

by withholding Federal funds from States who do not implement protections to prevent sexual assaults in our prisons. It also protects grants designed to provide services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Our legislation also builds on the landmark protections provided for victims of domestic violence in the 2013 Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Act. Imagine a woman living with an abusive partner in public housing, but her name is not on the lease. One night he beats her. She calls the police. The man is arrested. The woman believes she is finally safe. But then the landlord says she has to leave immediately because the man is being evicted and she has no right to stay. The Justice for All Act will allow this woman time to remain there while she either finds another place to live or she can demonstrate she is eligible to remain under her own name. No person should be forced to choose between abuse and a place to live.

And finally, our bill expands rights for victims of all crime. It builds upon the success of the Crime Victims' Rights Act by making it easier for crime victims to have an interpreter present during court proceedings and to obtain court-ordered restitution.

It has been my great honor to serve as the most senior Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee since 1997. During that time, I have worked with Senators from both sides of the aisle to craft solutions to some of the most important problems of our time. I am proud to join with my good friend the Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN, on this legislation and the many advocates who have helped guide our work. I especially appreciate the work of the Innocence Project, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations, Just Detention International, the National Criminal Justice Association, the National District Attorneys Association, Legal Aid DC, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, the Joyful Heart Foundation, the ACLU, the National Juvenile Justice Network, and the National Center for Victims of Crime.

Senator CORNYN and I have proved this is not a Republican or Democratic issue; this is a justice for all issue. That is why so many in both parties have joined, along with so many people around the country.

As we consider legislation next Congress, we must remember that we have an obligation to look out for all victims and to create fairness in our criminal justice system. While we made some improvements this year, including passing the bipartisan Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and the Sexual Assault Survivors' Rights Act, I am disappointed the Republican-led Congress failed to even allow a vote on bipartisan criminal justice reform legislation despite its strong support. As we look to the new

Congress, I hope those who worked with me on this important issue will continue to support efforts to correct the costly mistakes of mandatory minimum sentences. I hope we can again build the same kind of broad bipartisan consensus in support of all victims of sexual assault and domestic violence as we did last Congress when we passed the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act through the Senate.

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

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

APPOINTMENTS AND VOTER RIGHTS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, it has now been 23 days since the election—3 weeks and 2 days. Certainly it has been a time of great frustration and anxiety for Americans across the board, anticipating what our government will look like, what our executive branch will look like under the leadership of President-Elect Donald Trump.

The early signs have been ones that have indeed given a great deal of concern to many groups across America, beginning with the appointment by Mr. Trump of a White nationalist as his Chief Strategist, an individual, Steve Bannon, who has run a Web site, Breitbart, that specialized in hate, specialized in division.

It certainly reverberated in the campaign, but to bring that into the White House was something very few people anticipated would occur. It has been followed up by other appointments that were certainly a cause of deep concern. Just yesterday, there was the nomination of Steve Mnuchin, a Wall Street banker being assigned to the key post in our economy, the Treasury Secretary post—a post that will come before this Chamber for confirmation.

This is not just someone from Wall Street but someone who specialized in acquiring a bank that had been deeply involved in predatory lending, proceeded to foreclosure on thousands and thousands of families, was using robo-signing to accelerate that in violation of the law, was a specialist in turning people out of their homes, profited enormously in the strategy at the expense of working Americans seeking to have the fundamental comfort of owning their own home.

There is a list of other appointments, nominees who have certainly more than raised eyebrows, raised anxiety, other individuals who have specialized in hate and division, and other incidents such as the attack on the cast of "Hamilton" for proposing that individuals with a background of hate and division not be put into the Cabinet.

Then we have this from our President-elect. I quote his tweet: "In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally."

It is a straight falsehood. It has been debunked by every major analytical group, news organization in America. It is a complete fiction created in the middle of the night by our President-elect, but why? I think most people conclude that the fact he lost the popular vote is so disturbing to the President-elect because he wants to claim a mandate, but he cannot claim a mandate because the majority of Americans voted against him. They have voted against his strategy of division. They have voted against his strategy of incurring hate against Muslims, against immigrants, against women, against Hispanics, against African Americans.

No, Donald Trump, you did not get the popular vote, you lost it. You lost it straight out by more than 2 million votes and perhaps a great deal more.

No fiction you can stir up in the middle of the night can change that fundamental fact that you have no mandate in America for these politics of hate and division.

The fact is, the citizens' vote against Donald Trump would have been far larger except for a strategy of voter suppression. Voter suppression is a crime against the Constitution. Our Nation was founded on the vision of citizens being empowered to have a direct voice.

President Jefferson wrote a letter in which he referred to the mother principle of our democracy. He described the mother principle as we can only claim to be a democratic republic to the degree that our decisions reflect the will of the people. Then he went on and said and that will only happen if the people, each person, has an equal voice. Then he went on to say that the biggest factor in equal voice is the power to vote.

We know the original Constitution was incomplete in this vision, that it did not provide that full empowerment to women or to minorities—flaws that we have addressed over time in this vision and understanding that the power to vote is fundamental to a democracy.

Indeed, President after President over the course of our Nation has recognized the power of the individual to vote as fundamental to our democratic Republic.

LBJ said: "The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men."

Of course, he was referring to race and the battle over the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

FDR said: "The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and Senators and Congressmen and Government officials but the voters of this country."

Robert Kennedy put it this way: “Each citizen’s right to vote is fundamental to all the other rights of citizenship.”

These are not simply ideas that Democrats put forward, these are not simply ideas that our Founders put forward, these are ideas that Republican Presidents have put forward.

Let’s turn to Ronald Reagan, who said: “For this Nation to remain true to its principles, we cannot allow any American’s vote to be denied, diluted, or defiled.”

Ronald Reagan was right and that is why voter suppression is wrong. It is an attack on the vision of our Nation in which citizens are in charge, not powerful elites, powerful special interests. Citizens are in charge. When you deliberately set out to take away the vote from citizens, you really are trying to shred the Constitution.

So those in this Chamber who have been so engaged in promoting voter suppression and your attack on our Constitution—because it is simply wrong. As Ronald Reagan put it, it takes away the power of the individual, it denies, it dilutes, and it defiles. Quit denying, quit diluting, and quit defiling. Honor the vision of this Nation in which citizens are in charge.

Unfortunately, we have seen quite the opposite. We have seen a systematic Republican strategy to tear down the power to vote in our Nation, and this must end.

The Supreme Court set the stage for this by saying enough years have passed that the Voting Rights Act, which required areas and counties that had been active in voter suppression in the past, to get preapproval for changes in their law so they wouldn’t go back to defiling and denying the right to vote, said: Enough time has passed. We can now trust them.

That Supreme Court decision was clearly a mistake because, immediately, jurisdiction after jurisdiction proceeded to enact voter suppression laws, often carrying out a debate deliberately about how to keep minorities from voting. This wasn’t something hidden. This wasn’t sneaky. This was straight out: We don’t want those people to vote who might vote against us.

I tell you what I believe in. I believe in our Constitution. I believe in the power of citizens to vote, to be the rulemakers in our country, to have Jefferson’s vision, his mother principle of a democratic republic to make decisions in accordance with the will of the people, not the will of the powerful, special interests who are driving this voter suppression attack on Americans’ right to vote.

A study of nearly 400 counties in Alabama, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Mississippi found more than 860 polling places were eliminated in those counties. In Arizona, almost every single county shut down voting locations. More than half the counties in Louisiana, Texas, and Alabama did so. They provided data to the researchers.

Let’s take a look at North Carolina, a State that passed a voter suppression law which included restrictive voter ID, ending same-day registration, requiring votes cast at the wrong polling location to be thrown out, and shrinking the time for early voting a week—and which did these things after debating directly how to suppress the right of minorities to vote. That is an evil crime against our Constitution and against citizens of the United States of America. The law targeted African-American voters with what the Fourth Circuit of Appeals described as almost surgical precision.

The law was overturned by the court, but that didn’t stop the North Carolina Republican Party’s very direct efforts to suppress the vote, to eliminate early voting days—especially on Sunday, to severely curtail the number and hours of voting places, of closing all but one early voting location in largely African-American counties, and leaving 27 fewer polling locations than in 2012.

This strategy, successful in Mecklenburg County, which includes Charlotte and has more than 15 percent of the State’s Black voters. The State reduced early voting sites from 22 to 4. In three North Carolina counties with large African-American populations, the Republican Party put out a piece of mail and challenged thousands of voter registrations and tried to get them stripped from the rolls until the Federal court ordered them to stop.

Long lines were the result at polling places that “put early voting totally out of reach for people without the time or resources to travel long distances to vote.”

It is a crime against the Constitution, it is a crime against the citizens, and it significantly reduced turnout. It was successful.

In 2008, 70 percent of African-American voters in North Carolina voted early. The rough estimates are that about 10 percent fewer ballots were cast in North Carolina in 2016, and at least a substantial share of that change has to be attributed to these voter suppression efforts that produced those long lines and made it so hard for individuals to vote.

We saw glaring examples of voter suppression in Wisconsin, which has one of the strictest voter photo ID laws in the country. It is a law that by lower courts was ruled to serve no legitimate purpose, to make it unnecessarily harder to vote, and designed to disenfranchise African Americans, Latino students, the elderly people with disabilities, and low-income residents. It is a pure, partisan crime against the Constitution, a partisan crime against the citizens of Wisconsin.

As a result of this law, Wisconsin saw its lowest voter turnout in two decades for an election decided by fewer than 30,000 votes in the Presidential election.

Neil Albrecht, executive director of the Milwaukee Election Commission,

said: “Some of the greatest declines were in districts we projected would have the most trouble with voter ID requirements.”

That is not all. There were online voter suppression strategies. In the final days before the election, there were a series of ads put out that were claiming to be from Secretary Clinton’s campaign and basically said to folks “vote from home” by text message or online.

Well, of course, the law doesn’t allow people to vote by text message. It doesn’t allow people to vote online, although there may be a few exceptions around the country, the vast majority of places you cannot vote online.

We have come a long way technologically in this country, but by and large you still have to show up in person. You still have to vote your ballot. In Oregon, you have to fill out your ballot, drop it off or mail it in. In other places around the country, you have to show up in that voting booth, whether it be early voting or day-of voting.

An effort to mislead people is akin to the other voting suppression tactics where we have seen people put out messages that tell people the voting location has changed. People put out messages that the voting hours have changed. This—a new clever strategy—is saying: Don’t bother to go to the voting place, you can vote by text or you can vote online, encouraging people not to go to the polls.

When somebody does something like that, it should be a crime that puts them in jail for years, misleading voters about where to vote, the times to vote, or how you can legally vote. It should be a crime that puts people in jail for years. Why is that? Because it is an attack on the foundation of our democratic Republic, the right to vote.

It is this voter suppression strategy, a tactic which is completely at odds with the vision of a nation in which citizens are in charge—not powerful special interests, not powerful special interests like the Koch brothers who promised, in January of 2015, to put nearly a billion dollars into the 2016 election. The Koch brothers take credit for essentially controlling this Chamber. Indeed, their money played a key role in race after race after race. We saw it in 2014. We saw it this year in 2016.

What kind of Nation do we want? A nation where oil-and-coal billionaires control this Chamber, the Senate, or a nation in which the citizens control this Chamber, a nation in which we honor Jefferson’s mother principle or a nation in which we have handed over the keys to a few powerful special interests and billionaires.

Do we want a nation of, by, and for the people or a nation of, by, and for the powerful and the privileged? That is what is at stake here. A senior member of the Trump campaign publicly said: “We have three major voter suppression operations under way.”

One of those was Operation Project Alamo, the campaign’s custom online

database that contained detailed identity profiles on 220-million Americans. The point is, they used this information on more than 200 million Americans to target Secretary Clinton supporters with negative and misleading Facebook ads, the goal being voter suppression, as clearly stated by a senior member of the Trump campaign.

Well, let's go back to the principle laid out by President Ronald Reagan, and again I quote him: "For this Nation to be true to its principles, we cannot allow any American's vote to be denied, diluted or defiled."

So I call on my colleagues who have been the proponents of voter suppression, who have been the proponents of attacking the Constitution, who have been the proponents of government of, by, and for the most powerful and the most privileged rather than the people, to listen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I didn't hear how long.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Two minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. No objection here.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. I thank the Chair.

Those words should continue to reverberate in this Chamber. Colleagues, set your sights on the vision of ending your denying, diluting, and defiling of the most fundamental right close to the hearts of Americans and the foundation of a government of, by, and for the people. Only then will we have a government that responds to the real issues Americans face rather than the special goals of the most powerful and the most privileged.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday I spoke about the 21st Century Cures bill the House passed by a very large margin last night, and I am looking forward to taking up that legislation here in the Senate. I am particularly grateful that it includes some mental health reform legislation that I introduced here in the Senate. This represents the very first mental health reform in more than a decade, and it is high time we got it done. There are a lot of people who contributed to this effort, and I think it is something we can all be proud of.

With the mental health portion of the bill, we have two chief goals in mind—first, to help those who are mentally ill get the treatment they need, and secondly, to help law enforcement and first responders know how to respond to a potential mental health cri-

sis in order to keep the person they are responding to safe, as well as the first responders themselves.

It opens up existing funds so that they can be used for more outpatient treatment options. That way, local and State governments can help identify mentally ill offenders, assess their mental health needs, and get them in the right treatment to improve their condition, rather than sending them to jail, where they will be warehoused and their condition will likely just get worse and worse.

This legislation will also provide flexibility to State and local authorities so they can use what works in their communities to help mentally ill individuals in the criminal justice system get healthy. This could include things such as assisted outpatient treatments, where families can help their loved ones, with a backstop of court supervision so they will remain compliant with their doctors' orders and take their medication, which will allow them to lead productive lives.

This legislation will make available Federal grants so that our law enforcement officials have the resources to get the kind of training they need. When law enforcement officials are called to the scene of an incident with somebody suffering from a mental health crisis, it is very important that they know how to deescalate that crisis, both for the well-being of the individual suffering that crisis as well as the law enforcement officials responding.

It will allow the creation of more crisis-intervention teams comprised of law enforcement and first responders and even school officials, where appropriate, so they can rapidly respond to and counter a threat of violence in the community.

Yesterday I received messages from some of the people who have worked with us on this legislation and know all too well how mental illness can affect our families. One individual wrote:

After losing both [a] son and a husband to suicide, and having an adult son with bipolar disorder, I know only too well the frustrations of the mental health system. Thank you, Senator, for your determination and hard work to bring change to this broken system.

This is why these mental health reforms are so important. People need help and the mental health system needs reform, and that is why we need to pass the 21st Century Cures bill—for all the good it will do in addition to these important reforms in dealing with mental health challenges around the country. So I look forward to finishing the job next week and sending it to the President's desk.

MILITARY READINESS

Mr. CORNYN. Separately, Madam President, I come to the floor today to highlight a pressing national security concern that just doesn't get enough attention. Members often come to the floor to talk about specific military

threats that other nations pose to the United States, and that is good and right. For example, we have heard a lot about Iran this week as the Senate considers the Iran Sanctions Extension Act—a bill that will help ensure that President-Elect Trump and future Presidents will have the authority they need to reimpose sanctions on Iran, even in spite of President Obama's flawed nuclear deal which provided relief from these same types of sanctions and others without getting a whole lot of meaningful concessions from Tehran in return. This bill passed the House a few weeks ago with more than 400 votes, and I am glad there has been significant bipartisan support to move it forward here.

But today I want to talk about a problem that is partly of our own making, and that is threats to our long-term military readiness. It is no secret that our military leaders continually call on Congress to adequately fund the weapons programs that enable our troops to defend our Nation.

The major concern I have and one that is shared by leadership at the Pentagon is that our military's technological edge on the battlefield is being whittled away by other countries, such as China and Russia, that are working at breakneck speed, investing millions of dollars to erase our advantage in many areas of military capability. That means we have to wake up to the risks that are inherent in this situation and do more to invest in the next generation of weapons to meet the challenges on the battlefields of tomorrow. The nations that are most belligerent and hostile to America and our interests are not cutting back on their investment in military technology, so we simply do not have the luxury of being complacent.

Recently, I had a chance to meet with Under Secretary of Defense Frank Kendall, the Defense Department's top acquisitions person or top weapons buyer. He is charged with equipping our men and women in uniform, and he has been thinking long and hard about the need to get the next generation of our military the very best capabilities possible. As he has said publicly in speeches and in congressional testimony, he is concerned that our enemies are rapidly expanding and building out their technological innovations for military applications.

But it is important to understand that these countries aren't just building up their own militaries to simply defend themselves; countries such as China and Russia are doing all they can to invest in specific technologies to defeat our forces and to be used for purposes of aggressive activity, whether it is in the South China Sea or in Europe, where Russia continues to threaten the NATO alliance. Countries such as China and Russia are preparing not for next week but for the coming decades to effectively counter and defeat the U.S. militarily. That is a big concern of Secretary Kendall, and it