

Of course, you wouldn't guess that judging by the way Democrats and the media have treated him over the past few weeks. For example, earlier this week, one of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle said she would cancel her meeting with the nominee, which, of course, she is free to do. What media reports ignored was that this same Senator had announced her resolute opposition before any nominee was even announced. Talk about jumping the gun.

In an effort to stir up social media controversy, another colleague of mine suggested in dark and gloomy terms that the Judiciary chairman's use of committee confidentiality was some nefarious tool to hide salacious details about the nominee. In doing so, he neglected to inform the tens of thousands who retweeted his misleading message that committee confidentiality is, in fact, a common practice that has been used by past chairmen from both parties.

Before our friends in the media report these disingenuous claims, they should apply rigorous fact-checking to see if Democrats are telling the truth or simply crying wolf to whip up their base.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Mr. HATCH. Finally, I would like to say just a few words about criminal justice reform. We have been at an impasse since the Judiciary Committee took up the issue earlier this year, but recent reports suggest that negotiations with the White House may soon lead to a compromise. I have not been a part of those negotiations, and I understand that they are still ongoing and there is no final proposal on the table, but I am concerned that there is no mention of mens rea reform being included in that deal.

Sentencing and prison reform can do only so much if we continue to allow individuals to be sent to prison for conduct they did not know was unlawful, even when Congress does not specify that their crimes should be strict liability offenses.

Sentencing and prison reform must be paired with a solution that addresses the root problem of criminalization, which includes the lack of clear mens rea requirements in much of our criminal law. My Mens Rea Reform Act of 2018, which I introduced earlier this summer with Senate Judiciary Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY, provides that solution. It is supported by a broad range of groups from across the ideological spectrum, from the American Conservative Union to the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

To be honest, I am troubled that the bill is not part of the current negotiations. I am likewise troubled that we have not heard any discussion of a legislative fix for the Armed Career Criminal Act to ensure that dangerous, repeat offenders receive appropriately long prison sentences. Real criminal

justice reform should be about getting the policy right. That means we cannot be looking just to ratchet back prison sentences, but we must also be looking to close loopholes that prematurely let armed, dangerous criminals back on the streets.

Comprehensive criminal justice reform is long overdue, and I am pleased to hear that negotiations are continuing. I look forward to working with my colleagues to address those concerns.

I apologize to the leader for taking so long on these remarks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank my friend from Utah.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LINCOLN PARK ZOO

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this year marks an important milestone for a true treasure in Illinois. The Lincoln Park Zoo, located in the heart of Chicago, is celebrating its 150th anniversary.

From its inauspicious beginnings with the gift of two pairs of swans from Central Park in New York City, the Lincoln Park Zoo has grown to be a destination for Chicago residents and visitors alike. The zoo is visited by 3.7 million people annually.

Visitors to the zoo appreciate its central location; it is close to cultural and shopping attractions in Chicago. But what everyone loves about the zoo is that there is no admission fee in order to enjoy the zoo's exhibits. That is right; admission to the Lincoln Park Zoo is free. In 1878, 20 years after those swans arrived from Central Park, it was resolved that the Zoo would always be free and open to the public. Today, Lincoln Park Zoo remains the Nation's only privately managed, free-admission zoo in the country.

When people visit the zoo, they not only experience the seals, gorillas, polar bears, giraffes, the big cats at the Kovler Lion House, and a pygmy hippopotamus, they also are introduced to farm animals, equipment, and practices that reflect the importance of agriculture to my home State. For many urban children, the zoo allows an introduction to nature and agriculture in a way they may not otherwise experience.

Generations of Chicagoans have fond memories of spending summer days at Lincoln Park Zoo with their families. Many can tell you that it is worth

braving the blustery Chicago weather for a visit to Lincoln Park Zoo during Zoo Lights, their annual winter celebration.

I have always considered Lincoln Park Zoo to be a hallmark of a Chicago childhood. It is a place I wanted to share with my twin grandchildren, now age 7, when they come to visit. Hopping on the 151 CTA bus and wandering the zoo grounds in summer and winter has always been a great adventure for my family.

I want to join the community in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Lincoln Park Zoo. The staff and volunteers of the zoo should be proud of their efforts to preserve and foster this Chicago treasure, ensuring future generations have the opportunity to create memories as I have done with my family.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week, on August 16, more than 300 newspapers across the Nation published editorials giving voice and testament to the vital role of a free press in our American democracy. It is such a crucial requisite of democracy that this role—this right of a free people—is embedded in our Constitution.

The words, the actions, and the service of the free American press are a daily counterpoint to the vile charges by many that the press is "the enemy of the people"—a smear that is commonly used by despots in societies that do not have the freedoms that our Constitution is intended to ensure and protect. It is all too clear today that each new generation must renew the Nation's dedication to our founding principles and ideals.

The Senate, on August 16, unanimously passed a resolution reaffirming the vital and indispensable role of the free press. I was proud to cosponsor that resolution. It is regrettable that such a resolution was even needed—or even timely.

I am proud that several news organizations in Vermont participated on August 16 in publishing editorials about the importance of a free press. I call to the Senate's attention one of these, written by Steven Pappas and published in the Times Argus of Barre, VT.

I ask unanimous consent that this editorial be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Times Argus, Aug. 16, 2018]

YES, WE ARE THE ENEMY

[Editor's note: Across the nation today, U.S. newspapers and news organizations are publishing, posting or broadcasting editorials opposing press-bashing. The idea was sparked by Boston Globe editorial page editor Marjorie Pritchard. What follows is our voice in that chorus of solidarity.]

We are the enemy. It's true. We say that with no hesitation.

If you abuse power, we are the enemy.

When you use propaganda to mislead the people, you are the enemy.

If a public official deliberately hides documents or closes meetings, we are the enemy.

We will come after you if you are an oppressor of the underprivileged.

We will never allow anyone to silence the voices and opinions of others.

If you ignore laws and human rights, you are the enemy.

We will call out discrimination, any willingness or eagerness to hate, narrow-mindedness.

We will exploit anyone who creates smoke to divert anyone from the fires that you build.

We are the enemy of ignorance, all ignorance.

If you suppress, we are the enemy.

If you scheme, we are the enemy.

If you use conflicts of interest to gain leverage, you are the enemy.

If you are, in any form, an enemy of the public trust, then, of course, we are the enemy.

If you believe facts are subjective and truths should be measured in shades of gray, then we are your enemy in black and white.

And when you say there is no need for a free press, we are absolutely, unequivocally, your enemy.

So now that we have established ourselves as your enemy, know this: We are not the enemy of the people. Our readers and the public are our allies against you. We represent the communities we serve; we are their reflection—good, bad and indifferent. They depend on us to collect, vet and present information in spite of selfish motivations.

We are the watchdogs, sometimes the only ones who will stand up and say, “Hold on.” We will say, “I don’t think so.” We can declare, “Out of line.” And we are not afraid to say, “You’re wrong.”

We will kick over stones. We will ask hard questions. We will separate facts from fiction.

We will challenge you to prove yourself. We will ask you to think for yourself.

We will force you to say “yes” or “no.”

We will make you uncomfortable.

We will hold on to certain issues like a dog with a bone, until we are certain our investigation is complete.

We will also make mistakes. And we will own them and we will correct them.

We will sometimes publish an incomplete story. But we try, at all costs (and with far limited resources than ever before), to avoid presenting something that could be construed as “fake news.” That does not serve our interest to be the vehicle for answers, information or truth.

And if we are doing our job well, no one is ever really happy with us. But we earn respect.

To those who say journalists are the enemy, we definitely are. We actually wear that charge as a badge of honor. We are proud of the work we do and the purpose that we serve.

Because without us, or with even a hint of a state-run media, facts have no value.

George Seldes was fond of quoting Abraham Lincoln, who, during the Civil War, once famously said, “I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts.”

Seldes was an investigative journalist, correspondent, editor and author. He lived in Hartland Four Corners and died in 1995 at the age of 104. Over the course of his career, Seldes influenced many young people to become journalists. He also was hated for standing up to authority, both in foreign nations for his news coverage, and at home for his harsh criticism of the American press.

But he did journalism a favor by being everyone’s enemy and making us all squirm and question roles—both as consumers of news and newsmakers.

James Russell Wiggins, a career journalist who worked for The Washington Post and later retired to Maine, summarized the thread of the Fourth Estate’s purpose as this: “Americans will be tempted, in the years ahead, to sacrifice the principles that have made their country what it is. It will seem appropriate and convenient to meet the demands of crisis by bending a little here and giving a little there. It is an inclination that will have to be resisted at the first trespass upon our freedoms, or other invasions of individual rights will come swiftly upon us.”

That day is here, friends.

THE HIGH SCHOOL CODES ACT

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak about the importance of teaching computer science and coding in our education system. Throughout the United States and especially in my home State of Washington, our internet economy is booming. Nationwide it represents 7 percent of our GDP, which makes up 13 percent of Washington State’s economy. In Washington State, over 13,000 internet companies provide more than a quarter of a million jobs.

Every student in America should be taught the tools they need to enter our 21st century economy. Every student in the United States should have the opportunity to learn about the internet, and algorithms, and apps. This is a skills gap we have to close, and that is why I joined with my colleague from Louisiana, Senator CASSIDY, to introduce the High School CODES Act earlier this year.

Senator CASSIDY and I have long considered and spoken about the importance of allowing students to have the ability fulfill a math, science, or language requirement with a coding class.

That is why Senator CASSIDY and I were pleased to include language in the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act that the President signed into law yesterday. The language in the bill would allow Federal funds to support “efforts to expand, develop, and implement programs to increase the students’ opportunity for rigorous courses” in coding and computer science and “support statewide efforts to create access to implementation of coding and computer science.” Additionally, Senator CASSIDY and I were pleased to get an amendment included in the appropriations bill that highlights the importance of a dedicated funding stream for coding courses in K–12 education.

During the Carl D. Perkins markup negotiations both the majority and minority agreed to include strong report language that captures the intent of our original bill, S. 3122, the High School CODES Act. Additionally, we are pleased that Senator ALEXANDER agreed to send a letter to Education Secretary DeVos expressing the same.

I ask Senator CASSIDY, is it your understanding that the purpose of our

legislation is to incentivize States to allow coding classes be used in lieu of advanced math, science, or foreign language requirements?

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I, too, want to emphasize the importance of introducing young students to computer science and coding courses as part of their education. I thank my colleague and friend, Senator CANTWELL, for working with me on this issue. The answer is yes. Our legislation, the High School CODES Act, will incentivize states to allow coding and computer science classes to satisfy an advanced math, science, or foreign language graduation credit.

Now, this is not to replace the basic math, science, and foreign language classes all students need, but to allow students who do not need to take Calculus II or III to instead take a computer science or coding course. The CODES Act does not mandate curriculum on States; it gives them the flexibility to provide students with the type of education that best fits their needs. It gives students more opportunity to succeed in our rapidly changing economy.

According to code.org, computing occupations are the No. 1 source of all new wages in America and make up over half of all projected new jobs in STEM fields; yet, computer science is marginalized throughout our education system, with fewer than half of U.S. schools offering any computer science course, and only 8 percent of STEM graduates studying it.

In my home State of Louisiana, there are currently more than 2,300 open computing jobs. The average salary for a computing occupation in Louisiana is approximately \$67,600, about \$26,000 higher than the average salary in my State.

I applaud the State legislature for creating the LaSTEM Advisory Council to oversee the creation and delivery of STEM programs in Louisiana and for the LA Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for approving new STEM pathways for students allowing new, industry-based courses to count towards math and sciences for graduation.

In addition to thanking Senator CANTWELL, I want to thank education committee Chairman ALEXANDER for his support for including provisions in the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act that effectively captures the original intent of our bipartisan bill. We are also pleased the chairman agreed to report language and a letter to Education Secretary DeVos expressing the intent of the provisions. Lastly, I am pleased that Senator CANTWELL and my amendment is included in the minibus appropriations bill highlighting the importance of funding for coding courses in K–12 education.

These are positive steps that will give more students the opportunity to take computer science and coding classes.