

remains unchallenged. But the winds of change are blowing, and they are bringing good news for peace all across the region.

Of course, a few extreme voices, perhaps correctly sensing that their moment is slipping away, are not at all happy. A predictable cast of characters wasted no time condemning the agreement and branding the UAE as traitors to the Arab or Muslim world.

Unlike Iranian clerics or al-Qaida terrorists, everyone who is actually living in the 21st century is celebrating this major progress. This major step forward is being documented in a signing ceremony at the White House tomorrow. But in just the couple of weeks that have elapsed between the announcement of the Abraham Accord and the official ceremony tomorrow, another Arab state has joined the parade toward peace. On Friday, September 11, Israel and Bahrain announced their agreement to open formal diplomatic relations. After Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE, this makes the fourth historic step toward normalization by Israel's Arab neighbors.

Along with President Trump, Prime Minister Netanyahu and King Hamad of Bahrain called the agreement "a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East." Indeed, reports suggest that still more Arab states may not be far behind. This is a new course with the potential to fundamentally—fundamentally—change the Middle East.

Dennis Ross, former senior diplomatic adviser to President Obama and a longtime practitioner of the peace process, wrote just yesterday that these agreements are bona fide "breakthroughs" that are changing "the political landscape of the Middle East" and the Israel-Palestine stalemate for the better. That is Dennis Ross, from the Obama administration. That is how former Obama administration officials are praising the Trump administration's successes.

I am grateful for this administration's work to encourage peace. I am proud of this historic opportunity that American leadership and diplomacy has made possible.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on a totally different message, I had hoped, Republicans had hoped, and the American people had hoped that the Senate would be spending this week finishing up another bipartisan agreement on coronavirus relief. We want to get hundreds of billions more dollars into the pipeline for kids, for jobs, for healthcare.

Unfortunately, Senate Democrats chose to block it all. Our Democratic colleagues voted against hundreds of billions of dollars to help Americans fight the virus. This wasn't even a vote on final passage, just a procedural vote to break the Democratic leader's filibuster and move forward with some-

thing. Senate Democrats, nevertheless, filibustered the aid.

Then, just a few short days later, they went right back to signaling that a Democratic Senate majority paired with a President Joe Biden would abolish the filibuster and permanently vandalize this institution to more easily force radical change on the country. This threat to permanently disfigure the Senate has been the latest growing drumbeat in the modern Democratic Party's war against our governing institutions.

There was former Senator Reid starting the "nuclear" exchange back in 2013. There have been years of unprecedented tactics to try and deny President Trump the government the people elected. There has been the least fair, least thorough, and most rushed impeachment inquiry in modern history.

Now, the most shameless—the most shameless—hypocrisy: Senate Democrats happily use the filibuster to block coronavirus relief and Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill at the very same time they are conspiring to destroy that very tool so they can ram through their radical agenda if they ever win power. Grade A hypocrisy and nothing more.

We have had former President Obama call for "eliminating the filibuster, another Jim Crow relic," about 1 month after his own party used it to kill Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill. We have some of former Vice President Biden's allies in the Senate daydreaming about ending the filibuster even as they themselves use the filibuster to kill pandemic relief for working families.

Democrats want completely different sets of rules depending on whether they hold power—different sets of rules depending upon whether they hold power. They want to assert minority rights when they have the minority and steamroll them if they get a majority.

Here is NBC News:

Democratic insiders are assembling a coalition behind the scenes to wage an all-out war on the Senate filibuster. . . . Veteran party operatives, activist groups and supportive Senators are coordinating message and strategy.

This takes measuring the drapes to a new level. The Democratic leader and his colleagues aren't just measuring the drapes; they are calculating how much kerosene it would take to burn the drapes down.

They aren't just threatening to pass radical policies like Medicare for none or the Green New Deal—no, no, no. The far left wants to hot-wire democracy itself—things like packing the Supreme Court with new seats or packing the Senate by handing out new statehood to one individual city.

I said it a few months ago. Today's Democrats have lost patience with playing by the rules and want to wage war on the rule book itself. They are saying as much out loud.

Perhaps our colleagues think promising a shameless power grab is the

only way to energize their radical, far-left base, but the real effect—the real effect—is to make the stakes in these issues completely and totally clear to the American people.

The Framers designed the Senate to be the country's firewall against ill-considered and radical change. That is what the Senate was all about in the beginning. If our Democratic friends have concluded their worst ideas could never clear the high bar—if they think their ideas could never clear the high bar, it is their bad ideas that need to be scrapped, not the core checks and balances of our government.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Mark C. Scarsi, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

RACISM

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, the events of the last few months—what we have been seeing in the streets and the protests and all the issues that surround that—I think, have forced the country to grapple with our history on the issue of race and, in particular, what we teach young Americans about what that means and how it fits in the broader story of America.

Is America, in fact, a nation founded on racism, one that makes our very founding and its principles almost irredeemable? It is an important question. You can't ask Americans or any generation to sacrifice or defend a nation they believe is so deeply flawed, so it is one that I think we have to talk about.

This country was founded in the year 1776, and it was founded by this declaration that all men are created equal; that your rights come from God, from your Creator. Now, we take those words for granted today. They were extraordinarily radical ideas 244 years ago. Up until that time, every person on Earth was told that your rights are whatever the sovereign allowed you to have, whatever the King allowed you to have. You didn't have any rights that were natural to you. So the very principle itself was pretty radical.

The problem is that, from the very beginning, many people, including those who put their name on that document, and our laws at the time did not reflect that founding principle, and our story can largely be summarized as the 244-year journey to more fully live up to the promises made at our founding.

For our first 89 years as a nation, human beings were owned as slaves. And beyond just the horrors of slavery, they were the subject of torture, of rape, of seeing their children sold away—away from them—never to see them again.

When that horrible institution finally came to an end, it was followed by another hundred years of separate and unequal, where Black Americans were told where they could live, where they could work, where they could go to school, and more. They were told where they could eat, where they could sit or not, where they were allowed to stay overnight. They were even told what side of the road they would be allowed to walk on in many parts of this country. They were denied the right to vote, either directly or through intimidation and threats.

It was a time when, in many parts of this country, any Black man was one false accusation away from losing his life at the hands of a lynch mob.

This is a shameful truth, an undeniable part of our history, a stain on our legacy as a nation. But it is not the whole story. From the very beginning, it was clear that the promise of our founding and our failure to live up to it—these two things could not ultimately coexist. From the very beginning, within a year and even before the founding of our Nation, there were already Americans working to end slavery. Sometimes they paid for it with their lives.

Ultimately, it became the single most divisive issue in the country, to the point that it was resolved only through a bloody civil war. For the next hundred years, during the era of separate and unequal, it was also Americans who worked to end segregation and Jim Crow laws, Americans of every walk of life: little children who would brave angry mobs to desegregate a school, the protesters and those in the streets who faced down “Bull” Connor’s dogs and beatings, little girls who died when their church was bombed.

Ours is not simply the story of a people who, for 189 years, failed to live up to the promise of America. Ours is also the story of the Americans who ultimately succeeded in making us a nation that was closer to who we were supposed to be.

That is why, at least for me, when they play the “National Anthem” and the flag that I face and put my hand over my heart to honor—that flag—that is not the flag of slave owners; that is the flag of the abolitionists. That is the flag of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, who were American heroes. The flag that I pledge allegiance to is not the flag of a segrega-

tionist. It is the flag of the Freedom Riders, the people who made the march from Selma to Montgomery. That is the flag of Rosa Parks and Dr. King.

Our history does not simply belong to the villains. It belongs, even more so, to the heroes who, frankly, made us more American in each successive generation.

I have heard in some corners people suggest that our founding documents themselves are documents embedded in racism because I imagine many of the people who signed it, indeed, were or did not live up to the words they signed their names on. But that would be forgetting the fundamental fact that every single great movement in American history—every movement for equality in the history of this Nation—has not been a rejection of our founding documents, has not been a rejection of our founding principles, has not been a call to overthrow the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. Every one of these movements—great movements in the history of this country towards equality—has been an appeal to those principles, a demand that we live up to those principles.

Dr. King said the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence—an appeal to our founding documents, which he called a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.

As we talk now about what is taught to our children in our schools and in our lives, I think our children deserve to know the truth about their country—all the truth. We must teach our children about the times in which our Nation fell short. We must teach them about the people responsible for our falling short. We must point to the times even now when we fall short. That is the only way you learn the lessons of history and the only way to avoid repeating them. But we must also teach them that it was Americans who dedicated and even lost their lives to end these evils.

While we are at it, we should teach them, too, about the greatness of our country. Teach them about the young Americans who died far from home for the freedom and the liberty of others, who lost their lives at Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal and Normandy and the Ardennes and Chosin and Fallujah, on San Juan Hill and in Manila Bay. Teach them also about how, when disaster strikes anywhere on this planet, it is their country that responds first and with the most—Fukushima, Japan, and West Berlin; after an earthquake hit Haiti; after floods impacted Pakistan—how it is Americans and their charities and their government that have literally saved the lives of millions of people on the African continent from starvation, from the ravages of HIV-AIDS. Teach them how, on a summer night in 1969, the entire world stopped and watched with amazement as man first stepped foot on the Moon and there planted the flag of their country.

Our children deserve to know the truth about their country, that in the history of mankind, there has never been a great power that has used its means to help more people and more places than anywhere in human history—no other great power in human history has done what the people of this Nation have done, both individually through the monies we give to charities and through their government. This is also true about America.

Our children deserve to know that they are citizens not of a perfect country but of the single greatest Nation in the history of all of mankind. They deserve to know that they are the heirs to a 244-year journey to achieve in one land a nation where all people are viewed as equal under the law, whose rights come from their Creator. They deserve to know that their country is a special one—one worth defending, one worth protecting, and one worth passing on to the generations that will follow them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

WILDFIRES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, because of raging fires in my home State of Oregon, many communities in my home State have been reduced to ashes. A number of others are experiencing what is known as the ice box effect, where, in effect, smoke blocks out the Sun, and it gets quite cool. Virtually all of Oregon is now choking on smoke—that is whether you are inside or outside at this point. Countless thousands of Oregonians are under evacuation orders. Many are quite literally fleeing for their lives and abandoning their homes as the flames approach.

When I was home this weekend, I initially thought that a number of my communities had been hit by a wrecking ball. That really understates the situation because usually when you get hit by a wrecking ball, there is a little bit left that is not just ashes. Now thousands of people in my State have lost their homes. They have lost their businesses. They have lost lifelong memories.

I brought a flag to a family who lost in one of the fires the service flag of a loved one that they had cherished, and it just struck me that it is those kinds of memories, and losing them, that are as painful in many instances as losing houses and businesses.

The death toll has been rising. Others are still missing and unaccounted for.

Amid all the panic and loss, one of the aspects that left me, as I came back to Washington, with a bit of hope is that we lost so much, but we didn’t lose our spirit. We didn’t lose what we call the Oregon Way—neighbor helping neighbor, volunteers helping evacuees get food and water and shelter. Everybody steps up when a crisis arrives; nobody cares a whit about anybody’s politics.

I have come to the floor today with a specific purpose, and that is to ask the