

waited until the weekend was over to fly back home. We didn't want to get in the way of the immediate recovery efforts. I got in at 1 o'clock in the morning and went to work cleaning up the glass and broken things in my house, as many of my neighbors and fellow Alaskans had been doing all weekend long.

Over the course of the day on Monday, we were able to see some of the damage that this earthquake has caused. You think about the words when you are trying to describe something that—the scenes are just so, so different, and it is words like “gut-wrenching” and “astounding” and then “remarkable,” but it was really gut-wrenching being in the school.

We went out to Houston Middle School. This is an area out in the Mat-Su Valley. This is one of the schools that will not be opened, at least not this year and perhaps for longer. But you are standing in a building—this is the library there in the middle school, and you see all of the books that have fallen to the floor. You see the guts of the ceiling that have come out. The sprinkler system is activated, so not only do you have the chaos of the books but now you have got the saturation.

There is another picture here of the group of us who went in.

The ceiling literally disintegrated on top of the library there.

When you think about the time that this all happened, there were students in the library. There were students who were passing in the hallway. This school is cinderblock construction, and the actual concrete cinders popped out and crashed to the floor and broke. The metal struts coming out of the ceiling, the panels—this was all happening at 8:29 in the morning. It is dark in Alaska at 8:29 in the morning. The lights had gone out, and they had this crashing all around them.

When I use the word “remarkable” to describe some of it, how the students and the teachers responded was remarkable, the calm. The kids knew what to do. They got under their desks. They did what they were trained to do. When they got the order that they needed to get out, to evacuate, what they did was exactly what they were trained to do. And no injuries. No injuries. It is absolutely extraordinary.

The schools in Anchorage are going to be closed for the entire week. Mat-Su is opening some of theirs this week, but more than 85 of them sustained damage that clearly needs to be cleaned up, needs to be repaired.

The schools were one aspect of the damage that we saw, but what many have seen out there has been the damage to the infrastructure.

This is a picture of a collapsed road. This is Vine Road, out in the valley. This is kind of a boggy area that runs through here, but it is just as if there were a big suction that came underneath and literally sucked the ground out from underneath that.

This is an area that we visited. We took this picture from above, in the air. This is it up close. As you are standing here on these slabs of asphalt, the crevices you are looking down into are extraordinary, and you realize the intensity of the action of the Earth.

You see scenes like this, and you say: How are we going to get through all of this? And the work that is ongoing now, whether it is the on-ramps, whether it is the bridges, whether it is roads like this on Vine Road, our department of transportation is working to firm up the roads, to, believe it or not, fill them in, repave them, even restripe them, and get folks back on their way. What we saw in just those first 72 hours is absolutely extraordinarily impressive.

The Alaska Railroad is assessing their damage. They are operational. They are going to be going much slower than they would like, and that is going to cause complications, but they are up.

The Port of Alaska is undergoing an expansion right now. It has been complicated by this earthquake. That is something that, again, is very critical. As you look to how goods move around our State, 85 percent of them come through that port. So being able to allow for functionality is critical.

We look at our assets. We look at the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. That was closed down temporarily just for precaution, but it is up and running.

You know, when I think about all this, given what happened, the visible damage we saw earlier this week, I find myself thinking that we are so lucky—not that we were hit by this major earthquake but that it could have been so much worse.

We talk a lot about resilience—resilience of a people. I think we learned a lot from the 1964 earthquake, the Good Friday earthquake. That registered at 9.2 on the Richter scale and lasted 4½, almost 5 minutes. Extraordinary. What we have been doing—we are the most seismically active State in the country, so we work to be prepared.

Again, I mentioned that last Friday's earthquake was deep, and that mitigated some of the shaking that was associated with it, but the proximity to our State's population center put people and infrastructure at great risk.

The depth of the source and the mechanism of the fault helped reduce the damage. That is one part of it. The other part of it is being prepared, and this is where I am so proud of the resilience of Alaskans. Whether it is at the schools that practice these earthquake drills where the students get under the desk, they hold on to the leg of a chair or their desk, and they cover their heads to protect themselves—I know we have one Alaskan as a page. She has gone through this drill. I know you have. So even in the dark, even in the chaos, with all the noise and the crashing, students knew what to do, and they did it not only for themselves, but they did it for other students as well.

There are some stories of some very young heroes out there, and I have a young nephew who not only took care of himself but made sure that a fellow student who had severe mobility issues was able to get under a desk. I think about the calmness and the presence that so many exercised.

I am going to end by noting again how we have worked as communities in our State to be prepared for disasters when they come. We have some of the most stringent building codes in the world, and for the most part, our buildings held up. Families have earthquake kits in their houses. They have batteries, flashlights, nonperishable food—all of which came in handy as folks kind of hunkered down over the weekend.

I will end my remarks by noting how grateful I am for the first responders who took action in the aftermath of the earthquake, even amid all of the ongoing aftershocks, even with their households totally turned upside down—and not only for our first responders but for all those who acted as first responders, the neighbors who came together. It is Alaska at its finest when we all work together.

I am very grateful that we had no tsunami. I am very grateful that the damages, at least on the surface, are not worse. And we are certainly grateful that there have been no reports of major injuries or fatalities. I am grateful that we have strong Federal partners who have committed to helping us in any way that they can. I also appreciate the reach-out from so many colleagues here in the Senate who sent me texts and who called and said: Is everything OK in Alaska? Is there anything we can do? Thank you for that.

We know we are tough in Alaska. That is the reputation we have. We are kind of proud of that. We know we are hardy and resilient. But knowing that others are going to be with us as we go through this recovery period makes that much better. I thank so many who have been there to help Alaska.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Alaska.

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

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

**MS. MURKOWSKI.** Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XX, all postcloture time on the McNamee nomination expire at 12 noon on Thursday, December 6; further, that if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action. I further

ask that following disposition of the nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the Kraninger nomination and the time be equally divided in the usual form until 1:45 p.m.; further, that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the Kraninger nomination as under the previous order; finally, that if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to urge the majority leader to bring to the floor S. 3649, the First Step Act, which I have cosponsored. This bipartisan legislation, introduced by Senators GRASSLEY and DURBIN, includes positive prison reforms that the House passed by a 360–59 vote, combined with Senate-added provisions on sentencing reform that have passed out of the Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan basis.

Senators on both sides of the aisle agree that our criminal justice system is broken and badly needs repair.

In my own State of Maryland, we know the importance of criminal justice reform after the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore Police Department custody in 2015. Baltimore is a good example of the necessary Federal and State partnership we need in order to reform the criminal justice system. When I am talking about the criminal justice system, I am not only talking about the so-called back end of the system, which involves sentencing, corrections, and release from prison. I am talking about the “front end” of the system, which involves relations between the community and police and often the first interaction between our citizens and law enforcement.

In Baltimore, the U.S. Department of Justice initiated a Federal “pattern or practice” inquiry at the request of the city of Baltimore and the Federal congressional delegation. This investigation led to a comprehensive report finding a pattern and practice of unconstitutional arrests and policing in Baltimore that disproportionately affected minority residents, particularly the African-American residents of Baltimore.

Baltimore City and the Justice Department ultimately agreed to a consent decree and are now under supervision by the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland. This will entail a multiyear process of overhauling the police department to finally give the citizens of Baltimore the police department they deserve, using the “guardian” and not the “warrior” model, as recommended by President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

This fall I visited the headquarters of the Baltimore Ravens in Owings Mills, MD, in Baltimore County. I am a Baltimore resident and live in Baltimore County and, of course, am a proud Ravens fan. On that day, I had come to discuss criminal justice reform. I wanted to hear directly from the Ravens players about their insights into the criminal justice system, and they shared their stories involving their friends and family with me.

I am pleased that several Ravens players and team executives wrote a letter earlier this week to Senator MCCONNELL asking him to bring this critical legislation to the floor. The letter reads: “The undersigned players and executives of the Baltimore Ravens write to voice our support for the First Step Act, a bill which has the potential to bring transformative and much needed change to our criminal justice system. Criminal justice is an issue that deeply affects our community in Baltimore, as well as the nation as a whole. Not only will this legislation strengthen our nation’s criminal justice system, but it enjoys the backing of an incredibly diverse group of supporters.”

Indeed, this legislation is endorsed by both law enforcement and civil rights groups. Law enforcement groups endorsing this legislation include the Fraternal Order of Police, the National District Attorneys Association, and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives. Civil rights groups endorsing this legislation include the ACLU and Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. President Trump has endorsed this legislation, which has a growing number of bipartisan Senate cosponsors.

The legislation includes key sentencing reform provisions added by the Senate to the House-passed measure. First, it expands the so-called safety valve, which allows judges to sentence below the mandatory minimum for qualified low-level nonviolent drug offenders who cooperate with the government. Second, it makes retroactive the application of the Fair Sentencing Act, in which Congress addressed the crack-powder sentencing disparity, and allows individuals affected by this disparity to petition for sentence reductions. Third, it reforms the two-strikes and three-strikes laws, by reducing the second strike mandatory minimum of 20 years to 15 years and reducing the third strike mandatory minimum of life in prison to 25 years. Finally, the

legislation eliminates the so-called stacking provision in the U.S. Code, which helps ensure that sentencing enhancements for repeat offenses apply only to true repeat offenders. The legislation clarifies that sentencing enhancements cannot unfairly be “stacked,” for example, by applying to conduct within the same indictment.

This legislation marks the first time that the Fraternal Order of Police, the largest police union, has ever supported a criminal justice reform bill. At law enforcement’s request, the bill prohibits time credits for individuals convicted of a fentanyl trafficking offense, as well as bars time credits for individuals convicted of repeatedly possessing or using a firearm in relation to a violent or drug trafficking crime.

On the prison reform side, this legislation includes several positive reforms from the House-passed FIRST STEP Act. The bill makes a good time credit fix and revises the good-time credit law to accurately reflect congressional intent by allowing prisoners to earn 54 days of credit per year, rather than 47 days. The bill prohibits shackling pregnant prisoners and requires healthcare products be provided to incarcerated women. The bill requires prisoners be placed within 500 driving miles of their home and provides additional phone, video conferencing, and visitation privileges. The bill expands evidence-based opioid and heroin abuse treatment for inmates. The bill expands compassionate release under the Second Chance Act and expedites compassionate release applications.

The revised Senate bill also includes several prison reforms beyond what were included in the House-passed bill. The bill establishes an Independent Review Committee of outside experts to assist in the development of the risk and needs assessment system. The National Institute of Justice would select a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with expertise in risk and needs assessments to host the IRC. This added guardrail will help to ensure the risk and needs assessment system is evidence-based and minimize racial disparities.

It allows the use of earned credits for supervised release in the community, such as halfway houses or home confinement. The bill also would permit individuals in home confinement to participate in family-related activities that facilitate the prisoner’s successful reentry.

It effectively ends Federal juvenile solitary confinement, and limits the discretion of the Bureau of Prisons to deny release to individuals who meet all eligibility criteria.

Let us take this first step to reform our broken criminal justice system by passing this legislation during this session.