

WELL WISHES TO SENATOR TILLIS

I am also grateful to be standing at a desk that is next to the desk of our colleague THOM TILLIS, the Senator from North Carolina. I am glad he is “up and at ‘em” today after a little bit of a startle this morning.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. President, I rise to talk about the sea of blue that is in Washington, DC, this week. Monday was National Police Day. This week, we celebrate National Police Week. Law enforcement personnel—men and women from around the country—are in Washington to share their incredible commitment, their stories of sacrifice, courage, and the work they have done to protect our communities. Indeed, they are the frontlines of protection for our communities.

These incredible men and women in Colorado and across the country put their lives on the line each and every day to keep us safe.

They put their lives on the line each and every day to keep us safe. While they don't do this work—this sacrifice, this commitment—selfishly or for credit or recognition, I think all of us in the Senate this week join together when we say that we are happy to see so many of them in the Nation's Capital for this National Police Week.

I will never forget one time when we were out in Colorado and we were at a September 11 commemoration service. Our son Thatcher—he is 5 years old now; at the time, he was probably about 4 years old. It was just last year that we walked by a group of police officers who were there working that day. We were talking about the loss of so many first responders and law enforcement personnel and that September 11 day in 2001, so many years ago now, it seems. But I remember telling our son Thatcher—I said: Thatcher, what do we say to police officers? I was thinking his response would be, thank you. I said: You should go tell them that. You should go tell that to the police officer.

He walked up to the police officer and he got a little nervous—4 years old. I said: What do you say, Thatcher? Again, I was thinking he would say: Thank you. Instead, he looked up at the police officer and he said: You are a hero.

It kind of choked me up a little bit. I didn't say that to him; that was something that this 4 year old knew instinctively—knew from the work they had done around communities, the conversations he has been a part of. At 4 years old, he knew the work they do to protect us.

They are heroes. They show the highest amount of courage one can imagine. They run toward danger without hesitation to keep us safe and to protect our communities.

We ask an incredible amount of our law enforcement time and again. They are answering the call, whether that is a call wondering why someone hasn't moved a car for several days, a call to

do a wellness check or maybe to ask why they haven't heard from an elderly relative or maybe a call because they saw a broken window and they are concerned about what is happening inside.

We call on them each and every day to protect our communities. While we honor and celebrate the men and women protecting us this week, we must also remember our fallen heroes. Their courage is unparalleled. They went to work each and every day facing risks that most of us find unimaginable, never expecting their end of watch to occur on that day.

In Colorado and across the country last year, tragedy struck far too many times. Last year, Colorado lost three men in the line of duty, three men who will never be forgotten by the people of Colorado or their families, their communities.

Earlier this week, I met with the family of one of these fallen heroes, Corporal Nate Carrigan. Nate Carrigan, a sheriff's deputy for Park County, was a role model in the community and someone who took great pride in protecting the people and the area he loved. The pride and love Nate's family have for the work their son did to keep his community safe is unexplainable.

We also lost a sheriff's deputy, Derek Geer, this past year in Colorado, and we lost Cody Donahue in Colorado in 2016. All of them were memorialized this week. We celebrated their lives this week, and I hope their families know and recognize that we will always hold them and their loved ones in our prayers. They will always be a part of our community's fabric, knowing each and every day we rely on them to provide our own families with protection.

Mr. President, thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to Rachel Brand's nomination to the No. 3 spot in the Justice Department. Now, there are many reasons I am opposed to this nomination, but those reasons are all grounded in a central question facing America today: Whom does this government work for? Does it work just for the rich and powerful? Does it work just for the well connected? Does it work just for the billionaire in the White House or does it work for everyone?

One of the worst kept secrets in America is that there are two justice systems; one for the rich and powerful and one for everyone else. The first justice system is an exclusive club for giant corporations and wealthy individuals. In that justice system, serious crimes are punished with a slap on the wrist and a small fine. Taxpayers bail out corporations that stole the life savings, and wealthy criminals go back to their lives without missing a beat.

The second justice system is for those who can't buy their way out of prison time. In that system, minor, nonviolent offenses are punished with

harsh prison sentences. When those individuals are eventually released, they are branded with the scarlet letter that closes doors to employment and opportunity. It is a system that swallows up people whole and spits them out with nothing.

Americans are very familiar with the difference between those two justice systems. We saw the difference after the worst financial crisis in a generation, when Wall Street tycoons who gambled away the life savings of working Americans walked away free as a bird. We saw it in the War on Drugs when countless Black and Brown people were shoveled into prisons, where they wasted their lives away.

We need to fix this problem. We should be devoting every resource we have to fixing this problem. That starts with the Justice Department, the agency responsible for ensuring that nobody is above the law, and everyone—everyone is held accountable.

Unfortunately, it has been pretty clear to me for some time now that President Trump's Justice Department is pushing as hard as possible in the opposite direction. For much of President Obama's second term, prosecutors were allowed some discretion to consider the unique circumstances of each case and make a measured decision about when to ask for the most serious charge with the maximum penalty or when to ask for less.

It worked. Jail time for low-level drug offenses went down. States saved money, and lives were not irretrievably broken. Last week, that modest advance came to an end. Attorney General Sessions directed prosecutors to charge individuals with the harshest sentences possible. “Lock them up” seems to be his approach—but not in all cases. Jeff Sessions sings a very different tune when it comes to white-collar crime. He believes corporations should not be punished for the actions of their executives. Don't punish the companies for a few bad CEO apples.

In Jeff Session's world, we should throw the book at criminals, unless they are rich and powerful. Now, President Trump has chosen to somewhat help Jeff Sessions carry out his vision. His choice to be the third highest ranking official at the Justice Department is Rachel Brand, the nominee for Associate Attorney General.

She is well equipped to carry out that soft-on-white-collar-crime approach. She has extensive experience—years of experience—fighting on behalf of the biggest and richest companies in the world. She spent years leading the Chamber of Commerce's assault on the rules that protect working families, evidently deciding time after time that it is corporations that should get every break.

As the head of regulatory litigation of the chamber of commerce, Ms. Brand worked to dismantle environmental rules that prevent companies from poisoning our air and water. She worked to shield financial companies

from accountability when they broke the law or did not play by the rules. She worked to end the employment rules that prevent companies from abusing their workers.

If she is confirmed to the No. 3 spot at the Justice Department, she can watch out for giant corporations from her perch right inside the government. The Brand nomination is just another predictable move from a President who clearly believes that one set of rules should apply to the rich and powerful, and another set of rules should apply to everyone else.

We all remember Donald Trump's promise during the campaign that he was going to drain the swamp. Well, it is 118 days in, and the swamp is bigger, deeper, uglier, and filled with more corrupt creatures than ever. Over the last several days, President Trump has made it perfectly clear that he believes he should be above the law.

After he fired FBI Director James Comey, Trump went on national television and told the world that he fired Comey, in part, because Comey was leading an investigation into ties between the Trump campaign, the Trump administration, and Russia. Trump said top of mind when he fired Comey was "this Russia thing with Trump."

Now we have learned that he apparently pressured Comey in private meetings to drop aspects of the Russia investigation before he fired him. It is a basic presumption of our democracy that politicians cannot interfere with the law enforcement investigations into their own potential wrongdoing, but President Trump openly admitted trying to interfere with an ongoing investigation, and he clearly believes there should be no consequences for himself.

I understand that President Trump thinks he should be able to decide what investigations into his dealings go forward and what investigations get stopped on the spot. I understand that President Trump thinks he should be able to pack his Justice Department full of people who will watch out for billionaire CEOs and giant corporations. After all, he has packed other agencies with similar people.

I understand that is what President Trump thinks, but he is wrong. One of the things that makes our democracy strong is that we believe no one is above the law, not CEOs, not giant corporations, and not the President of the United States. It is up to the Senate to remind the President of that fact. We can start by rejecting the nomination of Rachel Brand to serve as Associate Attorney General. I ask everyone who believes in the promise of equal justice under the law to do the same.

(The remarks of Ms. WARREN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1162 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. WARREN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

VENEZUELA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak about an emerging crisis in our hemisphere in the nation of Venezuela. It has been covered extensively in the press. I wanted to come today with an update and a suggestion, a request of the administration about a step we can take.

First of all, I am very pleased that today our Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, scheduled a discussion at the U.N. Security Council with regard to Venezuela. It was not an open press discussion. Again, it showed extraordinary leadership, and I thank her for her work and for doing so. This deserves attention.

By the way, Venezuela is a country that is blessed with natural resources. It was once Latin America's richest country, but today the people of Venezuela are literally starving, its financial system has collapsed, and there are, as you have seen from the press reports, massive protests in the streets. Its once proud democracy is now in the hands of a dictator, Nicolas Maduro, and his cronies and thugs, who have plunged that nation into a constitutional crisis. They are using violence and bloodshed to suppress and silence citizens speaking out against the regime's corruption and its abuse of political prisoners.

What the people of Venezuela are calling for is pretty straightforward: free and fair elections as called for under the Constitution of that country, a return to representative democracy—the democracy they once had. They are paying for these requests with their blood and even their lives. According to the most recent reports, dozens of people have been killed, including teenagers. The Washington Post reported yesterday the recent deaths of 18-year-old Luis Alviarez, who was killed by a bullet to the chest, and 17-year-old Yeison Mora Cordero, who died from a bullet to the head.

There were two reports today in the press of great interest, one from the New York Times and one from the Washington Post. Both documented the plight of members of the national guard who have been tasked with the job of suppressing the protests in the street. The gist of the articles was this: These people who are putting on these uniforms—they didn't sign up for this. They signed up for security. They signed up to protect the people of Venezuela, not to oppress them.

They, too, are suffering from poor food. There was one article that said that basically breakfast in the morning for the national guard in Venezuela consists of a boiled carrot or a potato, and then they are sent to the streets for hours. Then they come back and maybe have an arepa, which is a corn cake, and, if they are lucky, some butter. They, too, are suffering from this.

Here is the most enlightening part of this: A lot of their family members—their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, loved ones, husbands, wives,

girlfriends, and boyfriends—are on the other side of the protest lines. Their fellow Venezuelans are on the other side, and they are being tasked to do this.

I just say to them: Remember what your oath was. To the members of the national guard in Venezuela, remember that your job is to protect the people of Venezuela, not to oppress them.

Beyond what we see there—the innocent people dying because of the dictatorship trampling the will of the people and destroying their democratic institutions—one of the specific things that Maduro has done to become a dictator is he has undercut and frankly tried to wipe out the authority of their National Assembly, which is their unicameral legislative body. The way he has done that is by highjacking the supreme court of the country, and they call it the Supreme Tribunal of Justice. It is packed with puppets who do his bidding. As an example, these puppets recently ruled that they would rescind the democratic powers vested to the elected members of the National Assembly by the constitution of that country. In essence, they ruled that the National Assembly no longer had legislative authority. The protests were so massive, even within the government, that they had to backtrack from that ruling.

Here is what is interesting. This is a recent opinion piece written by Francis Toro and Pedro Rosas in the Washington Post which said it best: "Beware Maikel Moreno, the hatchet man who runs Venezuela's supreme court."

Here is what they wrote:

Moreno, a former intelligence agent, was tried and convicted of murder in 1987, though the corroborating documents from the court system are no longer available. . . . He spent just two years in jail before being released. He was then immediately implicated in a second killing, in 1989, for which he was charged but never tried.

He was a loyalist of Hugo Chavez, and he became a judge in the early 2000s. His "career as a judge hit a snag in 2007," Toro and Rosas note, "when he was removed from the bench for 'grave and inexcusable' errors after releasing two murder suspects against orders from the Supreme Tribunal. The government handed him a new job as a diplomat abroad. After a few years out of sight, he was appointed a supreme court justice in 2014."

Then in 2017, Moreno—not once but twice a killer—was appointed the chief justice of Venezuela's supreme court. The Venezuelan supreme court is run by a murderer. Think about that. A convicted criminal is presiding over Venezuela's supreme court. So it is no wonder that the court's members have acted as a rubberstamp for Maduro's illegitimate power grab, and they have created a political and a humanitarian crisis.

Venezuelans, as I said, are struggling to get basic goods, like food and medicine, and access to basic services. The Wall Street Journal reported that Venezuelans have lost, on average, 19