

I will finish by saying that I think in this world of social media, it is also critically important for us to remember the importance of edited content and the work that journalists do. There is not a class of school kids whom I don't impose at least that thought on, as they think about the research they are doing for their papers and the work we need to do as Senators.

I thank my colleagues for their indulgence. Thank you for allowing me to speak on this floor. It is a great privilege to be here, but it is a privilege we need to exercise in a way that actually reflects the values of this country and the expectations that the American people have for us to address their priorities.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

RUSSIA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, first, I do appreciate the words of my colleague from Colorado, and I thank him for them, and that topic deserves more discussion on the floor of the Senate.

One of the things that always gives me extraordinary pride to be an American and to be a Member of the Senate is the realization—as I sat here today and listened to my colleague from South Carolina, Senator SCOTT—that neither my ancestors nor his were participants in terms of structuring this Republic. Yet this Republic is so grand that it has plenty of room for people like me and him and so many others participating—including here, as one of only 100 Americans who are entrusted with the responsibility of representing our States and also upholding our Constitution in this body.

The Senator from Colorado is also right in talking about the role of the Senate not just in terms of passing laws but in conducting oversight irrespective of who occupies the White House. It is a difficult thing to do these days because everything in American politics is covered through the lens of politics and of elections. Almost immediately, whatever I say here on the floor today will be analyzed through the lens and construct of elections past and elections future. What is he trying to achieve or what are any of us trying to achieve politically? There is a place for that. I think we are not foolish enough to believe there is no politics in politics.

There is also something that is incredibly important, and that is the Constitution that every single one of us is sworn to uphold. It is a pledge I again took recently on these very steps a few feet away from where I stand here now a few weeks ago.

Part of that is, in fact, to oversee the foreign policy conduct of the United States. As many of us are aware, there has been recent discussion in some circles, including in my party, about a desire to achieve a better relationship with Vladimir Putin and with Russia. By the way, I share that goal. I think it would be good for the world if the

United States and Russia had a better relationship and, in particular, with the Russian people, with whom we have no quarrel. I also think we have a responsibility to understand what the obstacles are to better relations.

It is in that context that I come to the floor of the Senate today because I had a lot of people ask me over the last week, over the last few months: Why is it that you have such views about our relationships with Russia on the way forward?

I want to take a moment to discuss that in the broader context, with everything else that is happening here now. Even as we work through these nominations, the world continues to turn, and events around the world continue to have an impact on us here.

Let me begin by saying this. I don't think this is a fact that can be disputed. Vladimir Putin today has amassed more power in Moscow and Russia than any leader in Russia in about 60 years, if not longer. He used to maintain that power through a pretty straightforward deal that he had with both elites and the broader society.

Here is the deal he used to have with them. The deal was this: I will help you—especially the elites—make a lot of money and become very wealthy, and I will help society at-large by helping to grow our economy. In return, however, I need complete power and complete control of the government.

That was basically the arrangement he had up until just a few years ago when a combination of falling oil prices and economic decline forced them into a different direction. The new model that Vladimir Putin is now pursuing in Russia is one in which he is basically trying to gin up and rally public support, and he is largely doing it through a foreign policy which is aggressive and which is designed to create an impression among the Russian people that Russia has now been restored to great power status—a status equal or on par with that of the United States.

The first thing we have to understand is that much of what Vladimir Putin does is not in pursuit of an ideology, like the Soviet Union did. It is about domestic politics in Russia and about needing the Russian people to believe that he and his strength are essential to what Russia has. So much of it is about that.

What are the prongs of the strategy? The first is that he has sought to make their military modern and strong, and you see evidence of that in the fact that while Russia is going through crippling budget cuts as a result of a downturn in the global economy, oil prices falling, and sanctions against the Putin government, they are increasing defense spending. They are modernizing. They are adding capabilities. They are, for the first time, although in a limited way, beginning to conduct naval exercises and projection of power in places they hadn't been in for 25 years or longer.

The second is a crackdown in internal dissent. For that, I think the evidence is overwhelming. I know we have all heard recently about the case of Vladimir Kara-Murza, who is a Russian political opposition leader. He is a vocal critic of Vladimir Putin. He works at something called the Open Russia Foundation, an organization of activists who call for open elections, a free press, and civil rights reforms in Russia.

This is an interesting thing to talk about because there has been a lot of discussion on this floor a moment ago about the press and a lot of discussion about elections, of course, over the last year and longer. There has been a lot of discussion about civil rights. Think about this. This is what the Open Russia Foundation works for and on behalf of in Russia.

In America, when you believe that civil rights are being violated at this moment in our history or you think the election system isn't working the way it should or you are defending the press, as my colleagues have done here today in the right of a free press, you have a bad blog post written about you, someone may run against you for office, cable commentators will say nasty things about you from the other side, maybe somebody will stand up on the floor and criticize you for this or that.

Let me tell you what happens when you do that in Russia. They poison you. Kara-Murza is believed to have been poisoned in February 2017; after he experienced organ failure, and he is currently in the hospital—just this month. This comes 2 years after another suspected poisoning that nearly killed him in May 2015.

I want to take a moment to urge the administration to do everything in their power to ensure that he is receiving the medical care he needs and to help determine who was behind the latest apparent attempt against him.

If this was an isolated case, you would say: Well, maybe something else happened. There is an incredible number of critics of Vladimir Putin that wind up poisoned, dead, shot in the head in their hotel room, found in the street, and other things.

In other instances, just today we have this article from the Wall Street Journal about someone who was thinking about running against Vladimir Putin. Alexei Navalny was thinking about running for President.

So what happens in America when somebody thinks you are going to run for President? They do an opposition research file. They plant negative stories about you. They start badmouthing you on cable news. That is unpleasant, no doubt. He was found guilty by a kangaroo court of corruption, which, of course, according to Russian law, finds him and blocks him from running in next year's Presidential election.

Again, if this were an isolated case, you would say: Maybe this guy did

something wrong. The problem is, just about anyone who is either thinking about running for office or challenging Putin winds up poisoned, dead, in jail, or charged and convicted of a crime.

The second thing he has done is just completely crack down on all internal dissent. There is no free press in Russia. I would venture to guess that if I controlled 80 to 90 percent of the press reported about me, I would probably have approval ratings in the eighties and nineties as well. That is a pretty good deal for the leader but not for the people.

The third thing that is part of this effort is that they are basically doing everything they can—Vladimir Putin—to undermine the international order that is built on democracy and respect for human rights. I think the example of that is in various places.

Look at what has happened in Syria. Vladimir Putin gets involved in Syria, not because he cares about humanitarian crises—because, in fact, Russian forces have conducted airstrikes in civilian areas. We have seen the images. It is undeniable that it happened. It is by every definition of the word a war crime to target civilians with military weaponry.

That is what has happened in Syria. But for Vladimir Putin, it has been successful because his engagement basically changes the conflict. He now has positioned himself in the eyes of the Russian people and many people around the world as a power broker in the Middle East—in fact, as an alternative to the United States in that region.

This is part of his strategy. It wasn't about Syria as much as it was about his goal of being able to go to the Russian people and say that we matter again on the global stage. In Ukraine, there was talk about moving toward the European Union in terms of economic relations. There was talk about joining NATO. Then he invaded Crimea, and he kept it. He has funded separatists forces in eastern Ukraine. There is no more talk of NATO, and there is no more talk of unifying the economy with Europe, and they kept Crimea. The last few days we are starting to read open press reports of mobilization and unusual activity among eastern Ukrainian separatists backed, supported, trained, and equipped by the Russians, and we fear that new fighting could be imminent at any moment once again.

Then we have all heard the discussions about the elections in the United States and the efforts of other governments to not just hack computers. It is not about hacking alone. It is about the strategic placing of information, gathered through cyber intrusion, for the purposes of undermining political candidates and, therefore, influencing the election.

There was something deeper here. It was part of a broader effort to discredit our Republic and our democracy, to be able to go back to the Russian people

and to the broader world and say that the American political system is corrupt. The American political system is not a true democracy. The American political system is as bad as all these other systems in the world that they criticize. They do not come to this with clean hands.

I often wonder sometimes if we contribute to that argument in the way we behave toward one another in our political discourse in this country. That is something to think about in the long term. I hope people understand that as we engage in these political debates in this country, these things are being viewed around the world. For people who may not have a clear perspective, or if this information is being used negatively—by no means am I saying that we should not have vibrant debate in this country; we should, but I also want people to understand—that often times gives off the perception that, in fact, our Republic is on the verge of collapse.

We are in challenging times. We have some strong disagreements, and often times they become heated. I know for a fact that there isn't a single Member of this body prepared to walk away from the Constitution or the liberties that it protects and are enshrined therein.

By the way, I don't believe Vladimir Putin is done in this effort. I think you are now going to see him continue to interfere in Yemen. He can use that as leverage against the gulf kingdoms, against the Saudis.

I think you are going to see him continue to engage in Egypt. He will go to the Egyptians and say: The Americans are always hassling you about human rights. Why don't you just buy your weapons from us? Why don't you give us a military base? We are never going to give you grief about human rights. We are a much easier and low-maintenance partner.

I wouldn't even be surprised to see him start dabbling in Afghanistan with the Taliban, in some capacity anyway, and couch it in terms of fighting ISIS.

We will see. My point is, it is not done. I bring all that up in the context of this suggestion among some, and I think it is important to talk about it because I don't think we should dismiss viewpoints. There are some, including in the administration, who believe that maybe we can do a deal with Vladimir Putin where he helps us fight against ISIS and in return we lift sanctions. The argument that I hear from people is this: Why wouldn't we want better relations with Vladimir Putin and enlist them in the fight against ISIS?

I come here today in the context of everything I have laid out to tell you why I think that is unrealistic and deeply problematic.

Here is No. 1. Why do we have to do a deal with Vladimir Putin to fight ISIS? He already claims that he is. In fact, that is the way he describes their operations in Syria—as an anti-terror operation. There is no more dangerous terrorist group in the world today than

ISIS. There is certainly no more dangerous terrorist group in the world today than ISIS. There is certainly no more dangerous and capable a terrorist group in Syria today than ISIS.

Isn't that what he is already doing? Why would we then have to cut a deal to encourage him to do what he claims to already be doing? There are only two reasons. Either No. 1, we think he should do more, which in and of itself tells you that he is not doing it; or No. 2, because he is not doing it now.

Here is the second problem: this argument that as part of this whole effort with Russia, one of the things we would be able to achieve is to break them from the Iranians, to create some sort of split between the Russians and the Iranians.

I saw an article the other day talking about that as part of this endeavor. My argument to you is that we don't really need to do that. That is going to happen on its own. Say what you want, as soon as ISIS is destroyed in Syria and Iraq or in both, the Iranians are going to immediately not just push to drive the Americans out of the region but drive the Russians out as well.

The Iranians are not interested in replacing American influence in the region with Russian influence. They want to be the hegemonic power in the region. As to this argument that we somehow can peel them apart, my friends, that is going to happen all on its own. If we abandon there tomorrow, the Iranians would immediately turn to driving the Russians out as well because they want to be the hegemonic power. They have long desired to be the hegemonic power in the region. That is going to put them in conflict with the Russians sooner rather than later at some point here, at least to some level.

The third thing I think we have to understand is that there is absolutely no pressure, no political rationale why Vladimir Putin needs a better relationship with the United States at this time, at least not politically. He is not going to lose an election, because if you run against him, you go to jail. He controls the press. He controls the political discourse in the country. So one of the reasons we should always be advocates for democracy is because democratic leaders act much more responsibly because they have to answer to their people, but in essence that is not what you have in Russia. There is really no reason or rationale why he would be pressured to have a better relationship with us.

Do the Russian people want a better relationship with America? I have no doubt about that, but I want you to understand that everything they learn about our relationship with them is largely derived through the Russian press. If you never had the pleasure of watching, for example, the RT Network on television, and you are interested in comedy and satire, I encourage you to tune into that station from time to time so you can see an alternative representation of events that would startle you, and perhaps make you laugh.

This is unfortunately the sort of media information that filters to the Russian people that Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin completely control.

Here is the fourth and perhaps most important reason I think this endeavor is unrealistic and perhaps even counterproductive. The price you would have to pay is simply too high in return for the alleged benefit that would come about.

No. 1, the Russian Federation under Vladimir Putin has basically violated every agreement they have made now and in the past. They are violating the cease-fire. They violated all sorts of arrangements with regard to arms reductions, and they will continue to do that in any deal anyone cuts with him.

The second is one of the first things he is going to ask for is the lifting of all sanctions for both Ukraine and interference in our elections, in return for no changes to the status in Ukraine and no promise of not undertaking efforts like what happened here in the future.

The third thing they are going to demand is recognition of a Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, especially in places that are now countries that were once part of the Soviet Union. In essence, a United States acceptance officially or otherwise that there are countries in the world who are not allowed to enter into economic or military engagements with the United States unless Russia allows it.

You think about that. They are basically going to ask us to play some game of geopolitical chess, where we basically turn over the sovereignty and future of other Nations and say to them there are these countries in the world, and we are not going to try to do anything with them, economic, political, cultural, socially or militarily, unless you give us permission to do so. This would be a requirement. It is one of the things he insists upon.

He would also require the United States to support pulling back NATO troops and equipment and personnel and operations from Nations in Europe, which would be devastating to the NATO alliance, which one of his other goals is to render NATO feckless and irrelevant.

I just don't think that is a price worth paying in exchange for alleged cooperation against ISIS—that he claims to already be conducting—and in exchange for basically sending a message to the world that America is your ally, unless there is a better deal with us for someone else. That would be devastating. What do I think we should do, and what I hope the Senate will do, if there is an effort now or any time in the future, by anyone, to change or conduct a deal of this magnitude?

I think the first thing we need to do is be committed to the principle. These sanctions that are in place should remain in place until the conditions in those sanctions are met, until the sovereignty of Ukraine is respected, and

until these efforts to undermine democracy and spread misinformation are fully accounted for.

The second is, I think it is important for us to reaffirm our commitment to NATO, and that includes the building up of defenses and exercises, that we continue to do that firmly, not just with our NATO allies but with any nation who seeks cooperation with us.

The third is careful but strategic engagement in the Middle East to the Iraqis, to make very clear that the United States will continue to be their partner after ISIS falls; that we want Iraq to be prosperous and free and that we believe it is better for the world and we are prepared to help them achieve that.

To the Egyptians, we will continue to press them on human rights, and we should. We should also be willing at the same time—and, by the way, with the argument that respecting human rights is actually good for Egypt, that in the long term these conditions that exist will lead to constant threats to their government, but we can do that while at the same time continuing to partner with them on military sales. I think they would welcome a conversation about trade and potentially a bilateral trade agreement with them about opening up avenues for business investment and so forth.

The fourth is to point out that if they are not going after ISIS, then what exactly are they doing now? It is important for us to point that out to the world. Again, I made this point numerous times. I want to make it once again; this idea that we are going to get them to cooperate much more against ISIS basically implies they are not doing it now, but they claim that is why they are in Syria to begin with.

Finally, I think it is important for us to try to communicate directly with the Russian people to the extent possible. It is hard to do because the Russian Government, under Putin, also controls the Internet with filters and the like. It is important for us to say our quarrel is not with the Russian people; that for many years up until this unfortunate turn of events over the last decade, the links with the United States and the Russian people grew strong and those links remain.

In my home State of Florida, there is a significant number of Russians who live in Florida part time and so forth. I hope that will continue. Our quarrel is not with the Russian people, and we desire for Russia to be powerful and influential in the world. We want Russia to be prosperous. This country does not view this as a zero-sum gain. In order for America to be influential, Russia must be less influential.

Our quarrel is not with Russia but a leader who does view it as a zero-sum gain, a leader who believes the only way Russia can be more important is for America to be less important, a leader who has chosen to try to undermine an international order based on democracy and free enterprise and

human rights that has kept the world out of a third world war, and I think it is important for us to do that.

I think that is important and why we need at least to be prepared in this body, if necessary, to move forward with legislation that doesn't just codify existing sanctions but that prevents the lifting of those sanctions, unless the conditions in those sanctions are met. This is our job. It is true that Presidents and administrations have an obligation, a duty, and a right to set the foreign policies of the United States. There is no doubt about it. I think that is true, no matter who is the President.

But it would be a mistake, and in my opinion, a dereliction of duty for the Senate and the Congress to not recognize that we, too, have a duty to shape the foreign policy of the United States and the power to declare war in the budgets that we pass, in the laws and conditions that we put in place, and in our ability to override vetoes, when necessary, even in the process of nominating individuals to serve in the U.S. Government and the executive branch.

We not only have the power, we have the obligation; the obligation to shape and mold and direct the foreign policy of this Nation, and if we don't, then we are not living up to the oath we took when we entered this body, and that it is not a political thing. This is not about embarrassing anyone. This is not about partisan issues. It should never be. In fact, one of the traditions that has existed in this Nation for a long time is that foreign policy, when it came to issues that impacted the security issues of the United States, there was an effort to make sure it was as bipartisan or nonpartisan as possible because when America gets in trouble on national security, there is no way to isolate on a bipartisan basis.

It is my hope, as we debate all these other issues, that we continue to keep these issues in mind because it is critical to the future of our Nation, critical to our standing in the world, and ultimately vital and critical to the kind of world and Nation we will leave to our children and grandchildren in the years and decades to come.

I, for one, in the midst of all of this debate about a bunch of issues that divide us, will continue to work to ensure that this is one that unites us and allows us to live up to our constitutional obligation, to participate fully in shaping and directing the foreign policy of this great Nation.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I rise to oppose the nomination of Senator JEFF SESSIONS to be Attorney General. I thought very carefully about this matter and about what it means to oppose a colleague. We had an unusual night last night, where one of our Members was ordered to stop speaking as she explained her opposition. Comments that

would have been allowed regarding any other Cabinet nominee were ruled unacceptable because this nominee also sits in this body. I voted to overturn that ruling and restore my colleague's speaking privileges because I was of the opinion that the constitutional duty to advise and consent on nominations should allow for debate.

But whatever my opinions about the ruling, I do have to acknowledge that standing on the floor to speak in opposition to a colleague is not an everyday occurrence. We do disagree every day, all of us, even within our own caucuses on matters of policy, but there is something more personal about taking the floor to take a position regarding a sitting Senator who has been nominated for a Senate-confirmable position.

I know Senator SESSIONS well. We served together on the Armed Services Committee. We attend a weekly Senate Prayer Breakfast together. We have taken code trips together. I consider Senator SESSIONS a friend, and I respect that he has been repeatedly sent to this body by the voters of his State, but while we can and should be friends, strive to be friends, in this Chamber, we are not ultimately here about friendship. We are here to do people's business. And significant differences in our opinions and convictions are not to be papered over, even when we find ourselves in different positions than our friends.

Some Members of this body ran for President, and I did not support them, even though they were my friends. And some people in this Chamber did not support me to be Vice President, even though we are friends. There is nothing unusual about that. We all understand it. We must treat each other with respect and civility. We are still called to, in the words of Lincoln, "be firm in the right as God gives us to see what is right."

So based upon how I see the right and on my convictions, I cannot support my colleague for the position because I do not have confidence in his ability to be a champion for civil rights, to wisely advise the administration on matters involving immigration, and to be resolute as the Nation's chief law enforcement official that torture is contrary to American values.

This one matters to me a lot. This appointment is very critical. The Attorney General is one of the four Cabinet appointees who are not allowed to be engaged in political activity: Secretary of Treasury, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense. They are beyond politics and supposed to be above politics. They must have an independent gravitas and even be willing to challenge the President. The mission of the Department of Justice cannot be more important. For 17 years, before I got into State politics, I was a civil rights lawyer. I read a book, "Simple Justice," when I was in law school, about the lawyers who battled to end segregated education in this country. Even though I really

didn't know any lawyers and certainly didn't know any civil rights lawyers—and was living in kind of an Irish Catholic neighborhood in the suburbs of Kansas City—I decided I wanted to devote my life to this.

So I moved to Virginia in 1984 and started practicing civil rights law, and I did it for 17 years. I will always remember—and I bet you will too—my first client, the first case that I had that was really mine. A young woman who walked into my office and told me she had been turned away from an apartment, and she thought it was because of the color of her skin. I was able to prove that was the case, and so we were able to win, but what I remember about Lorraine was how it made her feel. She was my age. She had just finished school. She was looking for an apartment, her first apartment away from home, just like I had done. While my experience getting a job, finding an apartment, getting out on my own had been a positive, her experience had been a negative. And she was going to have that feeling and carry it with her every time she looked for a house for the rest of her life: Am I going to be treated differently because of the color of my skin? What had been a happy occasion for me, as a young man venturing out into the world, had been a sad one and a difficult one for her. That started 17 years of fighting in State and Federal courthouses for people who had been turned away from housing or fired or slander or otherwise treated poorly, either because of their race or their disability or because of their advocacy about important public policy issues.

The civil rights laws of this country protect the liberty of minorities of all kinds who otherwise could be tyrannized by the majority view in their community. The promise of equal justice under the law is sacrosanct and fundamental. And in this battle, the Attorney General is the guardian of liberty, or in a wise Biblical phrase, the "Watcher on the Wall."

Judges sit in their courts and they wait for cases to come to them, but an Attorney General is charged with going out and finding wrongdoing and making sure it stopped. None of the advances that our country has made in the civil rights field has happened without a supportive Department of Justice and Attorney General. And those of us out in the field, lawyers who were taking cases, but especially the clients who simply seek equal justice under law, they have to view the Attorney General as their champion.

In 1963, a married couple in Northeast DC sat down at their kitchen table not far from here, and they wrote a letter to a lawyer in town. I want to read the letter to you.

Dear sir: I am writing to you concerning a problem we have. 5 years ago my husband and I were married here in the District. We then returned to Virginia to live. My husband is white, I am part negro and part Indian. At the time, we did not know that

there was a law in Virginia against mixed marriages. Therefore we were jailed and tried in a little town of Bowling Green. We were to leave the State to make our home. The problem is we are not allowed to visit our families. The judge said if we enter the State within the next 30 years that we will have to spend 1 year in jail. We know we cannot live there, but we would like to go back once in a while to visit our families and friends. We have three children and cannot afford an attorney. We wrote the Attorney General, he suggested that we get in touch with you for advice. Please help us if you can. Hope to hear from you real soon. Yours truly—Mr. And Mrs. Richard Loving.

That attorney, Bernie Cohen, became a friend of mine. And his partner Phil Hirshcop and Bernie took the case of this married couple all the way to the Supreme Court, and 50 years ago the Supreme Court struck down interracial marriage in this country. But the case started with a couple who, having no where else to turn, thought, if we write the Attorney General, surely he will be a champion for us and he will help us redress this horrible wrong. That is who the Attorney General needs to be. The powerful never have a hard time finding somebody to represent them in court, but the poor or oppressed or those who don't have anybody else to stand up for them, they need a justice system that will treat them fairly, and they need an Attorney General who will embody that value.

Three areas: civil rights, immigration, and torture.

In the area of civil rights, Senator SESSIONS' record here as a Senator has been troubling to me. In the past, when he was considered for a judicial position, he declared that the voting rights laws were "intrusive."

He welcomed the "good news" when the Supreme Court in the last few years struck down, in the Shelby County case, parts of the Voting Rights Act. He has not engaged in efforts that many of us have tried to engage in to improve and fix the law.

This is an important issue to know about an Attorney General whose Department is supposed to be the chief enforcer of the Nation's voting rights laws. Voting rights are under attack all over this country. The Attorney General must be a champion of those laws.

Senator SESSIONS has opposed protections for LGBT citizens in this body. He voted against the elimination of don't ask, don't tell. He voted against the passage of the Matthew Shepard hate crimes bill. He has publicly stated numerous times his opposition to marriage equality. As far as I know, he has never stated otherwise that he has changed those opinions.

The Senator spoke on the Senate floor about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2000. He said that this beneficial law was "a big factor in accelerating the decline in civility and discipline in classrooms all over this country." This is very troubling to me as someone who believes that act is one of the Nation's pre-eminent civil rights laws.

There are other examples, but I won't belabor the point.

The Loving family wrote to Attorney General Robert Kennedy to help them battle injustice because they believed he would protect their important civil rights values at stake. I am not confident that people hard-pressed in this country, who feel marginalized, will see the office as a potential ally and champion under Senator SESSIONS. This is particularly the case when we have a President who has been successfully sued in the past for civil rights violations and who makes prejudicial comments about people based on their gender, their religion, their immigrant status, or their disability.

Second, immigration. Our immigration policies are critical. We need to fix our laws. In my time in the Senate, Senator SESSIONS has been the most vocal Senator in opposition to what I believe are reasonable and necessary reforms. His floor comments and his obvious personal passion around this issue are clear, but I think his policies are simply wrong.

Immigration does not hurt our economy; it helps it. Jefferson recognized this in the Declaration of Independence. In his Bill of Particulars against King George, he said: We do not want to live under your tyranny. You won't let us have a good immigration system.

Jefferson recognized it, and all through the years, the inflow of talent, the blood of innovation and talent and new ideas from immigrants, has been part of what has made our country great. That is why there is such a consensus in favor of immigration reform from the labor unions and the chambers of commerce. The CBO says that it will increases our net worth and GDP.

Immigration does not hurt our workers, as Senator SESSIONS often claims it does. A reform would help our workers by eliminating the ability of people to live and work in the shadows and be paid substandard wages that undercut the wages of others.

Senator SESSIONS' views on immigration even extend to a critical program like the Special Immigrant Visa Program, which grants special protection to foreign citizens, especially those from Afghanistan and Iraq, who have helped our troops on the battlefield. They signed up to help Americans who are in the service. They put their lives at risk for doing so. Because of that, we have a special program to accord them a welcome that they are deserved in this country.

Senators McCAIN, SHAHEEN, and I and many others have worked on this program, and Senator SESSIONS has been a determined opponent of the SIV Program, and I just can't understand why. If we will not help the people who help us, then who will choose to help us in the future? Some of these SIV immigrants were turned away at airports after the poorly conceived and poorly implemented immigration order of President Trump.

As we contemplate some of this President's outlandish and discrimina-

tory claims about immigrants and as we deal with the aftermath of this poor order, we have to separate the extreme and the untrue from our legitimate security concerns. A good lawyer often needs to be a check against the bad instincts of his client. In this area, I am not confident Senator SESSIONS can do that.

Finally, torture. Like the vast majority of this body, I believe torture is contrary to American values. That is why I was proud to work with Senators McCAIN, REED, FEINSTEIN, and others in 2015 to pass a law clearly stating that torture would not be allowed by any agency of our government—not just the military but any agency of our government. This law passed the Senate overwhelmingly and in a strongly bipartisan fashion. But Senator SESSIONS was one of a small number of Senators who opposed the law, who opposed a ban on torture.

When we met, I asked Senator SESSIONS why he had opposed the law, why he had opposed this bipartisanship bill. This is a fundamental question for any of us but certainly for an individual who wants to occupy the Nation's chief law enforcement position. His response was not at all convincing. I don't think the Nation should have an Attorney General with an ambiguous record about torture.

While most Federal agencies have a general counsel, it is ultimately the Attorney General who sits at the very top of the pyramid of attorneys advising the President in providing this legal advice. This President has—very unwisely, in my view—stated that he thinks torture is both justifiable and effective. I believe we need an Attorney General who will check that instinct and not support it or justify it.

I will say this in conclusion: There is an independence that is necessary in this position. It is established in law in this position and three other Cabinet positions. Any Attorney General must be able to stand firm for the rule of law, even against the powerful Executive who nominated him or her. In this administration, I believe that independence is even more necessary.

I oppose Senator SESSIONS, who is a friend, who is someone I respect for this position, because I believe his record raises doubts about whether he can be a champion for those who need this office most, and it also raises doubts about whether he can curb unlawful overage by this Executive.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS).

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in strong support of the nomination of Senator JEFF SESSIONS to be the next Attorney General of the United States. I do that as someone who has known him personally quite well for 6 years now. I want to do this briefly because we are pressed for time, but I want to make a few points.

First, I think we all recognize the terrific credentials that Senator SES-

SIONS brings to this job—his career, his lifetime serving his country, from his time in the U.S. Army Reserve, to his 12 years as a U.S. attorney, to the 2 years he spent as the attorney general of Alabama, all before being elected to the U.S. Senate. But much more importantly, I am so impressed by this good man, this good and decent man's commitment to protecting all members of our society and his sense of fairness. Let me give a couple of examples.

It was Senator SESSIONS who worked with a Democratic colleague, Senator COONS, on legislation to help women and children who were victims of abuse. It was Senator SESSIONS who joined me in our successful effort to provide hundreds of millions of dollars of additional funds each year to victims of child abuse and sexual assault and domestic violence.

Senator SESSIONS' sense of fairness is also illustrated in his approach to law enforcement. It is probably widely known that he has the endorsement of every major law enforcement group in America, but Senator SESSIONS has also spent a lot of time and effort making sure people on the other side of law enforcement are treated fairly and humanely.

It was Senator SESSIONS who led the successful effort to eliminate the disparity in sentences for crack users versus cocaine users, working with Senator DURBIN, a Democrat. They succeeded because Senator SESSIONS understood that the disparity—the much harsher penalty on the use of crack cocaine versus white powdered cocaine—was completely unfair and overwhelmingly adversely affected African Americans. That was not acceptable to JEFF SESSIONS.

It was Senator SESSIONS who in 2003 joined with Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy in introducing and helping to successfully enact the Prison Rape Elimination Act because of his concern about the appalling abuse experienced by some people in our prisons. That was not acceptable to JEFF SESSIONS.

Let me just say that—I am going to be very candid. The most objectionable and offensive slander I have heard against Senator SESSIONS is the notion that somehow he has some kind of racist leanings. That is an outrageous and dishonest charge. I have known this man very well. There is not a racist bone in his body. This is a man who has been endorsed by many, many African-American leaders. This is a man who personally took on the KKK every chance he had when he was serving as the U.S. attorney. In fact, arguably, he was the reason that the law enforcement—in fact, he personally did probably more than anyone else to bankrupt the KKK by design so that he could destroy that organization in Alabama, which is exactly what he succeeded in doing.

JEFF SESSIONS is a man who has tremendous respect for the law, a reverence for the law, respect for the rule of law. There is absolutely no question

in my mind, from my own personal experience with him for these years, that he will enforce the law vigorously and fairly.

Several of my Democratic colleagues have come down here and they have rattled off policy areas in which they disagree with Senator SESSIONS. You know what, there are areas where I disagree with Senator SESSIONS. I guarantee you, there are lots of areas where I had disagreements with the members of President Obama's Cabinet. But it never occurred to me to expect that I would have complete agreement on every policy issue with every candidate for a Cabinet position.

What I know about JEFF SESSIONS is that he is an extremely well-qualified attorney, with outstanding credentials, has spent his adult life serving his country and his State, that he has gone to the mat to work for people who are some of the least fortunate and people who have been through appalling circumstances. He has been their champion. I just know he is going to stand up for the principles of the rule of law and equal justice before the law.

The last point I want to make is, when Republican Senators gather periodically for our lunches and our private discussions, every Republican Senator knows that when we are discussing something, if JEFF SESSIONS believes that we are talking about doing something that is a violation of a principle that he holds, he is going to be the first guy who is going to stand up, and he is going to say: My colleagues, this would be a mistake. This is not the right thing to do.

He is the one who is the first to stand up to any other member of the conference; it doesn't matter who it is. If he thinks what they are suggesting is not the right thing to do, not the principled thing to do, not consistent with our role as Senators, not consistent with our principles, JEFF SESSIONS is always willing to stand up for what is right.

He will stand up for what is right as the Attorney General of the United States. I am proud to support him, and I urge all of my colleagues to do likewise.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

MR. SANDERS. Mr. President, I think many millions of Americans perceive, as I do, that these are not normal times.

We have had a new President of the United States who called a judge a "so-called judge" because he dared to disagree with President Trump's decision on the ban of Muslims coming into this country.

We have a President who attacks the media in this country as fake news; everything they are saying is a lie. We have a President who goes before the troops—men and women in the American military—and starts talking about politics. It is very clear to me that we have a new President who really does

not understand the Constitution of the United States of America, who does not understand the separation of powers in the Constitution, and in that context, we need an Attorney General who will have the courage to tell the President of the United States when he is acting in a dangerous, authoritarian, or unconstitutional way.

I have known JEFF SESSIONS for a number of years, and personally, I like JEFF SESSIONS. But I do not believe at this moment in history, when we need people around this President to explain the Constitution to him, that JEFF SESSIONS will be the Attorney General to do that.

I am deeply concerned about voter suppression in this country. I am deeply concerned that, as a result of the Supreme Court's gutting of the Voting Rights Act, we have, in State after State after State, Governors and legislatures that are working overtime to make it harder for poor people, people of color, older people, young people to participate in the political process.

Today in the United States, we have, compared to the rest of the world, a low voter turnout. Only about 60 percent of eligible voters in America cast a ballot. Our job—whether you are conservative, Republican, Progressive, Independent, Democrat—whatever you are, if you believe in democracy, what you should believe in is bringing more people into the political process, increasing our voter turnout, not working as hard as you can to suppress the vote.

I want an Attorney General of the United States of America to tell those Governors, to tell those attorneys general all over this country that as Attorney General of the United States, he will fight them tooth and nail in every way legally possible to stop the suppression of the vote in State after State throughout this country.

We have the dubious distinction in this country of having more people in jail than any other nation on Earth. We have about 2.2 million Americans. We are spending about \$80 billion a year locking them up, and the people who are disproportionately in jail are African American, Latino, Native American.

I want an Attorney General who understands that the current criminal justice system is failing, that we have to figure out ways to keep people from getting into jail by investing in education, in jobs, and that incarceration and more jails are not the answers to the crisis we face within criminal justice. I honestly do not believe that JEFF SESSIONS is that person.

In recent years, we have made significant progress in allowing people—regardless of their sexual orientation—to get married and to have the full rights of American citizenship. I do not believe that JEFF SESSIONS will be the Attorney General who will be supportive of LGBT rights.

We have some 11 million undocumented people in this country. I be-

lieve that most Americans see the solution as comprehensive immigration reform and a path toward citizenship.

Today we have some 700,000 people who are DACA recipients, who have come out of the shadows and trusted the Federal Government to protect them. We need an Attorney General who is sensitive to the needs of DACA recipients, who will pursue humane immigration policies, and advocate for the need of comprehensive immigration reform. I do not believe that JEFF SESSIONS will be that Attorney General.

So, Mr. President, for all of those reasons and more, I will be voting against JEFF SESSIONS to become the next Attorney General of the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

MR. CARPER. Mr. President, I also rise this evening to talk about the nomination of our colleague from Alabama, Senator JEFF SESSIONS, to serve as our next Attorney General.

Like many of our colleagues, I have heard from an incredible number of people in my State regarding this nomination—some in favor, fewer than 100—many against. Almost 1,300 Delawareans have called, emailed, or written to my office, expressing their opposition to Senator SESSIONS' nomination.

I would like to share, if I could, just a few excerpts from some of the emails that I have received concerning this nomination.

We will start with Priscilla from the town of Newport in the northern part of our State. She wrote to me about the experience of her family growing up in a segregated society. Here is what she had to say. She said:

I lived through my parents not having the right to vote, not being able to go through the front door of a restaurant or doctor's office, using the colored fountains and bathrooms. Never again.

Another person, Rhonda from Dewey Beach wrote to me about Senator SESSIONS' voting record on voting rights. Here is what she had to say. She said:

Mr. Sessions has called the Voting Rights Act of 1965 a "piece of intrusive legislation." Under him, the Justice Department would most likely focus less on prosecutions of minority voter suppression and more on rooting out mythical voter fraud.

Here is one from Wilmington, DE—my hometown now—from a woman named Dawn. She wrote to me about her concerns as a parent of a child with autism. She wrote these words:

I am writing to express my deep concern with Jeff Sessions' nomination for Attorney General. I am a parent of an autistic son and am terrified that people with these types of views will be in power to enforce (or not) the laws that protect the rights of my son and so many others.

Mr. President, the common theme throughout these letters, these calls, these emails is their fear that Senator SESSIONS will not be an Attorney General for all Americans.

I know that many of my colleagues—our colleagues—will soon be voting

their hopes by voting to confirm Senator SESSIONS to be our next Attorney General, but too many of my constituents, including African Americans, immigrants, women, Muslims, and other vulnerable populations, have called and emailed my office in numbers that I don't think I have ever seen before to express their fears and to ask me to do something about it as their senior Senator.

I have heard their voices loud and clear, and I feel compelled to add my voice to so many others in opposing this nomination.

Let me just say this as clearly as I can. I do so with no joy, no joy.

Last night, as I was thinking about what I wanted to share on the floor this evening, my mind drifted back to another time and place.

The Presiding Officer may not know this. I grew up in Danville, VA, my sister and I, the last capital of the Confederacy. I got there I think when I was just about 9 years old and left when I was about to finish high school.

The home that we lived in right outside of Danville, VA—if you walked out the front door, about 100 yards down the road on the other side was a church, Woodlawn Baptist Church. That was our church, and my mom dragged my sister and me there every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, every Wednesday night, and most Thursday nights.

When my sister and I were in high school, we stood on the doorstep of that church Monday through Friday when school was in session, and we would catch a school bus. About 200 yards down the road, on Westover Drive, there was another school bus stop, where African-American kids got on their school bus, 200 yards away. We would drive in our school bus 10 miles to our school, Roswell High School, and the kids at the other school bus stop would get in their bus, and they would drive past our school another 10 miles to get to their school.

On weekends, my dad worked a lot. He was in the Navy Reserve as a chief petty officer. He was gone a lot on the weekends. My mom worked in downtown Danville in the five-and-dime store. My sister and I would catch a bus, and we would ride downtown to go have lunch with my mom on many Saturdays when we were 9, 10, 11, 12 years old.

I couldn't help but notice when we got on the bus that if you were White, you got to sit up front, and if you were Black, you sat in back. We would go to a blue plate diner with my mom at lunchtime. There was one section where, if you were White, you got to eat there, and another section where, if you were Black, colored, you would eat there. To go to the restrooms, it was colored only, White only.

After lunch, my sister and I would go to Rialto Theatre in Danville, and my mom would give us each a quarter. And for 25 cents, we could see that afternoon three movies until she was fin-

ished with work, and we would go home together. At that Rialto Theatre, if you were White, you sat down in front on the first floor; if you were Black, you sat up in the balcony.

I will never forget that when I was a little boy in Danville, one day, I went to the dentist's office for some dental care. I remember this older African-American woman coming into the dentist's office, and she was in pain with I think an abscessed tooth.

She said: I know I don't have an appointment, but could someone just help me out of my misery?

They said: I am sorry, ma'am. You don't have an appointment. We can't do anything for you. And she left crying.

My parents—it turns out I am a Democrat; they were Republican, as far as I know. They got to vote, and they got to vote regularly. But I will bet you dollars to doughnuts that the kids at that bus stop who caught that bus to go to that all-Black, all-African-American school, my guess is that a bunch of them didn't get to vote because of something we had in Virginia called a poll tax.

Among the lessons that my sister and I learned at Woodlawn Baptist Church was the Golden Rule: Treat other people the way we want to be treated.

Among the things that we learned at that church is Matthew 25: We should care for the least of these. When I was hungry, did you feed me? When I was naked, did you clothe me? When I was thirsty, did you give me a drink? When I was sleeping in prison, did you visit me? When I was a stranger in your land, did you welcome me? And we were taught: yes, yes, yes, yes.

Micah 6. In my church this past Sunday, the question was raised: What is expected of us by the Lord? And we received three answers. And the three answers: Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with thy God.

I have taken those lessons from my childhood, and those are lessons from my own church today. And I want to tell you that as a kid growing up in Danville, VA, I can understand how other kids in my community were racist or bigoted. I can understand how it happened in Alabama or North Carolina, where our Presiding Officer is from.

But somewhere along the line, somebody got ahold of me and said: You know all that stuff you are talking about in church and the Bible? If you really believe it, here is how you should act and talk and speak. And finally it sunk in.

I just want to say that JEFF SESSIONS has been my colleague. I have been here for 16 years. He has been my friend and colleague for 16 years. We read the same Bible. There have been times where we read it together over the years. When we met in my office just a few weeks ago, we talked about how our faith guides us in our lives. I reminded him of how Matthew 25 talks about moral obligations, “the least of these,” which I have talked about.

As I carefully considered my friend's nomination to serve our country in such a critical role, I found that while we agree on many issues, including that our faith is an important guide not only in our personal lives but in our capacity as public servants, I found that our views on too many important issues diverged.

Like many Americans, I am troubled by the direction Donald Trump is seeking to take our country in these first few weeks of his administration. I believe that an independent Attorney General can provide a check on this President's legal recklessness, and it may be more necessary now than at any point in recent history. Donald Trump has already revealed an agenda that reflects his divisive campaign, one that I believe will make our economy less robust, less fair, our environment less clean, our country less inclusive, our freedoms less free, and our allies less inclined to take America at its word.

Many of us worry that JEFF SESSIONS will not be the independent check on this administration that we need, and many of us worry that JEFF will not hold our Justice Department to the principles that everyone, no matter their age, income, sex, or color, deserves equal protection under the law. My colleagues and I have these concerns with a number of Cabinet nominees. I voted for more of them than I voted against.

Having said that, we need individuals to serve in these key posts who are willing to speak truth to power. Ironically, that is what got Acting Attorney General Sally Yates in trouble. She did it a few days ago when she was fired for refusing to defend the Muslim ban because she thought it might not be lawful.

Throughout the campaign, Senator SESSIONS supported a religious-based test for immigrants, and I fear that Senator SESSIONS is unlikely to stand up to Donald Trump and tell him that he is wrong on this front. To be honest with you, I just believe we need somebody who will do that, and unfortunately I fear there is a good chance that Senator SESSIONS believes Donald Trump just might be right. I am also afraid that Senator SESSIONS won't be the independent check our country is likely to need, especially in this administration.

Ultimately, however, the votes are where they are, and it appears that our friend, our colleague, Senator SESSIONS, will be our country's next chief law enforcement officer and chief attorney. Over these past days and weeks, I thought about whether our friend is the best person for the job, as I have said. I know others have too. I also thought about the millions of Americans who fear that he may have views about different races and minorities that could seep into the Justice Department, resulting in an unequal applications of our country's laws.

My thoughts have led me to the example of Lyndon Johnson, a man from

the South who served, as you may recall, in the U.S. House of Representatives in Texas for a number of years and later suddenly became President under tragic circumstances, as we all recall, in November of 1963. LBJ didn't just oppose civil rights while in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, he often bragged about it. But he went through a public transformation that would lead him to pass the first civil rights bill since reconstruction as Senate majority leader in 1957 and then signed into law some of our Nation's landmark civil rights laws—the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Act, the Fair Housing Act, and countless others.

LBJ's transformation didn't happen overnight, though. The truth is that his views on civil rights and racial justice might have been there all along.

Here is what Robert Caro wrote about LBJ in the most recent installment on his life:

Although the cliché says that power always corrupts, what is seldom said, but what is equally true, is that power always reveals. When a man is climbing, trying to persuade others to give him power, concealment is necessary: to hide traits that might make others reluctant to give him power, to hide also what he wants to do with that power. If men recognized the traits or realized the aims, they might refuse to give him what he wants. But as a man obtains more power, camouflage is less necessary. The curtain begins to rise. The revealing begins.

So it was, in Caro's view—and I think he is probably right—so it was with Lyndon Johnson.

Mr. President, that reminds me of another quote tonight. This is one from our former First Lady Michelle Obama, who said these words: "Being President doesn't change who you are, it reveals who you are."

It reveals who you are.

We are not confirming JEFF SESSIONS to be our next President, but we are confirming him to be our next Attorney General, and we must ask, as the curtain rises, what will it reveal? What will it reveal about JEFF SESSIONS?

Unfortunately, each time JEFF's career has led to more power, whether it was district attorney in Alabama, attorney general for his State, or as U.S. Senator, it has revealed a JEFF SESSIONS who is much the same as he has always been. It has revealed JEFF SESSIONS to be less inclined to undergo the transformation that so many others before him have undergone to put themselves and our Nation on the right side of history.

I will close with this thought: If Senator SESSIONS is confirmed, it is my sincere hope that our friend and our colleague will recognize the awesome responsibility and the opportunity he has to serve not only the people of Alabama, not only the people of the South or the Southeastern part of our country, but Americans across our country of all races, all colors, all creeds. In this body, it is often important that we vote with our hopes rather than our

fears, and unfortunately, tonight I am not yet prepared to vote my hopes. But the words of a reporter writing about President Johnson a few years ago give me some hope as we look forward, and maybe they will give hope to the rest of us. Here is what that reporter wrote about Lyndon Johnson:

Perhaps the simple explanation, which Johnson likely understood better than most, was that there is no magic formula through which people can emancipate themselves from prejudice, no finish line that when crossed, awards a person's soul with a shining medal of purity in matters of race. All we can offer is a commitment to justice in word and deed that must be honored but from which we will all occasionally fall short.

And I would just add, and we do.

I hope these words I have just quoted resonate with our friend and colleague, Senator JEFF SESSIONS. If they do, both he and our country will be better for it.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, there has been a lot of discussion about Senator SESSIONS' nomination on this floor in the last 24 hours. Before we vote, I want to offer a couple of observations about the unfairness in some of the statements.

First, I was hoping to limit my remarks to all of the reasons why I believe Senator SESSIONS will make an outstanding Attorney General, but instead I feel very compelled to say a few words about some of the attacks that have been leveled against Senator SESSIONS here on the floor, where he has served the people of Alabama faithfully for 20 years.

A number of Senators have come to the floor to talk about Senator SESSIONS' hearing in 1986 when he was nominated to be a Federal judge. Now, it happens that I was in the Senate in 1986, at that time by 6 years. I was on the Judiciary Committee in 1986, by that time for 6 years, and I want you to know I saw what happened. I don't have time to go into all the details here, but I will tell you this: JEFF SESSIONS' hearing in 1986 was an absolute ambush. In fact, it was a planned ambush. He was unfairly attacked then and he is being unfairly attacked now. I will give just two examples.

First, in the last 24 hours, we have heard Senator SESSIONS attacked for a voting rights case that he pursued as U.S. attorney in Alabama. We have heard a lot about that case. Of course, those who have raised the Perry County trial don't tell you Senator SESSIONS was actually asked to pursue that case by two African-American candidates who believed that ballots cast by African-American voters had been altered. The bottom line is that he was vindicating the voting rights of African-American voters whose voting rights had been compromised.

Second, we have heard Senator SESSIONS criticized for testimony in his 1986 Judiciary Committee hearing about the Voting Rights Act. It has

been said on this floor and it has been said repeatedly that JEFF SESSIONS called the Voting Rights Act "intrusive," but those speaking in the last 24 hours don't know what he actually said. He did use the word "intrusive," but then he said the Department of Justice had to do it "because it would not have happened any other way."

He said further: "Federal intervention was essential in the South." He said it was an intrusive piece of legislation "because it was a necessary piece of legislation, I support it." That is right. He said the Voting Rights Act "was a necessary piece of legislation, I support it." That is what he said. But if you have been listening the last 24 hours—you wouldn't know any of that by listening to those who have come to the floor and talked all about that case in 1986.

Like I said, I was here way back then. I saw what happened to that man who is going to be our next Attorney General, who would go on to join the Senate for these 20-some years and become our colleague and our friend. So you can understand why it is very frustrating to me to listen to all of those attacks, and it is particularly frustrating to hear it from Members who were not even here in 1986.

With that, let me just say this in closing: Senator SESSIONS has served with us for 20 years. Every Member of this body knows him to be a man of integrity. Almost all of us have been on the other side of a policy debate with Senator SESSIONS at one time or another. I know I have. What we know from those debates is that whether Senator SESSIONS agrees with you or not on any policy question, he handles the debate fairly, he handles the debate respectfully, and he handles the debate honorably.

Senator SESSIONS answered our questions in the Judiciary Committee for 10 long hours. He gave us his word on the critical issues that should decide our vote on this nomination. Most of that was centered around the fact that he is a man devoted to the law, and he is devoted as the chief law enforcement officer of our country to enforce the law, even if he didn't vote for it and even if he disagreed with it.

We know from the questioning that Senator SESSIONS will be independent when he said when he has to say no to the President of the United States, he will say no to the President of the United States. We know Senator SESSIONS then, as I have said, will enforce the law faithfully, without regard to person, for all Americans.

Motivated by those principles, Senator SESSIONS will make a very fine Attorney General, and most people in this body know that—even those who are going to vote against him.

I am pleased to cast my vote in favor of his nomination, and of course I urge my colleagues to do the same thing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of my colleague and friend JEFF SESSIONS to be the Attorney General of the United States.

Why? We have had this debate. It has gone on a long time, and we have heard from a lot of proponents and opponents of JEFF SESSIONS. Who would know JEFF SESSIONS better maybe than I would? I have worked with JEFF SESSIONS since he came to the Senate 20 years ago. Between us we have been here 50 years, 30 years for me, 20 years for him. Our staffs worked day and night on issues that have affected our State and affected the Nation.

I first really got to know JEFF SESSIONS when he was the Attorney General of Alabama. He had been the U.S. attorney. He was pretty well known, but I didn't know him. We didn't really know each other until he became the Attorney General.

I urged him to run for the U.S. Senate. I thought he could win, but I thought not just that he could win but that he could bring something to this body. I thought he would be a good colleague, he would be a good Senator for the State of Alabama and for the United States of America, and he has been.

When you deal with people day after day—remember, we all know each other as colleagues here. There are just 100 of us. It sounds like a lot of people, but it is not. When we interact on committees, when we deal with each other, when our families are thrown together, we talk, we debate, we maybe even fight a little bit at times over issues. We get to really know somebody.

I know JEFF SESSIONS pretty well. I believe he is competent as a lawyer, he was a good lawyer, he was a good prosecutor, and he served our State as Attorney General. He has been active on the Judiciary Committee where he has chaired a subcommittee. He has been active on the Budget Committee. He has been active on the Armed Services Committee. He has been active right here in the Senate—our Senate—on the Environment and Public Works Committee, and he is well respected.

What kind of Attorney General do we want? We want somebody who is competent, somebody with integrity—integrity above everything. That is what counts in this job. This is a very, very important job. These are big shoes. JEFF SESSIONS can fill those shoes, and I am happy and proud to be here and to vote for him tonight. I wish my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would join us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask to proceed on leader time.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to say a word about the nominee we are about to confirm. We have long known our colleague from

Alabama as Senator SESSIONS—and soon Attorney General Sessions—but it wasn't always this way. There was a time when the distinguished Senator from Alabama was known simply as "Buddy." Buddy—the product of a small town called Hybart, the son of a country store owner, the inheritor of modest beginnings.

Senator SESSIONS' parents grew up in the Depression. They taught their son the value of a dollar and the importance of hard work. If our colleague wasn't at school or football practice, you were likely to find him at his dad's store lending a hand to customers. As anyone from a small town can attest, that little store served as far more than just a place to buy goods. It was also a local gathering place, a place where people were liable to share their hopes and concerns, and their dreams too.

This is where JEFF SESSIONS developed his core values. It is where he developed an appreciation for the everyday struggles of working people. It is where he learned the importance of listening first, of standing up for what matters, of putting others' needs before one's own. It made him a better person. It made him a pretty good politician too.

Senator SESSIONS is the kind of guy who, with just one conversation, can make you feel as if you have known him your entire life. He is usually the first to arrive at constituent events and the last to leave. He has also made it a priority to travel annually to every county in Alabama—all 67 of them.

His staff will tell you it is these trips home when Senator SESSIONS is really in his element. Driving across Alabama, from sunup to sundown, milkshake in hand, or maybe a Blizzard from Dairy Queen, Heath bar flavor, thank you very much, that is Senator SESSIONS.

Now, it is not hard to see why Alabamians keep sending him back to Washington. Last time out he scooped up a modest 97 percent of the vote.

Part of Senator SESSIONS' secret to success is simple enough; he is just a likable guy.

Our colleague is one of the most humble and most considerate people you will ever meet. He is a true Southern gentleman. He is pretty funny too. His staff would certainly agree. They still remember the time he accidentally ran his suit coat through the paper shredder. They saved the evidence too. Let's hope that one makes it into his archives.

Sessions' alums call this man a mentor. They remain ever grateful for his focus on their own development. I know they are going to miss grabbing a burger and fries with him at Johnny Rockets.

They are really going to miss his wife Mary as well. We will around here too.

Now, in Sessions' world, Mary Sessions is something of a legend. She has been our colleague's strongest sup-

porter, no matter the task before him. She has been a source of encouragement and a friend to all of Team Sessions. I doubt they will ever forget Mary's friendship or her famous cream cheese pound cake.

One thing they will not soon forget either is Senator SESSIONS' intense focus on the office's letter-writing operation. Sometimes that meant working weekends with the boss to get the constituent correspondence just right.

There is no doubt Senator SESSIONS is very, very particular about his writing, whether it is constituent letters or legal memoranda, and there is a good reason for that. Words, as this lawyer is known to say, have meaning. It is a philosophy that has animated Senator SESSIONS' longtime love affair with the law.

He believes in equal application of the law to each of us, regardless of how we look or where we come from. It is a genuine passion for him. It is an area of deep importance and principle.

Senator SESSIONS will stand up for what he believes is right, even when it isn't always the easiest thing to do.

Now, this is a guy who fought for Republican principles long before—long before—Alabama became a red State. He stood up to the George Wallace dynasty as a young man. He stared down the forces of hate as U.S. attorney and State attorney general. He has continued to fight for the equal application of the law as well, not to mention a growing economy, a streamlined government, and a strong defense.

Of course, as anyone who knows him will tell you, Senator SESSIONS is a lawyer's lawyer. He is willing to hear the other side of an argument. He is willing to make the other side of the argument as well. He is also willing to be persuaded.

He has worked across the aisle with Democrats like the late Senator Ted Kennedy and the assistant Democratic leader on issues like prison reform and sentencing reform. Democrats have praised him as someone who is "straightforward and fair" and "wonderful to work with."

The politics of the moment may have changed, but the truth of statements like these endures. Deep down, each of us knows these things remain just as true about Senator SESSIONS today as they did when our Democratic colleagues praised him.

Fair in action, bound to the Constitution, a defender of civil rights, this is the man we have come to know in the Senate. It is the same man we can expect to see as Attorney General.

Senator SESSIONS may be leaving the Senate, but there is plenty this Eagle Scout will be taking with him. That includes the motto he has lived by—"Be Prepared"—which is so engrained in our friend that it is even engraved into the back of the granite nameplate on his desk. It is a simple phrase with a simple message, and it seems particularly fitting for our friend today.

He has a big job ahead of him. I think he is up to the task. He is tough, but he

is fair. He is persistent, but he is respectful. He is a likeable guy, a principled colleague, and an honest partner. And while we are really going to miss him, we also couldn't be prouder of him.

So let us thank Senator SESSIONS for his many years of service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Sessions nomination?

Mr. CORNYN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS (when his name was called). Present.

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 59 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Cochran	Inhofe	Sasse
Collins	Isakson	Scott
Corker	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tillis
Cruz	Manchin	Toomey
Daines	McCain	Wicker
Enzi	McConnell	Young
Ernst	Moran	
Fischer	Murkowski	

NAYS—47

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Harris	Peters
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Sanders
Brown	Heitkamp	Schatz
Cantwell	Hirono	Schumer
Cardin	Kaine	Shaheen
Carper	King	Stabenow
Casey	Klobuchar	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	
Franken	Murray	Wyden

ANSWERED “PRESENT”—1

Sessions

The nomination was confirmed.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the motion to reconsider.

Mr. McCONNELL. I move to table the motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table.

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Thomas Price, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Mitch McConnell, David Perdue, Johnny Isakson, Tom Cotton, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch, Jerry Moran, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, Lamar Alexander, John Barrasso, Orrin G. Hatch, Jeff Flake, John Cornyn, Shelley Moore Capito, John Thune, Richard Burr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of THOMAS PRICE, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: The Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 60 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Alexander	Fischer	Murkowski
Barrasso	Flake	Paul
Blunt	Gardner	Perdue
Boozman	Graham	Portman
Burr	Grassley	Risch
Capito	Hatch	Roberts
Cassidy	Heller	Rounds
Cochran	Hoeven	Rubio
Collins	Inhofe	Sasse
Corker	Isakson	Scott
Cardin	Johnson	Shelby
Carper	Kennedy	Sullivan
Casey	Cotton	Thune
Coons	Crapo	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Daines	Toomey
Donnelly	Enzi	Wicker
Duckworth	Ernst	Young

NAYS—48

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murray
Bennet	Harris	Nelson
Blumenthal	Hassan	Peters
Booker	Heinrich	Reed
Brown	Heitkamp	Sanders
Cantwell	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Kaine	Schumer
Carper	King	Shaheen
Casey	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Coons	Leahy	Tester
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Udall
Donnelly	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	McCaskill	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Feinstein	Merkley	Whitehouse
Franken	Murphy	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Sessions

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 48.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Alabama.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues in the Senate. Serving in this body for 20 years has been one of the great honors of my life. I remember coming up when I was running for the Senate and going to the Republican luncheon. They said: Well, you have a few minutes. You can say something, but don't talk very long because people don't want to hear a lot from you, frankly.

So I told them that I could think of no greater honor than to represent the people of Alabama in the greatest deliberative body in the history of the world. That is what I feel about this body. I want to say, I appreciate the full debate we have had. I want to thank those who, after it all, found sufficient confidence in me to cast their vote to confirm me as the next Attorney General of the United States of America.

I have to tell you, I fully understand the august responsibilities of that office. I served as United States attorney for 12 years and assistant United States attorney for a little over 2 years. During that time, the very idea of those great leaders in Washington leading those departments I served under make it almost impossible for me to conceive, I am that person and will have that opportunity and that responsibility.

So I understand the seriousness of it. I have an interest in law enforcement. I have an interest in the rule of law. So I want to thank those of you who supported me and had confidence in me. I want to thank President Donald Trump. He believes in the rule of law. He believes in protecting the American people from crime and violence. He believes in a lawful system of immigration that serves the national interest, within bounds, and those are things that may from time to time come before the Office of Attorney General.

I look forward to lawfully and properly advancing those items and others that we as a body support, and the American people believe in.

The Attorney General—this is a law enforcement office first and foremost. People expect the Department defend us, defend us from terrorists, defend us from criminals, defend the country from fraudsters who raid the U.S. Treasury time and time again and too often are not being caught or held to account for it.

I believe that is a big responsibility of the U.S. Attorney General and the whole Department of Justice. As a former Federal prosecutor, I worked regularly, nights, weekends, and became personal friends with fabulous Federal investigative agents. They give their lives, place their lives on the line