

That is why, when the Senate passed the CARES Act, we wisely placed limitations on how this money could be spent. We need to maintain those guardrails to ensure that the country can continue on a path to recovery.

For these reasons, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO KYLE HOPKINS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, as we all know, it has been an extraordinarily challenging time for our great Nation, a time that has been painful for so many of our fellow Americans.

It has also been a time when people across the country have given so much to their communities, to their States, and to their neighbors. And, as you know, we are a great nation. We are a kind nation. We are a proud nation, and we are a resilient Nation.

This pandemic has been testing the character of our country, and I believe that we are passing the test as Americans. I believe that because I see it everywhere. I certainly see it in my State, the great State of Alaska. People are passing out food, doing what they can for the elderly, tending to those in need. We are seeing this all across our Nation.

We see millions of our fellow citizens—people whom we all have the privilege of representing here in the Senate—stepping up with purpose and resolve. We see a greater appreciation for the dignity and the value of our workers who are on the frontlines of helping us get through this pandemic.

I was recently home in my State. The rule in Alaska is if you travel from the outside, when you get to Alaska, you have a very strict 14-day quarantine. I was quarantined with my wife and three daughters, hunkered down in Anchorage.

Yet I was also able to still appreciate what was happening with so many of our fellow citizens, especially frontline workers who are helping Alaska power through this crisis. So many of them are working day in and day out to ensure that our grocery stores are stocked, that the goods are transported, that buildings are maintained, that our telecommunication systems are running, that our airplanes are flying, that our hospitals are open, that our healthcare workers can give care, and that our extraordinary teachers are finding creative ways to teach our kids. The list goes on and on. It is happening in every State across the Nation.

Last week, I decided to give an impromptu Alaskan of the Week speech in my backyard. It wasn't here on the Senate floor the way we usually do it and the way we are doing it today. I was highlighting these workers. Many of them are part of the Teamsters

Local 959, led by third-generation teamster Gary Dixon. I want to say thank you to them again.

We talk a lot about people who are telecommuting. That is great. It is important to get us through this pandemic, but we also know there are a lot of people who can't do that. They are really our national heroes right now—essential workers on the frontlines, keeping our economies and our supply lines open, moving, robust.

Now that I am back in DC and the Senate is open again—finally, open again—and the business of the Senate is continuing, so does our Alaskan of the Week series from the floor of the Senate. It is one of my favorite times of the week, when I get to focus on a special Alaskan or a group of Alaskans who made Alaska such a great and unique place. I think the Presiding Officer likes it a lot, too.

I had intended, as I mentioned, on my Alaskan of the Week speech here coming back, to focus on more of these frontline workers who are doing so much in our States and so much in our country to get us through this pandemic. However, some really interesting and, I think, exciting news, broke on Monday in our State, as big news born of a tragic situation. And for that reason, I thought we would have a different focus on our Alaskan of the Week.

The Alaskan of the Week this week is an intrepid Alaska reporter, Kyle Hopkins, who led coverage in our local paper, the Anchorage Daily News, that earned him the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for public service. It is probably the most prestigious award in all American journalism—the prize of prizes.

Kyle Hopkins, an Alaska reporter, won that on Monday. He won it for a 17-story series called “Lawless,” about the public safety crisis of rural Alaska and the horrendous issue of sexual assault and domestic violence in our State.

As we all know, we are confronting a pandemic in our country. I live in a great State, but we have a lot of social challenges, just like a lot of States. We are confronting this pandemic right now nationally. My State has been confronting an epidemic of domestic violence and sexual abuse that has been going on for years—decades, generations.

Kyle's series combined dogged reporting and meticulous fact-checking with the utmost sensitivity that a subject like this requires, which is not an easy task at all. It was, according to the Pulitzer committee, riveting public service reporting. It was so much more than that. I will tell you that it was very, very important to the State of Alaska.

Let me tell you a little bit about our Alaskan of the Week, Kyle Hopkins, and what made him very qualified to write this series and why it had such an impact. And I believe—maybe, I should say I hope—it is beginning to bring changes to our public safety sys-

tem and, most importantly, to the unfortunate culture that we have in our State that spawns this kind of abuse and violence.

Kyle was born in beautiful Sitka, AK. That is in Southeast Alaska. His father was a teacher who came from California to teach the children of logging camp workers at a time when the southeast part of our State had a very vital timber industry. The family moved back to California after a few years, but then back to Alaska again, and then away and then back again. Sitka, Kake, Skagway—two small towns, one village—are all in Alaska's beautifully gorgeous southeast. For Kyle, the towns provided the backdrop of a magical childhood—spruce trees that seemed to rise to the clouds, aquatic universes and tidal basins, fish to catch, towering totem poles. High school was all about basketball for him, as it is for so many Alaskan high schoolers and kids. Traveling for tournaments in Alaska is a unique experience, requiring trips on small bush planes.

Kyle remembered seeing the planes and the ferries: “I remember thinking I was lucky to see and do these things.” He knew that even as a young man. He went to the University of Alaska Fairbanks for college, searching for a subject that allowed him to read a lot. He had an adviser that recommended a journalism class. Well, the rest, you could say, is history.

During college, he had a host of internships across the State in journalism, covering business, politics, sports, and crime—all the usual beats—and with some of our best journalism and media establishments, like the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, before moving to Anchorage to work for the Anchorage Press, a weekly paper; then, to KTUU, Channel 2, our big TV station in Alaska; and, then, to where he is now, the Anchorage Daily News.

Throughout all of his reporting, a few things constantly struck him. One is that we are a very big State, but also how few people even in Alaska had ever been to a village in our State. They didn't know the challenges and the beauty of what we call rural Alaska, the soul of Alaska. More than 200 villages dot our State, most of which are not connected by any roads or infrastructure.

He was always struck and increasingly disturbed by the challenge that I mentioned at the outset of my remarks—these very high rates of sexual violence that we have in Alaska. Depending on how you measure it, it is at least three times the national average—three times the national average.

Just like so many of us in Alaska, he assumed that someday the adults, the people in charge, would do something about it, until he realized at a certain point in his life that he was an adult and he had two children, two girls, with his wife Rebecca Palsha, another intrepid reporter in Alaska, and he wanted to make Alaska a better place

not only for his girls but for all other children across our State, a State that he knows and loves.

So the time was right to tackle this issue, and the time was right for another reason throughout the State. There was a more open discussion about this dark issue, this black mark on Alaska, the issue of sexual assault.

Brave women had started coming forward to tell their stories. A statewide initiative that I was part of called Choose Respect was launched over a decade ago trying to address cultural changes and then the “Me Too” movement came, and more and more people were beginning to share their stories of trauma and abuse and to have the courage to do it—because it takes courage.

Kyle not only captured many of those voices, he also began to dig into the larger issues of generational trauma and an issue that is so important in our State, the lack of law enforcement in many of these places, in so many small villages across Alaska. He did it all the while by capturing the complexities of a multitiered public safety system in Alaska. Working with ProPublica, he traveled throughout the State, dug through reams of documents, talked to dozens and dozens of survivors, perpetrators, police officers, lawyers, you name it.

Let me try to capture the breadth and depth and heartache of his 17-part series told by just a few headlines. These are some of the headlines of the stories in the Anchorage Daily News: one, “Discussing Alaska’s history of sexual violence is one step toward seeking solutions;” another headline, “Lawless: One in three Alaska villages have no local police;” another headline, “Dozens of convicted criminals have been hired as cops in rural Alaska. Sometimes, they’re the only applicants;” another headline: “She leapt from a van on the Kenai Peninsula to escape her rapist. Then she waited 18 years for an arrest.” You get the picture.

Let me summarize the opening to one of the stories, a first-person piece headlined, “Why we’re investigating sexual violence in Alaska,” and it tells Alaskans why this series is delving into this very, very difficult topic. It is a story—a horrible story—of a very young girl in one of our villages who vanished from the playground, found later sexually abused, murdered, and it rips your heart out.

These are the kinds of stories that I have certainly heard about and tried to address in my time in public service in Alaska. These are the stories that haunt us as Alaskans. They have haunted countless Alaskans: of course, survivors, victims, their families, leaders, good citizens, good people. They are difficult and shocking stories to tell, but they need to be told, they must be told, and that is what Kyle Hopkins did, and that is why he earned the Pulitzer Prize. These are the kinds of stories that Attorney General Barr

confronted when he came to Alaska last May, his first trip to any State in the country after he was confirmed as our new Attorney General.

Before his confirmation hearing, Senator MURKOWSKI and I had both invited him to come to Alaska. We talked to him in detail about these challenges, and then we did something that I think mattered, and, again, it gives a sense of why this series was so important. We started sending the Attorney General some of Kyle Hopkins’ stories of this 17-part series, the ones that he had written at this time.

So the Attorney General knew before he even got here some of the challenges because of this reporting. Attorney General Barr actually came to our State for almost 5 days—a long visit—to hear from survivors, law enforcement, lawyers, meeting dozens of Alaskans throughout the State who have worked on these issues—some without a voice, without help from the Federal Government, many Tribal members. It was a really important trip.

He was given a beautiful kuspuk as a gift, and when he left, he took a piece of Alaska with him in his heart. I am convinced of that. As a matter of fact, I talked to him about Alaska yesterday on the phone and this very series. He still wears the kuspuk, by the way. He says it makes him look trim.

Shortly after returning to DC, he began to focus with the Department of Justice on some of these big issues, declaring a public safety emergency in rural Alaska and starting to free up significant resources to improve public safety in our State’s rural communities.

So the funding helps, and it is already being put to good use, but this is a story not just about money. As a matter of fact, that is not even the important issue. The important issue is culture. We desperately need a cultural change on these issues in Alaska that have been going on for way too long, and that is another reason why Kyle’s work is so important, because you can’t change the culture if you don’t know how broken it is.

Will it work? Does he think things will change? “I wouldn’t presume to know,” he said, when my team caught up with him on Tuesday, a day after the Pulitzer Prize was announced, already hard at work on another story, by the way.

“I hope things change,” he said. “That’s one of the goals of the series . . . But if nothing changes, at least people will know about the injustice in our system . . . and if it’s going to continue, if we’re going to allow this to continue, it should be with our knowledge.” That is his quote.

“This is my place,” Kyle added, talking about Alaska. “It’s an awesome place and I don’t want to live anywhere else. But things are wrong. And it shouldn’t be for the next generation, for my girls and other girls. If there’s something we can do about it, we should do it.” That is his quote.

And of course, he is right. We should do it, and many of us in Alaska—really, thousands of us in Alaska—are committed to this cause and have been committed to the cause for a long time. I believe Kyle’s work is going to help a lot in that regard.

I want to thank the Anchorage Daily News for supporting this series, to all the staff who worked on the series, to the owners, the Binkleys. Thanks to the Pulitzer committee for recognizing the importance of this series, and thank you, Kyle, for your hard work and determination.

Congratulations, again, on winning the Pulitzer Prize, and probably even more prestigious than winning the Pulitzer Prize for the United States, congratulations on being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of all nominations on the Secretary’s desk for the Coast Guard, that the nominations be confirmed, and motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY’S DESK

ON THE COAST GUARD

*PN1379 COAST GUARD nominations (257) beginning JASON A. ACUNA, and ending DAVID J. ZWIRBLIS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 6, 2020.

*PN1571 COAST GUARD nominations (10) beginning JENNIFER J. CONKLIN, and ending GENARO A. RUOCO, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 13, 2020.

*PN1572 COAST GUARD nominations (160) beginning RYAN G. ANGELO, and ending JEFFREY S. ZAMARIN, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 13, 2020.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of PN1709 and the Senate proceed to consideration of that nomination.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Brett P. Giroir, of Texas, to be Representative of the United States on the Executive Board of the World Health Organization.