

and families are better protected than ever before.

Though we have a lot of work yet to do, it would be a grave mistake to go backward, and that is just what so many people fear would happen with Judge Kavanaugh on the Bench, given his past rulings and given the test that President Trump applied and his commitment to only nominate someone screened and approved by the extreme right, especially his stance that could take decisions away from our Nation's scientists and nonpartisan professionals and put those decisions into the hands of special interests.

That takes me to another issue I want to run through briefly: making sure our elections in this country are free and accessible and that corporations don't have a louder voice in our process than ordinary voters. These are issues where our courts have failed to serve us well in recent years, but by confirming Judge Kavanaugh, we would be cementing this awful pattern for a generation and making necessary reform so much more difficult.

Judge Kavanaugh will continue his habit of ruling to make it harder and harder for citizens to vote and have a voice in this democracy. We know this. We saw how he ruled in favor of stricter voter ID laws—ones where the intention to make it harder for Americans to vote was clear and absolutely the wrong way to go. We cannot have a Supreme Court that continues to allow voter suppression.

So I ask my colleagues: If you believe that voting in our country should be open to all and that people shouldn't have less access to the voting booth because of where they live or the color of their skin, join me in rejecting this nominee and demanding someone who will protect our elections and our democracy. If you believe that Citizens United was an awful decision that perverted the First Amendment and put shameful amounts of power into the hands of the mega rich and the biggest corporations, join me in rejecting this nominee and demanding someone who would put our ordinary voters first.

If we can't stem the flow of dark, unaccountable money in politics, and reverse the tide of the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations being allowed to have the loudest voices in our elections, we are going to keep running into massive challenges as a nation. Without a Supreme Court willing to do that, without rejecting Judge Kavanaugh and demanding someone else, we can't do that. Giving the most powerful among us an advantage in our elections is not the only way Judge Kavanaugh is working for those at the top, and I want to briefly discuss another.

Last month's Janus decision made it clear that workers and their unions need a fair voice on the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, Judge Kavanaugh has a long record of weakening worker protections, undermining union rights, and making it easier for corporations

and special interests to tilt the scales of justice in their favor.

I would urge my colleagues who claim to care about the rights and economic security of working families to join me in rejecting this nomination and put the power back into the hands of working families and the middle class.

This point is especially potent given the disgrace we witnessed in Helsinki. Every American should be deeply concerned about President Trump putting someone on the Supreme Court who is prepared to protect him from legal attack and do his bidding.

As we all watch, many of us in horror and dismay, as President Trump continues to do everything in his power to try and discredit the Mueller investigation, we cannot forget, for a moment, that his Supreme Court nominee suggested in a 2009 law review article that a sitting President should not be subjected to criminal investigation or civil or criminal litigation.

Does anyone think, for one second, this isn't something President Trump was looking for? Is there anyone who has seen how President Trump has acted, listened to what he said who thinks he is not thinking about what happens if something related to this investigation goes to the Supreme Court?

President Trump controls the White House. His Republicans control both Houses of Congress. The last thing we need, the last thing any American who truly cares about our country should want is to place the last remaining branch—the final branch intended to be independent, to put our Constitution first—into the hands of a Trump lackey. That would be awful. It would eliminate even the pretense of checks and balances. If Judge Kavanaugh is confirmed, with his record and given what we know about President Trump, that is exactly what would happen.

If you believe we should be taking the Russian election interference into U.S. elections seriously, join me in rejecting this nominee and demanding someone who would be truly independent and place an appropriate check on Executive power.

If you believe a President is not above the law, join me in rejecting this nominee and demanding someone who will take our Constitution and our judicial independence seriously.

If you believe Executive power is not unilateral and that real checks and balances are required, join me in rejecting this nominee and demanding someone who will clearly and unequivocally make sure that continues to be a reality.

Finally, I want to highlight Judge Kavanaugh's troubling record on commonsense gun safety. This is an issue that certainly hit close to home for far too many people in recent years. Churches, schools, concerts, it seems like no place is immune to the rampant gun violence happening in the country, which is why millions of Americans have taken to the streets in recent months to demand action.

Yet, at the same time, Judge Kavanaugh has taken a far more expansive interpretation of the Second Amendment and has vigorously argued that assault weapon bans are unconstitutional. His position is far more extreme than even the late Justice Scalia. It is no wonder the NRA immediately applauded Judge Kavanaugh's nomination and has pledged now to spend untold amounts to seal the deal on his confirmation.

Those are just a few issues weighing on so many people's minds right now. I could go on about what is at stake if President Trump turns his White House, and potentially now the judicial system, into one that favors the powerful few.

I would like to close by saying there are few things I take as seriously as a Senator than my duty to consider and vote on a Supreme Court nominee. In my time in the Senate, I have had the opportunity to consider nominees from Democrats and nominees from Republicans. I voted for some of them, I voted against some of them, each on their merits, and each based on how I think they would serve.

This time is different. We know exactly where President Trump's Supreme Court nominee will fall on the specific issues, no matter what vague answers Judge Kavanaugh chooses to deliver through this process.

Why do we know this? Because President Trump told us openly, publicly, and repeatedly. The President laid out specific tests and promised to only pick nominees from a prescreened list of people who would absolutely meet them.

Nobody should be fooled. Judge Kavanaugh is a rubberstamp. He will stand with special interests over families, and he will take our country in the wrong direction.

I urge my colleagues, stand with me in rejecting Judge Kavanaugh's nomination and join me in calling on President Trump to send us someone who would stand with women, with our workers, with our families, and who would truly commit to respecting settled law and the rights and freedoms we all hold dear and the longstanding protections that help keep our families safe and healthy.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Nevada.

**NOMINATION OF RYAN BOUNDS**

**Ms. CORTEZ MASTO.** Mr. President, I rise to speak out in opposition to the nomination of Ryan Bounds to sit on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

I will be voting against his confirmation, and I ask all of my colleagues to do the same. My reason for this is not just the fact that in expressing his disdain for multicultural values in a series of college writings, he compared efforts to build tolerance and promote diversity to Nazi book burning; it is not just the fact that he advocated against policies designed to make

LGBTQ students feel welcome and crack down on campus rapists; it is not just the fact that when a bipartisan judicial selection committee asked him to disclose past controversies, he deliberately misled the committee and said there was nothing to worry about.

Now that his controversial writings have come to light, he refuses to retract or show remorse for his statements. Instead, he brushes them off as overbroad and overheated.

Ryan Bounds' writings show he does not believe in a tolerant and diverse America, where women and people of color are treated with equal respect. In my eyes, that alone disqualifies him from sitting on the Federal bench, but Bounds has not received the blue-slip approval of either Senator from his home State of Oregon. No judge in modern history has ever been confirmed without a blue slip from either home State Senator.

So a vote to confirm him is a direct attack on the Senate's constitutional responsibility to advise and consent. The blue-slip process is a critical function of the legislative branch. It gives every Senator a chance to have a say in the Federal judges who serve in their home State.

The nominee to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit will have a lifetime tenure. If confirmed, Ryan Bounds will have influence over our legal system for the rest of his life. Don't the American people and their elected officials deserve a say in whether he should be allowed to fill that seat?

This debate is not just about one unqualified judge and his racist ideas. It is about the duty of the legislative branch to serve as a check and balance on the President. Over the course of the Trump administration so far, we have seen an unprecedented attempt to undermine the blue-slip process and pack the courts with judges favored by corporations and special interests.

I urge my colleagues to take a stand against President Trump's attacks on our legal system. Protect the integrity of the blue-slip process and vote against Ryan Bounds' nomination. The power and independence of the legislature is at stake.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF PASTOR ANDREW BRUNSON

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I think last week or the week before, you were presiding when I did a speech that I promised I am going to do every week we are in session until justice is served in Turkey.

It is a speech about this man. His name is Pastor Andrew Brunson. He was arrested in Turkey in October of 2016. If you want to sum up his crime, it is for being a missionary. He has been in Turkey for about 20 years, has served the community well, has provided aid and comfort to Syrian refugees, has provided a place for people in

Turkey who want to come into a Christian church to do just that. He has a small church in Izmir. You can only seat about 100 people in it, and he didn't even have that when he started his missionary work.

I should say he is from the Black Mountain area of North Carolina. He was part of the same church that Rev. Billy Graham was a part of. He went to Turkey to really pursue his passion and serve in Christ through missionary work.

In 2016, after the coup attempt, President Erdogan implemented emergency powers, and he swept up thousands of people and put them in prison. Pastor Brunson was in a Turkish prison for almost 19 months without charges—about 17 months in a cell that was designed for 8 prisoners that had 21 people in it.

I was in Turkey about 4 months ago—when I first met Pastor Brunson personally—to visit him in prison to let him know that as long as I am in the U.S. Senate, I am going to work hard for his ultimate release.

Then I went back about 6 weeks later, and I sat in a Turkish courtroom for about 12 hours, and I heard some of the most absurd charges that could ever be levied against someone to keep them in prison for what will now be going on 2 years. I told Pastor Brunson I would be back, and I will continue to be back, until justice is served.

I don't want to get into too many of the details so I will tell you he was in a courtroom today for another 5 hours. If it bore any resemblance to the time I was in the courtroom, it goes something like this: The defense gets to say nothing. They don't get to introduce witnesses to testify on his behalf. You have secret witnesses, many of them in a Turkish prison, testifying against him about things like a daughter posting a meal she had on a social media application that the Turkish authorities believe linked her to terror because they believe it is a meal certain terrorist organizations like. It also happens to be a meal that a lot of people in the Middle East like, but that was a charge that suggested he was involved in a coup attempt or conspiring with terrorists.

Having a light on in a church—by the way, in a room that doesn't have a window—that was supposedly observed by one of these secret witnesses who are in prison, saying: Well, clearly if there was a light on in this church, nothing good could have happened because it was in the middle of the night. Maybe somebody just left the light switch on, but I am still trying to figure out how they actually saw it because I have been in that room, and there is not a single window. There is no way you could have seen it from the outside.

Those are the types of charges that have been used to keep Pastor Brunson in prison since October of 2016.

Today, he was back, as I said earlier, in a hearing in a Turkish courtroom for 5 hours. At the end of the 5-hour

hearing he was told that he is going to continue to be in prison until they have another hearing in October, and that hearing is scheduled for about 4 days short of 2 years that he has spent time in a Turkish prison.

He has been in prison for 649 days. He is in good spirits—as good as you can imagine for somebody who is enduring the trauma of being imprisoned, I think, unlawfully and unfairly.

His wife Norine is in Turkey. She refuses to leave because she is afraid if she leaves Turkey, Turkey will not allow her to come back into the country.

They have been separated from their three children for 2 years because they are afraid to have them come into the country and not be able to leave.

I am asking the Members of Congress to join with me to apply pressure on Turkey to have justice done. Justice is releasing Pastor Brunson and letting him come back home.

We have provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act that send a very clear message to Turkey that we are serious about this.

I have my own concerns about Turkey because they seem to be drifting away as a NATO ally and partner and more toward a position I don't quite understand. I certainly don't understand it in terms of our mutual interests as NATO allies or as economic partners.

But for right now, I want to focus on a man who has been in prison for 649 days. I want to focus on other people who worked with the Embassy who have been in prison for about the same time. I want to focus on a NASA scientist who happened to be visiting his family in Turkey—he is a Turkish American—who has been in prison for 2½ years. We have to educate the American people on a Turkey that has no resemblance today of what it was just 5 or 6 years ago.

I want to have a positive working relationship with Turkey. I want increased economic ties and increased military ties. But when you illegally imprison American citizens, no matter how important that strategic relationship is, at some point we have to question whether or not we can go further.

In the meantime, if any of you are planning on going to Turkey, I would think twice. Make sure that you don't take a picture of somebody that maybe Turkish officials think is involved in a coup, because that can sweep you up in it. Make sure that you don't eat a meal that other segments of Turkish society like, because that may make you a coup conspirator.

I hope that we solve this problem, but I will tell you that there are very few things that would ever take me away from coming to this floor and going into committee meetings and doing everything I can to put pressure on Turkey until Pastor Andrew Brunson is back in this country safe and sound with his family. Then I will