

heroism. Our community lined up to donate blood. They helped to reunite friends and family in the aftermath, and they helped to financially support victims and their families.

The phrase “Vegas Strong” came into being after that time, and let me assure you, it is a phrase that could not be more true. The strength of our city is simply astounding. We work to build ourselves back up from crisis, side by side, arm in arm. It has taken time. It hasn’t been easy. Even now, we are still not all the way there, but every day, the people of Las Vegas show unparalleled resilience. Nevadans carried that resilience with them. They carry it in every challenge and in every crisis that we face.

I stand here today to honor the men and women who lost their lives on October 1, those who were injured in the attack, and the heroes who helped bring our city back.

I also call on Congress to show the same kind of strength that the people of Las Vegas have shown. Our Nation currently faces many challenges. However, my colleagues must recognize the threat that gun violence poses to our communities. We must honor the memories of those who were lost. We must take commonsense action to reduce gun violence and ensure that more lives aren’t lost.

As a legislative body, we must act. The Bipartisan Background Checks Act—a bill passed by the House 582 days ago—has been waiting for a vote here in the Senate. Today, in honor of the memories of the lives that were lost, I request that the Senate bring this bill, this important bill, for a vote.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF AMY CONEY BARRETT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday I had the pleasure of meeting—or should I say re-meeting—Judge Amy Coney Barrett, who has been nominated, as we all know, to the U.S. Supreme Court, to the vacancy left by the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Over the last few days, Judge Barrett’s nomination has been applauded by people across the political spectrum—and for good reason. Her background in practicing law and academia and on the Federal bench has provided her with an unquestionable knowledge of the law. Much of the praise has come from her colleagues who worked closely with her over the years.

Marcus Cole, who is dean of the University of Notre Dame Law School, where she teaches, said:

Judge Amy Coney Barrett is an absolutely brilliant legal scholar and jurist. She is also

one of the most popular teachers we have ever had here at Notre Dame Law School.

A group of her former students have published a piece recently that said:

While we hold a variety of views regarding how best to interpret statutes in the Constitution, we all agree on this: The nation could not ask for a more qualified candidate than the professor we have come to know and revere.

We have also seen support for Judge Barrett from unlikely sources. Harvard University Law Professor Noah Feldman clerked with Judge Barrett at the Supreme Court more than 20 years ago. He was also a prominent witness for Democrats during the impeachment process earlier this year. But he has written an opinion piece titled “Amy Coney Barrett Deserves to Be on the Supreme Court.” He wrote that he knows her to be a “brilliant and conscientious lawyer who will analyze and decide cases in good faith, applying the jurisprudential principles to which she is committed. Those are the basic criteria for being a good justice. Barrett meets them and exceeds them.”

There is really no question that Judge Barrett has a brilliant legal mind and deep respect for the Constitution and an unwavering commitment to the law, but these qualities alone are not what set this exceptional judge apart. Both Republicans and Democrats who have worked with Judge Barrett throughout her career have spoken about her personal qualities, like humility and integrity. These make her an ideal candidate for this influential position.

A group of her former students wrote about the kindness that she has shown to them, both in the classroom and during meals they shared at her home. They said:

Her genuine interest in the personal lives of her students outside the classroom, and the seamless way that she modeled for all of us the integration of her professional and family life, reinforces that there is more to life than the pursuit of professional accolades.

She has certainly proven that to be the case. In addition to rising to the very top of her field, Judge Barrett is a mother of seven children ranging from the age of 8 to 19. Following her nomination on Saturday, Judge Barrett credited her family’s ability to balance her and her husband’s successful careers with the needs of their children to the unwavering support of her husband Jesse, who is also an accomplished attorney.

In every respect, Judge Barrett is an inspiring role model for young people and I could say as the father of two daughters, of young women in particular, who are pursuing their professional and personal ambitions with equal vigor.

If confirmed, Judge Barrett—soon-to-be Justice Barrett—would become the first mother of school-age children to serve as a Justice and only the fifth woman throughout American history to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Considering the woman whose seat she

will fill if confirmed, the significance of that fact cannot be overstated.

She would be the only current Justice with a degree from a law school other than Harvard or Yale and bring much needed educational diversity to the Bench.

I have always thought it bizarre that, among all the highly qualified lawyers and judges in America, for some reason, it is overly populated with people educated in the Northeast, on the coast.

On top of that, she would join Justice Thomas as the only Justice born in the South and bring another perspective to the Court, whose members largely hail from the coast.

If confirmed, Judge Barrett would bring an underrepresented view to the Supreme Court. I know we would all be proud to have somebody like her—a woman of such strong character—serving our Nation in this very important capacity.

I want to commend President Trump for selecting this outstanding nominee. I was glad to spend some time with her yesterday. She has an unquestionable character, a brilliant mind, and the kind of temperament needed to serve on the Court. I am eager for the American people to see that for themselves as we begin the public confirmation process.

As we know, this is the second time Judge Barrett has appeared before the Judiciary Committee in the last few years. It was 3 years ago when the committee and the Senate confirmed her to her current position on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. However, there were some warning flags.

During her confirmation hearing back then, 3 years ago, the Democrats on the committee raised questions over Judge Barrett’s strong Catholic faith and questioned whether it would somehow disqualify her or impair her ability to discharge her responsibilities.

One Senator went so far as to say: “The dogma lives loudly within you, and that’s of concern.” Another asked her whether she was an “orthodox Catholic.” Well, this statement and that insinuation were discriminatory at best and unconstitutional at worst.

The Constitution itself includes that there is no religious test. Article VI reads: “No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”

This is not the first time somebody has been targeted for one’s Catholic faith. I was reminded of the speech that John Fitzgerald Kennedy gave in 1960 in Houston, TX, to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association. In addressing some of the explicit and implicit arguments that somehow he would be beholden to the Vatican rather than be able to discharge his responsibilities as President of the United States, he pointed out, as a Catholic, it was not the only concern because, if people would do that to a Catholic, why not do it to a Baptist or a Muslim or a Jew?

He said:

For while this year it may be a Catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been, and may someday be again, a Jew—or a Quaker or a Unitarian or a Baptist. It was Virginia's harassment of Baptist preachers, for example, that helped lead to Jefferson's statute of religious freedom. Today I may be the victim, but tomorrow it may be you—until the whole fabric of our harmonious society is ripped at a time of great national peril.

He made the important point that seems so obvious that he shouldn't have had to make.

He said:

I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic.

Finally, he said:

But if this election is decided on the basis that 40 million Americans lost their chance of being president on the day they were baptized, then it is the whole nation that will be the loser—in the eyes of Catholics and non-Catholics around the world, in the eyes of history, and in the eyes of our own people.

Throughout her career, Judge Barrett has impressed the brightest legal minds with her deep understanding of the law and commitment to judicial independence. She made it clear at her hearing 3 years ago that she would be loyal to her oath, and that is to uphold and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States.

It is clear, under the appropriate canons of judicial ethics, that if for some reason a judge can't apply the law because of some personal opinion or conviction, then one needs to disqualify oneself. President Kennedy said that, if it violates your conscience and your faith and you can't reconcile the two, you should resign.

Well, there is just no legitimate reason to question whether Judge Barrett's religious beliefs would make her unfit to serve on the Supreme Court, and I hope our colleagues on the other side will refrain from, once again, imposing a religious test on Judge Barrett as we consider her nomination.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, on another matter, with the school year well underway, I, like, I am sure, many of my colleagues, am continuing to listen to and learn from our teachers and administrators about how this unprecedented school year is unfolding. Whether kicking off the year in person or online or with some hybrid model, educators are facing a whole new range of challenges that have made the past several weeks anything but ordinary.

Over August, I spent some time talking to kindergarten through 12th grade teachers and students to learn how they were preparing to overcome the hurdles brought on by this pandemic. I also visited our colleges and universities to see how they were handling the start of the new year, and since then, I have stayed in close contact with all of them to learn more about how it is proceeding.

Our college campuses, for example, in most cases, are home to more than just classrooms and libraries. They are whole communities unto themselves with student housing, offices, dining facilities, gyms, convenience stores, and with, in some cases, full-service utility companies.

Lee Tyner, who serves as general counsel for Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, testified before the Judiciary Committee earlier this year and compared running a campus to leading a small city. You have a vast set of responsibilities that extend far beyond the education you are providing to your students, and those responsibilities have only grown more challenging during the pandemic.

Back in July, I spoke with some of the chancellors of our public colleges and universities to learn more about how they were preparing to deal with the immense challenges higher education was facing, and last Friday, I was able to catch up and see how things had gone—whether they had gone according to plan or whether they had encountered problems they had not been able to anticipate.

I learned about the University of Texas System's comprehensive plan to keep students and staff safe at each of their campuses across the State, which involves a serious testing infrastructure. Four institutions have built labs on their own campuses to conduct the testing that is necessary, and each has the capacity to test between 500 and 2,000 people each day. Other campuses are partnering with the UT Health Science Center institutions for their own testing, and these are providing a no-out-of-pocket cost testing opportunity for students, faculty, and staff.

The University of North Texas System has reopened campuses with a mix of in-person, online, and hybrid instruction, and it has been very effective at stopping the transmission of the virus. If a student or any close relative tests positive, there are clear guidelines for isolating and then contact tracing to minimize the spread.

When I spoke last week with the chancellors, UNT had only 27 active cases on campus, and it has seen no evidence of COVID-19 transmission in the classrooms or buildings where they conduct face-to-face activities.

This is the trend most campuses are seeing. There is a low to zero transmission rate in classrooms, thanks to these preparations and these precautions. The biggest risk to students, staff, and the surrounding communities actually comes from off-campus activities or people who bring it onto the campus who are not part of that student body or administration.

In Texas and States across the country, we have seen news articles about how off-campus parties and gatherings have been linked to clusters of these new cases. Appropriately, the universities have cracked down on these campus groups or individuals hosting those events, and they are trying to do what

they can to identify them and then stop the spread.

John Sharp, who is the chancellor of the Texas A&M University System, talked about one unconventional way that A&M is trying to pinpoint potential outbreaks as soon as possible.

A&M has adopted the practice of wastewater surveillance, which has been used for years as a way to detect viruses or diseases within a community. Now it is being used to find the source of individual COVID-19 cases or clusters of cases in student housing, particularly dormitories. The university takes wastewater samples from sewage systems on campus, and a positive test allows them to then go back and target individuals for testing.

Obviously, if there is no virus detected, they know there is no need for that conditional testing, at least at this time. This practice can help to detect an outbreak at a dorm that can otherwise go unnoticed for several days and, thus, be spread far and wide.

Our colleges and universities across the State have gone to great lengths to manage the crisis that did not come with a manual. They have implemented the best practices to protect the health and safety of students and staff members and to ensure that their students have access to a quality education, which is the very purpose for which they exist.

In our conversation last week, these chancellors told me how helpful the CARES Act funding has been over the last several months, and they reiterated that they need more help. They need Congress to come together and provide more help. It is not just colleges and universities. It is also our elementary, middle, and high schools.

Congress has already provided more than \$30 billion in emergency relief for education, including \$2.6 billion in Texas alone. This funding has gone a long way to prepare for this school year and to allow these leaders to manage the risks associated with the spread of the virus.

They say they need more help, and it is incredibly frustrating that, despite this being a bipartisan goal and something we were able to do together in four separate bills, we have now been unable to pass another relief bill to give our schools and our children the resources they need in order to be safe. You would think this would be a priority.

The two House proposals we have seen—one of which passed the House earlier this year and the other of which was introduced last week—did include additional funding for education, and a bill we proposed over the summer included another \$105 billion for education—more than tripling the investment that has already been made in the CARES Act.

History has proven that legislation gets harder to do the closer we get to an election, and perhaps nothing is better evidence of that than where we find