

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NOMINATION OF THOMAS FARR

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, there has been a lot of activity in the Senate today, and I wish to cover a couple of topics, starting with the nomination of Thomas Farr to be a U.S. District Court judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina. I understand we will not be voting on that nomination today.

I hope our colleagues will take the time between now and whenever we may cast a final vote on that nomination to take another look at the record because a number of very informative things have come out in recent days about Mr. Farr's record.

I want to take us back to a moment where this Senate Chamber was back in 2006. Back in 2006, the U.S. Senate passed the Voting Rights Reauthorization Act by a vote of 98 to 0. Ninety-eight Senators in favor of the Voting Rights Act Reauthorization—none opposed. The House passed the same bill by a vote of 390 to 33. President Bush signed that bill into law.

Fast forward to 2013, we have a case in the Supreme Court, *Shelby County v. Holder*. The Supreme Court, by a vote of 5 to 4, took a big bite out of the enforcement provisions of the Voting Rights Act. They eliminated the preclearance provisions. What we saw within a matter of weeks and months were States around the country that had previously been subject to the preclearance provisions beginning to enact laws putting up barriers to people's ability to vote, especially minority voters. Texas enacted legislation and North Carolina enacted legislation, among others.

I want to focus for a moment on what happened in North Carolina because in North Carolina the State legislature passed a bill that put up all sorts of obstacles that made it much harder—for African Americans especially—to cast their vote, to exercise their right to vote. When that bill was appealed to the Fourth Circuit, the Fourth Circuit found that North Carolina State legislation had targeted African-American voters with almost "surgical precision," and they threw out that North Carolina law.

Well, just a few days ago, this Senate confirmed a nominee to be legal counsel at the Department of Agriculture, Stephen Vaden, who was one of the people who filed and coauthored an amicus brief in support of the North Carolina law that was overturned. The Senate acted, and we did that.

It turns out that just a few days later, we have a nomination not for the general counsel for the Department of Agriculture but for somebody to be on the U.S. courts who was the architect and the defender of these North Carolina laws, Thomas Farr. That same law which the Court said targeted African Americans with almost surgical precision, trying to deny them their right to

vote, was also found by the Court to be "the most restrictive voting law North Carolina has seen since the era of Jim Crowe."

Thomas Farr wasn't just a key player in that case in defending North Carolina's discriminatory law, he was also a key player in passing other North Carolina laws that have been thrown out because of their discriminatory impact. He was in the middle of North Carolina's effort to redraw State legislative lines for both State House districts and State Senate districts that the U.S. Supreme Court threw out on the grounds that it was racially discriminatory, but his history in trying to put up barriers to minority voting rights goes back even further.

I have in my hand a memorandum, dated June 19, 1991, from within the Justice Department. It was during the administration of George Herbert Walker Bush. It is a memo recommending that the United States bring a lawsuit against the North Carolina Republican Party and the Helms for Senate Committee—that would be Jesse Helms, former Senator—for conducting a postcard mailing program designed to intimidate and threaten Black voters throughout the State of North Carolina in order to discourage them from participating in the November 6, 1990, general election.

I urge all of my colleagues to read this memorandum from the Justice Department during the time George Bush was President. I especially direct them to page 12. There is a footnote on page 12 that talks about Thomas Farr's work in this area of trying to put up barriers to voting, going way back to not just the 1990 election but back to the 1984 election of Senator Jesse Helms.

In fact, this Department of Justice memorandum states that Farr was the primary coordinator of the 1984 "ballot security" program conducted by the North Carolina GOP and the 1984 Helms for Senate Committee. He—referring to Thomas Farr—coordinated several "ballot security" activities in 1984, including a postcard mailing to voters in predominantly Black precincts which was designed to serve as a basis to challenge voters on Election Day.

I don't know what has happened to the Senate between 2006, when it unanimously voted to extend the Voting Rights Act, and today, when we have on the floor the nomination of Thomas Farr, who has a history of being the point person in trying to limit the ability of Americans to exercise their right to vote and, according to the Fourth Circuit of the United States, did so with "surgical precision" in denying African-American voters.

How can we in good conscience put someone on the Federal Court of the United States who has that history? How can people who come before that court have the confidence that the person—that judge—is really going to uphold their rights?

I urge my colleagues to oppose this nomination.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, I also want to take us back to 2006 for another reason. Back in 2006, we had many of our Republican Senate colleagues recognizing the dangers of doing nothing about the mounting costs of climate change. Back in 2006, there was a bill in the U.S. Senate by Senators McCain and Lieberman, a bipartisan group, designed to finally take action. Here we are so many years later from 2006 and, my goodness, have we regressed.

We now have a President of the United States, in response to a report that came out from 300 scientists in the U.S. Government about the dangers of climate change, who says: Well, I don't believe it. They tried to bury this report, releasing it the day after Thanksgiving, but it backfired because it was a slow news day and people realized what was up. They realized this was a deliberate attempt by the administration to deep-six something that is important to all Americans and something all Americans can see with their own eyes, which is the escalating impact of doing nothing about climate change, whether it is forest fires or floods or rising sea levels.

If you look at the report, if you live in the Chesapeake Bay area, you have to be really worried: increasing precipitation, increasing storm events. We already have flooding in Annapolis, the home of the U.S. Naval Academy. If you talk to the Superintendent there, he is already worried about the impact. This report makes clear that we are going to have rising sea levels, a rising Chesapeake Bay, and we are going to see islands in the Chesapeake Bay disappearing, all because this body refuses to take any action and decides to instead kowtow to the President of the United States.

I would like to quote the President very quickly. When asked about this the other day, he said the following. When he was asked why he doesn't believe in climate change—this is the President of the United States: "One of the problems that a lot of people like myself—we have very high levels of intelligence, but we're not necessarily such believers."

He goes on to say:

And when you're talking about an atmosphere, oceans are very small. And it blows over and it sails over. I mean, we take thousands of tons of garbage off our beaches all the time that comes over from Asia. It just flows right down the Pacific, it flows, and we say where does this come from. And it takes many people to start off with.

Then he goes on in this bizarre answer. This is the President of the United States responding to a question about the reality of climate change.

I hope we will get back to where we were on climate change in this body in 2006 and work on a bipartisan basis to do something, because the cost of doing nothing is rising every day and hitting Americans and people across the world.

Finally, when it comes to denying the facts, including the facts presented

by his own administration, we have a President of the United States who apparently doesn't believe his intelligence community. This is just another rewind-the-tape moment. We remember after Helsinki, when the President sided with President Putin and said: No, the Russians were not involved in the 2016 elections—despite the unanimous conclusions of all the U.S. intelligence agencies.

Now we know from reports that the CIA has determined with a high level of confidence that the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia was involved and helped orchestrate the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Instead of accepting the conclusions of the CIA, the President instead has become the mouthpiece for the Saudi regime. Early on, he played into all their cover stories.

Just yesterday, we had a briefing of the Senate. We had the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense. Guess who did not show up. The Director of the CIA. It is pretty clear that the administration did not want the Director of the CIA telling Senators from both parties what her findings are, but they have been reported in our newspapers.

When you have the Secretary of State write in the Wall Street Journal complaining about what he calls "caterwauling" in the U.S. Congress about what happened, you bet people in the Senate are upset about the fact that an American resident—a writer for a major American newspaper—got murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, and the President of the United States wants to not only just look the other way but is actually complicit in providing the cover story for the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. So there is a lot of caterwauling going on.

The President made another bizarre statement that began with the sentence "The world is a dangerous place" and then went on to somehow justify ignoring Saudi's conduct and the murder. Yes, the world is a dangerous place, and it is made a lot more dangerous when the President of the United States looks the other way when one of our so-called allies—and they have been an important ally in some respects—is actually complicit in the murder of an American resident overseas. That makes the world much more dangerous for all Americans and all people around the world.

It is important that the United States act to hold the Crown Prince accountable. It is also important that we stop giving Saudi Arabia a green light on all sorts of other conduct. This is a Crown Prince who kidnapped the Prime Minister of Lebanon. This is a Crown Prince who blockaded Qatar against our best interests. This is a Crown Prince who essentially threw out the Canadian Ambassador because she had the temerity to tweet about Saudi human rights abuses against women in Saudi Arabia. The reason the Crown

Prince thought he could get away with killing an American resident in Istanbul is because this President has given him a blank check to do whatever he wants, and that includes Yemen.

YEMEN

Mr. President, I will close by making a few remarks about Yemen because what we have seen is an administration that has essentially given a blank check to the Saudi war in Yemen, and it has backfired and has actually strengthened the hand of Iran. The Houthis are an indigenous movement in Yemen. Saudi's conduct has given Iran an opening in a way it did not have before.

The best way is to get all the parties to the peace table to have a negotiation, and we are not going to get the Saudis to the peace table if the President of the United States continues to look the other way for all their bad conduct. That is why it is important that next week the Senate pass the resolution that was discharged here to the floor yesterday and send a clear message about what we stand for.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. GARDNER. Reserving the right to object, we have a standing order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. GARDNER. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Ms. WARREN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF KATHY KRANINGER

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, 10 years ago, greedy financial institutes crashed our economy and crushed working families all across this country. Millions of Americans lost their jobs, millions lost their homes, and millions lost their life savings. That crisis was no accident, and it was no act of God. It was caused because Washington looked the other way while greedy Wall Street bankers scammed hard-working American families. It can happen again if we let it.

If we learned anything from the financial crisis that nearly drove our

economy over a cliff, it is that American families desperately need a strong consumer watchdog. Before the crisis, financial institutions sold consumers predatory loans that were like grenades with their pins pulled out. When they exploded, they wiped out trillions of dollars of wealth and caused millions of people to lose their jobs, their savings, or their homes.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was created to level the playing field for consumers and make sure that Washington never again looks the other way while millions of families get squeezed.

On June 18, 2018, President Donald Trump announced his intent to nominate Kathleen Kraninger as Director of the CFPB. Ms. Kraninger is a political appointee at OMB who has spent more than a decade working on homeland security policy in the executive branch and on Capitol Hill. She has never—I repeat, never—worked on consumer protection issues either in public service or in the private sector. She has zero track record of standing up for consumers.

The White House championed Ms. Kraninger's experience as a manager when announcing her nomination. A White House official stated that Ms. Kraninger "will bring . . . much-needed management experience [to the CFPB]." A quick search on Google shows that is bogus.

Ms. Kraninger's tenure at OMB has been marred by systemic management failures. As an OMB official with primary responsibility over the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, Ms. Kraninger was one of the officials responsible for managing and implementing President Trump's zero-tolerance policy. The policy resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe in which thousands of children were ripped from the arms of their mamas and daddies and thrown into cages.

Ms. Kraninger bungled the response to the three catastrophic hurricanes of 2017. Under Ms. Kraninger's leadership, OMB's budget requests in the wake of Hurricanes Irma, Maria, and Harvey were too little, too late.

Ms. Kraninger oversaw a budget that, if enacted, would have exacerbated, rather than alleviated, the Nation's affordable housing crisis.

No, it isn't Ms. Kraninger's management experience that got her a giant promotion; it is her enthusiasm for Mick Mulvaney's anti-consumer agenda that earned her this reward from President Trump. How do I know that? I asked Ms. Kraninger if she disagreed with one single action that Mr. Mulvaney took during the year he controlled the CFPB. She said: "I cannot identify any actions that Acting Director Mulvaney has taken with which I disagree." Not a single one. That means she agrees with Mick Mulvaney's decision to drop a lawsuit against payday lenders who were charging vulnerable buyers 900 percent interest. She agrees with Mick