those with disabilities to explore work, get a part-time job or an internship, and take that money and put it back into their ABLE account.

Today, 50,000 people in my State will be eligible for ABLE accounts. It will help them find a job that gives them independence, dignity, and purpose. We all recognize that a job is a foundation for a better life.

A booming economy isn't the only reason why Americans are better off. We have also made significant investments to combat the opioid crisis and human trafficking, target dangerous criminals, and make schools safer.

After the Obama administration left our Armed Forces depleted, we have made good on promises to revive and rebuild our military. In addition to giving our troops the biggest pay increase in almost a decade, we have provided for the largest increase in defense in 15 years. Our troops, including those I have the privilege of representing at Fairchild Air Force Base, will now have additional resources to train, address the readiness crisis, and keep America secure.

Madam Speaker, the American people don't want rhetoric. They want results. After years of slow growth, lack of confidence, stagnant wages, and a stagnant economy, they asked for a better way. I am proud to have been a part of a group that has proven that we can get those results done. By putting people first and focusing on improving lives, we have delivered real results and a better way forward. That is why Americans are better off today. I invite everyone to learn more at better.gop.

Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. FERGUSON), serving on the Committee on the Budget, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and the Committee on Education and the Workforce, representing the Third District of Georgia.

Mr. FERGUSON. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from California for leading this Special Order.

What a year and half it has been since I came to Congress. There have been a lot of positive things that have gone on, and I think Americans feel that they are better off now.

If you listen to the media and the rhetoric, you wouldn't know it. Every time I travel home and I talk to the folks in the Third District of Georgia, I get this sense of optimism, this reality that they are doing better. Their wages are up. There are more job opportunities. They are doing better. They feel safer, and they feel more secure.

In spite of what you might have heard on TV and in the other parts of the media, more than 177 bills have been signed into law in the 115th Congress. That is the most of any Congress at this point since 2008. The results are clear: Americans are better off.

I have heard from small businesses like Shred-X in Griffin, Georgia; Custom Truck and Body Works in Woodbury, Georgia; and Emma Hill Manufacturing in LaGrange, Georgia. All of these businesses are making investments. They are expanding. They are being more productive. Most importantly, they are hiring more people, and they are investing in their people with higher wages and better training. Families are doing better throughout our district.

But these businesses are doing more than simply investing in their people and in their businesses. They are investing in their communities. So our communities are becoming more helpful.

All of this is a result of a tax reform bill, a better regulatory environment, and a changing attitude in education that ensures that people pursue their talents and not just a degree. They are involved in making sure that they are able to make a living in viable careers for a long period of time.

It is not just the economy that is making us more secure. We have invested heavily in our military, and we have fully funded our men and women serving this Nation. Most importantly, when they returned home, we have made the changes in the VA that, over time, will make sure that they have the benefits that they have earned and, quite candidly, that they deserve.

We have also made investments in many other areas. Think about what we have been able to accomplish with human trafficking. We are beginning to take steps to really change how we view addiction and the opioid crisis. We are making progress, and that is making Americans better.

So it is easy to get caught up in the news of the moment, to get clouded from the really good things that are happening. But we are here to remind America that things are better now because of the work that we have done in this House of Representatives.

Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

TRUMP'S LIFELONG LEGACY: STACKING THE COURTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. FOXX). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. EVANS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. EVANS. Madam Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to anchor this CBC Special Order hour. I would like to thank the CBC chair, Chairman RICHMOND, for his leadership in this effort.

For the next 60 minutes, we have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people about issues of great importance to the Congressional Black Caucus and many of the constituents we represent.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FERGUSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I am going to do something highly unusual today, because my colleague who is here from the District of Columbia knows an awful lot about this subject. I have watched her; I have observed her. She has taught a few classes and a few people on this subject matter, and she is an expert.

So I think the best way to start off is with a person who was a former law professor who teaches, who really understands what our Supreme Court means as the third element, with the legislative and the chief executive. I have heard her in Congressional Black Caucus meetings.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia, Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the kind words of my friend from Pennsylvania, and I certainly appreciate his leadership of this Special Order this evening. It is a subject of immense importance to the American people, none more so, Mr. Speaker, than people of color in the United States of America.

So I would like to begin this Special Order by speaking about President Trump's district and circuit court nominees and then about his Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, who serves on the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. That is the circuit of my own home district, the District of Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, long before I came to the House, I had the distinct honor of arguing and winning a case before the United States Supreme Court. That case was a free speech case where I represented plaintiffs with whom I profoundly disagreed. As we look at the President's nominees, especially to the Supreme Court, one wonders today how these nominees would rule.

Let's look first at President Trump's nominees so far to the circuit courts and the district court. This is an amazing, unprecedented figure for the 21st century. His nominees are 90.1 percent white, 2.3 percent African American.

Now, one way to look at this is to look at another Republican President. So I said to my staff: Find the racial makeup of President Bush's nominees.

Remember, African Americans don't expect a Republican President to offer anything like the number of nominees of, for example, President Barack Obama, not because he was African American, but because he was, after all, a Democrat. That is not the standard to which I am holding this President. The standard I am holding this President to is, by comparison, to Republican Presidents.

The lion's share of President Bush's appointees was also White. I had no complaint then. I don't recall the Congressional Black Caucus taking to the floor and saying: How come the lion's share of President Bush's nominees was White, more than 85 percent?

That reflected his party and his supporters.

But 8.5 percent of President Bush's nominees were African American, compared to 2.3 percent of Trump's nominees. So that means that President Bush—and I am looking at the comparable period; I am not looking at his overall two terms in office; I am looking at up until now—he had appointed three times as many African Americans to the bench. Far more Whites, and I have no complaint about that.

But the Supreme Court and the Federal courts have meant everything to African Americans. I do not need to point out that the political bodies, the House and the Senate, took many years to recognize equal protection for African Americans. It didn't happen, indeed, until the courts made it happen in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, showing, I think, that the courts are of immense importance to a group that is not the majority and must depend upon the fairness of the majority and even more so on the courts, which are supposed to play no favorites whatsoever, only to equal justice under the law.

The President and the Republican Senate have made the Federal courts a top priority. I believe they have appointed as many as 40 nominees, if I am not mistaken. In fact, the Supreme Court means so much to them, even though they already have a majority on the Supreme Court with their most recent nominee, it means so much to them that our Republican friends in the Senate are wiping out their entire August recess to stay here to try to get Brett Kavanaugh nominated, and there is a fierce fight underway.

I am speaking about not only Brett Kavanaugh, the judge who sits on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, but I want to give you some sense of judges who sit on other circuits in other district courts, to make it clear why the Congressional Black Caucus is so alarmed at what is happening with federal court nominees.

□ 2000

Some Federal court nominees proposed by this President have had to be rejected because they were unacceptable on any court, beyond any sense of conservatism.

Most recently—I believe it was just last week—Ryan Bounds was to serve on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. A Republican Senate forced Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL to withdraw his name because two Republican Senators, Senator TIM SCOTT of South Carolina and Senator MARCO RUBIO of Florida, had indicated that they could not vote for Ryan Bounds because of remarks he had made on multiculturalism and racial issues. You don't want anybody on the bench who has already shown racial animus.

Since the Senate is so closely divided—51 Republicans to 49 Democrats—they were forced to withdraw Ryan Bounds' nomination.

I point that out to let you know that it is not a done deal that Brett Kavanaugh will go on the Supreme Court. That close number is going to hold up, we think, not only for Democrats, but when Senate hearings are over, we believe it will be very difficult even for some of our Republican friends to vote for Judge Kavanaugh.

Remember, the Senate represents a rather broad swath of people, so they will have to watch out for their own elections as well.

Let me give another example of how extreme President Trump's nominees to the Federal courts can be. Three more have had to be withdrawn related to race. Again, I am going to give you examples, and you will say nobody would ever have nominated such people to any court in the United States.

Last year, the White House was forced to withdraw a district court nominee, Brett Talley. What forced his withdrawal were reports that he had defended the first Ku Klux Klan in an online post—that is, the first, I suppose, emergence of the Ku Klux Klan—as recently as in a 2011 posting.

Jeff Mateer had his nomination withdrawn over reports that transgender children were—and I am quoting him now—part of ''Satan's plan.''

Now, look, if I were to call out these remarks, you might think that nobody thought of for the Federal bench would be who I was talking about, but that is exactly who we were talking about. That is why the Congressional Black Caucus cannot possibly support Judge Kavanaugh.

We understand that whatever nominee comes forward is going to be a conservative nominee. We are not asking for the nominee we would appoint. We are simply not asking for and will do all we can to oppose nominees who are beyond the American pale. I am speaking for the Congressional Black Caucus, which represents 17 million African Americans.

It is interesting to note that we have, in looking at Judge Kavanaugh, and here I am going on to the Supreme Court, in looking at his decisions, we have grown truly concerned about his lack of respect for precedent. I say that even though, increasingly, these precedents run against us. But when they have run for us, they have been on matters of equal protection under the law. And Judge Kavanaugh has shown an uncommon disrespect for precedent.

I invite my Republican friends, who also respect precedent because many of those precedents will reinforce their own views, to be leery of any judge who disregards precedent. His views on civil rights and equal protection have been out of the mainstream, but there haven't been a lot of them, so I have had to look closely to see what his views actually are.

I must say that, even his conservative colleagues and, I must emphasize, on the D.C. Circuit, which is now a conservative circuit with more Republican judges than Democratic judges, have often had to disagree with their colleague Judge Kavanaugh. He has achieved a higher number of dissents than any member of the D.C. Circuit Court annually.

How could that happen? This is a conservative court. Who is he dissenting from? He is dissenting from not only the Democratic appointees but from his own colleagues appointed by Republicans.

Now, of course, the notion of equal protection has disproportionately protected minorities and women, so we are very mindful of such decisions, even when they don't directly entail people of color whom we directly represent.

For example, we are concerned that no Americans be arrested without probable cause, and if you are a minority in any country, the probability of arrest will be greater than if you are among the majority.

We are concerned about the Affordable Care Act, again because of the disproportionate number of African Americans who are affected.

I am going to cite some decisions that show that Judge Kavanaugh cannot be trusted to uphold what even his conservative colleagues have said on such issues as these.

Let us look at arrests without probable cause. I bring that up because of the churning of relevent issues in our country. A week does not go by that there hasn't been a shooting of an African American by a police officer. This issue is among the very top in the African American community, the concern about overzealous police officers.

Kavanaugh has both spoken out and written, over and over again, in such a way to indicate that he would weaken probable cause standards that have stood for the ages—that is how long they have been there—making them, as he has written, more flexible.

As you consider this possible change as one about which African Americans are concerned, I hope you understand that most of the people who need probable cause in this country are White.

So decisions making it easier to do searches without a warrant or ''individualized suspicion''—I am quoting him—are decisions he believes need to be looked at more closely, even though the existing precedents has been clear, and they have not been challenged in other circuits.

Perhaps the rule that most Americans understand best is the so-called Miranda rule. That is a rule that says you don't have to incriminate yourself. Judge Kavanaugh appears to want to narrow that rule. I didn't think I would ever see the day when, after decades—must be 50 years—of Miranda juris prudence, there would be any judge sitting on any bench who would want to narrow the self-incrimination rule.

Of special interest to African Americans are Judge Kavanaugh's apparent

views on Roe v. Wade, or the right of a woman to choice. We don't know precisely where he stands on choice, but there is a very troubling precedent from this circuit involving an undocumented woman who had been found to be entitled to an abortion.

Now, that hadn't happened here. The case was in the D.C. Circuit, but the ruling was from a Texas court, perhaps the most conservative on matters of abortion, which made this woman go through many steps before deciding that she, indeed, qualified under Roe v. Wade for an abortion.

Judge Kavanaugh tried to do something that is unfathomable. The time was running. The House wants abortions done within 20 weeks. Roe v. Wade allows more time. The time was running, but Judge Kavanaugh ruled that she should have to get a sponsor before she could, in fact, enforce her constitutional rights to choice. His own court overruled Judge Kavanaugh.

I bring that up in no small part because African American women, for example, use abortion at a rate that is beyond the average American woman, so this issue matters to the Congressional Black Caucus.

On the Affordable Care Act, we have perhaps the most astonishing of Judge Kavanaugh's decisions. He hasn't said the ACA is unconstitutional. That is pretty hard to say at the circuit court level. But he has said something that has never been said before in American juris prudence: that a President may decline to enforce a law even after the Supreme Court has said that the law or statute is constitutional.

Understand what this means. The Affordable Care Act has been found to be constitutional. Yes, there are still attempts in this House to overturn it, but it stands. It is so popular that, while Brett Kavanaugh is being discussed in the Senate during the month of August, Senate Democrats are going to be talking about the Affordable Care Act because it has become one of the most popular laws in the United States today, even though the Republicans have done all they could to cripple it.

Judge Kavanaugh has said that the President may decline to enforce a law like the Affordable Care Act even after it is found to be constitutional. What happens to the rule of law if that becomes the standing law of the United States?

This is not just a wrong view but a dangerous view. It would allow Presidents to pick and choose which laws to enforce, notwithstanding the courts, that a President could stand as the sole decider of what laws to enforce, notwithstanding the jurisdiction of the United States Supreme Court.

□ 2015

Mr. Speaker, Brett Kavanaugh isn't fit to go to the Supreme Court of the United States based on the record he has shown. Yet Judge Kavanaugh seems to have gone out of his way to try to write his way onto the Supreme Court.

Why would he write so often in dissent? Why would he so often in write the law, views that are uncommon among Republicans?

I think he was trying to draw the attention of President Trump. And one of the reasons I think so is the last issue I will discuss, and that is this nominee's view, Judge Kavanaugh's view, of the independent counsel. You really had to dig this one up.

As recently as 2017, he dug back into a decision of long ago. This is a 1988 decision, Morrison v. Olson. He said he had not agreed with the author of the decision. It was Chief Justice William Rehnquist, the Republican Chief Justice. But he went out of his way to wonder about Judge Rehnquist's holding in that case, Morrison v. Olson, that the independent counsel was constitutional.

Why has Judge Kavanaugh gone out of his way to talk about the independent counsel when, in fact, there was no such case before him?

I think he was sending a signal to this President: Don't worry about the independent counsel as far as I am concerned. I quarrel with whether or not the independent counsel law is constitutional.

If there wasn't an independent counsel law, really, what would be the deterrent to a lawless President?

The deterrent, of course, would have to be impeachment. Impeachment is understood to be a political but difficult process. That is why it is very hard to get.

So right now, we have matters before the independent counsel that, indeed, are ordinary criminal and civil matters. The notion that somebody sitting on any Federal court of the United States believes that the independent counsel statute is unconstitutional or could be—he hasn't said that it is unconstitutional. He has come so close to it that it is noteworthy, for anyone judging whether he should go on the Supreme Court of the United States.

Judge Kavanaugh has demonstrated such a departure from established American law that one wonders why he wants to be on the Supreme Court of the United States. He has made a lifetime record of numerous dissents, I think, in order to show that he means to bring an even sharper departure from precedent than we have seen.

One of the most important and most conservative ways in which the courts operate is by precedent. So it is very hard to overturn precedent. But a determined member of the Court can chip away at precedent, and, we are sure, can chip away at the rights of the minority who is disproportionately dependent on a fair Supreme Court.

So I say to my good friend from Pennsylvania that we have our work cut out for us. But the President's district and circuit nominees have not all been upheld, and that should encourage us to know that, while we are not in the Senate, we do have two members of the Congressional Black Caucus who are in the Senate, and we must all be doing all we can here in the House to help them make the American people understand what is at stake and to make sure that the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Judge Brett Kavanaugh, does not become a member of the Supreme Court of the United States.

I thank my good friend for his leadership this evening.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I would ask my good colleague from the District one or two questions, if I could.

I listened very intently. One of my favorite decisions that came down was May 17, 1954, Brown v. Board of Education.

Mr. Speaker, the President asked Black Americans, after he came to the city of Philadelphia, he said: What do we have to lose? I think, ''what the hell do we have to lose?''

So I ask the gentlewoman that question in the context of Brown v. Board of Education, and that is over 64 years ago now. And for where we are, I just heard her very succinctly say about his ability to chip away and not, you know, be able to fully overturn.

So I would ask her to talk a little bit about how would she see anything relating to Brown v. Board of Education and his ability in any of his writings relating to that particular decision that came down.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, my good friend who raises the question about Brown v. Board of Education may seem to be raising the question about such settled law, both with the American people and the courts, that it couldn't possibly come up.

If I may first respond to the gentleman by saying that one of President Trump's nominees was asked where she stood on Brown v. Board of Education, and she declined to give an answer. More than 50 years after the Supreme Court, for the first time, recognized that African Americans must be treated the same as everyone else in the United States, we now have a nominee who questions even that precedent.

You may not be able to overturn it, but consider the notion of chipping away any part of it, remembering what it meant is spread now not across schools, but across the juris prudence of equality.

I appreciate the question. I say to my good friend from Pennsylvania, I appreciate the question so that Americans will understand that our opposition to Judge Kavanaugh is not far-fetched, that we are talking about a Supreme Court nominee, who leads us to believe that the most settled of decisions could be rocked by this nominee to the Supreme Court.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I would ask one other question.

The gentlewoman also laid out the percentages of numbers. Does the gentlewoman think there is some sort of philosophical packing taking place here when she describes the 8 percent versus the 2 percent. But just the 8 percent, is there some type of strategy

going on here relating to packing the Court, the Highest Court in the land, at least in some way influencing for years, 25, 50 years down the line? Is there something going on here that the public should know and be aware of?

The gentlewoman has obviously studied the court system, the judicial system herself over many, many years. Has the gentlewoman ever seen—and I heard her make the comparison of President Bush, and I understood the comparison she made.

It seems like there is something else going on here besides just putting individuals on the Court, but there is something like some type of philosophical strategy going on here.

Am I missing some point in what the gentlewoman just laid out to us?

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, that is a most interesting question. And as the gentleman indicated, I pointed out that I didn't expect a Republican President to come anywhere near Democratic Presidents in proposing nominees. However, I don't expect complete disdain for the importance of the courts to African Americans. I would not expect the lowest number of African Americans appointed to the courts of the United States in memory, certainly not since the 20th century in Brown v. Board of Education.

There had been some sense among Republican Presidents that one way to indicate that a Republican President believed in equal justice was to propose some African Americans on the court. Now, when you get to 90 percent—more than 90 percent nominees White, you are sending a very strong message on equal protection to African Americans.

This President has been accused of racism because of some of the things he has said. For example, Charlottesville, when he seemed to be for those killing people and not against them. I am not sure what his personal views are, but I am sure that when he shows disdain for equal protection and has given us no evidence that he understands equal protection, that we have every reason to wonder what it is that he intends to do to show people of every background that he is for equal justice.

It does seem to me that the President needs to make some gesture to indicate that he believes that all people are created equal. The best gesture would be to bite into this 90 percent—this 2 percent figure, a little over 2 percent figure of African Americans appointed to the bench, raise that number, as the Congressional Black Caucus calls on him to do this evening.

He may have, for example, been reacting to those staff who have been giving him judges to appoint, but I say to you, I say to my good friend from Pennsylvania, that there are many Senators who, I am sure, have suggested some qualified African American nominees or could do so.

I would urge the President to wipe away this notion that he thinks the United States of America should have as close to an all White judiciary as he can get by talking to, listening to some Senators who I am almost certain will have already put forward some African Americans, or surely will be doing so in the future.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, the one last question I would ask the gentlewoman: The Congressional Black Caucus gave a document, as a matter of fact, to the President that said we have a lot to lose.

In asking that question—and the gentlewoman has again done an excellent job in laying out historical perspective for where we are—obviously, as African Americans, it seems like, to me, there has to be a huge fear factor because, if the only check and balance, obviously, is the Congressional Black Caucus being the conscience of the Congress, and the United States Senate, you know, is that check and balance, what would you say to African Americans, Latinos, others relating to where we are, because this is a very crucial time.

What would the gentlewoman say when he says, ''What the hell do you have to lose?'' and we say, ''We have a lot to lose''? What would you say? What would you say to the people?

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, the most important thing I would say to the people is look at that 49–51 figure of how close the Senate is, and within a couple of months, there will be an election. We could turn a lot of this around.

If, as the polls tend to show, Democrats capture the House, and they are increasingly showing that they will keep the Senate, it seems to me all the American people can do now is take it to the ultimate remedy, and that is to change the Congress. And that way, it seems to me, would slow these nominees or get nominees where there will be some consultation with Democrats, as there has been in the past, often, in the Senate because you want to get your nominee through.

So I don't think, by any means, that there is anything to fear because there is an election coming and I believe that what this nominee for the Supreme Court and others for the district courts—and here we have African Americans mindful of the district courts and the courts of appeals throughout the United States. Surely all of that is, forgive the word, ammunition to go to the polls to make sure we halt this stripping of equal protection from the Federal courts of the United States.

□ 2030

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the great District of Columbia, where we need to make sure that she has a right to vote in this body is also something that needs to take place in terms of the District of Columbia and representation, and I thank her for that knowledge and information that she has provided to us.

I have someone else, Mr. Speaker, who I have grown deeply in understanding her thoughts and her comments. I had the chance of visiting the Seventh Congressional District in the great State of Alabama. She is moving and making a lot of things happen there in Alabama. She definitely said: ''I have to speak on this.'' I heard her give some comments before on this, and she has some real thoughts about what is taking place in the courts.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL).

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his leadership on tonight's topic. I also associate myself with his comments, as well as the comments of Delegate ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON. Congresswoman NORTON has been a steward on the issue of judicial appointments in the United States Congress for many decades, and it is an honor to follow her tonight in her leadership against the Trump administration's attempt to stack the courts with extreme rightwing political allies.

Just as President Trump has attacked our Nation's free press, just as he has attacked our intelligence agency, this President is now targeting our Nation's third branch of government, our treasured court system. We cannot let President Trump destroy yet another institution of American democracy.

The importance of a fair and nonpartisan court system cannot be overestimated. It is our Supreme Court, overall, that decided Brown v. Board of Education, the case that ended segregation in America's schools. It was our courts which struck down voter suppression laws, like poll taxes that freed and allowed lots and lots of African Americans in my home State of Alabama to vote. It was the Supreme Court that protected the work of the free press and our Nation's newspapers when President Nixon attempted to silence them. And it was our Supreme Court which struck down discriminatory State laws prohibiting interracial and gay marriage.

Those court decisions were the product of judges and justices in our judicial system, who put our Constitution and the law first, irrespective of the pressure they faced from politicians and from Presidents.

Mr. Speaker, the opposite can be true as well. When our courts are stacked with political allies, who put politics first and justice last, our Nation suffers. We need think of no other than the infamous Supreme Court decision which paved the way for Japanese American internment camps as an example. It is a reminder of all that can go wrong when our courts are stacked with political allies.

Today, our court system continues to decide questions that will have consequences for generations to come. When it comes to gerrymandering and discriminatory voter ID laws, our courts are still considering cases that will impact our right to vote.

As this administration continues its assault on our free press, we should have no doubt that the courts will be

faced with First Amendment questions in the years to come.

That is why President Trump's attempt to stack the court is so concerning. Last year, this administration appointed nine appellate judges, more than any President since President Nixon during their first term in office. And where do those open appellate seats come from? These are judgeships which Republicans systematically held open during President Barack Obama's final 2 years. I can speak with authority on that fact because, in the State of Alabama, we had not one, not two, but three open Federal judgeships that were held open for 2-plus years, and one 11th Circuit appellate judgeship that was held open for 2 years.

Yes, the people of Alabama were not well served by the fact that my Republican colleagues withheld appointing any person to that, in hopes that they would win the Presidential election in 2016. Now it was a good bet for them, but it was a bad bet for the American people and for the people of Alabama. For you see, the judges that were sitting, took on an inordinate amount of caseload that was unacceptable.

I know that for one, in the Middle District of Alabama, there was a senior judge by the name of Myron Thompson, who had 120 percent caseload. Yes, that is right. As a senior judge, he not only had a caseload that surpassed his caseload when he was an active judge, but, as a senior judge, took on an extraordinary number of cases. Why? Because in the Middle District of Alabama, there was only one judge sitting, as well as one senior judge, Judge Thompson.

This is unacceptable. This is an unacceptable play towards politics that, in the end, disserved the people of Alabama and disserved the American public.

The same was true on the Supreme Court level. Yes, Judge Merrick Garland was supremely qualified to sit on the Supreme Court, and was President Obama's choice to sit on the Supreme Court. But a year prior to the 2016 election, the GOP decided that it was not the time for a judge to be appointed when a Federal election was going to take place within a year.

Now, one can say the same thing about the fact that we have a midterm election that is coming up in 2018. But, oh, no, we don't get the same courtesy. This is politics before people, it is unacceptable, and we should not take it sitting down. That is why I am very happy that the Congressional Black Caucus tonight, under the leadership of the gentleman from Pennsylvania, is talking about stacking of the Supreme Court and its importance to all Americans.

I can speak firsthand how important the court system was to the civil rights and voting rights movement of America. As a daughter of Selma, Alabama, and as the first Black congresswoman from the State of Alabama, I can tell you, unequivocally, that it was because of the protections of the equal protection amendment, it was because of the Constitution and those brave judges, judges like Frank Johnson of the Middle District of Alabama, who stood against pressure to do what was right for all Americans, interpreting the Constitution as it was meant to be: that all men and women are created equal, and that the equal protection of the law extends to all Americans, irrespective of race and gender.

So I think it is really important that we remember from whence we all come. This is a proud tradition that is important that we uphold.

What is even more concerning is the temperament displayed by the court picks under this administration and their lack of qualification for the job. Last year, President Trump nominated four judicial nominees who didn't pass the American Bar Association's standard for being rated qualified by the ABA. Now, that is a simple standard.

The ABA standard of requiring that one be qualified is simple: a nominee must show integrity, professional competence, and judicial temperament. During his 8 years in office, President Obama never—I repeat—never selected a judicial nominee who received an unqualified rating from the ABA. Yet, this President nominated four unqualified judicial candidates in a single year, which is the worst record in American history.

One was to a Federal bench in Alabama. The nominee was Brett Talley, who withdrew his name in 2017 for his lack of judicial experience. He had never tried a case, and yet this person was nominated by this administration to a life appointment on the bench in the Middle District of Alabama. Unacceptable. Thank God, calmer and cooler heads prevailed and he withdrew his name. But the reality is, having unqualified candidates should not go under this administration. We should stand up and speak out against it.

That is why I am glad to join with my colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus as we talk about what is at stake. A heck of a lot is at stake. We have a lot to lose under this administration, and it starts with the Federal courts.

The reason President Trump has elected so many unqualified judges to fill our courts is that they are political allies of the extreme right. Every single one of President Trump's judicial nominees are allies of the rightwing, attacking women's rights, attacking human rights, attacking healthcare and workers' rights, and, of course, attacking voting rights.

President Trump's recent nominee of Judge Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court is no different. A review of Judge Kavanaugh's record shows that he will drive the Supreme Court further to the right, threatening and further attacking healthcare, our right to vote, affirmative action, and all of the important progress that we have made as a Nation when it comes to civil rights and civil liberties.

It was Judge Kavanaugh who upheld a discriminatory voter ID law as a judge on the D.C. Court of Appeals. Faced with a South Carolina voter ID law, which the Obama administration reported would disenfranchise tens of thousands of minority voters, Judge Kavanaugh ruled that the measure was not discriminatory.

The Obama administration said this same voter ID law violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a similar piece of legislation, and Judge Kavanaugh approved it. That is bad news for voting rights. And where I come from, representing Alabama's Seventh Congressional District, the voting rights, and the civil rights district of America, that is bad news for Americans. We should stand up for the equal rights of all Americans to vote. There should be no modern-day barriers to voting. And to have a Supreme Court nominee who has so blatantly gone against that is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, on voting rights and so many other issues, from healthcare to police brutality, the American people cannot trust Trump's judicial nominees to put the law before politics. We must call on the Senate to stop President Trump's attempt to stack the courts. Nothing less than the third branch of government, our democracy, is at stake.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for allowing me to speak on this issue, and I ask that all Americans oppose this nominee to the Supreme Court.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from the great State of Alabama a question.

This President talked about cleaning up the swamp. She may recall he talked about that issue. From listening to her just now, it appears that we know how it was taking place with his Cabinet, but we are talking about something very sacred, and that is the courts. Can she talk a little bit about, does she see cleaning up the swamp taking place here relating to the courts? Because as I listened to her, it sounds like the courts are not being cleaned up.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Pennsylvania is exactly right. The swamp only needs to be cleaned up when the swamp doesn't agree with this President.

We have seen, in the nomination of Brett Talley to Alabama's Middle District, that he did not report that his wife worked for the White House counsel. Now, this, to me, is an important disclosure. You can't be more on the inside, in the swamp, drowning in the swamp, than to have a relationship like your wife working for the White House.

I think it is really hypocritical that this White House would talk about draining the swamp, and yet choose judicial nominees that are clearly in line with far rightwing views and are clearly a part of the problem, not a part of the solution.

I think that we, the American people, need to really speak out when it comes to the Supreme Court nominee, and, actually, all Federal judgeships.

I had the great honor of clerking for the first African American judge in the State of Alabama, Judge U.W. Clemon. It was a great honor of my life as a young lawyer to sit at his feet and to learn. And I have to tell you that it is disheartening to me to see people who are woefully unqualified getting the opportunity to be nominated to a Federal bench. These are life appointments, life appointments that allow people to sit in those seats for decades to come and, therefore, decide decisions decades to come.

□ 2045

I know that when you talk to our Senators, they will, if they are truthful, tell you that some of the most pressing legacy issues for them are the nominations to the Supreme Court and the nominations to the Federal court. Why? Because these nominations, life appointments, have lasting effects that yield way beyond the actual nomination itself.

It is unfortunate to me, because when we think about, of the three branches government that worked for the civil rights movement and worked for all those freedom fighters, it was the Federal court that, with its independence, was able to grant so many opportunities to those freedom riders.

I think about Frank Johnson, a young judge from Montgomery, Alabama, who grew up in rural Alabama and had the temerity, had the audacity, had the courage to do what was right in the face of mounting pressures that came from his White citizenry around him to do the right thing and to actually issue that injunction that allowed marchers, such as our colleague, JOHN LEWIS, to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, which brought us the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Where is our courage today? I ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania. We have to stand up in the face of such overt partisanship and speak out against it.

The balance of the Court is so important. So much of the progress that we have seen as a Nation, we have always been one Supreme Court Justice away from a lot of that progress being eroded. It is with great sadness that I see Justice Kennedy leave, but it is with greater sadness that I see the nominee, Kavanaugh, coming before the Senate for confirmation as the next Federal Justice.

I do know that politics and elections have consequences, but when I think about the scale of progress and what affects that progress, nothing is more telling, nothing is more important, than the Supreme Court.

I hope that aggrieved persons, irrespective of their gender, irrespective of their race and who they love, that they can come before the Supreme Court and get a fair hearing.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague another question, but before I do that, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FASO). The gentleman from Pennsylvania has 4 minutes remaining.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, in the past, Judge Kavanaugh has emphasized the importance of ''checking political alliances at the door.''

So I ask the gentlewoman that question relating to what she just said because, in addition to the dark future for landmark decisions like Roe v. Wade, voting rights, affirmative action, Brown v. Board of Education, accessibility to affordable healthcare could be greatly diminished, the gentlewoman said that has consequences. And this is his quote. He said ''check political alliances at the door.''

So tell us now, we have got about 4 minutes, tell us, can we believe that he will check the political alliances?

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Well, he has a very expansive record. He sat on the bench now for over a decade, so there is an expansive record there. I believe in looking at a person's record to be able to tell what they will do in the future.

His past has shown that he is squarely aligned with the Federalist Society, squarely aligned with the far right. It is because of his extreme views that he is now the nominee.

Now, I would love for him to prove me wrong, but one's history, one's past, is a judge of what one will do in the future. So my great fear is about issues such as the right of the executive branch to overreach. His decisions that relate to that, to me, are why I believe this President chose him, because there has been some overreaching going on in the executive branch, and this President feels that this judge will be more partial toward him.

Now, let's just be very clear. The judge should be about being partial toward the facts and toward the law, irrespective of who the petitioner is. I can tell you that often people say that justice is blind. But the reality is justice often is seen through the eyes of the experience of the judges. That is why it is important to have a bench that is diverse, a bench that has diversity of thought, diversity of philosophy and ideas, because, at the end of the day, we are not monolithic as a people. We all have different views, and we come to those perspectives based on our experiences.

Frankly, this particular judge, this particular nominee, Kavanaugh, does not show that diversity of experience. His views have been clearly aligned with the far right, and I believe that that is woefully out of character with the American public.

I believe that the American public is far more centrist than that and that the American public deserves better than that.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alabama, and I really appreciate her comments and help.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus, with both of my colleagues, all of them today, really have shown how we need to be very conscious of this decision that the Senate is about to make. This is extremely important in talking about the future in America, and we need to understand that we must operate under the Constitution and the rule of law.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to join my colleagues in unequivocally condemning the President's gross assault on the independence of the federal judiciary by stacking the federal courts with unqualified nominees.

Since his inauguration a year and six months ago, the President and his supporters in the Senate have proceeded at breakneck speed to nominate ideological, often-unqualified candidates.

In his first 330 days in office, the President had won confirmation for 12 of his appeals court nominees—the most in an administration's first year since creation of the circuit court system in 1891.

The President's appellate nominees were approved by the Senate in an average of just 20 days after being voted out of the committee—which is eight times faster than President Obama's nominees.

As a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, I am concerned by the pervasive lack of oversight and partisanship that has poisoned our judiciary far more than the collection of highly publicized incidents would have us believe.

We must remember that the judiciary abuses of this Administration are the continuation of the shameless partisanship of Senate Republicans first began with the theft of the seat of Judge Merrick Garland.

Judge Garland had long been considered a prime prospect for the high court, serving as chief judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit—a frequent source of justices that is sometimes called the ''little Supreme Court.''

Widely regarded as a moderate, Judge Garland had been praised in the past by many Republicans, including influential senators such as ORRIN HATCH of Utah.

But even before President Obama had named Judge Garland, and in fact only hours after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, Senate Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL declared in February 2016 that any appointment by the sitting president would be null and void.

Senator MCCONNELL foreclosed any consideration of a nominee for the vacancy until after the 2016 election, nearly a year away.

Mr. Speaker, Supreme Court picks have often been controversial.

There have been contentious hearings and floor debates and contested votes.

But never has a nominee been ignored entirely, as if no vacancy existed.

A federal lawsuit was filed to compel Senator MCCONNELL to hold a vote on Judge Garland, but it was dismissed because the plaintiff lacked stand-ins.

This president has used the levers of his office to continue to divide, rather than unite.

When confronted with a replacement to the Supreme Court's swing vote, the President has chosen an ideologue and a foot soldier of

the Republican Party and the conservative movement.

To be sure, Brett Kavanaugh has acceptable credentials and has enjoyed an undistinguished tenure as a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

But, it is not his credentials or his pedigree which is worrisome.

Rather, throughout his entire career—as a deputy in the right-wing's crusade against President Bill Clinton during the 1990s, as a political operative fighting to prevent the recount in Florida in 2000, which paved the way for the Supreme Court's decision in Bush v. Gore, and thereafter a decade as a stalwart conservative on the country's most important federal appellate court—Brett Kavanaugh has used his legal acumen in the service of decidedly and uncompromisingly conservative causes.

Instead of ensuring that the court will protect the rights of minorities, women, children, and society's most vulnerable, the President has chosen to politicize our halls of justice.

This President has used his Constitutional powers to push down on the scales of lady justice.

Both of the President's Supreme Court appointees—Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh—have drawn withering criticism from respected organizations across the nation.

Marc Morial, the president of the National Urban League, the oldest and largest community-based nonpartisan civil rights organization of its kind, condemned Neil Gorsuch's nomination and the regression of the Supreme Court on civil rights issues.

More recently, the National Urban League, National Action Network, NAACP, NAACP Legal Defense Fund & National Coalition on Black Civic Participation urged citizens to contact Senators to delay confirming Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a nonprofit formed in 1963 at the request of President Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal services addressing racial discrimination, explicitly denounced Kavanaugh's nomination.

President and executive director of Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke remarked that in this critical time for civil rights protections under attack by the administration, ''it would be an abdication of [the Senate's] constitutional responsibility to merely rubber stamp Kavanaugh's nomination'' on partisan grounds.

Rev. Al Sharpton, civil rights leader and President of National Action Network (NAN), released the following statement following President Donald Trump's announcement of the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh:

> Some will pass this off as a middle of the road pick. Don't be fooled. On every issue, Kavanaugh has proven to be an ideologue who will ignore our rights . . . This is a fight for the soul of our country, and we at National Action Network call on the Senate to stop Kavanaugh's nomination at any cost—his confirmation would be a disastrous attack on basic human rights.

The NAACP—with its cherished heritage of struggling for fair-minded justice, including when it was instrumental in defeating a Herbert Hoover nominee to the Supreme Court, John Parker—characterized the Kavanaugh nomination as an effort to ''re-make the Court in President Trump's own image.''

Fatima Goss Graves, President and CEO of the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) expressed strong concern that Kavanaugh's nomination could put women's health, equality, dignity, and even lives on the line: ''it will shift the balance of the Court, and could roll back rights for an entire generation.''

The backlash has not only to do with the abandonment of the pursuit of justice for blatant partisanship, but also the flagrant breach of protocol in nominating Kavanaugh.

Usually, the White House Counsel's office maintains a list of potential nominees on hand, along with some basic information about them, long before an opening appears.

An informal working group is assembled from several sections of the White House, including not just the counsel's office but legislative affairs, the vice president's office, the chief of staff, and the Attorney General.

Congressional leaders from both parties are consulted, as well: GOP strategist Ken Duberstein, who helped shepherd half a dozen Supreme Court nominees, said in an interview that it is critical the administration reaches out to both parties on Capitol Hill, as ''there has to be some consultation, on both sides of the aisle, coming from the White House.''

Instead of this time-honored, bipartisan process, the President has relied heavily on the Federalist Society—a nationwide organization of conservative lawyers that openly seeks to ''reorder priorities within the legal system to place a premium on conservative values.''

Leonard Leo, the executive vice president of the Federalist Society, went as far as to take leave from the Society to construct a list of nominees for the President: granting such unprecedented access to an unashamedly partisan organization is a departure from convention.

This approach—partisanship above justice; loyalty above protocol—should be concerning and insulting to every American whose civil liberties are at stake.

But more disturbing than partisanship in judicial nominations is the deliberate appointment of unqualified candidates.

Thomas Farr, the Raleigh attorney nominated for a judicial appointment to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, received the wholehearted support of the President and North Carolina's two U.S. senators, while two qualified African-American women could not even get a hearing.

Farr has been the lead attorney in a series of recent legislative efforts to suppress political participation by African Americans in the state.

In 2010, Farr advised the General Assembly in what federal courts later termed a ''racial gerrymander'' of North Carolina House, Senate and U.S. Congressional districts.

In separate lawsuits, each redistricting plan was proven to have intentionally discriminated against African-American voters.

In 2013, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted a bill that shortened early voting, required voters to present government-issued IDs and eliminated same-day voter registration and out-of-precinct voting—all of which are forms of marginalization and voter suppression.

Farr advised the legislature on the bill and then became lead counsel in a three-year battle to defend it.

Federal courts ruled the law unconstitutional and an attempt to disenfranchise African-American voters ''with almost surgical precision.''

Farr began his notorious in voter suppression and race-baiting career as a campaign aide to Senator Jesse Helms, who entered public life in campaigns that urged ''White People Wake Up'' and smeared the University of North Carolina as ''the University of Negroes and Communists.''

Helms was infamous for his diatribes against ''Negro hoodlums'' and ''forced integration,'' and for touting the ''purely scientific statistical evidence of natural racial distinction in group intellect.''

Helms became the state's most vociferous opponent of the civil rights movement, which, as late as 2005, Helms railed had ''ripped away at the customs and institutions people cared about.''

During Farr's time on the campaign, the Helms Campaign Committee sent more than 105,000 post cards to African Americans falsely warning that they were ineligible to vote and could be arrested for voter fraud if they appeared at the polls.

Farr denied having any knowledge of this effort, but a former Department of Justice official said the Helms disciple ''absolutely'' was involved in this and earlier illegal voter suppression tricks that the campaign described as ''ballot security efforts.''

A 1992 consent decree prohibited the campaign from tactics ''to intimidate, threaten, coerce, deter, or otherwise interfere with a qualified voter's exercise of the franchise''—and Thomas Farr signed the decree.

More than 20 years later, during Farr's defense of the election law that the Fourth District Court ruled targeted African-American voters ''with almost surgical precision,'' the judge in Winston-Salem asked Farr, ''Why don't y'all want people to vote?''

A track record that continues to raise this question should prevent anyone from being appointed to the federal bench.

But the problem is compounded by the fact that Farr would preside over the Eastern District, which contains a majority of the state's counties with the highest percentages of African–American residents.

Despite being home to North Carolina's ''Black Belt,'' the Eastern District has never had an African-American judge in its nearly century and half of existence.

Senator BURR says Farr will ''serve North Carolina well,'' and Senator TILLIS—a supporter of the massive voter suppression and racialized redistricting that allowed Republicans to take a super majority in the state legislature—calls the President's nominee ''impeccably qualified.''

In doing so while blocking the hearings of May-Parker and Timmons-Goodson, these Senators insist North Carolina be revealed as backward-looking and bitter during nationally televised Senate hearings for a morally stained and unrepentant figure like Thomas Farr.

Being a conservative is not the same thing as spending almost 40 years fighting to block full citizenship for all Americans.

This nomination is not just about what Thomas Farr stands for—it is about what America stands for.

Some nominations have been entirely inconsiderate of any standards of qualification that judicial nominees would otherwise be subject to.

Matthew Petersen, a Trump nominee to a lifetime appointment on the U.S. District Court

for the District of Columbia, withdrew from consideration for the seat in December 2017 days after a video clip showed him unable to answer basic questions about legal procedure.

Petersen, a graduate of the University of Virginia Law School, was a member of the Federal Election Commission since 2008 but had no trial experience.

His only connection to the Trump Administration was that his tenure on the FEC overlapped with that of White House counsel Don McGahn for about five years.

Petersen was one of three judicial nominees picked by President Trump to have withdrawn in that week amid criticism about their qualifications.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman CHARLES E. GRASSLEY told the White House to ''reconsider'' the nominations of the other two nominees, both of whom were reported to have endorsed positions or groups that embrace discrimination.

A day later, both nominations were pulled.

This gross disregard for competence is inconceivable in any profession, much less our government.

One of the two withdrawn for discrimination was Brett Talley.

Talley had been rated ''unanimously unqualified'' for the post by the American Bar Association after an evaluation that questioned his experience.

Talley had never argued a case, or even a motion, in federal court, he testified.

Mr. Talley nevertheless won preliminary approval from the Judiciary Committee's Republican majority to be a judge.

Even after Talley's nomination advanced through the Senate Judiciary Committee on an 11–9 party-line vote, media reports and good government groups cast doubt on his credentials for the spot on the U.S. District Court in Alabama.

As he was awaiting a Senate floor vote, it emerged that Mr. Talley had not disclosed that he was married to White House Counsel Don McGahn's chief of staff.

It was further publicized that he had failed to disclose that he had apparently written thousands of pseudonymous posts on a University of Alabama sports fan website, including one defending the early Ku Klux Klan.

Talley's withdrawal is celebrated as a case in which civic awareness and activism by various groups from media to good governance organizations pressured the government to do the right thing.

One such organization that is critical to safeguarding fairness of justice in our courtrooms is the American Bar Association, which gave Talley the ''unanimously unqualified'' rating.

Since 1953, this venerable legal organization has played a critical, behind-the-scenes role in assessing judicial nominees and their fitness to serve on the bench.

By the end of President Trump's first year, the ABA deemed at least four of Trump's judicial nominees ''not qualified.''

But with the ABA emerging as a major stumbling block in President Trump's effort to transform the courts, our colleagues in the GOP accused the nonpartisan group of holding a liberal slant and is seeking to sideline it.

Instead of being equally concerned of the quality of judicial nominees put forth by this Administration, our colleagues chose to ignore the ABA and discredit the century-old group.

ABA President Hilarie Bass said the group is a ''nonpartisan organization that has focused on legal issues and not politics'' and that it has vetted thousands of judicial nominees ''fairly and in a nonpartisan fashion'' under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

However, our colleagues are engaged in a desperate charge against factual truth itself.

''The ABA's record on judicial nominations has been highly questionable,'' said Sen. TED CRUZ (R–Texas), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, ''it has demonstrated over past decades repeatedly partisan interests and ideological interests.''

Arizona Sen. JEFF FLAKE, who also sits on the Judiciary Committee and is a vocal GOP critic of Trump, added: ''Not a big fan of the ABA.''

''It's blatantly political,'' Flake said. ''Often. Not always.''

In a shift from the Obama Administration and a return to the policy of President George W. Bush, the administration decided earlier this year not to allow the ABA to review potential candidates before they were nominated.

Trump officials are abandoning the practice so Republicans can push through younger, conservative attorneys who may not have as much—if any—experience to a lifetime position on the bench.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today in opposition of the Trump Administration's misguided and foolish judicial nominations.

I stand today as a woman, who fears for my fellow woman's right to choose.

I stand today as a granddaughter of immigrants, who recognizes the value of immigration to our, society and national identity.

I stand today as an African American, who celebrates the progress our community has made in expanding civil rights in our nation, but recognizes the struggle yet left ahead.

I stand today as a mother and grandmother, who is determined to hold our courts accountable to safeguarding our nation's civil liberties for generations to come.

I stand today as an American, because a judiciary that dispenses evenhanded justice is what defines who we are and what we stand for.

Mr. Speaker, fellow members of Congress, let us be unequivocally clear that it is our responsibility and our high call of service to our fellow citizens to defend the rule of law and preserve our courts as the bastion of justice in our nation.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the judicial branch serves as one of the key pillars of our democracy, charged with restraining both the legislative and executive branches from reaching beyond their constitutional authority first envisioned by our Founding Fathers. The importance of having qualified judges on the bench is not only vital to the judiciary, but also to the proper functioning of our system of checks and balances—and by extension, our democratic system. By stacking the courts with biased, unqualified judges, President Trump and Senate Majority Leader MCCONNELL are choosing party over their country in a manner that will cause enduring harm to the process and principles that we hold dear as a democratic nation.

The nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court is already a dangerous threat to longstanding precedent on matters regarding civil rights, abortion, and government oversight. However, the lower federal courts are equally as important to the judiciary's ability to protect the fundamental rights that we enjoy as Americans. President Trump has demonstrated time and time again through his nominations of extreme candidates that he has little to no regard for due process, and has every intention of leaving behind a lifelong legacy of stacking the courts to favor radical right-wing conservatism.

Mr. Speaker, the nominees being put forth by this Administration and the process by which they are being vetted is a wild and dangerous departure from regular order. Senate Republicans are knowingly sidestepping traditional vetting protocols in order to rush right-wing judicial nominees through the process before the American people can react. It is a misguided practice that places partisan politics over the needs of the American people, and I urge my colleagues in the Senate to oppose any unqualified nominee at every opportunity.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 5515, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019

Mr. THORNBERRY submitted the following conference report and statement on the bill (H.R. 5515) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2019 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of July 23, 2018, published in Book II.)

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of inclement weather affecting travel.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on July 19, 2018, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill:

H.R. 6042. To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to delay the reduction in Federal medical assistance percentage for Medicaid personal care services furnished without an electronic visit verification system, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 52 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, July 24, 2018, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.