

The Supreme Court ignored our work, and in the Shelby County decision overturned a key section of this law. That is why we need to once again step up on a bipartisan basis to pass this Voting Rights Amendment Act.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I might also reflect on that victory 50 years ago and think about another civil rights milestone that we have an opportunity to act on this week—this week—in Washington.

Two weeks ago, the Judiciary Committee favorably reported the nomination of Loretta Lynch to the full Senate. If confirmed by the Senate, Ms. Lynch will become the first African-American woman to serve as Attorney General of the United States.

In January, she gave moving testimony to the committee about sitting on her father's shoulders as a young girl so she could witness civil rights activists planning sit-ins and marches in the early 1960s.

Ms. Lynch is incredible. She is so well qualified that in the course of 2 days of hearings, there was virtually no negative question asked of her. She handled it so well.

She has now waited 121 days for confirmation by the Senate. Loretta Lynch has waited longer than any nominee for Attorney General in the last 30 years. She languishes on the calendar. It is embarrassing to think that after all of the speeches and all of the reflection of this last weekend on the progress we have made in civil rights in America, this woman, whose nomination in and of itself is a civil rights victory, is being held up in the Senate for no obvious reason.

As Congressman LEWIS said in a recent letter to the Judiciary Committee, Ms. Lynch "recognizes the value of all people and has fought vigorously to ensure their equal protection under the law." JOHN LEWIS said: "She will carry the torch of justice to help make the United States a more perfect union."

Mr. President, we are not a perfect union. We will strive throughout our history to reach that almost impossible goal. There is a lot of work we need to do, and each generation must accept it. First we need to confirm Loretta Lynch, and let's do it soon. Let's do it this week so she can lead the Department of Justice and continue the fight to move our Nation forward. And we must restore the Voting Rights Act so the Justice Department has the tools it needs to ensure the efforts of those who marched 50 years ago.

As I said before, no other Attorney General nominee in the last three decades has had to wait this long to receive a confirmation vote on the floor of the Senate. By way of comparison, the Democratic-controlled Senate confirmed Michael Mukasey as Attorney General 53 days after his nomination was announced.

Ms. Lynch was reported out of the Judiciary Committee on February 26 in a bipartisan vote. On that day, the Judiciary Committee also reported out the nomination of Michelle Lee to be Director of the Patent and Trademark Office as well as a bill called the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act.

The majority leader has scheduled a vote on Ms. Lee for today, and he has said the Senate will vote this week on the trafficking legislation. Why is Ms. Lynch's nomination being kept in limbo while these other matters are being scheduled ahead of her? There is no reason to stall the process for Ms. Lynch any further. The majority leader should schedule a confirmation vote without delay.

When we have that confirmation vote, I will be proud to vote in support of Loretta Lynch. She is a nominee of outstanding qualifications, integrity, and judgment. She has been confirmed twice before by the Senate to serve as the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and she has served in that position with distinction. She has prosecuted some of the highest profile cases in the country, and she has received widespread praise for her diligence and her no-nonsense approach.

Ms. Lynch is a prosecutor's prosecutor. But her resume stands out for other reasons as well. She received undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard. She has private sector experience at prestigious law firms, including working as a defense attorney and on civil matters. And she has international experience working for the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Through it all, Ms. Lynch has never forgotten her roots, growing up as the daughter of a minister and a school librarian in North Carolina. Loretta Lynch's life is a testament to the fact that in America, glass ceilings can be shattered through hard work, perseverance, and outstanding performance on the job. Now the Senate is in the position to confirm this historic nominee to serve as our next Attorney General—once her floor vote gets scheduled.

I think Ms. Lynch will do an excellent job. But don't take it from me. Let me read some of the praise for Ms. Lynch that has come from individuals and groups that have endorsed her.

Here is what the president of the National District Attorneys Association, Michael Moore, said about her:

On behalf of the National District Attorneys Association, representing 2500 elected and appointed District Attorneys across the United States as well as 40,000 assistant district attorneys, I write in strong support of Loretta Lynch's nomination to lead the Department of Justice as the next Attorney General of the United States. As prosecutors facing challenges in the field from violent crime, to human trafficking, to gangs and drug traffickers, our membership feels that Ms. Lynch understands the operational nature of these challenges and will be a strong independent voice at the helm of the Department.

Here is a letter signed by 25 former U.S. attorneys, both Republicans and Democrats, including Patrick Fitzgerald and Scott Lassar from my home State of Illinois. They said:

We are all former United States Attorneys. Some of us served in Republican administrations, some in Democratic administrations. We all share a deep commitment to the rule of law and an abiding respect for the Department of Justice. . . . We firmly believe that Ms. Lynch will make an outstanding Attorney General. . . . we believe that Ms. Lynch has the experience, temperament, independence, integrity, and judgment to immediately assume this critically important position.

Law enforcement groups support Ms. Lynch, too. Here's a letter from the President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Richard Beary. He said:

The IACP believes that Ms. Lynch's years of service have clearly demonstrated that she has the qualifications and experience necessary to be an effective leader of the U.S. Department of Justice . . . The IACP urges you to confirm Ms. Lynch's nomination rapidly.

Here is a letter from the president of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, representing 26,000 active and retired federal law enforcement officers. He expressed his full support for Ms. Lynch and said:

FLEOA stands behind her proven leadership and her support for those who investigate and enforce the federal statutes. . . . Her accomplishments and her leadership continue to resonate in the law enforcement community, and she possesses the requisite institutional knowledge that is required of the position of Attorney General.

These are just some of the endorsements that Ms. Lynch has received. She has also been endorsed by other prosecutor and law enforcement groups, bar associations, business leaders, civil rights organizations, and former top Justice Department officials from both parties.

As I mentioned earlier, this past weekend marked the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday when 600 civil rights marchers were beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL. Our Nation's conscience was shocked by the image of JOHN LEWIS, now a Congressman from the State of Georgia, being beaten and badly injured on Bloody Sunday by troopers with nightsticks.

JOHN LEWIS has spent his life marching for the cause of justice. He speaks with a voice of moral authority that all of us should heed. Several weeks ago Congressman LEWIS sent a letter to the Judiciary Committee in support of Ms. Lynch.

I want to read an extended excerpt from the letter I mentioned earlier. Congressman LEWIS said:

With over 30 years of legal experience, Ms. Lynch is unwavering in her efforts to create a more just society. A Harvard graduate with an extensive career in public service, private practice, and academia, she recognizes the value of all people and has fought vigorously to ensure their equal protection under the law.

She will carry the torch of justice to help make the United States a more perfect

union. Ms. Lynch's commitment to civil rights stems from her family's roots in North Carolina. Her father, a Baptist minister, preached at a church where students would meet to organize anti-segregation boycotts. Her grandfather, a sharecropper and pastor in the 1930s, helped people in his community who faced challenges under the Jim Crow system.

I will never forget Loretta Lynch's description of her father raising her onto his shoulders so she could witness the civil rights protestors in his church. The fact that this young girl could be the first African-American woman to serve as our Nation's Attorney General is another milestone on our Nation's long, slow march to establish a "more perfect union."

The bottom line is this: Loretta Lynch is extraordinarily well-qualified to serve as Attorney General. She has been extensively vetted, and she has performed admirably while in the spotlight of that process. And Members of the Senate have had plenty of time to review her qualifications.

It is time to move forward and hold a vote on Ms. Lynch. There is nothing to be gained by further delay. I hope the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, will call her nomination for a vote and I hope all my colleagues will support this outstanding nominee.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, we spend a lot of time, as one would expect in a legislative body, talking about the technical aspects of legislation and the procedure we use to consider it and pass it, a subject which perhaps many of us enjoy but which probably turns the public—puts a glaze in their eyes and bores them because they don't see the relevance of it.

We talk about motions to proceed and cloture and filibusters, but what is important in the Senate is the subject matter of the legislation that we apply this procedure or these rules to. This week in the Senate we will be undertaking a very important subject; that is, how to protect our fellow citizens, many of them children, who are needing our help and waiting to be rescued. Those are children who are being trafficked in the commercial sex and forced-labor trade—not over there, not necessarily just in some other country, but right here in the United States of America.

I believe that we are all created in the image of God, that all human beings are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. But the criminals

who traffic in human flesh treat these same human beings created in the image of God as a thing. They treat these children as a commodity to be bought and sold. To me that is the very definition of evil. A few weeks ago the Judiciary Committee heard from several witnesses on what has been called modern day slavery—human trafficking.

I know many of us thought that slavery was an ugly part of our Nation's beginning but certainly only something in the past. But the truth is that there exists today something that you could legitimately call modern day slavery, and that is human trafficking. Now, even though institutionalized slavery has long been cast into the dustbin of history and is something we read about in our history books, human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, still affects the lives of hundreds and thousands of our children.

Tragically, many of them are young girls. As the father of two daughters, it turns my stomach to realize that a majority of the human beings who are trafficked are girls who are of middle-school age. In the Judiciary Committee, we heard from Malika Saada Saar who represents a wonderful organization called Rights4Girls.

Malika spoke of a young woman named Aviva. According to Malika, Aviva was in foster care when a trafficker kidnapped her and held her hostage for almost a year. During this time, we learned in the Judiciary Committee during that hearing, Aviva was sold to as many as 10 different men a night. Of course, she did not understand. She could not comprehend why an adult man would want to buy her body when she was just a child.

When law enforcement officials found Aviva, she was arrested for prostitution at the age of 15. Let me repeat that because it is important. This young girl who was kidnapped, raped, and sold nightly—daily—was treated like a criminal, not a victim. In 1992 Holly Austin Smith ran away from home and was forced into a sex trafficking ring the summer before her freshman year of high school.

Within hours of running away, 14-year old Holly was sold for \$200 to a man who wanted her for sex because he said she reminded him of his granddaughter. When police eventually found Holly—still only a child, scared and confused, as you can only imagine—they treated her as a criminal, not as a victim. Too often these children, who are not of the age of consent, are treated as child prostitutes.

As many of us who have worked on this issue for some time know, there is no such thing as a child prostitute. If you are not of the age of consent, you cannot consent, and you cannot agree to be used in such a horrific way. These are children who are bought and sold for sex—plain and simple—as nauseating as that truth is. Malika powerfully said during our hearing: "There should be no difference between raping

a child and paying to rape a child." Now, the individuals who commit these crimes—not just the people who traffic in them but the people who purchase these services—too often pay a fine and get on with their lives. Yet they are the child rapists who should be treated as the sex traffickers they are.

If it were not for the demand, sex trafficking would not have a business model. But unfortunately, there is too great a demand. But often the people who purchase these children are treated with impunity. Tomorrow, I expect the Senate will move to consider legislation that I have introduced with a number of our colleagues from Minnesota, Illinois, and Oregon. Indeed, there are a number of Senators who have already contributed a lot of very good and constructive work to the product we will turn to tomorrow.

The bill is called the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. The most important thing that it does is that it ends the culture of impunity for the people who purchase children and other victims of human trafficking. It holds the so-called johns and the pimps accountable, and it does not focus on the victim who should be treated like a victim and helped to heal and get on with their lives. But too often they are the ones who are prosecuted and treated as a criminal.

Instead of being treated as criminals, this bill makes sure that the future Avivas and Hollys are treated for what they are, and that is as victims. What this bill also does is it takes the money and assets forfeited from convicted human traffickers and directs it to services for the victims. So future Avivas and Hollys would have a shelter, a place to live, a roof over their head, a bed to sleep in, and somebody who loves them and cares enough to help them heal and get on with their lives. That is the kind of treatment these victims of human trafficking deserve—not jail time.

We know that Washington can be a dysfunctional place more times than we would like to admit. So often there are political issues or ideological issues that divide us. But the fight against human trafficking reminds us that it does not have to be this way. Indeed, I was heartened a few weeks ago when this particular piece of legislation passed the Judiciary Committee with unanimous support. All Republicans and all Democrats on the committee voted to support it.

Indeed, Republicans and Democrats—not just in Congress but across the country—support this legislation, as evidenced by the more than 200 different organizations, from victims' advocates to law enforcement groups, which have joined forces to fight this modern day slave trade and to support the legislation we will turn to tomorrow. It is a fight, sadly, that must be acknowledged and it must be fought. But it is a fight we can win, finally delivering our Nation's promise of freedom to those who are enslaved.