

our economy in order to improve life for the American people.

We eliminated burdensome regulations that were acting as a drag on economic growth, and we passed a historic reform of our Tax Code to put money in Americans' pockets and make it easier for businesses to grow and to create jobs. Now we are seeing the results: a thriving economy that is extending more opportunities to more Americans.

For all of Democrats' talk about inequality, it is actually Republicans and President Trump who have done something about it. We have helped create an economy that is lifting up people across the entire economic spectrum.

There is still more work to be done, of course. For one thing, we need to make sure that the agriculture economy is able to catch up to the economy at large. But thanks to tax reform and other Republican economic policies, American workers are doing better than they have in a very long time.

It is unfortunate that the gains we have made would be reversed if Democrats have their way. Democrats' plans—from budget-busting government-run healthcare to free college—all have one thing in common: They would cost a lot of money.

Where would the government get most of that money? From tax increases—tax increases on businesses and tax increases on ordinary Americans.

Thanks to the tax relief that Republicans passed, the economy has expanded, paychecks have increased, and more jobs and opportunities have been created.

Raising taxes would result in the opposite: fewer jobs and opportunities, a smaller economy, and more families struggling to get by on smaller paychecks.

Republicans are determined to make sure that doesn't happen. We are committed to building on the progress we have made and further expanding economic opportunity for all Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

HONG KONG

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the very high-stakes political and social crisis that has been unfolding in Hong Kong over the past several weeks.

Hong Kong is a very exceptional city. It boasts of a very robust free market economy that has thrived for centuries. It has a very vibrant free press. It has an independent judiciary and a partially democratic election system. Those freedoms, combined with Hongkongers' natural entrepreneurial spirit and appreciation for individual liberty, have made Hong Kong a jewel of the financial and business world, one of the freest places in Asia, and a great place to live—for a time, anyway, as I did back in 1991.

Economic and political achievements are particularly impressive when you

consider that Hong Kong is, after all, a part of China, which has neither a free economy nor a politically free society.

Back in 1997, Great Britain transferred Hong Kong to China on a condition—an explicit written agreement—that Hong Kong's social and economic systems would remain unchanged under a “one country, two systems” arrangement that would last for at least 50 years, until 2047.

The Chinese Government also made a pledge at the time—a pledge that Hong Kong's legislative and executive leaders would be elected through “universal suffrage.” Yet, here we are, 22 years later. Hongkongers still do not enjoy complete universal suffrage, and Hong Kong has faced deep and persistent efforts by the mainland to erode the independence and the authority of Hongkongers.

On the surface, this ongoing crisis in Hong Kong was clearly caused by the Hong Kong Government, probably at the behest of the Chinese leadership in Beijing to pass a deeply unpopular extradition bill. This bill would diminish Hong Kong's independent legal system very dramatically, and it would do so by allowing and exposing individuals in Hong Kong—including Hong Kong citizens, foreigners, and even tourists—to be extradited to China.

The accused would then face prosecution by an authoritarian government in mainland China that does not uphold the rule of law, nor does it practice the fair and impartial administration of justice. Let's face it. The judicial system in China is politicized and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.

Some people are concerned that if this bill were to become law, it would even pave the way for Chinese state-sponsored kidnapping of dissidents. It certainly would have a chilling effect on freedom in Hong Kong, a chilling effect on the ability of Hong Kong people to live their lives and express their views without the fear of political repercussions. It is simply a fact that mainland China is a legal black hole, and Hong Kong's extradition bill would be a step to exposing Hong Kong residents directly to mainland China's opaque and often blatantly unfair legal system.

In response to this threat, the people of Hong Kong have for weeks poured into the streets, calling for a withdrawal of this bill and deeper democratic reforms. Remarkably, last month, one of these protests—one of these demonstrations brought together an estimated 2 million Hongkongers into the streets. It is stunning anywhere in the world that 2 million people would come out to protest anything. But in Hong Kong, it is truly staggering because the total population of Hong Kong is only 7.4 million. That is about one in four Hongkongers who were on the streets protesting.

Just today, the Hong Kong Chief Executive said that bill was dead. But it has not been formally withdrawn, as I

understand it, and I think the threat remains.

It is also important to note that on a deeper level these ongoing protests are really a response to efforts by the Chinese Government to “mainlandize” Hong Kong. It is an effort in which political, cultural, and even physical distinctions between Hong Kong and mainland China are meant to be diminished, the differences blurred, and the distinction eroded.

The extradition bill is just the latest example of the Hong Kong people's struggle for the freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights that they cherish, that they want to hold on to, and that were promised to them when the handover occurred in 1997.

Hongkongers really have a rich history of protest, and I think that history reveals their enduring grassroots desire for the freedoms they have grown to love and cherish and for a democratic form of government that they deserve.

Back in 1989, the Tiananmen Square massacre that we all remember—the 30th anniversary was just last month. On the eve of the massacre, once it was clear the Chinese Communist Government would respond to peaceful protesters with bullets and tanks—once that became clear, about 1.5 million Hongkongers marched in the streets of Hong Kong in solidarity with the students in Tiananmen.

In 2003, the Hong Kong leadership proposed an anti-subversion bill. Hongkongers rightly saw this bill as an attack on their freedom of speech and freedom of association. The Hong Kong leadership proposed it—again, doing it at the behest of the mainland Chinese Government—and 500,000 citizens protested and eventually forced the government to withdraw the bill.

In 2014, the Hong Kong Government announced a reform to change how Hong Kong's Chief Executive was selected. The proposal was meant to continue what already existed, and that was mainland Chinese Communist control over the election process in Hong Kong. One of the mechanisms they used to achieve this was that only candidates vetted by a committee of mostly pro-Beijing supporters would be allowed to seek the office of Chief Executive.

In response to this undemocratic measure, Hong Kong students staged a campaign of civil disobedience and peaceful protest to oppose this effort. Up to a half a million people participated in the movement. Students famously used umbrellas to shield themselves from tear gas and pepper spray that was being launched at them by the police, so much so that the pro-democracy protesters were quickly termed the “Umbrella Movement.”

All of these protests and acts of civil disobedience make it clear that Hongkongers want more freedom, not less freedom.

I think this matters. This matters obviously in Hong Kong, but it matters

beyond Hong Kong. It matters to us. It should matter to us. What is happening in Hong Kong is not just important for those residents but for the rest of the world. Today the people of Hong Kong are fighting against an unpopular and unfair extradition bill. They are really fighting for a future in which they can enjoy basic human rights, natural rights that everyone should have, including the right to free speech, the right to a fair trial, the right to be confident that your government will follow the laws of the society in which it exists, and participation in a just and fair representative system of government.

If the Chinese officials in Beijing and the Communist Chinese who rule mainland China have their way, they will extinguish these rights for the people of Hong Kong. If the extradition bill were to become law, it would threaten all of those rights because of the chilling effect of the threat of being extradited to the lawlessness of the Chinese judicial system.

In some important ways, I think Hong Kong can be seen as a canary in a coal mine for Asia. What happens in Hong Kong will at least set expectations, create a climate that will maybe affect what happens in Taiwan over time, other Asian nations that are struggling for freedom in the shadow of China. The fact is, China itself is controlled by an authoritarian government, interested primarily in its own survival. That is the top priority of Beijing's leadership. They have created a modern-day police state. They use mass surveillance, censorship, internet applications in order to control their own citizens. They have imprisoned over a million of their own citizens, the Muslim Uighur minorities, in concentration camps.

China's authoritarianism threatens free and open societies all around the world. A democratic Hong Kong is a direct threat to the Communist regime in Beijing because people across China, naturally, ask the question: Why do Hongkongers get to have more rights and a better life and more freedom than we have? That is the threat the government in Beijing is trying to extinguish.

We, of course, recently had the blessing of being able to celebrate our own Independence Day, when Americans reflect on our own struggle against tyranny, against an unjust government, and our successful effort to throw that off and establish this, the world's greatest, most vibrant, and freest democratic society.

In many ways, the Hongkongers are fighting for some of the very same values as our Founding Fathers did during the American Revolution. I think it is important that we in the United States not turn a blind eye to the struggle for freedom that is happening outside our borders. I think it is important that Americans continue to stand in support of the voices in Hong Kong calling for freedom, for democracy, and re-

spect for basic human rights. I will do what I can in the Senate to support the people of Hong Kong in their peaceful protests for their own freedom, and I call on my colleagues in this administration to join me.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, if I understand the procedure, are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are postcloture on the Bress nomination.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I rise today to oppose the nomination of Daniel Bress to the Ninth Circuit in California.

First, by history and tradition, this is a California seat on the Ninth Circuit. The fact is that Mr. Bress is neither a California attorney nor a California resident. In fact, he has not been a resident of the State for over a decade. He has lived and practiced in the Washington, DC, area for almost his entire adult life.

As California Senators, Senator HARRIS and I know that experience and connection to California are really necessary for a Ninth Circuit judge to be effective on the bench. We know our State, we know our constituents, and we know the challenges they face.

That is why the blue slip is so important. Honoring the blue slip ensures that Senators who understand and are accountable to their constituents have a say in judicial nominations for their home States.

Senator HARRIS's and my blue slips were not returned. That ultimately symbolizes our objections. I was also very disappointed that the White House ignored that and moved forward with Mr. Bress's nomination.

Senator HARRIS and I worked in good faith with the White House to find nominees acceptable to the President and to us. During our negotiations that took place, we informed the White House that we could support several other nominees who were, in fact, selected by the White House. Yet the White House and the Republican members of the Judiciary Committee have claimed we were at an impasse. That is simply not true. For reasons still unknown to us, the White House abandoned our negotiations and nominated Mr. Bress for this seat instead.

I am very disappointed that Republican leadership decided to schedule a vote on Mr. Bress's nomination, given both of our objections to his nomination and our concerns about a lack of connection to our State.

Next, I want to discuss what I mean by a lack of connection to our State.

The White House has greatly exaggerated Mr. Bress's connections to California to justify their decision to move forward with a non-California nominee.

I have studied Mr. Bress's record extensively, and I would like to run through some of what I have found.

Mr. Bress claims to spend a substantial amount of time working in his law firm's San Francisco office. However, as recently as November 2018, Mr. Bress's profile on the Kirkland & Ellis LLP website listed him as an attorney working exclusively in the firm's Washington, DC, office. His profile page likewise provided contact information—phone and fax—only for the Washington, DC, office.

Just before he was nominated, Mr. Bress's Kirkland & Ellis profile was revised to list him as an attorney in both the Washington, DC, and San Francisco, CA, offices of the firm.

In addition, according to a review conducted by my staff, every public legal filing signed by Mr. Bress lists his office as Washington, DC. This includes legal filings submitted in California courts. Mr. Bress has never had an oral argument before the Ninth Circuit—never had an oral argument before the Ninth Circuit.

The chairman of the Judiciary Committee entered a letter into the record at Mr. Bress's hearing identifying 26 cases in California courts that Mr. Bress has been involved in. However, according to Mr. Bress's Senate Judiciary questionnaire, 11 of these 26 cases were asbestos lawsuits for a single client, the chemical company BASF Catalyst. Another four cases were products liability lawsuits involving another single client, the air conditioning manufacturer United Technologies Corporation. So those are two clients. This is hardly the wide breadth of California court experience that one would expect of a Ninth Circuit court appointee.

Mr. Bress does not belong to any legal organizations in California. His children do not attend school in our State. He has voted only once since high school in a California election. And he does not have a California driver's license. Finally, Mr. Bress does not own any property in California outside of one share in a family business venture.

These facts, along with Mr. Bress's residency in the Washington, DC, area—he lives here; his family lives here—make clear to us that he is not a Californian, nor is he suited for the Ninth Circuit.

This is something we have never experienced before; that is, bringing a judge from one coast to put him on the Ninth Circuit on the other coast.