

The bill I just introduced will help our allies to escape Putin's trap. The bill is actually called the ESCAPE Act. It stands for the Energy Security Cooperation with Allied Partners in Europe Act. It mandates sanctions on Nord Stream 2, as well as other Russian pipeline projects. At the same time, it speeds up U.S. gas exports to NATO allies. The bill also creates a transatlantic energy security strategy, and it directs our NATO representative to help our allies and our partners improve their own energy security.

The ESCAPE Act builds on previous action in Congress. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, which Congress passed in 2017, authorizes but does not require sanctions on Russian energy pipelines.

In March of 2018, I led a bipartisan group of 39 Senators in sending a letter to key administration officials opposing Nord Stream 2. President Trump has made clear time after time that he believes Europe's reliance on Russian gas undermines regional security. The United States, especially Wyoming, has been blessed with abundant natural gas resources and supplies. We have more than enough gas to meet America's needs, as well as exporting gas to other countries. So why shouldn't we use some of these energy resources to help our friends in Europe, as well as our own energy workers here at home.

Last summer I published an op-ed in the Washington Post saying:

We made clear that we want to roll back Russia's energy invasion of Europe. Now Congress should take the next step and mandate sanctions.

Freeing Europe from Russian energy dependence will strengthen both our allies and our NATO alliance. It is time to shut off Putin's pipeline valve and open Europe's escape valve. It is time to pass the ESCAPE Act.

I yield the floor.

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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HONG KONG

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, this past week we saw the largest protest in Hong Kong since 2014. Millions turned out in order to protest the erosion of civil rights, human rights, and good governance in Hong Kong, violating the commitment that was made during the July 1, 1997, transfer of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China.

We saw China backtracking in 2014 on its electoral changes, when the candidate for the Chief Executive had to be screened by the Chinese Government, contrary to the commitments that were made when Hong Kong's relationship with the United Kingdom ended.

The protests in 2014 were called the Umbrella Movement because a large

amount of protesters, who were being attacked by the police with tear gas, were using umbrellas to protect themselves from the tear gas itself. The "one country, two systems" that was developed after the United Kingdom relinquished its control in 1997 was a commitment that Hong Kong would be a capitalistic system and the way of life that existed before the transfer to the Chinese would be upheld and unchanged. That was the commitment that was given, and that commitment has not been lived up to by China.

There is the Chinese interference we saw in 2014, and then this time we saw the government of Hong Kong try to implement an extradition law that provided real concern about people who disagreed with what is happening in China and who wanted to protest about their universal rights of being subjected to extradition to China.

This is not hypothetical; this is a real concern. Two million people went to the streets this month in Hong Kong to protest that erosion of rights in Hong Kong, basically at the insistence of the Chinese Government.

This is not theoretical. Lam Wing-kee is one example. I can give many examples. In 2015, he mysteriously disappeared. He was selling literature in Hong Kong that was banned by the Chinese Communist Party in China, not Hong Kong, supposedly. He disappeared from the streets and ended up in China, in solitary confinement in one of their prisons. He was ultimately allowed to leave with certain commitments. He decided to flee to Taiwan and stay safe there.

There are so many other examples of individuals who are in jeopardy. The extradition law that was being proposed really put the fear into those people who live in Hong Kong and visit Hong Kong that if they did anything that would upset the Chinese Government, they could be charged with a crime in China and extradited to China, never to be seen again.

Millions turned out in protest. As a result of the protests and, quite frankly, the international spotlight on what was happening in Hong Kong, the government decided to withdraw the extradition—the proposed law, but they didn't say they would withdraw it permanently and made no commitments about any future. And, of course, the current chief executive remains there, which is very much against the reforms that were supposed to take place.

The United States has spoken on this issue. The United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 allows the United States to treat the territory as separate from the rest of China politically, economically, and otherwise under certain conditions. Those conditions are that Hong Kong remain sufficiently autonomous from China and that the rights of its citizens be protected. That is specific in our law.

I question, as I think many of us do, whether Hong Kong and China are complying with the conditions under which

the United States passed the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 that allows for preferential treatment in Hong Kong that is not enjoyed by China.

Last week, Senator RUBIO and I, with the support of the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, introduced the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. It reaffirms the act that we passed in 1992 to make it clear that Hong Kong's recognition by the United States and its trading relationship with the United States and its special relationship with the United States—much different from China—only exist if the conditions on autonomy are maintained.

Under this legislation, we require the administration to periodically certify to us that Hong Kong is, in fact, in compliance with the conditions of the 1992 law. If not, special exceptions would no longer be valid. We also put into this statute sanctions against those who are responsible for abridging the human rights of people in Hong Kong. This is similar to what we did in regard to the Magnitsky statutes.

I am very proud of the work this Chamber did, particularly the work I was able to do with our late colleague Senator McCain on passing the Magnitsky laws. We first applied it to Russia. We then applied it globally. Now we have seen other countries also apply these sanctions where if a person violates basic, internationally recognized human rights, that individual is denied the opportunity to visit America by not allowing any visa or the use of our banking system. We extend those types of sanctions in regard to those who are violating the rights of the people of Hong Kong.

Let me point out that our foreign policy—our strength is American values. It is the values we stand for as a nation—democracy, support for human rights, the basic freedom of people, religious freedom. Those are the values America brings to our engagement globally. It is important that we be on the right side of history in regard to Hong Kong and that the Congress and the American people stand in solidarity with the people of Hong Kong; that we stand with them and the commitment that was given in 1997 that Hong Kong would be different and autonomous from China and the rights of their people would be protected, as they were under British control.

It is important today that the Senate, the Congress, the American people, and our government stand by those commitments and stand with the people of Hong Kong. We saw millions show up this week to show their support for these principles. We must stand with those people.

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.

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

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

ABORTION

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, many State legislatures across the country have taken action recently to protect unborn babies from the violence of abortion. My home State, for instance, Arkansas, has just passed a law to protect unborn babies after 18 weeks of development. This reform is not just supported by Arkansans; it is supported by a large majority of all Americans, more than 70 percent of whom believe unborn babies ought to be protected at or before that stage of pregnancy.

These reforms are the work of the pro-life movement, which fights for the most vulnerable among us every day. The pro-life movement seeks change in the noblest tradition of our country and works within our democratic system so that our laws ultimately live up to our highest principle in the words of our Declaration of Independence—that all men are created equal and that all have a basic right to life.

Of course, this is a democracy. So not everyone agrees when or even if we ought to protect the unborn. I understand that. I know there are decent people on both sides of this sensitive issue. We resolve our differences and reach compromise through democratic debate. What should never happen, though, is a billion-dollar corporation's trying to dictate these moral questions to us. Politically correct CEOs shouldn't be in the business of threatening normal Americans, but that is exactly what we have seen lately.

The loudest objections to these pro-life laws haven't come from the bottom up, from normal citizens who happen to disagree with one another, but from the top down, from cultural elites and, increasingly, from giant corporations that wield their economic power as a weapon to punish the American people for daring to challenge their pro-abortion extremism.

Giant media companies, like Disney, Netflix, and WarnerMedia, have threatened to cripple Georgia's film industry if its residents don't bend the knee and betray their pro-life convictions.

Just last Monday, the New York Times ran a full-page advertisement that was organized by the pro-abortion lobby and was signed by the CEOs of hundreds of companies that read that legal protections for unborn babies are "bad for business." How disgusting is that? Caring for a little baby is "bad for business."

Now, I get why outfits like Planned Parenthood and NARAL would say babies are bad for business. Abortion is their business, after all, and they are just protecting market share. Yet what about all of those other CEOs? Why do they think babies are "bad for business"? It is, perhaps, because they want their workers to focus single-mindedly on working, not on building families and raising children.

All these politically correct CEOs want company men and women, not family men and women. They will support your individuality and self-expression just as long as you stay unattached and on the clock.

You couldn't find a more perfect example of this mindset than that of &pizza, one of those companies whose CEO signed the pro-abortion ad. This company, &pizza, doesn't even offer paid maternity leave to its employees, but it does celebrate their oneness and individuality. It will even pay employees to get a tattoo of the company logo. So if you want to be a walking billboard for your employer, &pizza will foot the bill, but if you are pregnant with a child, tough luck.

In the spirit of some of these CEOs, I might call for a boycott of &pizza for their political correctness, but you could just skip them because their pizza is lousy anyway.

There is a troubling trend among giant corporations using their wealth and power to force liberal dogma on an unwilling people. As liberal activists have lost control of the judiciary, they have turned to a different hub of power to impose their views on the rest of the country. This time it is private power located in a few megacities on the coasts.

That is not an exaggeration. The overwhelming majority of companies that lashed out against the pro-life movement in that New York Times ad are headquartered on the coasts, hoping to rule the rest of us like colonies in the hinterlands. More than three-quarters are headquartered in New York or California alone. More than a dozen are foreign companies. Yet those same companies presume to tell all of America what we should think.

For some reason, this outrage only seems to go in one direction. As States like Arkansas have passed pro-life laws, other States have sadly gone down a different path, stripping unborn children of recognition and protection under the law. States like New York, Illinois, and Vermont recently passed laws declaring abortion a fundamental right, accessible until moments before birth for practically any reason as long as you have a doctor's note.

We have already begun to see the consequences of these laws which strain so mightily to defy and deny the humanity of the unborn. In New York City, prosecutors recently dropped a charge of abortion against a man who brutally stabbed to death his girlfriend and her unborn child. They dropped that charge because the pro-abortion law that had just passed the legislature in Albany removed all criminal penalties for killing an unborn child. According to the laws of New York State, that woman's child never existed.

The pro-abortion laws passed in New York, Illinois, Vermont, and elsewhere truly deserve the label "radical." So why isn't the national media covering these radical laws with the same intensity they have reserved for States like

Georgia? Where are the indignant CEOs who profess to care so much for their female employees? They are nowhere to be found because their outrage is very selective. They don't speak for the majority of Americans, much less for women. Instead, they are actively trying to force a pro-abortion agenda on an unwilling public.

These companies want to wield a veto power over the democratic debate and decisions of Arkansans and citizens across our country. They want to force the latest social fashions of the coasts on small towns they would never visit in a million years. They want us to betray our deeply held beliefs about life and death in favor of a specious account of equality. If there is one thing the New York Times ad got right, it is that "the future of equality hangs in the balance" when it comes to abortion, but their idea of equality doesn't include everyone. It omits, it degrades unborn babies as expendable, lesser than even bad for business. That is a strange kind of equality, if you ask me.

This trend of intolerance ought to alarm everyone, no matter your views on this sensitive question. It threatens democratic debate on this question and ultimately on all questions.

Despite the pressure campaign waged against us, I am heartened because I know the pro-life movement will carry on, as it always has, speaking to the inherent dignity of every human life. Not everything can be measured on a corporate balance sheet. Some things are bigger and more important than the bottom line or what wealthy, politically correct corporations consider bad for business. The cause of life is one of those issues worth fighting for.

I yield the floor.

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

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise to talk about something I have talked about many times on the floor and to reiterate over and over again that healthcare isn't political; it is personal. It is personal for people in Michigan. It is personal for every person, every child, and every family all across our country.

It affects each of us, regardless of our political affiliation or the State we live in or what kind of car we drive. Hopefully, you are driving a car made in Michigan.

At some point, just about all of us will need to take at least one prescription medication in our lifetime. The question is, Will we be able to afford it?

Brian Hose knows this struggle very well. He owns Sharpsburg Pharmacy, an independent drugstore in Sharpsburg, MD. He joined me and some of