions in my home State of Kentucky. Recently, the Simmons College of Kentucky announced its accreditation from the Association of Biblical Higher Learning. It is the college's first national accreditation.

The story of Simmons College is one of success. After the Civil War came to an end in 1865, there was no place in my home State where African Americans could obtain a college degree. That changed in 1879 when the Kentucky Normal Theological Institute opened its doors on the corner of 8th and Kentucky Street in Louisville. The school's second president, Dr. W.J. Simmons, transformed the nascent school into a full-fledged university that offered a wide array of liberal arts and theological programs. Simmons increased the school's enrollment from 13 to over 200 during his 10-year tenure. In 1918, Charles Parrish assumed the role of president of the university and aptly renamed the school Simmons University.

Simmons flourished into the 1920s, when enrollment peaked at over 500 students, but this success could not