

That is simply not acceptable. It is not acceptable to me, it is not acceptable to Texans still in need, and it shouldn't be acceptable to the U.S. Congress.

I recently introduced a bill that would ensure that the Office of Management and Budget wouldn't stand between communities impacted by disaster and vital funding appropriated and approved by Congress. Once signed into law, it would establish a "shot clock" requiring the Office of Management and Budget to release funds appropriated by Congress within 90 days.

This change would apply not only to this particular block of funding but to any funds appropriated to the States which are being withheld by the Office of Management and Budget.

With hurricane season just about a week away, there could not be a more critical time to act.

It is important for us to come together in a bipartisan agreement that can pass the Senate and the House and get the President's signature. I hope that those who are negotiating this disaster relief bill, including this shot clock provision, will continue to negotiate in good faith so we can reach a compromise and reach a result soon.

Communities across our country need this money for disaster recovery and mitigation, and they are simply tired of waiting for Congress to act. I am hopeful that any agreement will include this shot clock provision so we can finally get the roughly \$4 billion in disaster mitigation funding untangled from Washington redtape and get it to the Texans who desperately need it.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut

#### MEMORIAL DAY

MR. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am very proud to be in this Chamber. I am always enormously grateful to be in this body, but especially so at the beginning of this Memorial Day weekend, when we celebrate the patriotism and dedication of our brave men and women in uniform—patriots who serve our country in so many different ways, as teachers and firefighters and police—and the values that bring us together always as Americans. What we share is a dedication to the rule of law, basic rights, which are the reason that our forbearers and this generation have fought in parts of the world whose names we can barely pronounce.

We celebrate those values and the rule of law in our Constitution on this day, as we do every day this weekend, as every weekend, because they guarantee the rights that enable us to march in parades when we wish, gather with our families, worship, and speak as we please.

They guarantee also the rights to privacy that are at the core of our Constitution—the right to be let alone from governmental interference; the rights that literally ignited the passion

and fight for freedom in this country; the right of people to control their destinies, their futures, their bodies.

Those rights are imperiled today as never before. We are in a dark and dangerous time in this country with the passage of laws in Alabama and Missouri, Kentucky and Ohio, and in other States around the country, where the rights of women are under assault.

But let me say to the men of America, those rights are as important to you, and that assault on rights is as critical to you as they are to the women of America. Women's healthcare is under attack. Women's reproductive rights are under assault, and that means that all rights and all healthcare are gravely threatened. All of our rights are under attack. That is the reason today I am introducing the Women's Health Protection Act with my great colleague and friend Senator BALDWIN of Wisconsin and, in the House of Representatives, CHU, FRANKEL, and FUDGE, who led this effort there. We have actually reintroduced it. It has been a longstanding effort of mine and theirs, and my own commitment to this cause dates from my law clerkship to Harry Blackmun on the U.S. Supreme Court, the year after he wrote the majority opinion in *Roe v. Wade*.

I am proud to be a man standing for women's healthcare because women's healthcare rights are human rights, and the men of America need to hear loud and clear that their stake in this fight is as big as anyone's, because this fight and this debate and this war on women's healthcare endanger and imperil all of our rights in America.

The Women's Health Protection Act protects a woman's constitutional right to access an abortion. It is a right that is absolutely central to her economic well-being, her mental and physical health, and her freedom—no matter where she lives, no matter what her ZIP code is, no matter what her income, race, or religion is. And it is true of men, as well, that regardless of where we live or who we think we are, those rights are critical to our lives too.

The Women's Health Protection Act is designed to protect the healthcare providers—some of the real heroes of women's healthcare, who are delivering the best care they can, the care their patients want and need—from absurd and medically unnecessary requirements. These so-called protections for women that States have enacted relating to the width of hallways in clinics or admitting privileges or waiting periods are a pretext. They are a disguise, a ruse to restrict women's rights to healthcare.

Under the Women's Health Protection Act, no State—none—can restrict women's healthcare by judging the width of hallways or doctors' privileges or any of those supposed protections, which are really pretexts. And those pushing unconstitutional restrictions will no longer be able to disguise their

morally repugnant efforts as protecting women's healthcare, when, really, they want to take it away.

The attack on women's rights that we saw last week in Alabama was only the most extreme and restrictive of a line of actions—demagogic and draconian actions—in our State legislatures around the country. But they have created fear, and they have created disparate effect, so that women are apprehensive and anxious. And they should be.

They are angry, and that is absolutely right. We all should be angry. We all have a responsibility to stand up and fight back, because these laws cannot stand in our country.

We will fight them in the courts. We will fight them in the statehouses, and we will fight them here in the Senate and in the House, as we are doing with the Women's Health Protection Act.

These radical and unconstitutional extreme measures, which simply tell a woman when she can become pregnant, involve the Government controlling her body, which is against the fundamental guarantee of our Constitution in the right to be let alone from unwarranted and illegal Government interference.

We have had enough of the dangerous and deadly attacks on women. We have had it with the meddling politicians who are getting between women and their own personal healthcare decisions, interfering with women's rights to consult their doctors, their families, their counselors, and their faith leaders. We have had it with contemptible assaults on women's freedom and futures.

When I worked for Justice Harry Blackmun, I remember we thought at the time: All done. All settled. No more issues with a woman's right to reproductive rights.

*Roe v. Wade* was the decisive opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court, the law of the land, then and thereafter.

Here we are, decades later, still fighting this needless and senseless battle for a woman's right to privacy and freedom, because there are groups and individuals in this country who want to defy the U.S. Constitution. *Roe v. Wade* was correctly decided. The U.S. Supreme Court has reaffirmed it in its progeny.

Nominees to the courts coming before the Judiciary Committee have refused to answer my question about whether it was correctly decided, but the fact of the matter is, it was, it will be, and it will remain. But the courage and strength of women still to assert their rights, of providers who give them the care they need, of clinic access escorts who every day put their well-being on the line, of the groups like the Center for Reproductive Rights and Planned Parenthood, which advocate tirelessly, and of the heroes who keep up the fight and the flame should inspire us in this Chamber to say: Enough is enough. Let's pass the Women's Health Protection Act so

women no longer fear that their rights will be imperiled regardless of where they live and where they come from.

We will not be silent. We will not stop fighting. We will not give up, and we are not going away.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

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

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

(The remarks of Senator COLLINS and Senator SMITH pertaining to the submission of S. 1657 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Ms. SMITH. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

#### PRESIDENTIAL PARDONS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, media outlets have begun reporting that President Trump is looking into granting pardons to certain military personnel who have been convicted of committing war crimes in both Iraq and Afghanistan. If these reports are true, I find this to be most troubling.

I have an article here that appeared CNN that says:

The idea of pardons of accused servicemembers who have not yet gone to trial and been convicted that is raising the most concern from some military law experts.

The United States' global influence is due, in large part, to its reputation for upholding human rights and adhering to international humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict, otherwise known as the law of war. As Stephen Preston, a former general counsel of the Department of Defense, wrote in the Department of Defense's Law of War Manual:

The law of war is part of who we are . . . the laws of war have shaped the U.S. Armed Forces as much as they have shaped any other armed force in the world . . . The law of war is a part of our military heritage, and obeying it is the right thing to do . . . the self-control needed to refrain from violations of law of war under the stresses of combat is the same good order and discipline necessary to operate cohesively and victoriously in battle.

Five interdependent principles serve as the foundation of the law of war: military necessity, humanity, proportionality, distinction, and honor. These principles are pillars of America's moral standing in the world that allow our military to be the most lethal fighting force against our adversaries but also the most respected and revered by citizens of the world.

The principles of the law of war are aligned with the constitutional values that our Founding Fathers set forth

and that all generations of U.S. military servicemembers have sworn an oath to uphold and defend against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Department of Defense policy states that "each member of the armed services has a duty to: (1) comply with the law of war in good faith; and (2) refuse to comply with clearly illegal orders to commit violations of the law of war." By virtue of their oath and training, members of the U.S. military are accountable for their individual and collective actions through the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The U.S. Government is also obligated to implement and enforce the law of war as required by our Nation's own domestic laws, policies, regulations, orders, and by the multiple treaty obligations we have with other countries.

U.S. military members who are investigated and convicted of violating the law of war, through the prescribed Department of Defense investigative and judicial procedures, have violated international and domestic laws and have failed to uphold their oath and professional ethics. Whether it was My Lai during Vietnam or Abu Ghraib in Iraq, we have seen how the horrific acts committed by a small group of rogue actors can strategically diminish America's global standing, moral leadership, and strengthen our enemies.

We Americans combat extremism, tyranny, and hate to preserve our way of life. Under no circumstance is adapting to the behaviors of our worst adversaries ever justified—ever. If we willfully allow our institutions or the individuals within them to deviate from the laws and standards of conduct that underpin our great Nation, then we lose our way, and the world loses its champion of righteousness and internationally recognized norms and values.

I do not believe anyone in this Chamber disagrees with the laws and values of this country. The matter at hand is whether we will hold people accountable who violate those laws and fail to act on behalf of America with honor. To me, the right answer is very clear: The United States will not willfully commit or condone war crimes, and we must bring those who do commit them to justice regardless of citizenship, affiliation, or background. That is what we stand for as a nation. Those are our values, and that is America's leadership.

Even in the fog of war—especially in the fog of war—we must endeavor to act with the moral clarity that distinguishes the United States of America as a shining city upon a hill.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

#### THE ARCTIC

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have asked for a few moments on the floor today to speak about an issue I

care about deeply. It is a part of the globe, a part of the world that, in my view, is truly evolving and is as dynamic an area as anyplace on planet Earth. This is the Arctic.

The Arctic is growing in prominence around the globe. Countries like China, India, and Germany have taken a keen interest in what happens in the far north.

I have had many colleagues ask me: Why should a Senator from, say, the State of Indiana care about the Arctic?

I guess my rhetorical answer would be this: Well, why should China care about the Arctic? Why should Japan, Germany, and India care about the Arctic? If they are paying attention to it, shouldn't we, as an Arctic nation that actually has territory in the Arctic, be interested and focused on this as well?

To be fair, we have made some good progress this year. I appreciate the administration working with us. I appreciate my colleagues here in the Congress who worked with us to ensure that we were able to advance appropriations for the first polar security cutter. This is significant news for the American Arctic. People have heard me say that we have about 1½ icebreakers in the United States right now. We have the Polar Star, which breaks ice down in Antarctica, meeting our obligations there. We have the Polar Sea, which is tied up in Washington State and will probably never see service again. We have a medium-strength icebreaker, the Healey, which does a fair amount of research work. But for us, as an Arctic nation, it is important to have a fleet of icebreakers.

That is what we, as an Arctic nation, must be working toward, so a contract for the design and construction of the first polar-class icebreaker to be built in the United States in the past 40 years was awarded just last month. As a nation, we haven't seen work on an icebreaker in four decades now.

A total of \$20 million is also being provided for long lead time materials for a second polar security cutter. Hopefully, we will be talking about more than just one polar security cutter and we will one day have what this country, as an Arctic nation, should have, and that is a fleet.

But the Arctic is about more than just icebreakers. It is about the people who live there. It is about the environment. It is about its location on the globe. The Arctic is a living and breathing place. I think some people, in their mind's eye, view the Arctic as a frozen wasteland, or perhaps it is a snow globe that just kind of sits up on a shelf and you don't touch it. But it is not. It is home to some 4 million people in the Arctic region. It is not highly populated, but there are people living, working, raising their families, subsisting, and engaging in commerce. It is an important place.

It is a good thing when officials at the highest levels get together to discuss the issues within the Arctic. That