

January 2014. Her disease, unfortunately, has progressed rapidly. She is now close to fully paralyzed and has very limited use of her arms and hands, requiring loved ones to be with her at all times. Her respiratory system is also affected. She is struggling with the life-or-death decision of whether to have a tracheotomy procedure and go to mechanical ventilation or to enroll in hospice and essentially prepare to die. Her preference is to continue living, as she still enjoys life.

One important factor in the decision for her is that being able to communicate is a tremendous concern. While she still has some vocal ability to speak and to be understood currently, she knows that going on the vent will be the end of her spoken voice and her ability to vocalize, and she is very worried that if she decides to go on a vent and prolong her life, she may lose the ability to communicate with the outside world because of the changes in Medicare policy that prevent her from accessing email and Internet via this technology we are talking about. She is also very concerned that Medicare will deny coverage for the eye-tracking technology she will need in order to use the SGD—this significant technology we are talking about.

So, bottom line, she is worried that if she decides to continue living using mechanical ventilation, she will face the prospect of being locked up and having no means to communicate to help direct her care. Because of the limitations of SGD coverage, she may actually choose dying over living, because of that factor. It doesn't get more direct than that. It doesn't get more stark than that as to why we need to give these patients access to important communication technology through the Steve Gleason Act and why we need to act today, why we cannot delay this any longer.

Of course, Steve Gleason, for whom this act is named, is a superb advocate for the ALS community. He is the former New Orleans Saints player who famously blocked a punt in the Saints' first game back in the Superdome after Hurricane Katrina. After that tremendous feat and his NFL career, Steve was diagnosed with ALS. Just as he gave the city of New Orleans hope to rebuild after the devastating storm, through his organization Team Gleason, he gives the ALS community and their families hope with his "No White Flags" message.

Steve was my guest at the State of the Union speech this past January, and during his visit to Washington, we met with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Sylvia Burwell, and started to gain huge momentum for the Steve Gleason Act.

This bill again reinstates long-standing Medicare policy—Medicare policy that was solid and true to these patients until recently—to offer immediate relief for patients experiencing incredible difficulty accessing this important technology and equipment.

The act expands access to advancements in technology in a fiscally responsible way.

Michelle Gleason, Steve's wife, summed up the story of ALS patients and their loved ones this way:

What causes me the most pain is the loss of his voice. I love hearing his voice. I want him to talk to me, and to our son Rivers. This disease takes his body; to take his voice just seems unfair.

We can offer a voice. It may not be the same voice but a voice for these struggling patients. This was their lifeline. This was due them until recently, and now it is not because of this Medicare change.

I urge all of my colleagues to come together around this piece of bipartisan legislation. Let's pass this today and give a voice—a real voice, a meaningful voice—to these struggling victims.

Mr. President, this will become law because we have assurances from House leadership that they are eager to bring the bill to the House floor. They are eager to finish this important work to change the lives of patients across the country by giving them back their voice. So I urge us to come together to do this today, to not delay, to not wait longer, and to reinstate the voice for ALS patients struggling in this way all around the country.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mrs. GILLIBRAND pertaining to the introduction of S. 1027 and S. 1023 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct. There is 5½ minutes remaining.

#### LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has been 165 days—5½ months—since the nomination of Loretta Lynch to be Attorney General was announced. Ms. Lynch has been pending on the Senate Executive Calendar for nearly 2 months. She was reported out of the

Senate Judiciary Committee in a bipartisan vote—nine Democrats and three Republicans—on February 26. This is a new record, sadly, in terms of delay in appointing an Attorney General. The last seven nominees to be Attorney General of the United States combined—combined—waited on the Senate floor 24 days—seven nominees, 24 days.

Sadly, Ms. Lynch has now been waiting over 50 days. Why? What is it about this nominee that causes so much of a problem? Nothing came up at the Judiciary Committee hearing to suggest a problem. Yes, she was appointed by Barack Obama. Yes, she has said she will serve this President. But when it came to her personally, there was nothing. In fact, we have this tradition that after the nominee has testified under oath, then experts are brought in. Each party can bring an expert in to testify for or against the Attorney General nominee. Senator PATRICK LEAHY, the ranking Democrat on Judiciary, said to the assembled group—I think there may have been 10 or 12 of these outside witnesses: Which of you, by show of hands, objects to the nomination of Loretta Lynch for Attorney General? Not a single one raised his hand—none. So even the witnesses that were brought to speak in negative terms all conceded that she should be Attorney General.

That is rare. It is rare to have a nominee with that kind of affirmation come out of the Senate Judiciary Committee—and for good reason. When you look at her record, you can understand why. This young woman has an extraordinary record of service. She grew up in North Carolina as the daughter of a minister and a school librarian. Her dad was there at her hearing. Her father was smiling as she recalled those instances when she was a very young girl, and he would sit her on his shoulders and take her to see the civil rights events that occurred when she was so young.

She received her undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard University. She has private sector experience at prestigious law firms. She has twice been confirmed unanimously by the Senate to serve as U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York. She served in that position with distinction.

Her nomination has been endorsed by a wide range of groups, representing law enforcement, prosecutors, bar associations, business leaders, civil rights organizations, and former Justice Department officials from both Democratic and Republican administrations. In what may be one of the most amazing ironies of this whole situation, Loretta Lynch has been recognized as a leader when it comes to prosecuting human traffickers. Why is that significant? Because the Republican leader announced that he was holding up her nomination until we passed a bill on human trafficking.

Here is a woman who, as a prosecutor and professional, has prosecuted the

people guilty of that crime, and she is being delayed in her appointment as Attorney General of the United States of America because of a political debate on the floor of the Senate for almost 4 weeks over this bill.

Under Ms. Lynch's leadership, the U.S. Attorney's office in the Eastern District of New York has brought many important prosecutions in human trafficking. In *United States v. Lopez*, three brothers were convicted in 2014 for running a human trafficking ring involving 14- and 15-year-old girls. Ms. Lynch was also involved in the successful prosecution of the Granados-Hernandez sex trafficking ring, in which numerous child trafficking victims were reunited with their mothers. In *United States v. Johnson*, Ms. Loretta Lynch was involved in a prosecution where a Queens man was convicted for trafficking and prostituting a 15-year-old girl out of his home.

Make no mistake, when it comes to the issue of human trafficking, this nominee for Attorney General knows more about the subject than most, and she has a record to prove it. Malika Saada Saar, the executive director of Rights4Girls, is one of the Nation's leading antitrafficking advocates. She said: "It is clear that as the top prosecutor in Brooklyn, New York, Lynch has a strong record of being tough on crime and human trafficking." She has been held up on the floor because of our failure to pass a bill on that same subject.

Here is what the President of the National District Attorneys Association, Michael Moore, said about Ms. Loretta Lynch when he wrote to express his organization's strong support for her: "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."

Calling a vote on Ms. Lynch and confirming her would be a big step forward in the fight against trafficking. It is time to end this delay and obstruction. This extraordinary woman nominated by the President of the United States to be the first African-American woman to serve as Attorney General should have been approved by the Senate long ago. While she has been waiting patiently for a long, long time, we have interrupted the business of the Senate to approve the President's appointments for Assistant Secretary of Transportation, Assistant Secretary of Commerce, Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commissioners, Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board Members, Undersecretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security, Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission, and several Federal judges.

We have had more than adequate opportunity to call Ms. Lynch for approval. Let us not leave Washington

this week without voting on Loretta Lynch to be our next Attorney General. I voted for her in committee and will proudly support her nomination in the hopes that it will come to the floor this week.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 178, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 178) to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Pending:

McConnell (for Cornyn) amendment No. 1120, to strengthen the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act by incorporating additional bipartisan amendments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

#### LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I realize the devil is always in the details. I see the distinguished senior Senator from Texas on the floor and I hope we are getting somewhere on trafficking.

I appreciate the fact that this body, when we were doing the Violence Against Women Act, voted for the anti-sex trafficking amendment I proposed. And the majority of the Senators at the time voted for the final version of the Violence Against Women Act, which included anti-sex trafficking language, and that bill has been signed into law. We should continue on with this bill, which adds to what we did a couple of years ago. But I am concerned, as I have said many times, that we have held up Loretta Lynch because of this. I cannot see what the corollary is.

My friends on the other side of the aisle told me, when they had to wait for 3 or 4 days for a Republican nominee on the floor to get confirmed, that it was too long. They would warn us of national security concerns. Well, Loretta Lynch has waited on the floor for a vote for 54 days. I want to put this in some context. Attorney General Holder waited 5 days. Attorney General Mukasey waited 2 days. Attorney General Gonzales waited 8 days. Attorney General Ashcroft waited 2 days. Attorney General Reno waited 1 day. Attorney General Barr waited 5 days. Attorney General Thornburgh waited 1 day. If we take those seven most recent Attorneys General and take all the time that they waited on the floor and add it all together, it comes to 24 days. Loretta

Lynch has waited 54 days on the floor—more than twice as long as the seven most recent Attorneys General combined.

Then we still have the Deputy Attorney General nominee, whose background is virtually the same as Loretta Lynch's. Both are highly respected prosecutors. Both have prosecuted matters involving the issues we are trying to stop here on the floor—terrorists, traffickers, and white-collar criminals. Once we are done with Loretta Lynch, we have to get her deputy confirmed. I hope both of these highly qualified women are confirmed soon. It has already taken too long.

These delays create a morale problem in the Department of Justice—one of our first lines against terrorists and organized crime. We have some superb men and women who work at the Department of Justice. Some came during Republican administrations, and some came during Democratic administrations. I have met many of these men and women, from both Republican and Democratic administrations, and I am so impressed by them and their dedication. Most of them could leave, go to a law firm, and make a lot more money, but they are dedicated to this country. It is demoralizing to them when we hold the position of Attorney General in limbo. We should stop. The Department of Justice is something we should, whenever possible, keep politics out of.

Remember, too, it is not the "Secretary of Justice," like we have the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Agriculture and so on—a member, as some might suggest, of the President's staff. This is the Attorney General of the United States. They represent you. They represent me. They represent everybody.

I have often told a story about when I was a young law student at Georgetown. The then-Attorney General invited four or five students from different law schools to meet. He reviewed our grades, invited us in to actually spend an hour with him and encouraged us to come work with the Department of Justice.

I remember one of the questions I asked that Attorney General. I said: If you are Attorney General of the United States and you are asked to prosecute somebody who is close to the President, what do you do?

He said: Well, if they should be prosecuted, they would be treated the same as anybody else, and we would prosecute them as such.

I declined the offer to go work at the Department of Justice. I was homesick and wanted to get back to Vermont. Both my wife and I wanted to get back. I wanted to practice law there, which I did, and I actually became a prosecutor. But I often thought of what the Attorney General said to me about his role. Subsequently a man in Illinois who was critical to the election of the next President ran afoul of the law and the same Attorney General signed off