

she has been universally praised by her former students and ultimately served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

Her record and experience show that she is ready for the Supreme Court.

There is some home-State pride. Judge Barrett was raised in Metairie, LA, and is a graduate of St. Mary's Dominican High School. When I go back there, I will see folks with the pen she would have received when she graduated, and they are very proud to have attended the same school and perhaps to have been in the same class.

As a fellow Louisianan, I am proud that one of our own will become a Supreme Court Justice. She will be only the second person from Louisiana to serve on the Court, which, for my State, makes the confirmation historic. But it is more than Louisiana rooting for Amy Coney Barrett; she will serve our country well.

I will also say that I think it fitting that a woman fill the seat that opened after Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's passing. Although she and I had our differences in political and judicial philosophy, she should be recognized for her service and lifelong pursuit of ensuring that women have a seat at the table. We thank the legacy of Justice Ginsburg and her service to the United States.

One of the many things that are notable for Justice Ginsburg that I will emphasize is that she broadened the perspective of SCOTUS—the Supreme Court of the United States—as they treated the law. I think Judge Barrett does the same. She will be the first mother of school-age children to serve on the Court. She and her husband Jesse are raising seven children, two of whom were adopted from Haiti and the youngest of whom has Down syndrome. If there is a mom—whether a working mom or not—who wonders if her perspective is ever spoken to when cases are considered before the Supreme Court, Justice Barrett will bring that perspective to the Court.

Finally, I want to thank Judge Barrett for her willingness to serve. To accept a nomination to the Supreme Court is, sadly, to accept ruthless attacks from partisans seeking to score political points. Her nomination was no different.

She has been repeatedly attacked for being a practicing Catholic. She has every right to live her faith. No one in public service should be expected to cast aside deeply held religious convictions to satisfy an angry mob fabricating reasons to say no.

Thank you, Judge Barrett, for defending your—and by extension all of our—religious liberty.

I think the balance and the grace she exhibited during a very difficult 2 days of being before the committee but in her life in general is testimony to the depth by which she considers the best of her faith.

That said, her political enemies and some in the press intentionally

mischaracterized many of her statements, twisting them into new ways to attack her, again fabricating reasons to say no. Yet Judge Barrett handled each attack with grace and dignity.

During her hearing, she displayed time and again that she has the skills, the demeanor, and the experience to serve on the Supreme Court.

On Monday, I will proudly cast my vote to confirm Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. She will serve our country well, and she will serve the future generations that will be influenced by her decisions on the Supreme Court well. I encourage my colleagues to put politics aside and to do the same.

Thank you.

I yield back. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The Senator from Connecticut.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 1112

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, we are here today on a unique Saturday, a day that is not normal, a day when the coronavirus is setting new records across the United States for infection—just yesterday, 85,000 new cases, which is the very highest since July—ravaging the United States, and creating untold hardship and heartbreak.

We are in the midst of a raging pandemic, but we are not considering measures to deal with the pain and grief and loss that it has created, the threat that it poses to many States across the country, providing memories for many of us in Connecticut who went through the worst of these ravages and still suffer, in Connecticut, the threat of a new wave. Economic crisis grips this country, people are out of jobs, and small businesses are failing, but we are considering a nominee who would threaten to decimate our healthcare system in the midst of a healthcare crisis as we go through this pandemic.

It is a day that is sad, shocking, surreal, and it is not normal. It is not normal to rush through a nominee for the highest Court in the land—a lifetime appointment—while Americans are going to the polls in record numbers. Their voices should be heard, and the next Senate and the President should choose this next Justice. It is not normal because we are, in effect, ignoring and disregarding the duty we have to consider and pass real measures to address this pandemic and the economic crisis we face.

It is not normal for real people whose lives are impacted so severely and potentially even more so in the weeks ahead and whose healthcare, reproductive freedom, protection from gun violence, workplace rights, civil rights, and civil liberties are all threatened by this nominee.

We brought into the hearing room those real people from Connecticut and all around the country through the posters that we had, watching those hearings and the nonresponses that Amy Coney Barrett gave to our ques-

tions. We brought real lives and the real harm they will suffer into that hearing room.

I brought Connor Curran, whose treatment has kept him alive only because his parents were able to use the Affordable Care Act for his preexisting condition; Julia Gonzalez, who is alive because she received treatment for her cancer as a result of the ACA making it affordable, protecting her as a preexisting condition survivor; Samantha, a rape survivor, who was able to get an abortion because of the protections of *Roe v. Wade*; Tracey, who was able to use in vitro fertilization because of reproductive freedoms that are guaranteed by *Griswold v. Connecticut* and its progeny—Amy Coney Barrett has refused to say whether she thought *Griswold* was correctly decided; Ethan Song, who lost his life because of an unsafely stored firearm in a friend's home—his parents, Michael and Kristin Song, were with me, and so was Ethan; Janet Rice, whose son, Shane, then 20 years old, was killed in downtown Hartford; and, of course, the Barton family, who lost their beautiful son, Daniel, along with 19 other wonderful children, in Sandy Hook in that massacre, and sixth grade educators as well.

Those lives and real people and real harms are what are at stake in this debate, and so this Chamber seems so surreal on this day, in the midst of hardship and heartbreak that would only be aggravated by the Justice who may be confirmed as early as Monday evening.

She has been selected, screened, and vetted to be an activist judge who would strike down the Affordable Care Act and overturn *Roe v. Wade*. We know that she has passed that “strong test”—the President's words, “strong test”—to legislate from the Bench and accomplish through the Court what they have been unable to achieve in this body, in this Chamber, and in this Congress through the legislature.

They have failed to overturn the Affordable Care Act because the majority of American people want that protection for preexisting conditions. We have stood strong on this side against those 10, 20, 40 efforts to strike down the Affordable Care Act.

Madam President, she has been vetted and screened for a position on gun violence protection that she herself has admitted in a speech she gave at Hillsdale College. It sounds kind of radical. It sounds kind of radical, as I said to her during the hearing, because it is radical. It is part of a radical, extremist agenda to deny the American people State and local laws that protect them against assault weapons and large-capacity magazines, people who are dangerous and should be denied the purchase of firearms because they should be screened out through background checks and through emergency risk protection orders and safe storage laws, and repeal of PLCAA. That gives gun manufacturers near complete immunity from any responsibility.

We are still in the middle of an epidemic of gun violence, and among those real people who have spoken out is a young woman, 19 years old, named Tabitha Escalante. I was on a phone call with her yesterday with other advocates.

She is the judiciary advisory associate at March for Our Lives, and she is advocating, along with other groups, grassroots groups, that have created a movement—Giffords, Brady, Everytown, Moms Demand Action, Students Demand Action, Connecticut Against Gun Violence, Sandy Hook Promise, Newtown Action Alliance—along with March for Our Lives. They have created a movement that is prevailing, just as we prevailed and stopped the legislative branch from overturning the Affordable Care Act.

The strength of this movement has caused the NRA and the extreme radical groups that are supporting it to go to the courts, as we documented in a report that we released just yesterday. I thank my colleague SHELTON WHITEHOUSE for spearheading this effort. I have been proud to join in various efforts on captured courts. And the report “What’s at Stake: Gun Safety” was the reason that Tabitha and I and others joined that call yesterday: “How a Corrupted Organization Has Radically Transformed the Second Amendment.”

It shows how the NRA has been at the tip of the spear, working for special interests, the gun lobby—dark money channeled to put on the court judges, at every level, who will stop commonsense measures on protecting people against gun violence. Justice nominee Amy Coney Barrett is only the most recent of them who have been screened and vetted to carry forward that agenda.

These interlocking groups—the firearms industry, retailers, and private organizations like American Encore, American Future Fund, American Action Network, Judicial Crisis Network—have spearheaded this effort, and the NRA has been their tool and instrument, and judges in the Federal courts have been the result.

The fact of the matter is that they are turning to the legislatures because of the strength of this grassroots movement—not its weakness—and their efforts to repeal the ACA have failed. So have their efforts to block those measures in State legislatures and local governments.

In fact, gun violence prevention was on the ballot in 2018, and gun violence prevention won. That is the reason that the House of Representatives passed a universal background check measure and other steps that are so important and should be done here.

In the past 10 years, in fact, this scourge and epidemic of gun violence has continued with more than 236 mass shootings in this country. Those mass shootings have taken 1,300 lives, including those innocent children and educators at Sandy Hook.

In the past 10 years, gun violence has taken more than 350,000 lives—in rural communities, urban communities, and every community across the United States. Gun violence is an insidious public health menace, a public health epidemic that affects every community.

Amid this public health epidemic, Republicans have vetted and screened this nominee to take Justice Ginsburg’s place on the Supreme Court because of her extreme views, as she articulated in her dissent in *Kanter v. Barr*. She showed an alarming willingness to stretch the founding-era history to support her extreme and expansive view of the Second Amendment. Her views are not only out of the mainstream; they are out of the position articulated by Justice Scalia, her mentor.

But the fact of the matter is that the threat to these gun violence prevention measures is real and urgent. Cases are literally one step away—remember, one step away—from the Supreme Court. There are three cases challenging restrictions on assault weapons and large-capacity magazines, two of them from California that are about to be petitioned for a review of certiorari at the U.S. Supreme Court. Two cases challenging limits on open carry and three cases challenging background check and licensing requirements are one step away from the Supreme Court, possibly this term, when Amy Coney Barrett would take her seat.

With her nomination, every single commonsense violence prevention measure at every level of government is in great peril. The public safety and health stakes of her nomination could not be greater. As Tabitha said, “Nothing less than everything is at stake.” “Nothing less than everything is at stake”—and not just now when these cases are one step away, but for decades to come.

Tabitha’s generation may have children, even grandchildren, who will see Amy Coney Barrett on the Supreme Court Bench, if she is confirmed, and district court and appellate court judges whom we have confirmed through this effort to reshape the courts in the image of the far right, of what used to be the Republican Party—one step away from this disaster.

Likewise, on the issue of reproductive freedom, Judge Barrett was also vetted and screened. At the hearing, she refused to say—absolutely refused to say—whether *Roe* was correctly decided. As you know, *Roe* protects a woman’s right to choose after being raped, as Samantha was. We presented her story.

It is constitutional to make in vitro fertilization a crime if *Roe* is overturned. It is constitutional to make it a crime for doctors to perform abortions. She refused to answer that question as well. But, in a way, she didn’t really need to answer those questions because we know where she stands. She described *Roe*’s legacy as barbaric in a

letter and ad that she aligned herself with.

She has called, in effect, through organizations with which she was aligned, for the unborn “to be protected in law.” She aligned herself with a group on legal positions—I am not talking about moral beliefs—pushing the most extreme legal views on reproductive care, which include criminalizing IVF, criminalizing doctors, ending legalized abortion in this country.

Her extreme views on reproductive freedoms once were disqualifying, but it is the reason why Donald Trump chose her in the first place—his strong test on that issue.

Right now, there are 17 abortion-related cases that are one step away from the Supreme Court. There are challenges to bans on abortion as early as 6 weeks into pregnancy, before many women even know they are pregnant. There are bans on abortion later in pregnancy, when women can face the most severe health risks and rely on their doctors for accurate information and compassionate care.

They are reason-based bans that merely exist as a pretext—and I say “reason-based ban”—for interrogating and intimidating women who seek an abortion. They are redtape laws that require abortion providers to jump through hoops that serve no medical purpose but merely exist to burden them and make necessary abortion services harder and harder to obtain—and numerous other abortion laws designed to limit access—strictly to limit access in the name of healthcare, particularly for poor, rural, and immigrant women who simply cannot afford to make trips to clinics hundreds of miles away. They are laws that impede racial justice, human justice.

Access to reproductive care is already hanging by a thread across the country. Judge Barrett’s nomination imperils what access remains. Those cases are just one step away—one step away—from decisions by the Court that Judge Barrett would join.

So there is a great deal of our fundamental rights at stake here. As Tabitha said, “Nothing less than everything is at stake.” These cases that are one step away from decision are only 17 cases involving reproductive freedom, 14 cases involving gun violence prevention, and there are numerous others involving workplace safety.

The Affordable Care Act will be argued a week after the election, when she would sit on the Court. Her hostility to the Affordable Care Act is well documented by now in her criticizing Chief Justice Roberts for his vote to uphold the act, saying he had to stretch the meaning of it to keep it alive, her saying in *King v. Burwell*, when she spoke about that case, that the dissent had the better of the argument. These are real rights for real people that would be lost.

Instead of imperiling healthcare and other rights that should be enjoyed by the American people, we should be enacting measures that are before us

right now that have been passed by the House of Representatives, by bipartisan majorities, that would actually address the needs and challenges of the American people during this extraordinary time in our history.

They are before us right now. There is no need to write them anew. There is no need to invent the words or the purposes for these acts.

In order to proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1112, the Enhanced Background Checks Act—bipartisan legislation to close the Charleston loophole, extending the initial background check review period from 3 to 10 days, and eliminating that loophole for gun purchases which enabled the Charleston shooter to get his weapon and murder people in the basement of a church and others around the country to endanger and kill innocent Americans, embodying the principle of “no check, no sale,” that must be the rule—I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CRAMER. Reserving the right to object.

The Senate is currently considering the qualifications of an excellent nominee to be on the Supreme Court of the United States. That is why we are here. It is very important work. This request is nothing more than another form of procedural harassment by the minority to try and stop our process of considering Amy Coney Barrett for the Supreme Court of the United States. It is certainly unfair to her. It is unbecoming of this Chamber.

If this bill was so important to the Democrats in the Senate, they wouldn't have voted four times to adjourn until after the election. So, clearly, this is just a stunt.

By the way, if that wasn't reason enough, the bill that the Senator is suggesting we get into would put onerous burdens on law-abiding Americans who just want to protect themselves at a time when Democratic mayors and Governors are overseeing all kinds of damage to life and health and property unchecked. In fact, calling off the law enforcement of their communities to protect our citizens, they now want to take away the rights of those citizens to be able to purchase arms or at least make it much more difficult.

For these reasons and several others, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, what my colleague calls procedural harassment, it is actually democracy. It is legislation. It was passed by the House. It is bipartisan. The majority was bipartisan. It will save lives. I fail to understand why my Republican colleagues will not allow this loophole—it is a fatal and defective loophole in our current laws—to be repaired.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 7

Madam President, let me move to another measure. In order to proceed to the consideration of H.R. 7, Paycheck Fairness Act—again, bipartisan legislation that would empower women to challenge pay discrimination in the workplace, passing the House by a bipartisan majority and giving women the power to hold employers accountable for discriminatory practices, making a tremendous difference in their lives—I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session on the Paycheck Fairness Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CRAMER. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

This is yet one more obstructionist move to prevent us from taking up Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court of the United States, a highly-qualified nominee who deserves her time in the Chamber. She deserves her time in debate and not these other external matters that, by the way, if they were important to the Senate minority, they would not have voted four times this week to adjourn until after the election.

For that reason and several others, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, the so-called external matters go to the heart of fairness in the workplace, equal pay for equal work, discriminatory practices, other kinds of injustices that have existed for years—women ought to have the right to challenge them and hold their employers accountable. What could be more fundamental and important?

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 1423

Madam President, let me move now to H.R. 1423, in order to proceed to consideration of the Forced Arbitration Injustice Repeal Act, also known as the FAIR Act, which passed the House on September 20, 2019—again, a bipartisan measure, which would increase Americans' rights to seek justice and accountability through the court system.

We are in the midst of considering a nominee who has expressed a hostility to seeking justice in the workplace and in jobs and in other areas. So this measure to eliminate forced arbitration clauses in employment and consumer and civil rights cases is especially relevant. It would allow consumers and workers to agree to arbitration after a dispute occurs, but it would not force them to do so.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CRAMER. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

I will not allow the Senate to be diverted from the issue at hand, and that is the consideration and of Amy Coney

Barrett to be an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. She is a highly-qualified nominee and deserves this debate.

For that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4443

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, in order to proceed to the consideration of the Lori Jackson Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act—because millions of women are still at risk as a consequence of this loophole in our present laws that enables dangerous, estranged spouses or partners to have access to weapons during the most perilous time in a domestic dispute right after separation, because that loophole endangers innocent women because it provides access to weapons to those dangerous people—I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CRAMER. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

Again, if the minority was serious about passing legislation, they would not have voted four times to adjourn until after the election, so it is a little hard to take this seriously, but it is especially difficult on this one because Federal law already prohibits violent felons from owning and purchasing firearms.

Again, should I remind the Senate and the country that Democratic mayors and Governors all over this country have failed to protect their citizens. The last thing we would want to do at a time like this when citizens are left to defend themselves against violent crime is to prohibit law-abiding Americans or make it more difficult for law-abiding Americans to own firearms. For those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, just to remind my colleague, this measure doesn't pertain only to dangerous felons. It protects innocent women against dangerous people. There is already the provision for protective orders to provide that kind of safeguard after a period of time. This measure would close a loophole for the first period when, in fact, women and others are at greatest risk.

It is a public safety measure that is particularly relevant because of the hostility expressed by this nominee to commonsense steps in the name of a very extreme view under the Second Amendment.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 840

Madam President, I would like to ask that we proceed to consideration of H.R. 840, the Veterans' Access to Child Care Act—what could be less controversial, a bill that provides childcare assistance to veterans receiving covered healthcare services in a VA facility?