

justice system's ability to dispense even-handed justice to all."

Shouldn't that be the heart of the nomination process, that we make sure we are sending forward individuals who add to the integrity of our judicial system, not individuals who take away from it?

During his interviews with our committee out in Oregon—this committee continued its work, even though the President nominated him without waiting for the committee to finish its work. The committee asked him if he had controversial writings or events in his life that he needed to disclose, and he said that he did not. He did not disclose them. This is not an ancient failure of integrity; this is an immediate, recent past failure of transparency and integrity.

The letter we received from the chair of Oregon's Federal Judicial Selection Advisory Committee states:

I am writing to you as Chair of the [Oregon] Federal Judicial Selection Advisory Committee. I have reviewed a recent piece in the Wall Street Journal titled "Give Amnesty for College Writings." The piece concerns Ryan Bounds, a candidate for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals vacancy, and specifically states that our committee recommended him. The piece notes Mr. Bounds' writings, but fails to point out Mr. Bounds never disclosed those writings to the committee at any point in the interview process. Since that time, I have heard from four members of the judicial selection committee specifically with regard to this omission. I can say with confidence that those four committee members as well as myself would not have ranked Mr. Bounds as we did had we known about these deeply troubling writings.

Mr. Bounds' writings themselves are objectionable not only for the views they express, but for the intemperate and demeaning tone that he uses to express his opinion. Equally, if not more disturbing, Mr. Bounds failed to disclose these writings when specifically asked by the committee about his views on equity and diversity. Although he felt free to volunteer details about his life going back to childhood, he misled the committee in response to this important inquiry. For this reason, five of the seven committee members no longer recommend Mr. Bounds.

That is what we heard from the Oregon committee.

We have a responsibility to the institutions of governance of the United States of America, with the fundamental principle embedded in those three words: "We the People"—government of, by, and for the people. We have seen a series of significant bills where it is the exact opposite of this: bills designed to destroy healthcare for millions of Americans, bills that put us deep in debt in order to deliver the proceeds to the richest Americans. It is perhaps the biggest bank heist in the history of the world.

Now we see an effort to sully the integrity, to damage the legitimacy of our courts. That is unacceptable, and we need to rethink our course and honor our responsibility to strengthen, not undermine, the beautiful architecture of our "we the people" Nation.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The assistant Democratic leader.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I think we should be honest with ourselves and the people around the world and present the reality of what Iran is today.

Iran pursues a host of dangerous activities around the world that threaten the United States, its interests, and its allies. It is fomenting a proxy war in Yemen. It supports Hezbollah and Hamas. It appears to be using its foothold in Syria to test Israel's defenses. And in tragic irony, Iran supports the Syrian butcher Bashar al-Assad, who has stooped to using chemical weapons and barrel bombs to kill his own people. How a regime like the Iranian regime—whose own people suffered under heinous chemical attacks from Iran during the Iran-Iraq War—can stand behind Assad and Syria is incredible.

Having said that, we entered into an agreement with Iran to stop them from developing a nuclear weapon. Despite all these other challenges and all the differences we continue to have with Iran, we said that—gathering together with allies around the world—we wanted to make certain that Iran did not develop a nuclear weapon. There were lengthy negotiations and agreements, which led to the nuclear agreement with Iran to stop its development of nuclear weapons. I think it was a critically important step forward because Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a danger not only to Israel and the Middle East but also to the world.

It was that agreement which I supported and which was overwhelmingly supported by Democrats in the Senate when President Obama negotiated it. The Republicans opposed it. The candidate for President on the Republican side, Mr. Trump, said that it was a terrible agreement, and he thought we should never have entered into it. He had all sorts of derogatory things to say about the Iran nuclear agreement. But the fact is, that agreement went in place and was implemented. International inspectors were sent into Iran. Those inspectors enforced that agreement and have reported to the United States—and personally to Members of the Senate, including me—repeatedly that Iran is complying with the terms of this agreement and is not developing a nuclear weapon. For all of the differences we have with Iran, the facts and the evidence are clear: They were living up to the terms of the nuclear agreement so that they would not develop a nuclear weapon and threaten Israel and that region of the world.

Despite the progress made by this agreement, today President Trump announced his decision to halt the waiver of sanctions related to Iran and the nuclear agreement—in essence, to step away from the agreement and to say that the United States will no longer be party to it. That nuclear agreement with Iran removed the threat of nu-

clear weapons being used to pursue destabilizing Iranian activities. Just imagine how hard and difficult it would be to push back on Iranian aggression if, in fact, they had a nuclear weapon. The purpose of the agreement was to avoid that possibility—the very agreement President Trump walked away from today.

Because of this agreement, Iran's nuclear weapon program has been stopped in its tracks. In fact, you have to go back over 10 years to find any plans being made in Iran in the past to even consider it. The agreement was working. International inspectors have unprecedented access to Iran to watch for cheating. Iran does not have a nuclear weapon or a quick breakout ability to make one. These are real accomplishments toward world peace.

We live in a dangerous world. President Trump's decision today will make it more dangerous. By eliminating U.S. participation in this agreement to stop the development of nuclear weapons in Iran, we run the real possibility that terrible things will follow—terrible things that will cost human life and cause even more misery around this world.

Let's be clear. That agreement clearly states that "Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop, or acquire any nuclear weapons." That is an unequivocal statement. And to ensure that Iran never does, the agreement provided for ongoing inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency. They weren't just inspecting the obvious places; they were inspecting the entire supply chain that Iran would have to turn to to develop a nuclear weapon.

Ernest Moniz was Secretary of Energy under President Obama. He is a physicist by training. He has received global recognition for his expertise. He sat at the table because he knows what it takes to develop a nuclear weapon. He put into this agreement which President Trump is walking away from today the kind of access for inspection that gives us the assurance that Iran cannot cheat, and if they tried, we would catch them.

Anyone arguing that Iran is allowed to build a nuclear bomb under this agreement after a certain period is simply wrong and misleading the American people. I have met with IAEA Director General Amano several times. Each time, I was very blunt and direct with him: Tell me what your experience has been in Iran. Tell me, if your inspectors wanted to go through a certain door, inspect a certain installation, go inside a certain facility, were they stopped by Iran?

He told me: If we were stopped and protested, they opened the door. We have never had a failure of access.

That is what he told me repeatedly, over and over again. He said the same thing to Democratic Senators he spoke with—that Iran was in compliance with the nuclear agreement and that IAEA inspectors were able to resolve any

areas. Where they contested and said “We should have access,” they were given access.

I hope President Trump will actually read this agreement. I wish he had sat down and spent a few minutes with Inspector Amano before making this fateful decision today. I know it is probably good political theater for some to blast any international agreement or related effort that was taken up by President Obama, but let me remind my colleagues of other negotiations undertaken with troubling regimes that served our national security interest.

It was President John Kennedy who negotiated with the Soviets during the Cuban missile crisis, bringing us back from the brink of nuclear war.

It was President Richard Nixon who negotiated with the Chinese on normalizing relations, even while that Communist regime was providing weapons to the North Vietnamese who were fighting our soldiers.

Of course, who can forget that it was President Ronald Reagan who negotiated with the Soviets while that Communist nation had thousands of nuclear warheads pointed at the United States of America? They were occupying Eastern Europe, and they were supporting troubling regimes around the world. Yet President Reagan sat down and negotiated with them.

Let’s recall how many on the right of the political spectrum savaged President Reagan for negotiating with the Soviets on nuclear arms reduction. Let me read an excerpt from the January 17, 1988, New York Times about the opposition President Ronald Reagan faced in negotiating an arms agreement with the Soviets—criticism eerily familiar to what we have been hearing today from President Trump. Here is what they said about President Reagan:

Already, right-wing groups . . . have mounted a strong campaign against the INF treaty. They mailed out close to 300,000 letters opposing it. They have circulated 5,000 cassette recordings of Gen. Bernard Rogers, former Supreme Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, attacking it. And finally, they are preparing to run newspaper ads this month savaging Reagan as a new Neville Chamberlain, signing an accord with Hitler—

Of his day—

and gullibly predicting “peace for our time.”

The conservative National Review’s May 22, 1987, edition had a cover titled “Reagan’s Suicide Pact.”

While opposed by some at the time, I doubt few in this Chamber on either side of the aisle would look back today and say that President Reagan’s negotiations with the Soviets and the eventual agreement weren’t in the best interest of America’s national security.

So here we are today with President Trump plunging us and our allies into uncertainty when it comes to an Iranian nuclear weapon and the credibility of America’s word around the world. It is not very good timing if we

seriously hope to bring peace to the Korean Peninsula by putting the American signature and name on the line in a negotiation to stop the development of nuclear weapons in that area of the world.

What will President Trump do if Iran restarts its nuclear weapon program? Is he prepared to face the prospects of another war in the Middle East—a war with nuclear weapons? Certainly we will have no inspectors there anymore if President Trump has his way, and that can only set us back and open the door to the possibility of a nuclear Iran in the future. Does that make America safer? Does that make the world safer? Of course not. Is this just about undoing what President Obama did, keeping some campaign promise, which, frankly, doesn’t serve the best interest of peace in the world or our own national security.

Mr. Trump and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who support this move and are unwilling to speak against it, the situation being created by walking away from the nuclear agreement with Iran is now in your hands, on your watch. I hope something good can come from this.

By all accounts, the American people overwhelmingly oppose what President Trump did today. The American people know we live in a dangerous world. They have heard over and over again about the prospects of a nuclear attack from North Korea. The notion that Iran would now develop a nuclear weapon does not make America feel any safer, and by a margin of 2 to 1, they tell President Trump: What you announced today was wrong. It does not make us any safer.

There have been many opportunities in this country to work together on a bipartisan basis on foreign policy. Historically, that was almost always the case—as it should be. Sadly, those days are behind us. Instead, now it is straight partisanship. If President Obama wanted it, President Trump happens to oppose it.

Look at the decision on the Paris climate agreement. That was an agreement reached by every nation in the world, and President Trump stepped away from it, saying: When it comes to climate change, the United States does not want to engage in this global conversation.

When it came to healthcare in the United States, President Trump said: I want to eliminate ObamaCare—eliminate the Affordable Care Act. Across the United States, we are now seeing dramatic increases in health insurance premiums because of President Trump’s decision and the opposition by Members of Congress on the Republican side against the Affordable Care Act.

Now we are walking into a new territory. It is not just climate change; it is not healthcare; it is the safety of this world. It is a question about whether another nation will join the nuclear club—a nation we have plenty of differences with.

We had an agreement, a good one. It was brokered by a group of nations that were unlikely allies: China, Russia, Western European nations, and the United States. Of course, that is an unusual grouping, but they all agreed Iran should not have a nuclear weapon, and we moved forward with an agreement that was working until this President, just 2 hours ago, came before the American people and said the United States is walking away from that agreement.

Sadly, it is a reckless decision. It is a historic, tragic, and reckless decision, which runs the risk of allowing this country, Iran, to develop a nuclear weapon, threaten the region, and threaten the world. We live in a dangerous world, and we need a President who understands that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL BRENNAN

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, just before we left for last week’s State work period, the majority leader filed cloture on six nominees for Federal circuit courts. He did not take this action in a vacuum.

Over the past year and a half, the majority leader and the Republicans in the Senate have joined with Donald Trump to try to pack our Federal courts with ideological judicial nominees who seek to change American law to match their partisan politics.

To accomplish this goal, the majority leader and Senate Republicans have also been eliminating procedural checks designed to ensure a fair and qualified judiciary. One of those checks is the blue-slip requirement—a mechanism for Senators to indicate their approval of nominees from their States.

In the past, when Senators objected to a judicial nomination in their home State, with almost no exceptions, the Judiciary Committee took no further action on that nominee. This was because the Constitution requires the President to get the advice and consent of the Senate when nominating judges.

Traditionally, this has been done by consultation with the home State Senators, but the majority leader and his Republican colleagues have largely abandoned this constitutional safeguard.

The Judiciary Committee has, though very rarely, scheduled hearings for nominees who lack one blue slip and whose home State Senators have returned negative blue slips.

Now, tomorrow, we will have a hearing for a Ninth Circuit nominee for whom no blue slips have ever even been returned. This has never happened in the modern history of the Senate, and it certainly was not the standard the majority leader and the chair of the Judiciary Committee applied to President Obama’s judicial nominees.

It does not have to be this way. It is possible for home State Senators to confer with this administration and identify nominees acceptable to both