

this history of 3 percent or higher for decades, we are going to surrender because our policies have smothered growth, have smothered the American dream.

Here is the good news. I think we finally have a White House that is starting to focus on this issue. Certainly, the Congress is starting to focus on this issue, and the Senate is starting to focus on this issue with policies like tax reform, with policies like regulatory streamlining, with policies like infrastructure, with policies like energy. As the Presiding Officer knows, our two great States are part of the energy renaissance that can drive economic growth well above 3 percent.

As we focus on tax reform, as this body focuses on tax reform, I am hopeful my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, can all agree that one of the key elements of what we are doing with regard to tax reform, and every other policy in this body, is to get us back to traditional levels of U.S. economic growth, to get us back to where people say: Wow. I have great opportunities. Look at this economy—not the doldrums and the anemic growth and the sub-3 percent new normal that we have been told by other Federal officials to accept as our fate.

That shouldn't be our fate. We should have policies, particularly tax reform, that are focused on getting back above that red line, and I am certainly hopeful that all my colleagues—all 100 U.S. Senators—can agree on that goal, strong economic growth for American families and reigniting the American dream with strong GDP growth that is much higher than what we have seen in the last 10 years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak despite the order for recess.

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

HURRICANE IRMA RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, it has been 2 months since Hurricane Irma hit Florida and basically covered up the State, and our people are still hurting because they don't have sufficient housing.

If you lived in a mobile home, if you lived in a low-lying area, your home was destroyed. It is uninhabitable. The ceiling is collapsing. The mold and the mildew, because of all the water which has now accumulated, makes it an uninhabitable home.

FEMA, through individual assistance, is supposed to provide temporary housing. This is the law. That is what the people of Florida are entitled to—just like the people of Texas are entitled to in the Presiding Officer's State—but it is not happening in Florida. Why? Because they get on the telephone, and they have to wait up to—documented—4 hours to get somebody on the phone from FEMA or, for home inspections, it takes 45 days before

they can get an inspector to come out and see the home so they can be declared eligible for individual assistance. That is just unacceptable.

If they don't have the means—especially if they don't have a job as a result of the jobs being destroyed in the hurricane—where are they going to be able to get temporary assistance for housing? It is a fact that this is happening in the State of Florida, and it has to be changed.

Thus, you see the bipartisan effort of my colleague from Florida MARCO RUBIO and me writing to the head of FEMA today to say: Look, what happened? Years ago, during the debacle of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, they experienced an average wait time of 10 minutes before they could get FEMA on the line to help them. Now we have people waiting as much as 4 hours. I wanted to bring this to the attention of the Senate.

After a hurricane, 2 months later, we cannot have an aftermath where our people are hurting, they are suffering. They can't live in a healthy condition in the homes that have been destroyed in the hurricane.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:59 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak as in morning business.

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

The Senator is recognized.

RECOGNIZING THE MAYO CLINIC

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my deepest gratitude to my friends at the Mayo Clinic's Arizona campus, where I was recently treated for cancer. This is not my first obligation to the Arizona branch of this landmark medical institution, which has been a synonym for medical excellence for more than 100 years. I received outstanding care for a prior, unrelated tumor in the year 2000.

In July of this year, I found myself at Mayo once again. It is no exaggeration to say that the team of doctors, nurses, and technicians who looked after me were my salvation. They located and removed a brain tumor—a glioblastoma—that threatened my life. I will always be indebted for their timely and skillful intervention and for the outstanding support provided to my family by the entire Mayo community. Their professionalism is unmatched, as is their compassion. Thanks to my

physicians, I was able to return to the Senate after only 10 days of recuperation. Following my surgery, I received radiation and chemotherapy at Mayo in one of the most modern facilities in the world.

I mention this to draw attention to Mayo's renown as a center of excellence not only in the treatment of cancer but in virtually every field of medicine. A nonprofit institution, Mayo has large hospitals in Rochester, Minnesota, Phoenix, and Jacksonville, FL, which employ almost 50,000 people. Mayo also operates a network of more than 70 affiliated hospitals and clinics, to which more than 1.3 million persons turned for treatment this year, patients from all 50 States and 137 different countries. Moreover, the Mayo system operates several premier colleges of medicine and is a world leader in medical research. This breadth of activity, outstanding in each facet, is remarkable. It is no exaggeration to claim that the Mayo Clinic is central to the astonishing success of American medicine.

I have made my own career in public service, but as I reflect on my experience as a cancer patient, I am humbled by the example of service to mankind provided by the entire Mayo family. I am and will always remain deeply grateful to everyone involved in my care.

RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

Mr. President, I come to the floor today to recognize a remarkable group of physicians, people to whom I and many others owe a profound debt. I refer to the team that has led my treatment at the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD.

Every year, cancer claims the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans and millions of others across the globe. It is a relentless and complex disease. It comes in many forms that demand varied and specialized treatments.

There are many centers of excellence in the struggle against cancer, but NCI plays a special role. The physicians assembled there are recruited from the most outstanding medical institutions of the world to lead the fight. Yes, NCI conducts its own research and treatment programs, and I am among its many patients, but more importantly, it oversees and funds our national effort against cancer, awarding grants and supporting a nationwide network of 69 NCI-designated cancer centers. NCI's role in the development of anticancer drugs has been especially noteworthy: Roughly two-thirds of cancer medications approved by the FDA have emerged from NCI-sponsored trials.

Despite the special tenacity of this disease, we have made enormous strides. To the lives of cancer patients, NCI has added decades where once there were only years and years where once there were only months. They are closing in on the enemy, in all its forms, giving hope to millions of families and offering a real prospect of

someday comprehensively eliminating this dreaded illness.

NCI is a large and expert team of scientists, doctors, nurses, technicians, and administrators, and all of them deserve our thanks. I would like to single out for special mention a few who have won my particular gratitude and that of my family, but NCI has requested that I not do so. Instead, I will say this: All too often in American culture, we associate heroism with physical manifestations of courage—the toughness of the athlete, the daring of the soldier or sailor. My friends, we would do well to remind ourselves of and to teach our children the more patient forms of bravery exemplified by our doctors and nurses and research scientists who wage the war against cancer day after day, year after year. Through their tireless effort, the physicians and researchers of NCI remind us of the heroes of the medical art, showing it to be, as Samuel Johnson called it, “the greatest benefit to mankind.” It has certainly been a great benefit to me, and I am deeply, deeply grateful.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote on the nomination of Notre Dame Law Professor Amy Barrett to serve on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. She is an eminently qualified and exceptionally bright nominee who has received praise and support across the legal profession. She clerked for Judge Silberman on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals and for Justice Scalia on the Supreme Court. She has experience in private practice and many years as a law professor teaching classes on constitutional law, Federal courts, statutory interpretation, among others. She was appointed by Chief Justice John Roberts to sit on the Advisory Committee on Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, where she served for 6 years.

Her nomination has also received wide support. For example, in a letter to the Judiciary Committee, a bipartisan group of law professors encouraged the committee to confirm her nomination, saying that Professor Barrett “enjoys wide respect for her careful work, fair-minded disposition, and personal integrity.” Her colleagues at Notre Dame described her “as a model of the fair, impartial, and sympathetic judge.”

Despite this, all the Democratic members of the Judiciary Committee voted against her nomination in committee, and I suspect most of the minority will vote against her confirmation later today. This, of course, is a shame, and it does not speak well of our institution, the U.S. Senate, and I would like to explain why.

When the Judiciary Committee voted on Professor Barrett’s nomination, I listened to the reasons my colleagues gave for voting against her. Some said that she didn’t have enough experience to be a circuit court judge. Well, the American Bar Association rated Professor Barrett as “well qualified.”

The Democrats have said that the ABA’s ratings are very important to them when considering a nominee, once even calling it the “gold standard.” Their votes certainly don’t reflect that. I suspect the ratings don’t actually matter to them since they have voted against most of the “well qualified” nominees this Congress. The minority has even requested that I not hold hearings on nominees when the committee hasn’t received the ABA ratings for that nominee, as if the ABA—an outside group—can and should dictate the committee’s schedule. But even when we have “well qualified” or “qualified” ratings from the ABA, the minority still votes against these nominees, so the actual significance of the rating to the minority doesn’t make a lot of sense.

Furthermore, lack of appellate experience hasn’t mattered before. When President Clinton nominated Justice Kagan to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, she had no appellate experience. But I remember my friend from Vermont saying that the Senate should vote on her nomination because she was an “outstanding woman.” Her lack of appellate experience didn’t appear to be of concern to my friends in the minority at the time of Kagan’s nomination coming before the committee, so I don’t understand why the standard is different now.

Another reason some of my colleagues gave when voting against her is that they say she will disregard judicial precedent. Of course, if that is true, that would be a very serious consideration, but looking at all of Professor Barrett’s writings and listening to the testimony she gave, not once did she say that circuit or district court judges could disregard precedent. In fact, during her hearing, she told the committee that she understood “circuit judges to be absolutely bound by the precedent of the Supreme Court” and that “circuit courts are bound to follow the precedent of their own circuit.” That doesn’t sound like a nominee who will not respect precedent. In fact, she understands exactly the role of precedent and the limitations and restrictions placed on lower court judges.

Another Senator argued that she has written provocative things like “A judge will often entertain an ideological bias that makes him lean one way or the other. In fact, we might safely say that every judge has such an inclination.” I am not sure why this statement is provocative. I think everyone here knows that every person has their own biases and policy preferences, whether or not they are a judge. In writing this, Professor Barrett shows the awareness to recognize that every person comes to their job with personal biases and views. This is especially important for judges to recognize about themselves. In fact, she is so self-aware that this is a potential problem for judges that she cowrote an article arguing that if a judge cannot set

aside a personal preference in a particular matter before that judge, she shouldn’t hear the case in the first place.

These comments come from an article about potential issues Catholic judges may face that Professor Barrett wrote in law school. The article was about Catholic judges but could have been written about the biases of judges of any religion or of no religion at all. My friends in the minority have looked at a few of her comments from this article and seem to have concluded that she will base her judicial decisions off of what her religion teaches.

During her hearing, one Senator even implied that Professor Barrett could not separate her religion from her judicial decision making, but Professor Barrett had said and argued quite the opposite and had done it several times. She believes that it is highly inappropriate for a judge to use his own religious beliefs in legal reasoning. In fact, she concludes the very article the Democrats are concerned with this way: “Judges cannot—nor should they try to—align our legal system with the church’s moral teachings whenever the two diverge.”

I think opposition to her nomination ultimately comes down to the fact that her personal views about abortion do not line up with the minority’s views about abortion. I knew the minority would ask her about her views on abortion, so during her nomination hearing, I took advantage of being the first to ask her if she would allow her religious views to dictate her legal decisions. She said that she would not. I also asked her if she would follow Supreme Court precedent involving abortion, and she simply and succinctly answered: “Absolutely, I would.”

At her hearing, the statement was made—now, can you believe this?—“You are controversial because many of us that have lived our lives as women really recognize the value of finally being able to control our reproductive systems.”

This statement alone is stunning to me for two reasons—first, that a nominee is controversial because she might share the views of over half the country, which is that abortion is wrong; second, that this statement amounts to a religious test. In response, Professor Barrett said over and over that she has no power to overrule *Roe* or any other abortion-related Supreme Court case nor does she have interest in challenging that specific precedent.

A further statement was made:

[R]eligion . . . has its own dogma. The law is totally different. And I think in your case, professor, when you read your speeches, the conclusion one draws is that the dogma lives loudly within you, and that’s of concern when you come to big issues that large numbers of people have fought for years in this country.

So the Democrats are saying that women who have personal beliefs that are consistent with their religions are not eligible to be Federal judges even

when they have assured the committee, as she did over and over again, that they strongly believe in following binding Supreme Court precedent. If that is the case—if the minority is enforcing a religious litmus test on our nominees—this is an unfortunate day for the Senate and for the country.

Others have spoken on the issue of a religious test, but I will remind my colleagues that the Constitution specifically provides that “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office under the United States.” It is one of the most important founding principles. I do not think an evaluation of how religious a person is or how religious she might not be should ever be a part of that evaluation.

We have received many letters on this topic, including one from Princeton University’s president, who is a former law clerk to Justice Stevens and happens to be a constitutional scholar. He writes that the questions the Democrats posed to Professor Barrett about her faith were “not consistent with the principle set forth in the Constitution’s ‘no religious test’ clause” and that the views expressed in her law review article on Catholic judges are “fully consistent with a judge’s obligation to uphold the law and the Constitution.”

Finally, this morning, my friend from Illinois justified the Democrats’ questions to Professor Barrett in committee by noting that I also asked questions in the committee about her article, but there is a difference in simply asking a nominee if her religious views will influence her judicial decision making and trying to ascertain just how religious a nominee is by asking, “Do you consider yourself an orthodox Catholic?” or by saying, “The dogma lives within you.”

My questions gave Professor Barrett a chance to explain her law review article, which was an article I knew the Democrats would question her over. The other side’s questions and comments went to figure out just how strongly she would hold to her faith, which was the inappropriate line of questioning.

I will make one more related comment. I mentioned this in the Judiciary Committee, but I think that it bears repeating on the floor because the issue will continue to come up.

Professor Barrett and a few other nominees have a relationship with or ties to the Alliance Defending Freedom group, which, as several Senators have recently pointed out, has been labeled as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. When the nominees have been asked about this, they have pointed out that the Southern Poverty Law Center’s designation is, in itself, highly controversial. I would say that it is completely unfounded. The ADF, Alliance Defending Freedom, is an advocacy organization that litigates religious liberty cases. It has won six cases in front of the Supreme Court in the past 6 years, including cases that are

related to free speech and children’s playgrounds. They are not outside the mainstream.

Any difference in viewpoint that folks may have with them boils down to, simply, policy differences, but dissent and a difference of opinion do not equal hate, and it is wrong to compare an organization like the ADF to that of the Ku Klux Klan or the Nazi Party and, by extension, imply that the nominees before us sympathize with such actual hate groups.

Finally, I would note that the Southern Poverty Law Center designates the American College of Pediatricians and the Jewish Defense League as hate groups. So some of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s designations appear to be discriminatory in and of themselves.

Professor Barrett is a very accomplished, impressive nominee, and we know that her personal story is compelling. She has seven children, several who were adopted from Haiti and one who has special needs. She is an accomplished attorney and a well-respected law professor. I will be strongly supporting her nomination today, and I urge every one of my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I wish to explain my vote today in opposition to the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to serve as a U.S. Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit. In Professor Barrett’s hearing before the Judiciary Committee, I focused my questions on Professor Barrett’s views and previous writings on the circumstances under which judges must adhere to precedent and on the doctrine of originalism. It was on the basis of her responses to those questions that I have concluded that I am unable to support her nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

PUERTO RICO AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
RECOVERY EFFORT

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the disaster supplemental that the Trump administration is expected to send to Congress as early as tomorrow. While Congress has passed two supplemental aid bills since this year’s hurricanes, I want to make it very clear that what we have already passed is not even close to what we will need to help Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands fully recover and rebuild.

Hurricane Maria destroyed their power grids and has significantly damaged their water infrastructure so as to make clean drinking water dangerously scarce. Three of Puerto Rico’s biggest industries—manufacturing, finance, and tourism, which drive their already struggling economy—remain severely damaged because the hurricane wiped out so many factories, buildings, and hotels. Many Puerto Ricans who had jobs the day before Maria struck no longer have anywhere to go to work. In other words, in Puer-

to Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, this is not just a natural disaster; it is also an economic disaster that these local governments cannot dig out of on their own. Our fellow citizens desperately need our help.

Listen to what one New Yorker told me about how dangerous things are right now, especially for the sick and elderly.

My constituent was trying to help someone in Puerto Rico who was autistic and bedridden and under the care of his 93-year-old father. He needed surgery. He was taken to at least three separate medical facilities, and he spent countless hours in an ambulance with his elderly father. He was transported from one location to the next, but the medical facilities were finding it extremely difficult to communicate with each other. After all of that, his doctor could not find any facility on the island that would accept him into its care. He was finally able to get his treatment, but how many more people are still waiting for help?

Another of my constituents is struggling to help her father, who is in a rural area of Puerto Rico. She has only been able to speak to him briefly and exchange limited text messages. Her father suffers from heart issues and glaucoma, and he may need a prescription refill very soon if not right now. There are countless more stories just like these throughout my State and, no doubt, in many of my colleagues’ States as well.

The \$36 billion that is for all of Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands is just not enough. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, it cost the Federal Government \$120 billion to rebuild the Gulf Coast. That is the amount of funding that we need to be thinking about for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands right now.

It will take at least \$5 billion just to rebuild Puerto Rico’s power grid, and that will not even cover improvements to make the system more resilient and more efficient than it was before the storm. Right now, two-thirds of Puerto Rico still does not have power. That means no refrigeration so that people can have food to eat or can keep medicine from spoiling. It means no electricity for oxygen tanks in nursing homes and no lights at night to keep people safe. It will take additional funding to restore roads so that whatever supplies do make it to Puerto Rico can actually be delivered, and people can get to their loved ones in need.

The Small Business Administration will need billions of dollars to help people rebuild their businesses, which are vital to their basic economic recovery. The Army Corps of Engineers will need funding and the authority to rebuild the dams and the ports that were damaged so that commerce can actually go on, and FEMA will likely need \$8 billion more just to respond to all of the households that have requested assistance to repair and rebuild their homes through its Individual Assistance Program.