

If I am elected, you won't lose one plant, you'll have plants coming into this country. . . . I promise you that.

If the President of the United States meant what he said—if he said you are not going to lose plants, if he said the companies that have moved overseas are going to come back to Lordstown, come back to Mansfield, come back to Toledo, and come back to Dayton, then, Mr. President, what you need to do is support the American Cars, American Jobs Act. Let's end this tax break, this incentive for companies to shut down production in Xenia, OH, and move overseas. Let's end this tax cut for corporations that shut down these American plants and move American jobs overseas. If you love this country, you fight for the people to make it work. Mr. President, let's do that and pass the American Cars, American Jobs Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

YEMEN

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I want to express my strong support for the bipartisan resolution—54—that is before us today. The strong, bipartisan support we are seeing on the floor—most recently from my colleague Senator LEE of Utah—shows how necessary and important this resolution is to end the complicity of the United States in the murderous war waged by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

The United States is complicit because we are providing fuel, intelligence, and other support that is only increasing the barbaric power of the Saudis in that civil war—murderous activities that are taking a toll on civilians. The blood will be on our hands if we continue to support the Saudis in this brutal effort.

The resolution before us is carefully crafted to preserve our national security and our national interests while at the same time removing our involvement from the Saudi war crimes. There seems to be no other word for what we are seeing the Saudis do. The arguments made by the administration for our support and participation carry no weight. We should never compromise our national value for the sake of arms sales. In fact, the arms contracts are a pittance or a fraction of what the administration claims. So I am proud to support this measure. It will do too little and too late what should have been done long ago: Renounce our moral and legal responsibility, as well as our practical involvement for the murderous and brutal Saudi attacks on civilians and others in Yemen.

NOMINATION OF THOMAS FARR

Mr. President, I rise today to speak out on a less bipartisan issue against the concerted campaign by the administration and its allies to dramatically reshape our judiciary—to fill the courts with partisans and ideologues.

President Trump has made no secret of his frustration at judges nominated by both Republicans and Democrats who choose to uphold the rule of law

and, as Chief Justice Roberts has said, “do equal right to those appearing before them.” He is wrong to talk about Obama judges or Bush judges. In fact, the Chief Justice is absolutely right that when a person puts on the robe, they are no longer a judge nominated by any President; they are a judge doing the right thing, hopefully, from the bench in a completely bipartisan, nonpartisan way.

Yet this administration has repeatedly put forward extreme nominees who will seek to undo decades of critically important progress in recognizing and protecting reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, voting rights, workers' rights, environmental protections, and more.

In fact, we are scheduled to vote on a nominee for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Thomas Farr, who exemplifies this administration's efforts to remake the judiciary. He has been nominated for a judgeship that has been open for years. In fact, it is the longest open judicial vacancy in the country.

In 2013, President Obama nominated Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer May-Parker to fill the seat. Senator Hagan returned a blue slip, but Senator BURR—despite formally recommending May-Parker to the White House for the position—declined to return his blue slip. At that time, the Senate still adhered to its longstanding practice of respecting blue slips and referring to home State Senators, so the nomination was never considered. To accommodate Senator BURR's obstruction, Senator Obama nominated North Carolina Supreme Court Justice Patricia Timmons-Goodson to fill the vacancy on the district court in 2016. Neither Senators Burr nor Tillis returned blue slips on her nomination.

Senator BURR had the right—and I may have misspoken when I referred to obstruction—when he declined to return that blue slip. Would that that right were still observed in this body. He had that right. He exercised it. But now President Trump has nominated Thomas Farr, an attorney whose career is defined by efforts to dilute African-American votes and suppress them through redistricting and to make it more difficult for African Americans to vote in the first place.

Mr. Farr has worked to suppress minority votes since at least the early 1990s. The Department of Justice under George H.W. Bush alleged that Farr engaged in acts of voter intimidation during the 1990 election. In fact, during that election, Farr served as legal counsel to Senator Jesse Helms. The Department of Justice alleged that Senator Helms' campaign sent out to Black communities tens of thousands of postcards that falsely told voters they could be found ineligible to vote based on various conditions. President Bush's Justice Department described this mail campaign as “intended to intimidate thousands of African-American residents and discourage them from voting in a 1990 Senate election.”

Since then, Farr has become an attorney of choice for North Carolina's Republican politicians when they have sought to gerrymander and suppress voter efforts. Notably and most recently, he successfully represented the North Carolina legislature in *Cooper v. Harris*. That case involved two districts that were redrawn after the 2010 census as majority Black districts by removing African-American voters from other predominantly White districts. The redrawn districts effectively diluted the voting power of African Americans by concentrating the Black population in a smaller number of districts that already elected candidates who received strong support from African-American voters.

The Supreme Court rejected Farr's defense of the redrawn districts and found that the legislature had engaged in unconstitutional racial gerrymandering. That ruling was remarkable—absolutely exceptional in Supreme Court jurisdiction—indicating the blatant and flagrant disregard for constitutional law in that gerrymandering.

Farr also defended the North Carolina legislature in a challenge to its restrictive voter ID law. The day after the Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* struck down the preclearance requirements of section 5 in the Voting Rights Act, the Republicans in the North Carolina legislature requested data regarding the racial breakdown of the usage of various voting access tools.

The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals found that the law discriminated against African-American voters “with almost surgical precision.”

The court said: “This sequence of events—the General Assembly's eagerness to, at the historic moment of Shelby County's issuance, rush through the legislative process the most restrictive voting law North Carolina has seen since the era of Jim Crow—speaks a certain purpose.”

Thomas Farr argued in favor of those legislative districts that restricted representation of African-American voters in their State and Federal Government.

President Trump has chosen this man to serve as a judge. I cannot vote for him. I hope my colleagues will join me in rejecting this nominee. His nomination alone speaks volumes about the intentions and predilections of this administration. This nominee is not suited to the vital task that judges—particularly Federal district court judges—are empowered to carry out.

This nominee is not fit for this job. I will vote no. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to strongly oppose the nomination of Thomas Farr to the Federal bench, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting against him.

The right to vote is sacred and a precious human right, but it has been under attack, and that is unconscionable and wrong.

This nominee represents yet another threat to the basic premise of one person, one vote because, throughout his career, he has worked to make it harder for Black Americans to vote. That is not who we are as a country, and this nominee does not deserve the privilege of a lifetime appointment on the Federal bench.

Over and over again, on the most serious and consequential questions related to our sacred right to vote, Mr. Farr has been on the wrong side of the issue.

Listen to his record: Mr. Farr defended in court a gerrymandered congressional map that was so blatantly racist that our Federal Court of Appeals judge ordered it to be redrawn. Mr. Farr defended in court State laws that were so obviously designed to suppress the Black vote that a Federal Court of Appeals ordered them to be struck down. He wasn't just a cheerleader for these discriminatory laws; he was the actual architect. He was their defender in court. He did everything he could to keep them in place.

That is why millions of Americans all over the country, including so many men and women of color, the NAACP, and the Congressional Black Caucus, are so outraged by this nomination. They are right to be so because this nomination is an insult.

This seat is the longest judicial vacancy in the country, but it did not have to be that way. Just a few years ago, a highly qualified nominee was picked to fill the seat, but she didn't even have a hearing, let alone a vote. So then another highly qualified nominee was picked to fill the seat, and she didn't receive a hearing either—or a basic vote. Now we have another nominee for the same exact seat, but this time my colleagues are practically tripping over themselves to rush him through the Senate at full speed, to push him across the finish line before the end of the year, and to hand him a lifetime appointment to the Court.

I urge my colleagues to reject this bad choice. Let's find someone better, who isn't so obviously biased on questions related to race. If his record of discrimination and bias alone isn't enough to convince you, then think about this: We cannot ignore the fact that this nomination is coming at a moment when so many Black Americans are still experiencing blatant and racist disenfranchisement every time they try to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Just look at the voter suppression that happened in Florida and in Georgia this month in their elections for Governor.

We have already seen terrible decisions from the Federal bench that have rolled back voting rights, such as when the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act. This body has done nothing to address this egregious decision, and

we should not be complicit in further eroding this precious right.

Now we want to confirm another man to the Federal judiciary who has spent his entire legal career fighting to make it harder for Black Americans to vote. What kind of awful message are we sending to our country?

We must reject this nominee. We must stand up to discrimination and racism in all its forms, not reinforce them, not encourage them.

I urge my colleagues to do the right thing and vote no.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

UKRAINE

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today, as I have many times before, to stand up for a free and independent Ukraine.

I come to the floor to unambiguously call out and condemn the Russian Government's escalation of aggression and the increasingly dangerous situation in Ukraine.

Over the weekend, Russian forces sharply escalated their campaign in Ukraine by attacking and seizing 3 Ukrainian vessels with 23 crew members and temporarily shutting down commercial shipping through the Kerch Strait. Ukrainian sailors were injured and required medical attention.

This was an outrageous violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, so I want to say this clearly and unequivocally: The Kremlin must immediately return the vessels and sailors to Ukraine. The Kremlin must not obstruct the free passage of shipping through the Kerch Strait moving forward.

We here in the United States must take the Kremlin's actions seriously in word and in deed, for the Russian Government's actions on Sunday marked a sharp escalation in Putin's ongoing assault on the international rules-based order, this time on the freedom of navigation in the high seas. Indeed, this was an act of war, and Sunday's attack comes in the context of ongoing Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine for the past 4 years.

For the past 4 years, Ukrainian forces have endured an unrelenting assault, rendering the Donbas economically shattered and ungovernable.

For the past 4 years, 1.5 million displaced people have lived lives of uncertainty, not sure when and if they will ever be able to return home.

For the past 4 years, Ukraine has struggled to rebuild its economy and reform its institutions while fighting a hot war and suffering regular casualties.

For the past 4 years, Ukraine has been on the frontlines of a struggle against the Kremlin's vision of a world that is not guided by Democratic values, not buttressed by fundamental freedoms, not governed by a rules-based international order but, instead, ruled by Mr. Putin and a corrupt cabal of oligarch insiders.

Despite years of aggression, Putin's latest escalation marks an even more

insidious turn. Apparently, the Kremlin no longer seeks to hide behind lies of little green men or Russian-backed separatists. The Russian Government, with no pretense or obfuscation, fully admitted to directly firing on Ukrainian forces and seizing their ships.

Beyond the military component, this attack tells us that Putin is ramping up an economic war on Ukraine. Since the spring, Russian vessels have blocked Ukrainian commercial ships from sailing through the Kerch Strait, costing Ukraine millions in lost revenue from exports and blocking imports critical to the Ukrainian economy. This weekend, Moscow opened up a new front in the war, one that could ultimately do the most damage to Ukraine's viability as a state.

Russia's actions show that its leaders are emboldened, unchastened, and on the march. Clearly our response to Russian efforts to undermine our security, our fundamental democratic values, our institutions, and the rules-based international order has thus far been inadequate.

Certainly the State and Defense Departments have taken some steps to counter Russian aggression. Ambassador Kurt Volker, who has led efforts to fully implement the Minsk agreements, has shown clear-eyed leadership in calling out the Kremlin and holding Putin to account. Our Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, Wess Mitchell, has done much of the same. Secretary Jim Mattis has consistently supported a strong military presence in Europe to counter Russian aggression. Nikki Haley, our U.S. Ambassador, issued the first statement from the administration following Sunday's attack and was appropriately firm. Come to think of it, I can't think of any player within the Trump administration who is soft on Russia—except one, of course: the President himself.

Just yesterday, when asked by reporters about Russia's escalation in Ukraine, President Trump said: "We don't like what is happening either way." In other words, he once again fell back on the same old both sides excuse he keeps in his back pocket whenever asked about Russia's bad behavior. This is not the kind of clear and unequivocal denouncement the people of Ukraine or the world needs to hear from an American President at a moment in which the international democratic order is under attack, but unfortunately it is what we have come to expect from President Trump, who repeatedly subverts his own administration's positions and efforts on Russia.

The work of Mattis, Volker, Mitchell, Haley, and countless others has been repeatedly undermined by a President who has abandoned America's interests and betrayed our core principles time and time again, from the fiasco in Helsinki to an exchange in Paris just weeks ago where he greeted Putin with a giant smile on his face.

The President has had many opportunities to restore confidence to the