

the Senate floor. He has been called “a real friend,” “a mentor,” “more than a colleague,” “humble and tenacious,” “they don’t come any better”—and that is just by Democrats. That is one of the reasons I suggested to Leader MCCONNELL that we have a lunch for JOHNNY ISAKSON, which we are having this afternoon.

Just as there is good reason to praise JOHNNY ISAKSON in the ways Democrats did, there is good reason that during his chairmanship, ISAKSON’s committee passed so many bipartisan bills—57, to be exact—to help veterans. It is because he treated everyone—Democrat, Republican, Independent, newly elected or committee chair—with respect. JOHNNY never let the cynicism of our political times dim his faith in our ability to get something done.

JOHNNY ISAKSON didn’t have the loudest voice in the room, but it was often the most influential. That is because he built years’ worth of trust. You never doubted his word. He was an honest broker. So whenever a chasm seemed to separate the parties on a certain issue, ISAKSON was often the one spanning the divide. I know that from experience, over and over again. As an example, when families in New York struggled to recover from disasters, like Sandy, only to find that flood insurance rates were crushing them with enormous debt, it was Senator ISAKSON, whose State has suffered its fair share of disasters, who worked with my office to find a solution.

We made enormous progress working together to strengthen media shield laws, protecting fearless and independent journalism at a time when we needed to stand up for a free and open press.

In this most recent important appropriations process, we worked together to help the widows and children impacted by 9/11 gain access to a special terror victims’ funding. I want to thank him personally for that, and more broadly, I want to thank him for the example he set for many other Senators.

There are many fine adjectives that will be used to describe Senator ISAKSON, and all of them will be well-deserved, but one word used to describe Senator ISAKSON is not often found in the Halls of Congress: “kind.” JOHNNY ISAKSON is one of the kindest, most thoughtful Senators I have known in my time here. He is a true statesman. That is why I know that independent of any party or politics, everyone here will miss JOHNNY.

I will have more to say about our friend at the bipartisan lunch this afternoon, but for now, I would like to note for the record Senator ISAKSON’s many years of faithful service to his beloved State of Georgia and his country. We wish him and Dianne the very best as he enters the next chapter of his life.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arkansas.

CHINA

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, the New York Times has recently obtained a secret trove of documents from the highest ranks of the Chinese Communist Party. Those documents reveal some chilling, terrifying details about Beijing’s campaign to stamp out all dissent and religious diversity in Xinjiang Province in the north, where the party has concentrated more than 1 million Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other minorities in reeducation camps.

These documents bring to mind George Orwell’s famous novel “1984,” not as the cautionary tale as he meant it, but as an instruction manual for the totalitarian government in Beijing. This reign of terror began in 2014, after a string of terror attacks in Xinjiang Province. But instead of bringing those terrorists to justice, the Chinese Communist Party used the attacks as an opportunity to eradicate all dissent—all wrong-think, if you will—from a province with 25 million residents. It would be as if you tried to turn the State of Texas into a concentration camp.

These secret documents reveal a stunning order from General Secretary Xi Jinping. He said, “We must be as harsh as them and show them absolutely no mercy.” So to beat these terrorists, Beijing chose to adopt the tactics of terror. Every Uighur and dissenter in the province is suffering as a result.

Secretary Xi tapped one of the most notorious enforcers to execute this mission, a man named Chen, who climbed the ranks of the Communist Party first by crushing dissent and religious diversity in the southwestern Chinese province of Tibet. The techniques that they perfected in Tibet, the Chinese Communist party took to Xinjiang. They have turned the province into a garrison state with ruthless and pitiless competence. Chen’s order to the police? “Round up everyone who should be rounded up.”

Uighurs, young and old, were loaded on into buses and taken to concentration camps with thick concrete walls and razor-sharp barbed wire. The police informed anxious relatives that these were schools and that their loved ones were being “reeducated.” And, no, they were not free to leave the school, nor would there be any recess or field trips.

A secret manual obtained by Western journalists reveals that these facilities operate more like maximum security prisons than like schools. The manual’s very first section deals with preventing escapes through the use of guard posts, patrols, internal separation, video surveillance, and double locks on dor-

mitory and hallway doors. The manual even advocates the use of “secret forces” to infiltrate the detainee population to prevent them from joining forces or planning an escape.

Beijing now holds—let me say it again—more than 1 million people in these reeducation camps, supposedly for reasons of national security, but the truth is a lot more chilling. The Chinese Communists, like all totalitarians, are paranoid about their own survival—and rightly so—as a conspiracy of greedy, power-mad princelings with no democratic legitimacy whatsoever.

Like all totalitarian rulers, the Chinese Communist Party is also a very jealous master. Every attachment, every conviction, every loyalty—whether to one’s family, one’s culture, even one’s creator—must be sacrificed on the altar of the Party. According to the Chinese Communist Party, everything must bow before it, and every tongue must profess the slogans of Xi and Mao. That means the Uighurs and also Hongkongers, Tibetans, Taiwanese, and others.

The paranoid Communist Party will not limit itself to one province or one people, nor will it ultimately limit itself to its own land. It will extend its tyrannical reach to every corner that it views as its own, creeping ever outward until it demands the deference of all the world, until it “deals with” the rebellious billions who have not yet learned to love the Chinese Big Brother.

The Chinese Communist Party is running concentration camps today, but make no mistake, its appetite for expansion is far greater, its methods of control applicable to anyone anywhere. The Free World must confront this threat in plain view and act now to avert such a dark and chilling future.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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 Senator from Illinois.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, a few years ago, a woman who works in my office in Chicago—who actually cleans up the office in the evenings—was so excited when she learned that her daughter had been accepted to college. It was a dream come true for a woman who had immigrated to the United States, taken some of the hardest, most menial manual jobs in the hopes that her daughter, one day, would have a better life.

She sat down with my chief of staff in Chicago to tell her about the details, and immediately, we knew there was much more to the story. Her daughter had been accepted not just to another

college or university; she had been accepted to a for-profit college in the Chicagoland area. The for-profit colleges and universities are notorious. The numbers tell the story, two separate numbers: 9 percent of all postsecondary students go attend for-profit colleges and universities—University of Phoenix, DeVry, very well-known names—9 percent of students go to those schools, but 33 percent of all of the federal student loan defaults are students from for-profit colleges and universities.

Why? Why is this one category of higher education so notorious for students starting and ending up deeply in debt to the point where they cannot pay it back? Well, the reasons are simple and very obvious. They overcharge the students, and they undereducate them. They make promises that are wild and cannot be kept. They give them courses of doubtful value and do not tell them that any credits that they have earned at these for-profit schools cannot be transferred to city colleges, community colleges, or universities.

So the students are stuck. At some point, some will quit piling on the debt and just basically walk away. All the promises and all the jobs and careers that were supposed to come from this are never going to materialize. It is a classic fraud, and sadly, our government is part of that fraud. You see, we recognize the accreditation of those schools. We tell that cleaning lady and her family that these are good schools and universities. The Federal Government does that and offers Federal loans to these students to go to these schools.

Is it any wonder that the students and their families think they are doing the right thing for their future? The Federal Government gave a stamp of approval. Well, what happens when those schools reach the end of the line? What happens when those same for-profit colleges and universities go bankrupt? The students are in a terrible position, deeply in debt with courses that are meaningless, with their lives compromised, and nowhere to turn.

We decided long ago to create an opportunity for these students to get out of this dilemma—one that we share in by accrediting these schools—something called the “borrower defense,” which allows these students, if they were defrauded, to discharge their federal student loans and get on with their lives.

Today, hundreds of thousands of students—who were defrauded by their for-profit colleges—are desperately waiting for Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to discharge their Federal student loans under a provision in Federal law known as borrower defense. Congress created the borrower defense provision to ensure students’ lives are not ruined by their schools’ misconduct and deception.

In 2014, for-profit Corinthian Colleges collapsed. It left more than 70,000 stu-

dents nationwide with worthless credits they could not transfer and mounds of student debt. The students had been lured into those Corinthian schools with false promises, inflated placement rates and income projections. We know that for a fact. We have the data to show they were lying to the students about what graduation from Corinthian could mean in their lives.

Over the last 5 or 6 years, nearly every other major for-profit college, nearly every one of these have faced Federal or State lawsuits and investigations for predatory practices similar to Corinthian Colleges. The result has been hundreds of thousands of defrauded students across America who are seeking discharges to which we say they are entitled under Federal law.

Secretary Betsy DeVos has allowed more than 200,000 borrower defense applications to pile up at the Department, nearly 11,000 from my own State of Illinois. But listen to this, Secretary DeVos has not approved a single claim for more than a year, 200,000 applications stacking up at the Department of Education, not one approved.

So who are some of these borrowers that are languishing? What is their story? Let me tell you about two of them.

One is Jessica from Tucson, AZ. Jessica attended the Art Institute of Tucson from 2009 to 2012. It was owned by the failed for-profit Education Management Corporation, EDMC. Heartbreakingly, Jessica says: “I have experienced unbelievable amounts of stress and depression due to this situation. I have been placed on anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication over the years and been through therapy . . . I have self-harmed and contemplated suicide, because I feel so trapped and unable to recover or move forward. I have a general feeling of worthlessness, because I feel like my potential has been squandered.”

She went to the Art Institute of Tucson, and her experience has led her to this desperate situation. She tried to harm herself. Instead of a bright future, she is left with a mountain of debt and nothing to show for it but deep financial and psychological pain. She says, “Every aspect of her life has been affected.”

And so, is Secretary Betsy DeVos trying to help Jessica? No. Secretary DeVos is making it worse. Jessica submitted her borrower defense application almost 4 years ago in 2016. She has waited for this period of time to hear anything from the Department of Education. What is their excuse? I mean, if someone writes a letter to my office and does not get a reply and they come back to me and say, Are you going to answer this, DURBIN, we send a reply. We try to do it promptly with everybody.

How can Secretary DeVos be holding these things up for years, while the students see the mountain of debt growing? As she waits, Jessica’s loans are in forbearance, where they con-

tinue to gather interest, meaning that the total amount owed continues to grow. She is just 1 of 4,518 borrowers from Arizona who are stuck waiting for Secretary DeVos to use the authority that Congress gave her to discharge fraudulent loans.

I also want to tell you about Jonathan from Colorado—3,600 defrauded borrowers are waiting for relief. Jonathan from Westminster, CO, attended DeVry University—sadly a Chicago-based for-profit school—studying to be an electronics engineer.

He is a father and a husband who was trying to provide more for his family, so he took out student loans that sounded like an investment. He currently owes almost \$100,000 in outstanding Federal student loans from attending DeVry, twice what he was told his education would cost.

Of his debt, Jonathan says, “My credit has been destroyed. I couldn’t repay these loans in two lifetimes, even if my degree had any value to employers.” Sadly, it doesn’t. Employers don’t even recognize his degree.

Jonathan says:

My student loans are the millstone around my family. The debt I owe has made my kids not want to attend college at all. They see no value in it; their own father has an engineering degree but he can’t get hired anywhere because his school was a scam.

Those are the words of Jonathan from Colorado.

So not only has this fraudulent school taken away his future by burdening him with a worthless degree and piles of debt; in many ways, it affects his children’s future.

Jonathan applied for a borrower defense discharge in 2017, nearly 3 years ago. He has been waiting to hear from Secretary Betsy DeVos. Secretary DeVos’s failure to provide him with relief, he says, “has caused [him] to lose faith that the government will actually protect students like [him].”

Secretary DeVos has cruelly ignored defrauded borrowers like Jessica and Jonathan, but what is more is that she is trying to make it almost impossible for future borrowers like them to secure the relief that Congress intended by rewriting the rules.

In August, Secretary DeVos released a new version of the borrower defense rule that places unreasonable burdens on borrowers to attain relief. The result is that the Department estimates the DeVos rule will deny nearly \$11 billion in relief to borrowers compared to the current rule.

In September, I introduced a resolution in the Senate to overturn the DeVos borrower defense rule. Forty-two of my colleagues have joined me in cosponsoring it. I plan to bring the resolution to a vote on the Senate floor where it only needs a simple majority to pass. At that time, my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will have a choice: Will they stand with Secretary DeVos’s actions—or, I should say, lack of actions for 3 or 4 years—will they deny help to defrauded students, or will

they stand with young people like Jessica and Jonathan, trying to get their lives back together and trying to get Congress to implement the one law it passed that could help them? It is a choice that seems pretty easy for most American people when they hear this scenario described to them.

A recent opinion piece in the *Anchor-age Daily News* criticized Secretary DeVos for siding with “for-profit colleges that have defrauded students” and “illegally [denying] student loan debt relief to thousands of students.” Even in Alaska, hundreds of borrowers are waiting for borrower defense discharges.

Nationally, Americans agree that these defrauded borrowers deserve relief. In a 2016 *New America* poll, 78 percent of Americans said that students should have their Federal student loan debt discharged if their school deceived them. That is pretty basic, isn’t it? If you were cheated, you ought to be taken care of.

When you break the numbers down by party, 87 percent of Democrats and 71 percent of Republicans—vast majorities—supported relief for these students. So when it comes time to vote on my resolution to overturn the DeVos borrower defense rule denying relief to defrauded borrowers, I hope my colleagues will stand with students and the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### ABORTION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, my hope is that each of us in this Chamber and their families enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving time, being grateful for all of the blessings that we in this country have.

I know I certainly had a wonderful week. I had the opportunity to spend some time across the great State of Tennessee and to talk with Tennesseans about what was on their minds.

I will tell you this. In my opinion and experience, as diverse as Tennesseans are, there is one thing in common that I heard repeatedly, and that is that they are through with trying to guess where politicians in Washington, DC, stand on issues. This is something I think all of us need to hear and probably don’t want to hear, but our fellow Americans, and certainly Tennesseans, have no idea what their elected representatives believe. Instead, all they see up here is this endless cycle of political in-fighting and failed legislation. They consistently say: We want you to focus on things that are important to us. We want you to focus on things that are important to the country. I will tell you that it is no wonder that our country’s discourse is plagued by what is a marked cynicism for even our most earnest efforts.

As I thought about this during the week and the visits that I had across the State, I thought: You need look no further for an example of where they

see this fighting as being unnecessary than an issue that has become a magnet for derision, and that is the issue of protecting life—more specifically, the use of taxpayer dollars to fund the abortion procedures.

In poll after poll, after poll, a majority of Americans have indicated that they oppose public funding of abortion. The numbers on this are not even close.

As early as this summer, self-identified Democrats’ support for taxpayer-funded abortion struggled to even break out of single digits. The data is clear, and it is convincing. The American taxpayer does not want their tax dollar being used to fund abortion procedures.

So how is it, then, that my friends in the minority insist upon loopholes and work-arounds that make taxpayers complicit in the slaughter of the unborn?

Their cause has been frustrated, of course, by President Trump’s aggressively pro-life agenda. Last year, he proposed the “protect life rule,” which cut taxpayer funding under the title X program for any facility that performs abortions or that refers their clients to those facilities that perform abortions.

This rule closely mirrored my Title X Abortion Provider Prohibition Act. That was the first bill I filed when I came to the Senate. It is something that is very important to me.

But this year, this body’s liberal faction once again seized an opportunity to undercut the pro-life agenda via a legislative trick known around this Chamber and Capitol Hill as a poison pill. You see, they found a way to hold hostage millions of dollars attached to the fiscal year 2020 State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill. That was done via an amendment that funnels family planning dollars to domestic organizations that support abortions overseas.

Do you see what they are doing?

It is an amendment that funnels family planning dollars to domestic—U.S.—organizations, but those organizations are supporting abortions overseas. It also uses Obama-era gender policies to define sex—a clear red herring to get people arguing about gender identity so they will ignore the Democratic Party’s leftward swing on the issue of abortion.

You could chalk all this up to politics, were it not for the existence of the bipartisan budget agreement that both parties agreed to ahead of our work on appropriations. That agreement included a ban on poison pill riders like the Shaheen amendment, as well as assurances that any poison pills would be swiftly removed. We thought we had taken care of that issue with the bipartisan budget agreement, but oh, no, here we go.

Yet in order to “empower women overseas” Democrats have indicated that they are willing to throw away \$847 million for maternal and child health, \$100 million for global health

security programs, \$150 million for nutrition assistance, and \$6.2 billion for global HIV and AIDS assistance. They are doing this, throwing all that money away, so they can make a political point.

This is an interesting development coming from the party that once deployed their support for abortion in only the most extraordinary circumstances. The party of “safe, legal, and rare”—their terminology—has become the party that hedges their bets with infanticide and prioritizes convenience over human life.

Just across the river in Virginia, Ralph Northam and his cohorts were allowed to set a new reprehensible standard for what left-leaning America is willing to condone in the name of soulless politicking.

Tennesseans told me they want to see their representatives speaking up. They want to see women speaking up on behalf of life, families, and the unborn. They see clearly that if protecting life is the hallmark of the conservative movement, then, destroying life is the hallmark of a more liberal approach. They want us to draw a line in the sand and declare once and for all that loopholes and legislative tricks will no longer be tolerated because, for them, abortion is not up for casual discussion. They see how clearly and how easily the left trifles with the lives of children, and they are repulsed by it. What they want us to do is to focus on getting things done that are important to them. And, yes, to Tennesseans, being able to say the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness is something that has a deep meaning.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. 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 question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Komitee nomination?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

(Mr. CRUZ assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. CRAMER assumed the Chair.)

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator