

Mr. President, I am a little curious, though, when I hear him and others talk about the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau as if it is this awful, out-of-control Federal agency. What bothers my colleagues about the CFPB is that it is the only agency in government that is willing to stand up against the Wall Street interests. We see the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, and we know how close he is to Wall Street—the Comptroller. We see the FDIC and we see the Federal Reserve and we see these nominees who come out of a White House that looks like it is a retreat for Wall Street executives, and they are on one side protecting Wall Street and doing Wall Street's bidding.

We have one agency, just one agency, which my conservative, pro-Wall Street, pro-corporate colleagues complain about every day, every week, every month—an agency that has saved 29 million American consumers \$12 million. How do you think—and they want to rein in that agency, saying the agency just has too much power over people's lives. It is actually protecting—my friend, the Senator from Massachusetts, who is also in the hall, talks about their being a cop on the beat. They are protecting consumers while Wall Street is doing whatever Wall Street does to them. I will just leave it at that.

A FREE PRESS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, a free, independent press is vital to our democracy. It is enshrined in our Constitution. We need tenacious, dedicated journalists, who will afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted, to ask tough questions, to challenge special interests, to connect Americans with their communities. That is why I joined my colleagues this week on a resolution condemning this administration's awful, vicious, demagogic attacks on reporters—including the decision last week to bar a reporter from attending a White House event just because the White House didn't like the questions she asked—with the repeated labeling of the free press as "enemies of the people."

Watch the video from last night. Watch the video in Florida from last night where the President egged on, egged on, and egged on his supporters to start screaming at newspaper reporters and other reporters—people who are doing their jobs.

In spite of this President using Stalinist language—I am just reading a book right now written by a Stalinist translator, and this book talks about a lot of the language Stalin used. He called people "enemies of the people." That is Communist talk. That is Stalinist talk. Yet this President calls reporters who get up every day and do their jobs—most of them not paid very well, frankly—the enemy of the people. They do vital work not just in Washington but throughout the country.

I would like to take a moment to highlight one of them. I am going to come to this floor every so often in the weeks and months ahead, and I am going to talk about a local reporter—a reporter who gets up every day, who probably doesn't make more than \$20,000 or \$30,000 a year. In many cases it is a little more than that, but reporters are generally not particularly well-paid people. I want to talk about the important work that local Ohio journalists do. Some of them I have met; others I haven't met but I have observed, because I know how important they are to their communities. I will start doing this on a regular basis because in this town today, with this administration, with this President of the United States—I still can't believe a President of the United States engages in talk like Stalin—the Soviet Stalin—calling American citizens who get up every day and do their job and do their job to the best of their ability "enemies of the people," and he tries to get the crowds he speaks to, the people he addresses, to chime in and call them "enemies of the people" and start calling those reporters names.

I want this floor message that I am going to do from time to time to be a constant reminder of how reporters contribute to their communities.

Last week, the Daily Jeffersonian in eastern Ohio ran a story on the upcoming Firemen's Festival in Caldwell, OH, a town in Appalachia, reported by a local reporter named Austin Erickson. It is the local fire department's biggest fundraiser of the year. They rely on the proceeds in part because of the corruption in State government where State government doesn't fund local communities like they used to for a whole bunch of reasons, but this fire department relies on the proceeds of the Fireman's Festival to fund daily maintenance, testing, and safety gear of their firefighters.

Mr. Erickson talked to the festival's chairman, who pointed to the fire department and told the reporter: "If it's in those four walls, it's from that festival." In other words, if it weren't for this festival, we wouldn't have the fire equipment we need.

Through its work, the Daily Jeffersonian and local reporters like Mr. Erickson are informing their communities about ways to support local firefighters and responders who keep them safe. If people like Mr. Erickson of the Daily Jeffersonian in Cambridge, OH, were not writing these stories, were not reporting on the Fireman's Festival, not as many people would go or understand it. They spend their hard-earned money there. It helps their local communities. It helps their fire department.

Enemies of the People? If the President would listen and see what these reporters do every day, maybe he would stop the demagoguery. Maybe he would stop calling people names. Maybe he would stop calling his own Attorney General names. Maybe he

would stand up to Putin who clearly—that is a whole other story. I won't get into that.

Let's go back to these local reporters and what journalists do every day and what Mr. Erickson does. It is what newspapers all over Ohio—from my hometown paper, the Mansfield News Journal, the paper where my wife used to work, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the Columbus Dispatch, the Cincinnati Enquirer, a smaller paper, the News-Herald, the Lorain Journal—I could go on and on and on, paper after paper after paper.

Journalists wake up every day and do their jobs. They serve their communities, and they serve their country. They are not enemies of the people. I just pray to God that the President of the United States will stop that kind of talk.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, today we came together to pass important bipartisan legislation to strengthen our national security and invest in American jobs.

Many of my colleagues of both parties have helped get the National Defense Authorization Act over the finish line. I particularly want to thank my colleague Senator PORTMAN from my State, who worked with our office to secure important Ohio priorities, and Senator INHOFE and my friend JACK REED, who served so well on the Banking Committee in addition to the work he has done on unemployment insurance and on military issues, and Senator CRAPO, my colleague from Idaho, as we worked on securing and fortifying our national interests when it comes to foreign investments. All of these colleagues of mine worked with the conference committee to get our agencies new tools to screen Chinese and other foreign investments for national security threats.

This bill would not have been possible without the leadership of one Senator in particular; that is, the senior Senator from Arizona. Senator MCCAIN's leadership on this legislation and throughout his career is why this Congress honored him through the naming of this bill—the John McCain National Defense Authorization Act. That is a rare honor. Congress rarely honors its own. We all know we all have feet of clay and don't put our friends here up on a pedestal, but for a few lions in the Senate, including Sam Nunn, John Warner, Ike Skelton, Carl Levin, and now JOHN MCCAIN, we have done that.

It honors his commitment to our national security through the John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program—fitting tributes to the service and sacrifice of a man like JOHN MCCAIN. We know his story—how a young Navy pilot was captured behind enemy lines, yet he never wavered in his commitment to his fellow POWs in Vietnam.

I have had my disagreements with him. We all have. But we have always respected each other. He has been a leader whom almost all of us from both parties have relied on for guidance, including national security issues and on issues when, in my first year in the Senate, I worked with Senator MCCAIN on keeping down the costs of prescription drugs.

He has been a critical fighter for sanctions to hold our adversaries accountable. Last year, we worked together, along with Senators CRAPO, SCHUMER, GRAHAM, RUBIO, CORKER, and CARDIN, to pass tough, new sanctions on Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

He has always been clear that we don't only honor the rule of law or refrain from torture when it is easy or convenient. He authored a 2015 amendment to prohibit the use of torture as an interrogation method.

He has been forceful in defending our allies against Russian aggression in Crimea and Georgia and Montenegro. After the Helsinki summit, Senator MCCAIN—one of the few Republicans in this body who is willing to call the President out when he does something, especially on foreign soil, to attack the United States of America—spoke out forcefully against the President cozying up to Putin and his attacks on journalists.

He said: "The President [of the United States, Donald Trump,] made a conscious choice to defend a tyrant against the fair questions of a free press, and to grant Putin an uncontested platform to spew propaganda and lies to the world."

He said: "All that makes us who we are—a republic of free people dedicated to the cause of liberty at home and abroad."

Those words stood out because so few Republicans were willing to utter them.

Throughout his life and career, he has lived the motto of "country first." I thank my colleague from Arizona for his work on the National Defense Authorization Act this year. I look forward to continuing our work together to protect our national security and together to serve the people of this great country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, every day I meet all sorts of people—small business owners, working moms, students, seniors, and servicemembers—and they are concerned about all sorts of things: the growing cost of healthcare, the cost of child care, the cost of college, the cost of student loan debt, stagnant wages, fixing our broken criminal justice system, gun violence in schools—you name it.

But in the thousands of conversations I have had, I haven't met a single person who has said they are concerned

that Washington doesn't work well enough for big businesses. If you ask any of them, they will tell you that, when it comes to the wealthy and the powerful, Washington works just like a dream, but for everyone else, Washington just isn't working.

That is not a coincidence. Powerful interests have been working for years to capture every single branch of government to tilt the scales in their favor and against everyone else.

Our courts are no exception in this. Powerful interests have worked for years, pouring incredible amounts of money into capturing our courts. It has been a real one-two punch.

The first punch has been working with Republicans to stop fair-minded, impartial judges from sitting on the Federal bench, slowing down or stopping those nominations, holding open a Supreme Court seat, and keeping fair people off the bench whenever possible.

Then came the second punch. Whenever they get the chance, it is stacking our courts with judges dedicated to a vision of the law where the wealthy and well-connected get to call the shots—people who are willing to leave behind women, workers, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, students, families, and everyone else who doesn't have money or power.

Donald Trump's decision to nominate Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court is just the latest example of this. Minutes after Donald Trump announced Kavanaugh's nomination, the White House blasted out a document. To whom? To business lobbyists around Washington touting Judge Kavanaugh's rulings in favor of corporate interests and against the interests of everyone else. They are not even hiding it anymore.

Think about that. The first move by the White House is not a memo to the American people talking about the nominee's independence or talking about his commitment to justice for everyone but a memo to business lobbyists highlighting Judge Kavanaugh's loyalty to big business. That is a key part of Donald Trump's public case for Judge Kavanaugh—the promise that Judge Kavanaugh will tilt the playing field even further in favor of corporations and against working people.

Take a look at cases the White House included in its sales pitch to corporate lobbyists. In one recent case, Judge Kavanaugh ruled that the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was unconstitutional, calling independent agencies like the consumer bureau "a significant threat to individual liberty." Really? That is the consumer agency that a bipartisan group of 60 Senators and 237 Representatives created after the most devastating financial crisis in generations. It is the agency that is a tough watchdog for American families, the agency that in just 7 years has returned \$12 billion directly to people who were cheated by big banks, credit card companies, and student loan servicers. But I guess all

Judge Kavanaugh saw was a threat to the individual liberty of companies that were looking to cheat people.

Judge Kavanaugh's ruling was so out of the mainstream that the rest of his colleagues on the court promptly reversed his decision by an overwhelming vote. But if Judge Kavanaugh becomes Justice Kavanaugh, he could provide the decisive vote on the Supreme Court to strike down the CFPB and leave consumers at the mercy of predatory lenders again.

That wasn't the only time that Judge Kavanaugh ruled against consumers and in favor of the giant corporations that squashed them. Last year, he issued an opinion that would have set aside a lower court ruling and allowed a merger of two giant health insurance companies to move forward, despite evidence that the merger could hurt consumers in 14 States. Luckily, once again, Judge Kavanaugh's colleagues disagreed, and they criticized him for applying the law as he wished it were, not as it currently is. Again, Judge Kavanaugh found a way to rule in favor of corporate interests, no matter what the law said.

Judge Kavanaugh has also ruled time and again to reverse rules designed to address climate change and to protect the air we breathe. In three separate cases, the Trump administration highlighted for corporate lobbyists that Judge Kavanaugh argued that the Environmental Protection Agency had acted illegally in taking action to protect the environment and to protect public health. In each case, the EPA had spent years carefully considering the input of scientists, experts, and the industry, but in each case, Judge Kavanaugh found that wasn't enough. He put maximizing polluter profits ahead of protecting working families and the well-being of our planet.

The Trump White House and the Republican Congress have gone to bat for corporate interests time and again. They have showered them with \$1.5 trillion in tax giveaways, rolling back the rules on some of the country's biggest banks, and reversing rules to protect workers and consumers from corporate abuse.

But there may not be a single body in Washington that has delivered more victories for giant companies in the last 2 years—and more losses for everyone else—than the Supreme Court of the United States. In case after case, by 5-to-4 decisions, this Court has limited the rights of working people and expanded the ability of giant corporations to do pretty much whatever they please. It is no wonder that working families are working longer and harder, only to get squeezed between flat wages and rising costs.

Judge Kavanaugh would tip the balance of the Court even further in favor of those corporations and special interests. For the next 30 or 40 years, he would be a reliable vote in favor of whatever giant companies and their armies of lobbyists decide that they