

like Oswaldo Paya who are working to bring hope and liberty to oppressed nations, who are working to make a better Cuba, free of the horrors of Communist rule.

I have never been to my father's homeland. I have never been to Cuba. My father has not returned to Cuba in over 60 years. I look forward to one day visiting Cuba, hopefully with my dad, with my tia Sonia, my cousin Bibi, with my whole family, my two girls, and seeing a free Cuba—where people can live according to their beliefs without fear of imprisonment, violence, or oppression, but today is not that day.

There are many, like Oswaldo, who have fought for this vision for a free Cuba, who are no longer with us, but their struggle will endure, and their spirits will shine a light through the darkest nights. We will never forget them, nor cease fighting to bring about the free Cuba they died for. Today, and on July 22, and each day thereafter, they will be remembered, "Viva Cuba libre."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, soon, the Senate will vote on the Ryan Bounds nomination, and I want to make sure each Member of the Senate is aware of two important issues as they prepare to cast their votes on the Bounds nomination to serve on the Ninth Circuit.

First, Mr. Bounds flagrantly misrepresented his background to our bipartisan Oregon judicial selection committee. This is the committee that was tasked with vetting his nomination—a process I have worked on with Republicans for literally two decades. I was pleased to work with our former colleague Senator Smith on this. I worked with the late Mark Hatfield on this. Now it is a pleasure to work with Senator MERKLEY, and the bipartisan efforts we have had produced this selection, a process. Mr. Bounds misrepresented—in my view, really lied—as he covered up disturbing, intolerant writings from his past.

Among many hateful matters he wrote about, he defended homophobic vandals who damaged a gay pride monument. He argued against efforts to protect the survivors of sexual assault on college campuses because, he wrote, he didn't think that would guarantee absolute safety.

As I indicated earlier, what outraged me, and shocked me, was his comparison of organizations that promote multiculturalism and tolerance in America to Nazi rallies. I am the child of Jewish parents who fled Nazi terror in Germany. Not all of our family got out. My great Uncle Max was among the last to be gassed at Auschwitz. For Mr. Bounds to compare groups that lift up minorities in America to Nazis is an extraordinary and dark stain on his character. For him to have concealed these writings from Oregon's bipartisan selection committee is disqualifying.

He never acknowledged these writings until they were uncovered and then posed a threat to his nomination. To this day, he has not fully recanted the abhorrent views that are reflected in that content. Five of the seven members of the bipartisan judicial selection committee, including the Chair, said recently they would not have included Mr. Bounds among their recommended candidates had they known about the writings as he was vetted.

Our bipartisan committee forwarded Mr. Bounds' name, along with others, as part of this process, and they said if Mr. Bounds had been straight with them, he would have told them about these offensive writings, but he misled them by keeping that secret.

The second issue, this is the first time in the 101-year history of what is called the blue-slip process where a nomination moved forward without a blue slip from either home State Senator. Senator MERKLEY and I withheld our blue slips specifically because of what I described, these lies about omission. We didn't consent to a hearing, a debate on the floor, but Chairman GRASSLEY and Majority Leader MCCONNELL barreled right ahead.

Leader MCCONNELL even told the New York Times that blue slips ought to be viewed as nothing more than an indication of how Senators might vote on a given nominee. That was not the tune Republicans were singing in 2009. Democrats then occupied the Oval Office, held the gavel of the Judiciary Committee, and every Member—every Member—of this body who sat on that side of the Chamber in the Republican conference sent a letter to President Obama and then-Chairman LEAHY saying that the nomination's process was "needlessly acrimonious." They wanted to return to an era of bipartisanship. Then, they said:

We hope your Administration will consult with us as it considers possible nominations to the federal courts from our states. Regretfully, if we are not consulted on, and approve of, a nomination from our states, the Republican Conference will be unable to support moving forward to that nominee.

In 2009, while in the minority, everyone who sat on that side of the Chamber rushed to defend blue slips as a statement of senatorial courtesy and collegiality. What a difference a few years makes.

What is happening now cheapens the advice and consent role of the Senate, something delegated to us by the Founding Fathers. The White House wants the Senate to act as a rubberstamp on whatever nominees are sent our way. The majority seems perfectly willing to go along with that.

My colleagues on the other side need to be aware of the new reality—this new reality where the blue slips don't matter—they are creating. This is going to be the end of the blue-slip process as it has worked in the Senate to promote good government on both sides of the aisle. This breach of a cen-

tury of bipartisan protocol is going to further drive the judiciary to the partisan extremes.

As we consider this nomination in a few minutes, this means lights-out—lights-out—for this important bipartisan tradition. The nominee we will be voting on concealed disturbing, intolerant writings from his past, misleading the bipartisan committee that reviewed his candidacy. Moving his nomination forward, in the face of that information and without the blue slips from Senator MERKLEY and myself, destroys more than a century of bipartisan tradition and certainly expands the power of the executive branch of the President.

What we learned earlier this week is it would take only one U.S. Senator on the other side—of all the people sitting over there, it would take only one to stop this abomination of a process. I hope one of my colleagues will be swayed by the horrendous writings Mr. Bounds lied to conceal.

This has been a sad moment for the Senate and a rejection of the kind of bipartisanship this body ought to bring to judicial nominations, the kind of bipartisanship I have been honored to be part of in Oregon for two decades. I urge my colleagues to vote no on the Bounds nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Michigan.

FAST-GROWING STARTUP COMPANIES

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, when you think about fast-growing startup companies, you might think about Silicon Valley, Boston, or Boulder. Though all these cities certainly have very vibrant ecosystems, innovative startups and small businesses are launching and growing across the United States, including in my home State of Michigan.

In every State, there are hard-working entrepreneurs who have established job-creating startups. These dynamic companies act as business leaders, innovators, and job creators within our communities.

This is why I am working with Senators WARREN, TILLIS, and SCOTT to commemorate Startup Week Across America and celebrate the ingenuity and entrepreneurship in our States and across the country. I kicked off this annual event in 2013 while serving in the House of Representatives. In the years since, I have had the privilege of visiting startups in Grand Rapids, Detroit, and Traverse City.

I have met with business founders who code apps for Fortune 500 companies, design and produce high-end jeans and other denim products, and grow and deliver farm-fresh products.

This Monday I visited Ferris Wheel, a new coworking space in Flint, MI, a community of hard-working Michiganders who are focused on their future.

The people of Flint are committed to building a stronger, healthier, more prosperous community, and they are

committed to doing it together. You can see this in their schools and their churches and nonprofits, and you can see this in their startups and small businesses.

One of the best parts about starting a business in Flint is 100K Ideas, a non-profit staffed by university students committed to helping entrepreneurs start their companies. This group is named in honor of the 100,000 residents of Flint and inspired by the thought that if they could pull one idea from every local resident, they could change the world.

This week, I had the chance to learn about a few of these new ideas. I met Kiara Tyler, the founder of Kalm Clothing. She moved the furniture out of her apartment to make room for inventory and stocked boxes of overalls and track suits where her couch used to be, while using her car as the company's headquarters. Now Kiara has done over \$100,000 worth of business. She is selling her clothing online, and she has space for her office and inventory at Ferris Wheel. Flint is her home, and she is excited to stay and to build her business in Michigan.

I learned about Article One Eyewear, a company that has taken on office space next door to her. They sell handcrafted eyeglasses and donate a portion of their proceeds to combat vitamin A deficiency and to fight blindness in developing nations.

I also met with SkyPoint Ventures, a true homegrown Michigan story. While they are a for-profit investment fund, they have also committed to social benefit projects and making Flint a better place to live and to do business. In addition to investing in companies like Article One, SkyPoint renovated the Ferris Building to create the Ferris Wheel coworking space and commit to the growing community of startups in the city of Flint.

Successful business growth comes down to matching talent to capital, and the United States does this better than any other country in the world. I am proud to say that I had a chance to see this happening firsthand in Flint and across the State of Michigan.

Michigan, in fact, has one of the fastest growing venture capital communities in the entire Nation, a critical asset that will help us become the startup capital of the Midwest. We have world-class colleges and universities, more engineers per capita than any other part of the country, and the infrastructure to export not just nationally but global as well.

I know that if we keep pulling together as a community and harness 100,000 ideas and beyond, Flint's future is bright. I know that Michigan's small businesses and startups will help to lead the way to new innovations that will revolutionize our economy.

I am committed to ensuring that our growing startup communities will be a fixture of creativity, innovation, and job creation for decades to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, today I rise to voice my support for the brave men and women of America's Immigration and Customs Enforcement, also known as ICE. Unfortunately, a resolution that would have shown this body's unanimous support for these courageous individuals was blocked.

While the Border Patrol has the important mission of maintaining security at our borders, ICE agents have the critical mission of enforcing immigration laws inside the United States. These two work hand in hand. Our Nation cannot have border security without enforcing our laws inside communities, and we cannot have secure communities without enforcing our laws at our borders.

The critical mission of ICE goes far beyond just immigration enforcement. These folks are on the frontlines of our homeland security.

Here is just a short list of the types of activities ICE is involved in: one, investigating and combating drug smuggling, pretty important; stopping human trafficking; preventing gang-related crimes; and working with other law enforcement entities to stop criminal and terrorist networks from operating.

Iowa, along with the rest of the country, has been gripped by an opioid crisis that puts our people and our safety at risk. Additionally, we continue to have a very grave methamphetamine issue that threatens the core of many of our already struggling rural communities.

We need ICE to help stop the flow of these drugs into Iowa's communities, our schools, our workplaces, and to our children and our families. In 2017 alone, ICE enforcement and removal operations seized nearly 1 million pounds of narcotics—1 million pounds of narcotics seized by ICE. Abolishing ICE would turn the flow of illegal drugs across the border from a stream into a monsoon.

I also implore anyone challenging the need for ICE to look at the horrendous toll of human trafficking: young and innocent women and men, boys and girls used as human pawns, smuggled across the border with hopes of a better life, forced into prostitution or worse—raped, beaten, subjected to sexual diseases and stripped of all innocence and dignity.

Sadly, human trafficking is a major issue in Iowa. In 2016, for instance, Des Moines was identified as one of the country's top 100 human trafficking locations. That information came to us from our good friends at Polaris, which is an anti-trafficking organization.

Human traffickers often exploit our immigration laws to transport their victims, and our ICE agents are the ones who help to stop them and to stop their illicit activities.

Every day, 24/7, 365 days a year, ICE agents are on the frontlines. They are

working to dismantle human trafficking networks and protect our most vulnerable.

I urge my colleagues to reconsider their objections and to support not only the resolution but to support those officers and personnel who carry out the vital mission of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in order to ensure the safety and security of all Americans.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss what is on so many Americans' minds today and the last couple of days—President Trump's recent trip to Europe, his meeting with Vladimir Putin, and his comments about Russia's interference in our elections.

So many Pennsylvanians—and I am sure this is true in every other State—have called or written to our office this week in complete disbelief asking: What is next? Where do we go from here?

These are good questions. They are critically important questions.

This President's views on Russia's past actions and the way forward have seemed to change every day this week.

Rather than focus on the news cycle following the Helsinki summit, I want to take a minute to review where things stood before—before—the President went to Europe.

Relations between the United States and Russia have been deteriorating for some time. We know that. The Russian Federation is clearly and unequivocally our adversary. Vladimir Putin envisions a world more closely resembling the Cold War era, certainly, than compared to today's realities, and he works toward a resurgence of Russian power and influence every day.

Just take a few examples. Russia attacked, annexed, and continues to illegally occupy Crimea. Russian-backed forces continue to violate cease-fire agreements in Ukraine and destabilize other parts of that country, preventing the Ukrainian people from fulfilling their dream of a secure and prosperous nation.

Russia is backing and enabling the murderous Assad regime in Syria. The conflict has emboldened terrorist groups, had dramatic humanitarian impacts, and has threatened the region's stability. As many as a half million people have been killed, and half the country has been displaced.

Just imagine if half of our population, say 150 million people, were displaced from their homes, sometimes to another part of the country and sometimes to a completely different country. That is the reality in Syria since