

When we were representing clients, Cory would normally prepare the first draft of pleadings and send it to me to review. Seldom were there any reasons to make any changes because he utilized his legal abilities to navigate through the complexities of the legal issues which resulted in a well thought out, plausible argument.

During Judge Wilson's investiture as a Judge on the Mississippi Court of Appeals, I had the pleasure of being one of the speakers. I spoke about three traits of Judge Wilson—(1) Respect, (2) Character and (3) Legal Intelligence. To keep this letter to a respectful length, I will not repeat everything I said but the essence is, Cory respects everyone he comes into contact with, he does not change who he is because of race or political affiliations and his ability allow him to break through legal jargon and get to the point.

Judge Wilson and I are quite different—I am Black and he is White. I am older and he is younger. I am a Democrat and was a Republican (before he became a judge). I live in the majority African American City of Jackson, Mississippi and he lives in a suburb of Jackson. Yet these differences have become our strengths. We often have lunch and discuss the pressing issues of the day as friends. He has sought my advice, based on my judicial experience, on how to be a better judge. And while we may disagree on some matters, in the end we realize that we are just two lawyers who want our communities to be better and we know that having a fair judiciary is one of the ways to make that happen.

If you need any additional information or have any question, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. GIBBS.

Mr. WICKER. Again, let me just stress to my colleagues that Cory Wilson has gained a reputation as a fair and impartial judge and a good and decent man, and I am confident that this reputation will follow him as he serves on the Fifth Circuit. He will serve the circuit and our Nation well as a U.S. circuit judge.

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.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE JUSTICE ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, as we have been working over these last several weeks to develop police reform legislation, I figured the best use of my time would be to spend that time listening, as much as anything else—listening, for example, to Black Americans about their experiences with law enforcement and the changes they would like to see in our country; listening to my colleagues in the Senate about the most effective ways to make these changes, especially under the leadership of Senator TIM SCOTT, who has personally experienced the injustices we are trying to address, and, particularly, this deficit of trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve; and listening to leaders in Texas who are working hard—in the

midst of this pandemic and widespread protesting—to keep every single Texan safe. You would think, before we decide on what reforms to take, it is important to hear from those who know best what is working, what isn't, and what we need to do more of.

A few weeks ago, I called two of my friends, who happen to be the mayor of Dallas and the mayor of Houston, Eric Johnson in Dallas and Sylvester Turner in Houston, and asked them to help me pull together a group of people in both of those major American cities for an open conversation about these issues. Less than a week later, I was in Dallas for an open and honest conversation with a group of law enforcement, faith, and community leaders. They provided very useful feedback and ideas that I brought back with me while the JUSTICE Act was in draft form. After the bill was introduced last week, I was eager to hear from more folks in Texas.

Last Friday, I traveled to Houston for another similar type of discussion at city hall. Like in Dallas, we were able to hear from a variety of points of view familiar with these challenges. I was glad to also be joined by Senator CRUZ and Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE. In a way, I thought it was a coincidence, but maybe not, that this conversation happened on Juneteenth—a day that allows us to reflect on the progress we have made in the fight for equality. This year—I would say more than normal—it was a reminder of how far we have to go.

At this point, I would like to say the good news is there is a lot of common ground and good will, and I think we have a unique opportunity to do what I told the Floyd family I would do when they told me they wanted Texas-size justice. I think some good can actually come out of this tragedy, their loss of their loved one.

I heard an inspiring message from Bishop James Dixon, who is the pastor at Community of Faith Church and first vice president of the Houston NAACP. He talked about the need for unity and action in response to the widespread protests we are seeing and encouraged everyone, as he put it, to “dignify the outcry.”

We need to affirm that, yes, there is a problem; yes, it has gone unaddressed for too long; and yes, we are going to do our best to do something about it. While there may be differences of opinion on the best route to take, the good news is we are all pulling in the same direction.

During our conversation, I was able to talk briefly about the JUSTICE Act, which was introduced, as I said, last week. Among other things, they seemed to be pleased the bill would strengthen deescalation training, as well as training on the duty to intervene in case there is something inappropriate occurring, the use of body cameras, incentivizing the States to restrict the use of choke holds, and make lynching a Federal crime.

I received some great feedback on how it will ensure that police departments nationwide are using proven best practices to keep our communities safe. As we prepare to debate this legislation this week, that conversation could not have been more timely.

Another common theme—and I have heard this before—is the growing strain on our law enforcement officers. I remember several years ago Chief David Brown saying: We ask our police to do too much. Basically, they are the ones who we know will go quickly to a crisis and intervene, no matter what it is, whether it is a domestic crisis, a mental health crisis, or somebody breaking the law. Mayor Turner, in particular, talked about how the list of responsibilities we are giving our law enforcement officers keeps growing longer and longer and longer. They are not just fighting crime; they are responding to calls about drug abuse, mental health, domestic violence, homelessness, and a range of other crises. Between COVID-19 and the ongoing protests, their jobs are not getting any easier.

As Police Chief Art Acevedo pointed out, police are performing these jobs not by design but because there is basically nobody else to do them—by default. There is no question we need more support services that can help alleviate some of this strain on our law enforcement officers. Over the years, we have tried to bolster services available for things like the First Step Act, which took prison reform from the State level to the national level. We put money into Project Safe Neighborhoods grants and Mental Health and Safe Communities Act grants. In particular, I remember when we debated the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act grants to help train law enforcement to deescalate conflicts between people undergoing a mental health crisis, during which an escalating level of crisis would be a threat not only to the individual who is undergoing that crisis but to the officer, him or herself. We actually found it to be very effective, this training.

As this list of responsibilities we are giving our law enforcement officers has grown, so has the need for additional training and additional funding for support services—ancillary services that can work in conjunction with our law enforcement officials so we can get the most efficient, most effective response to the person who needs it.

That is precisely why defunding the police is not the answer to the challenges we are facing. It is really an insult, if you think about it, and it is living in a fantasyland.

Chief Acevedo shared an analogy a fellow police chief and friend of his made about the effort to shift responsibility from police to other providers. He said: If you are building a new stadium, you wouldn't tear down or stop using the old one until the new one was complete.

If cities strip funding from their police departments without having other

support services in place, our communities wouldn't be more safe; they would be significantly less safe. So rather than cutting funding while those services are being established and strengthened in cities across the country, let's talk about the reforms that make sense.

The most impactful reforms are going to be made at the State and local levels. We can't be a city council for 330 million people. Those responsibilities, ultimately, are born at the local and State level. They are the ones accountable to the voters for the actions they take or don't take at the local level, but we know there is a role for us to play. Much of it has to do with identifying things like best practices, as well as providing money for training and resources. The hiring is done at the local level, officer training is conducted there, and decisions about day-to-day police activities are made there.

During our discussion, Mayor Turner expressed the need for folks in Congress to listen to mayors, and I am all for that. For any law we pass or reforms we make, they will be the ones responsible for implementing the changes we make.

I have been in close contact with my mayors and other officials across the State, and I don't intend for that to stop once we, Lord willing, pass a police reform bill.

This has to be an ongoing conversation between local officials, State officials, and those of us who happen to work here in Washington in the Congress. This conversation is not going to be a brief one. It is not going to be a one-time conversation. This is going to stretch on for weeks and months. Really, what we are talking about is a cultural change as much as anything else.

I want to, once again, thank the men and women in Texas who wear the uniform of our police departments and those who shared with me their ideas and feedback over the last few weeks. It has been incredibly valuable and will become even more helpful as we begin debating the JUSTICE Act this week.

Senator SCOTT, who is leading us on this legislative effort, has done a great job of compiling a broad set of reforms that will improve transparency and accountability. Many of these provisions, as I said a few minutes ago, already enjoy broad bipartisan support.

This legislation, I believe, will go a long way to improve accountability and transparency and deliver real change to communities across the country. I am glad that at Senator SCHUMER's request, Senator MCCONNELL put a bill on the floor before the Fourth of July. That is specifically what Senator SCHUMER called for and exactly what Senator MCCONNELL said he intends to do.

Now that we have the opportunity to turn talk into action, it does sound like our friends across the aisle are getting cold feet. I have been interested to read in the press where some of them said they haven't really made

up their mind whether they will even allow us to get on the bill.

We can't pass a bill that we can't start. Once we start it, they will be given every opportunity to offer amendments to help improve the bill. But shutting it down just out of a fit of pique or overt politicalization does not do a service to the people we are trying to help here: to help our law enforcement officials and to help the general public and people who sense a gap of trust between those officers and the law enforcement community they serve.

Our Democratic colleagues are weighing whether to block us from even considering this bill, one that will be put on the floor, debated and voted on, just as Senator SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, requested. Unfortunately, our friends across the aisle seem focused more on the few differences between Senator SCOTT's bill and the House bill rather than the similarities. This is where I think the 80-20 rule ought to apply. If we can agree to 80 percent or 70 percent or 60 percent, why don't we do that? Why don't we put that in the bank and work on the rest?

The truth is, there are many places where these bills overlap, and there is a lot of room for us to find common ground. In order to do that, our colleagues across the aisle need to do what maybe is not their first instinct and that is to cooperate—that is the only way we get things done here—and prove to the American people that they are sincere in their desire to see us debate and pass effective reforms. There is a difference between doing that and just grandstanding and posturing, but this is not a time to grandstand. This is not a time to posture. This is a time to roll up our sleeves and work together to get things done. We need realistic, resolute, and immediate action in order to repair that broken relationship between law enforcement and some of the community they serve. So I hope our Democratic colleagues will join us in that effort this week.

I appreciate, for one, the hard work and leadership of Senator SCOTT in drafting this legislation, and I appreciate the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, for prioritizing its consideration on the floor. I am a proud cosponsor of the JUSTICE Act, and I look forward to voting for this bill when the opportunity comes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I so enjoyed listening to the comments of my colleague from Texas, and it causes me to think that, yes, we are moving forward with another week, and what we have to realize is that, indeed, our Nation was built on free speech and the premise to have dissent or robust, respectful political debate. That is something that keeps our Nation strong.

To go back and look at the work of our Founders, there was barely a day that went by that they were not having that robust debate, that they were not having those arguments that were really constructive conversations that would say: We are here; how do we go here?

That is how you solve problems. Indeed, that is what Tennesseans are telling me every day that they want us to do: Solve these problems. Let's get ourselves on the right track.

When you look at it and go back and look at the Founders, you see that the debates they had were not superficial. They were not necessarily the bright, shiny object story of the day. They were deep, philosophical debates on issues that were about the future of the Nation they were trying to build. Everything was on the line, and no one kept quiet. They felt as if their opinions were important, and indeed, today, there is a lot on the line when we talk about civility and when we talk about the strength, the core, and the preservation of our rights and our freedoms. Nobody spared anyone's feelings at that point because the stakes were too high and they were focused on freedom.

How did they create a free nation? How did they create it so that it would pass to their children and their grandchildren? Indeed, you can go forward in history and look at the words of Ronald Reagan reminding us that freedom is not something that is permanent. Every single generation—every single generation—has to fight for it.

Madam President, of course, we say an extra thank-you to you and others in this Chamber who have worn the uniform and have served, and we are grateful for that service.

I would state that, in spite of all the strife that our Founders went through, they never wavered from their commitment to building a society that was, in their hearts and minds, a society of the people, for the people, by the people—of the people. It was freer and more Democratic than the land they had left in order to get here.

The First Amendment to our Constitution is more than just a prohibition against government repression. It is a warning against the private attacks on free speech. The success of online discussion platforms is a testament to how much the American people still value the free exchange of ideas.

Don't you love it? In a good conversation with good friends, somebody makes their point, and you make a counterpoint. Then you discuss it, and you have a respectful conversation.

Everyone from political candidates to corporations to the free press has taken advantage of the opportunity to reach those millions of eyeballs that are scrolling through social media timelines and news aggregation services. For a while, it looked as if the system would revolutionize the way we read and the way that we share information, the way we have that debate,