

less is a conflict of interest and a mockery of democracy. We need to replace first past the post with ranked choice voting, allowing for a greater variety of candidates. This will serve as another booth in the marketplace of ideas.

To many these goals are mountains too tall to climb. But in America, we don't know how to give up. It's what makes us great. The idea that if we want change, we'll fight until we reach it. It's what got African-Americans equality under the law. It's what got women the right to vote. It's what has brought equal love to our entire nation. And it's what led to independence for the plucky colonists who took on the world because they thought it could be better. Throughout our history, all we've needed is an idea, an ideal, and each other. After all, out of many, we are one.

EMILY BALLOU, SOUTH ROYALTON HIGH SCHOOL
SENIOR (FINALIST)

It is both a privilege and an honor to live in a nation where I have the right to speak my mind without the fear of failure or retribution, where liberty of expression is celebrated, and diverging views, though challenged, are entitled to develop according to their merit.

The greatest problem we have is that the people of our country lack compassion. We lack empathy. We need to integrate our passions instead of separating them. Love should trump hate, but it seems as of late that that is reversed. We must renew our nation, and to do so, we must stop the ignorance of the public. We must end the bigoted, chauvinistic, and discriminatory ideologies and mindsets of our people.

What we have in common is more important than the differences used to divide us. Groups of like-minded people acting in a similar fashion are not a new phenomenon, but the engagement of these groups has become dedicated to excluding the expression of other views.

What makes a country great is not how rich the monetary funds of the upper class is, but how well its most vulnerable citizens are treated. This is why we must start early and teach the next generation to kindness and to love.

When someone of power misuses his or her status to bully those more vulnerable, their actions are desensitized. This disrespect incites more discord which invites both fear and hatred into the minds of all ages. The very young feel no hatred. Currently, not all adolescents are being taught the importance of tolerance and empathy in their homes, schools, or in public. These lessons must begin in their earliest years of schooling before they acquire biases from around them and their beliefs are negatively impacted.

The vernacular must include words of kindness, not derogatory terms or racially-charged slurs. No matter what an individual's values are, they should not value the discrimination and hatred associated with these words. Silence is compliance. The cycle of history will continue to repeat itself unless people begin to empathize with all. If one wishes to "Make America Great Again," hate should not be the weapon of choice. We must be more inclusive and accepting of the diversity in which this nation has prided and built itself on, for change begins with ourselves.

Love does trump hate. Although we adhere to the flaws in society, we must not. We must instill hope into those of the coming generations. There is hope that our world will see peace. There is hope that our world will be preserved. There is hope for change. We are "a nation of the people, by the people, for the people that shall not perish from the Earth," where people, no matter their

race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender, should take comfort in. We are the great United States of America, and the day we forget that, we will cease to exist, because despite current circumstances, the world is not entirely lost if everyone resists, together.

BILLY BENDER, HANOVER HIGH SCHOOL
SOPHOMORE (FINALIST)

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of the 115th Congress and Distinguished Guests,

As Americans we face many difficulties, but two are of particular concern: one is a challenge to our world, the other to our republic. We can and must do more to stop global warming, and we can and must get big money out of politics.

Climate Change is real. The scientific debate is over. We have already begun to see its effects in the United States. Large sections of the country have experienced severe droughts and wildfires, hurricanes have been more violent, and our summers are becoming dangerously hot in the south. Internationally, long-term droughts are causing malnutrition, threatening coastal cities, and creating climate refugees. This is real, it is urgent, it is a direct result of the actions of humans, and its impact will be felt disproportionately by the most vulnerable peoples on our planet. We caused it, and we can stop it. We have a responsibility toward our children, our grandchildren, and all of the future inhabitants of our planet.

Our government needs to invest heavily in large scale clean energy infrastructure projects. We need to renew and add to the existing subsidies on renewable energy to make solar or wind a viable financial option for homeowners and businesses. We need to invest heavily in clean energy research and stop subsidizing fossil fuels. When renewables like solar, wind and hydro power are cheaper than oil, then the massive oil companies will have no choice but to become energy companies instead of oil companies and build dams, wind farms and solar fields. We will no longer have to tolerate the risks of nuclear energy.

However, to achieve the goal of powering our nation with renewable energy, we need to take the influence of huge, anonymous donors out of American politics. Citizens United has allowed huge corporations to funnel millions of dollars into electing politicians who regard them favorably. The fossil fuel industry is hugely profitable, and the millionaires and billionaires who control them want to delay and diminish the impact of renewables on their bottom line. Their huge sums of money give them a massively disproportionate voice in elections, allowing them to create Super PACs which will ensure the continued existence of dangerous, damaging practices like fracking.

Climate change is a critical problem facing our nation and our world, but it will be difficult to take the bold steps necessary to mitigate its effects without first eliminating the advantage that billionaires have in our elections. It is time to take large scale legislative and judicial steps to eliminate the out sized voice of the extremely wealthy and save our planet for all who come after us.

SIMON BUPP-CHICKERING, BELLOWS FALLS
UNION HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR (FINALIST)

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."—Martin Luther King Jr.

A nation that neglects to confront and eliminate injustice is no true defender of its people's rights. Due to the death penalty's inherent inability to be more than state sponsored revenge, its exorbitant cost, and the lack of statistical evidence showing it does anything to stop murder, the death penalty is an antiquated and medieval punish-

ment that has no place in a modern democracy.

One of the most common arguments brought up by proponents of the death penalty is the idea that enforcing the death penalty acts as a deterrent for other criminals. However, this argument fails to account for the fact that the vast majority of murderers aren't executed, less than one percent. In addition, 88 percent of criminologists, experts who study crime for a living, refute the idea that the death penalty works as a deterrent. Furthermore, as the South accounts for 80 percent of all executions in the United States, if the death penalty did act as deterrence, then those states would have the lowest rates of murder. However, the South holds the country's highest murder rate, and the North, which accounts for less than 1 percent of the country's executions, has the lowest murder rate.

The death penalty as it is practiced today is simply a tool for revenge, misguidedly used in an attempt to help grieving families. The finality of the punishment destroys any hope of reflection, apology, or forgiveness, thus eliminating any chance of true healing. Additionally, revenge is an emotional response to tragedy, and the judicial system in America should be about providing just and emotionally unbiased decisions. Instead of perpetuating a cycle of violence, the United States government should promote restorative justice, which promotes rehabilitation and the improvement and bettering society rather than resort to base human emotions in response to tragedy.

In order to prevent this outdated and pointless practice of state-funded murder from damaging our justice system any further, the death penalty must be abolished nationwide, and those on death role should have their sentences commuted to life in prison without parole. In a modern, civilized society, there is no place for such a horrific punishment. Most other enlightened nations around the world have removed the death penalty from their judicial systems. Instead of remaining among the questionable company of nations such as North Korea, America must prove that it understands the egregious error in killing as punishment for killing.

Ultimately, the fact that the United States still uses the death penalty reveals a fundamental lack of ethical maturity in our nation, and is a mark of shame to Americans who want to believe that the country they live in has evolved from the barbaric practices of antiquity along with the rest of the civilized world.●

TRIBUTE TO MILTON BRONSTEIN

● Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, Mr. Milton Bronstein, a lifelong public servant, labor leader, and great friend to me, today celebrates his 100th birthday.

Milton served in many capacities during his more than three decades of service as an employee of the State of Rhode Island. In addition, he was an active workers' organizer, leading Rhode Island's AFSCME chapter, Council 94, as its first president and eventually becoming the retiree chapter's vice president until retiring just last year at age 99.

Those who have been fortunate enough to work alongside Milton during his State service or to benefit under his tenure at Council 94 describe him as a strong, dedicated leader and mentor. Current labor leaders say Milton's involvement helped strengthen

the labor movement in Rhode Island. It is his selflessness and commitment to seeing working Rhode Islanders succeed that so many of us admire.

Milton has been a tireless leader in the community. He has served on the board of directors of the Rhode Island Credit Union and the Touro Fraternal Association, the largest independent Jewish fraternal order in New England, for more than 50 years. He also was very active in the Rhode Island Democratic Party for just as long, working as president of the Association of Democratic City and Town Chairs. One of his proudest moments in politics was being a member of the 1992 Electoral College where he proudly cast his vote for President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore.

I know Milton's family means everything to him. His love for his late wife, Claire, and his devotion to his children, Harvey, Andrew, and Cindy, are obvious. He has carried on his devotion to family with his seven grandchildren and his two great-grandchildren, with one more on the way.

Milton has been a close friend, supporter, and adviser to me throughout my political career. He is someone you can go to when you need help, and he is always there. He has helped so many people over the years, but you would be hard pressed to hear of him asking anything for himself.

Milton, I am lucky to celebrate you today. You are a great Rhode Islander. Thank you for everything you have done for me and for your dedicated service to the people of our great Ocean State. As your friend and Senator, please accept my birthday wishes for a wonderful 100th year.●

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-476. A communication from the Director, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2016 Agency Financial Report; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-477. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "2,4-D; Pesticide Tolerances" (FRL No. 9958-07) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 13, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-478. A communication from the Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a violation of the Antideficiency Act; to the Committee on Appropriations.

EC-479. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting a report on the approved retirement of Vice Admiral Joseph P. Mulloy, United States Navy, and his advancement to the grade of vice admiral on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-480. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment" (RIN0790-ZA12) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 18, 2017; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-481. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-482. A communication from the Chairman and President of the Export-Import Bank, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Bank's 2016 Annual Report; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-483. A communication from the Assistant to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Total Loss-Absorbing Capacity, Long-Term Debt, and Clean Holding Company Requirements for Systematically Important U.S. Bank Holding Companies and Intermediate Holding Companies of Systematically Important Foreign Banking Organizations" (RIN7100-AE37) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-484. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, the continuation of the national emergency originally declared in Executive Order 13692 on March 8, 2015, with respect to Venezuela; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-485. A communication from the President of the United States of America, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the continuation of the national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 12947 with respect to terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-486. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, the continuation of the national emergency originally declared in executive order 13288 on March 6, 2003, with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-487. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, the continuation of the national emergency originally declared in Executive Order 13660 on March 6, 2014, with respect to Ukraine; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-488. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on the continuation of the national emergency with respect to Cuba and of the emergency authority relating to the regulation of the anchorage and movement of vessels, as amended; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-489. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the continuation of the national emergency with respect to Libya declared in Executive Order 13566; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-490. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report of the continuation of

the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared in Executive Order 12957 on March 15, 1995; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-491. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to operation of the Exchange Stabilization Fund (ESF) for fiscal year 2016; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-492. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the export to the People's Republic of China of items not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-493. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, an Executive Order that revokes sections 1 and 2 of Executive Order 13067 of November 3, 1997, and revokes Executive Order 13412 of October 13, 2006, in its entirety; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-494. A communication from the Attorney, Legal Division, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustments" (12 CFR Part 1083) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 13, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-495. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the continuation of a national emergency declared in Executive Order 13222 with respect to the lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-496. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Updated Statements of Legal Authority for the Export Administration Regulations" (RIN0694-AH22) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 18, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-497. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendments to the Export Administration Regulations Implementing an Additional Phase of India-US Export Control Cooperation" (RIN0694-AH26) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 18, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-498. A communication from the Chief of the Policy, Performance, and Management Programs Division, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Subsistence Management Regulations for Public Lands in Alaska—2016-17 and 2017-18 Subsistence Taking of Wildlife Regulations" (RIN1018-BA39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 11, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-499. A communication from the Deputy Designate Agency Ethics Official, Office of the Solicitor, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Supplemental Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Department of the Interior" (RIN1092-AA12) received during adjournment of the Senate in