

CONGRATULATING THE STATE OF NEBRASKA ON THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADMISSION OF THAT STATE INTO THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise to recognize a pivotal moment in our Nation's history. On this day, 150 years ago, the Territory of Nebraska became the 37th State to enter the Union.

Let me tell you the story of Nebraska. In a deep and powerful way, it is the story of America. America grew up in Nebraska. We were the first State admitted after the Civil War, but our admission was first vetoed by President Andrew Johnson. It was the only time in American history that this had happened. The reason? President Johnson disagreed with a fundamental condition of Nebraska's statehood—that Black men be allowed to vote.

Fortunately, Congress overrode this veto, and on March 1, 1867, Nebraska became a State. I said before that Nebraska's statehood was a pivotal moment for our country. Nebraska gave America a chance to be better.

By bringing Nebraska into the Union, our country turned away from slavery forever. We turned toward the truth about humankind—that everyone is precious in Heaven's eyes. By making Nebraska a State, America reached for a future more closely aligned with that truth.

Since that new birth of freedom, our Nation has taken many more steps—some bold strides, some stumbles—but always we seek to be more fully the country we were made to be. At a crucial moment, Nebraska strengthened our commitment to do that. Nebraska renewed America's identity.

As a State, Nebraska had not only hard but also humble beginnings. They called it the Great American Desert. In the early 1800s, the famous military officer and explorer Zebulon Pike shrugged us off, saying simply: "Not a stick of timber." A few years later, geologist Edwin James and MAJ Steven Long gave us this review: "The land was uninhabitable by a people depending on agriculture."

Today, wagon ruts can still be seen on Windlass Hill on the Oregon-California Trail, where settlers passed through. They were looking for greener pastures.

Well, last year Nebraska ranked No. 1 in the Nation in beef exports. The State ranked No. 1 in both the number of mother cows and cattle on feed. We are the beef State. We are Corn Huskers. With both corn and cattle, we produce high quality protein products that are sought by consumers all around this globe. We are No. 1 in the Nation in great northern bean production, popcorn production, and irrigated acres of cropland. Nebraska agriculture is diverse and it is expansive.

We also have more miles of river than any other State. As we sit over the great High Plains in the Ogallala Aquifer, water flows to seven other States from Nebraska. Our abundant

supply of groundwater makes us leaders in producing soybeans, wheat, pork, and grain sorghum.

But I am getting ahead of myself.

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act. It made Americans really a simple offer: Strike out west, cultivate 160 acres of surveyed government land for 5 years, and at the end of that time, the land would be theirs. Families crossed the plains in covered wagons to take Mr. Lincoln up on that offer, and this time they stayed. In fact, the law's very first claimant was a doctor and a Civil War veteran named, fittingly enough, Daniel Freeman. So powerful was his dream that Dr. Freeman filed his paperwork just a few minutes after midnight on New Year's Day, 1863, the day that law went into effect. His homestead lies just outside of Beatrice, NE, where today we find the Homestead National Monument of America. In this vast and ruthless land, the homesteaders made the American dream real. They tilled the earth, first to feed themselves and then to feed the world.

Nebraskans made the Great American Desert into one of the greatest agricultural exporting regions in world history. They did this in part by scientific discovery. Developments in agricultural technology, including the center pivot, pioneered in Nebraska, have allowed Nebraska ag producers to feed the world. Nebraska continues to lead the Nation in center pivot irrigation technology, and today we are home to the four largest irrigation companies in the United States.

Other technological breakthroughs came in transportation, especially rail. These developments helped us to connect our communities and our country. The route of the First Transcontinental Railroad runs through my State. Today, Bailey Yard in North Platte is the world's largest railroad classification yard. In addition, Nebraska now connects her families by 97,000 miles of public roads. Well, that is a far cry from those wagon ruts. These improvements allow us to continue that noble work which we gladly accept of feeding the world.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on something. Nebraska not only helped America find its moral compass again, but our State also shows what wonders a free and virtuous people may work, and it reveals the relationship between the two. When you seek the right thing first and you work at it hard, amazing things follow. This is true not only in our rural areas but also in our cities.

Omaha began as the "Gateway to the West." Pioneers and immigrants made it a mighty city in its own right. From the former stockyards to the strong family businesses and Fortune 500 companies that you will find there today, the fingerprints of hardworking, dedicated people cover every inch of concrete.

Omaha leads in banking, insurance, telecommunications, transportation,

and in medicine. Last year, the University of Nebraska Medical Center was ranked fifth in America among the best medical schools for primary care. I think Dr. Daniel Freeman, America's first homesteader, would be proud of that, but I doubt if he would be surprised. This is what happens when we work hard and let ourselves be guided by goodness.

It happened in Lincoln, our State capital, which was renamed after President Lincoln was assassinated. It happens in our Nebraska Panhandle towns and in our cities along the broad and braided Platte River, all along our I-80 corridor, and in so many rural small towns across our State. Nebraskans are a people who are engaged in manufacturing, technology, ag business, education, and the arts. We are strong people, and we build strong communities.

I have to say another word about doing the right thing. In 1879, Nebraska was the site of the first time that American Indians had their day in court, when Standing Bear made his famous statement: "I am a Man." The U.S. district court eventually ruled what we all know to be absolute truth—that a person is a person. Here again, Nebraska gave America the opportunity to be better. There are many other moments.

Nebraska was the first State in which women were the two major party candidates for Governor, when Kay Orr, a Republican, defeated Helen Bosalis, a Democrat, in 1986.

I am on the Senate floor honoring the State I love on its 150th anniversary. I encourage you to come and see what the good life is about. See our cities—their industry, their creativity, their culture—where our innovators work new wonders, so much so that we are now called Silicon Prairie. Feel the thrill of Memorial Stadium, which becomes our third largest city on a game day. Shout "Go Big Red" and cheer on the Huskers. Delight in our opera and ballet. Breathe in our small towns. Stop in at a family-run bakery. Have lunch at a local cafe. Enjoy some of the national food sensations that began in Nebraska: Kool-Aid, our Reuben sandwich, and, of course, runzas.

Enjoy local favorites, like kolache, kuchen, fried tacos, and pork chili. Enjoy a Nebraska rodeo. Ride out to our rural areas, where, as Poet Laureate Ted Kooser says, the "pickup kicks its fenders off and settles back to read the clouds." Be awed by the vastness of Nebraska, which gives us perspective on things great and small. Learn from Chimney Rock, our western buttes, and the Pine Ridge, how to stand tall no matter the weather or the season of life. Be soothed by the Sandhills—the largest grass-covered sand dunes in the world and God's own cattle country. Find peace in the song of the Sandhills cranes. Take in the Central Flyway, where millions of migratory birds fly, including our State bird—the western meadowlark. See our gently rolling eastern hills. Canoe our

rivers, fish our trout streams, and relax on our lakes. Follow the trails that tell the story of our history and the roads that lead to a bright future. See Nebraska at night, under a sky filled with stars. Know why people travel from all across the world simply to stargaze.

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Willa Cather, who grew up in Nebraska, wrote of the West: "Elsewhere, the sky is the roof of the world; but here the Earth was the floor of the sky."

We are a people of the Great Plains, the prairie, the Sandhills. We remember our enduring sources of strength—faith in God, reliance on family, and a habit of hard work. These things give us a sure footing.

For America for 150 years, Nebraska has been a place to look up and begin again, a land of vast possibility, of opportunity, a place to dream and to realize dreams—a model for America and the envy of the world.

Congratulations to the people of the great State of Nebraska as we celebrate our rich history, the exciting present that we are building, and the brighter future we will have in our next 150 years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, if I could just begin with a hearty "amen" to the great words of my senior Senator, it felt like old home week there for a moment, with the quote about the Nebraska sky. My kids—I have one of them with me almost every week in DC. We commute, and I bring somebody with me. Another two of them are almost surely going to be exploring along the Platte River later this afternoon, as happens almost every day. As for the comments about the 1986 campaign between Kay Orr and Helen Boosalis, it was the first time in America that two women had run for Governor of any State. I worked for Kay, the Republican Governor; it was the first campaign I had ever worked on as a 14-year-old. And then, most fundamentally, were her great words about the Homestead Act and the settling of America. I am a fifth generation Nebraskan and descended from homesteaders in the exact counties that the Senator was talking about engaged in Jefferson County.

Our State on its 150th anniversary, looks back on a history built by grit from homesteaders, as Senator FISCHER mentioned, to a football team at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln. Today, we celebrate all of those things that make Nebraska special: hard work, resolve, and love and care for our neighbors.

Millions of men and women settled Nebraska when our State was still known as the Great American Desert. The Homestead Act made land ownership accessible to anyone—to widows, to former slaves, to immigrants. People of totally different backgrounds could legally own 160 acres of American land, and as long as they worked and

lived on that land for 5 years, they would get the deed. Your care of the land is what mattered, not your background, not your status, not your family name, but your willingness to work and to contribute and to feed the world as our State still does today.

Today, Nebraska is the breadbasket of the world, exporting more than \$6 billion a year of agricultural products. We have cared about the land for this last century and a half, but we care even more about our neighbors. Two towns tell that story well.

During World War II, North Platte launched a hospitality initiative that reached 6 million American troops as they would head for Pacific and European theaters in World War II. Folks in the town saw trains stop in North Platte every day and decided that they would cheer those servicemen who were on their way to the war to fight for our freedom.

On Christmas Day in 1941, a young woman named Rae Wilson, a 26-year-old saleswoman, founded the North Platte Canteen. For 4 years, volunteers would meet each train—full of troops and passing through North Platte—with candy, with fruit, with smiles, with hugs, and with encouragement, thanking those men for how they were going to fight to defend the freedoms that made places like Nebraska and the rest of this Nation great. Some soldiers would go on to become POWs, including the first train of men that went through North Platte on Christmas Day in 1941. They had been sent off by these women of North Platte with food and with encouragement for their fight. Some never returned home. Who knows how much the kindness of those women meant to people from all of the States as they passed through Nebraska on the way to their deployments.

In recent years, that same generosity has shown up in Pilger, NE. In June of 2014, twin tornadoes ripped through this small Nebraska town, killing two and leveling the entire town—destroying 78 buildings. Only in the two corners of the town were structures left standing. Some people might not consider a town of 352 people a top priority, but those folks are not from Nebraska. From all across our State, thousands of volunteers just began driving to this town where tornadoes had destroyed people's livelihoods and their homes, bringing meals and sorting through rubble with people who had been strangers until the volunteers arrived and became family.

Young and old, Nebraskans from all across our State pitched in 2½ summers ago. One retired teacher would drive 180 miles every day round trip to serve in this community, helping people dig out of the rubble. One little girl sent \$70 in from her lemonade stand. Pilger became the town known as the town too tough to die.

When we are not coming together to help our neighbors, we are usually coming together to celebrate Husker

football. Our team represents something much bigger than just a typical collegiate sports team. It is about toughness, and it is about community. The Bugeaters, as the Nebraska Cornhuskers were first known in the 1890s, started with a volunteer coach and now boast many Heisman Trophy winners, five national titles, and a sell-out streak that dates to October of 1962.

For those of you who think there are football teams in your States—and I say this with all due respect to the Presiding Officer, who comes from a State that has passable football—and for those of you who think you are from States where football is taken seriously, there has not been a seat available to a game in Nebraska since October of 1962. Nebraska has had, by far, the biggest winning streak—the winningest team—over the course of the last half century in American college football.

Nebraskans know and love this team, not just because of the prowess on the field but because Nebraska football is the undisputed champion of Academic All-Americans in the country, having a 43-award lead over the second closest team in the history of Academic All-American Awards and American life.

That is Penn State, not North Carolina, that is in second place, I say to the Presiding Officer.

We live, we breathe, and we love our football team. After each Husker win, church attendance goes up, and crime goes down. Literally, for generations, half of the boys in Nebraska grew up wanting to play quarterback for Tom Osborne in the option offense. Why only half, you ask? It is because the other half wanted to play Blackshirts defensive football to smack the snout out of whoever was going to line up against the Huskers on a given Saturday.

Success on the field is great, but the real reason Nebraskans are so proud of this team is that the Cornhuskers embody the hard work, resolve, teamwork, passion, and sportsmanship of the Nebraska people. While these are the trademarks and hallmarks of our football, they are really the hallmarks of our community associations—of Nebraska's pioneers, of our farmers, our ranchers, our teachers, our small business men and women, our churches, and our Rotary clubs.

Do you know what? We could not be any more proud of that heritage. On this 150th anniversary, I join my senior Senator in saying, please, come visit, and "Go Big Red."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in legislative session.

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

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 74, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 74) congratulating the State of Nebraska on the 150th anniversary of the admission of that State into the United States.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 74) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS AND RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last night, I joined most of the Members of Congress to hear President Trump give his first address to a joint session. His speech lasted about 60 minutes, and I listened carefully, as did everyone in the Chamber, to the President's first remarks from that historic setting as he addressed a joint session of Congress.

There were some omissions, which I found very interesting. Not once—not one time—in the course of an hour did President Trump ever say the word "Russia"—not one time—even though we have been told by 17 of our intelligence agencies that Russia made an overt effort to influence the outcome of the last Presidential campaign. That has never happened before in American history. A foreign country attacked the sovereignty of the United States in the election process for the highest office in the land. I think that is noteworthy. It is certainly historic. It would certainly be worth at least a mention when a President speaks to a joint session of Congress just a few months after that election. Instead, there was radio silence, mute button, crickets—nothing about Russia.

What do we have in terms of congressional response to the possibility that Vladimir Putin was trying to pick our next President? We have the suggestion by the Republican leaders in the Senate and the House that this matter should be taken up by the Intelligence Committees.

It sounds reasonable on its face. Having served on Intelligence Committees, I can tell you it is an awesome responsibility and assignment. I can also tell you we have some extraordinarily gift-

ed, talented, patriotic members of those committees from both political parties in the Senate and in the House, but there is a fundamental flaw to this approach. If you went searching on Capitol Hill to find the room in which the Senate Intelligence Committee meets, you would come up empty. There is no sign on the door. It is basically kept clandestine, confidential, and secret. For 4 years, I entered that door, sat down in closed hearings, with no one from the public able to hear or even appreciate what we were doing. It is a lonely assignment—unlike any other committee on Capitol Hill.

I wonder: Is that what we want to do to explore the involvement of Vladimir Putin in our Presidential campaign—to go behind closed doors in secret and meet clandestinely? I think not.

There is an aspect of this that will require some intelligence gathering, some discussion of intelligence—and certainly that would be secret—but there is much more of it that is public in nature that will never be disclosed if we rely on the Senate Intelligence Committee. It is an invisible process, and that invisible process does not serve the needs of a democracy that wants the truth—the straight talk, the answers.

Secondly, the work of an Intelligence Committee ends up in a report that is classified, which means the public doesn't get to see it. We have seen some renditions of it—heavily redacted pages, where one or two words might escape being crossed out.

How do you move from a classified document on Putin's involvement in our Presidential campaign to a public document the people can understand? It takes declassification. Who makes the decision on whether we declassify the information from the Intelligence Committee investigation? The White House.

So, with the possibility—and I underline that word—with the possibility that some people in the President's campaign may or may not have been involved in this, the President has the last word as to the American people ever hearing the results of an Intelligence Committee report.

Many of us believe this is serious, and many of us believe there should be an independent, transparent commission, just like the 9/11 Commission. Let's call on people we respect, such as GEN Colin L. Powell, Sandra Day O'Connor, a former Supreme Court Justice, and many others just like them, who could get to the bottom of this and answer the basic questions: What were the Russians up to? We hear they had 1,000 trolls sitting in offices in Moscow dreaming up ways to hack into the computers and Internet of the United States and to disclose information to try to influence the outcome of the election. It is not a new tactic from Russia. They have done it over and over again.

The last couple of weeks I visited Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine. They know

these tactics oh so well. Under Soviet times and since, Russia has tried to invade their space when it comes to election decisions—overtly, covertly, through propaganda, through cyber attacks. They have done it in many countries around the world. Sadly, they are good at it. Now they have decided they can do it in the United States. They can decide who our President will be or at least try to. Are we going to take this sitting down?

November 8, 2016, election day, was a day that will live in cyber infamy in the United States. The Russians invaded the U.S. election process. The President of the United States spoke to the American people last night and never mentioned one word—not a single word—about this.

How many Republican Senators and Congressmen have come to the floor? I don't know about in the House, but I can tell my colleagues I know about the Senate. None. Not one has come to the floor to even address this issue.

So when President Trump ignored it last night, refused to even mention it, I wasn't surprised, but it is not going away. It is a fact.

We currently have an investigation underway in our intelligence agencies. I just met with former Senator Dan Coats of Indiana. He has been designated by the President to be the DNI—the Director of National Intelligence. He made a statement publicly yesterday before a hearing in Congress that he is going to cooperate with the committees and with Congress in disclosing information they have accumulated in our intelligence agencies as to this Russian involvement in our election.

We also know the Federal Bureau of Investigation is involved in this same exercise to find out exactly what happened and to disclose as much as possible and take action—prosecutorial action—if necessary.

There is a problem, though. The Federal Bureau of Investigation works for the Attorney General. The Department of Justice has the power to impede or stop any FBI investigation. Our former colleague Jeff Sessions was deeply and personally involved in the Trump Presidential campaign. He should recuse himself. He has an obvious conflict of interest on this issue. For the integrity of the office and for his own personal integrity, he should step aside and appoint a special prosecutor who can follow up, if necessary, with this FBI investigation.

This is a serious matter that was not addressed at all last night by the President of the United States speaking to a joint session of Congress.

The Associated Press went through some of the claims that were made by the President last night, and I want to give them credit for their homework on this. It is important for the RECORD that some of the things the President said be explained.

The President said:

According to the National Academy of Sciences, our current immigration system