

advocates in Communist China is to pass this measure that he has objected to, which has unanimously passed the House of Representatives. Only H.R. 8428 offers that opportunity, and frankly, only this measure that he has objected to does anything for the dissidents or the democracy advocates or the freedom fighters directly.

He is talking about movies; we are talking about human lives. He can draw all the kinds of hypothetical connections between the so-called movie moguls in Hollywood and China, but I think his SCRIPT Act actually works against the goal that he is advocating.

Censorship in China is a legitimate concern, no question about it, and I would welcome the opportunity to work with him on a bill that does something about it. But actually his bill not only takes away the support for the movies that may be made; it takes away support for documentaries about the repressive regime in China, and it takes away classification and other security screening that are necessary for those kinds of movies to be shown in this country. I think that kind of obstacle may be inadvertent on his part. But I welcome the chance to work with him on a bipartisan bill, a truly bipartisan bill that, in fact, in the next Congress could reach the President's desk. This one that he is offering, the SCRIPT Act, goes nowhere.

But I just want to bring us back to the reality that really is at issue here. Just last Wednesday afternoon of this week, two of the activists among the six pro-democracy fighters living abroad, charged under China's new national security law, were before our committee. I am wondering what they are thinking when they hear my colleague from Texas pounding the table about being tough on China but objecting to a bill that guarantees them protection. As I say, I am talking about their lives and tens of thousands of others. I am not talking about movies. I am not talking about Hollywood moguls.

Let's stand up for the lives of those Chinese Hong Kong freedom fighters now in this country seeking protection through a bill passed unanimously by the House of Representatives—the only bill that will go to the President's desk if we approve it.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Three brief observations: No. 1, the Senator from Connecticut said multiple times that the House bill in question passed the House unanimously. I am sure this is inadvertent, but what the Senator from Connecticut said is simply wrong. It passed the House by voice vote, which is a very different thing from passing unanimously. It simply means the vote tally was not recorded.

Secondly, the Senator from Connecticut said the SCRIPT Act is not going to pass this Congress. Well, that appears to be correct, but that is for one reason and one reason only, which is the final two words uttered by the Senator from Connecticut: "I object."

Quite literally by doing nothing, quite literally by giving the identical speech he had just given and then closing his mouth before those final two words—had that occurred, the SCRIPT Act would have passed this body unanimously.

So the only reason the SCRIPT Act isn't passing is because the Senate Democrats are objecting. And it should not be lost on anybody that the Hollywood billionaires who are enriching themselves with this Chinese propaganda are among the biggest political donors to today's Democratic Party in the entire country.

The Senator from Connecticut said: Well, the SCRIPT Act might make it possible to have documentaries on the human rights abuses in China. Oh, really. That argument staggers the mind. It so defies reality because—you know what—Hollywood doesn't make movies about the human rights abuses in China.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to meet Richard Gear. Now, Richard Gear is not someone you would ordinarily imagine palling around with a conservative Republican from Texas, but Richard Gear was up here. He was up here actually standing up against Chinese abuses and urging anyone who would listen—Republican or Democrat—to stand with him.

Do you know Richard Gear has not made a single major Hollywood movie in a decade? Why? Because he dared stand with Tibet, and the Hollywood billionaires blackballed Richard Gear. If you speak out for Tibet, if you do what the Senator from Connecticut just suggested and discuss the Chinese human rights abuses—it doesn't matter that Richard Gear used to be an A-list Hollywood blockbuster actor—boom—his career is dead because no studio will produce a movie with him because he spoke the truth.

By the way, my bill presents zero barriers to someone actually making a documentary on the human rights abuses in China because, presumably, if you are making that documentary, you wouldn't allow the Chinese Communist Government to censor it.

I don't know what kind of documentaries the Senator from Connecticut is familiar with, but I am not familiar with documentaries done on tyrants and concentration camps where you let the concentration camp guards edit out the stuff they don't like. That ain't a documentary.

The Senator from Connecticut said perhaps we can work together in a bipartisan manner to address this. I hope so. Standing together against the oppression of the Chinese Communists would be a very good thing for the U.S. Senate. It would be a very good thing

for our country. Unfortunately, at least today, that hasn't yet happened.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, the only ones happy with the outcome of today's debate are the Chinese Government. I regret this outcome because there probably was a time when we would have cooperated in a bipartisan way on both of these matters.

It may not have been unanimous. There may have been a few contrary votes in the House, but clearly it came here with bipartisan support, and I regret that the outcome today is not bipartisan agreement to protect those freedom fighters who came before the Judiciary Committee and who have risked their lives.

This issue is not going away. We will be back because, fortunately, the activists from Hong Kong will persist in their fight, and we ought to do everything we can to make sure they have a safe haven in this country and that they are protected here.

So my closing plea to my colleague from Texas is that maybe there remains time, even in this setting, but, if not, we need to take a stand as a nation against Chinese censorship, against repression by the Chinese, and come together and work together. I thank the chairman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, the first thing I want to do is comment on the discussions we just had.

I have been up here a little less than 2 years, and the thing that surprises me is, invariably, the Democrats won't stand up against the Communist Party in China.

The case that we are dealing with now is they are going to stand up for Hollywood rather than rights, rights that we have here that I am going to talk about in a second.

We ought to be standing up against Communist China stealing our jobs, our technology. We ought to be attacking the Communist Party for what they have done to Uighurs, for organ harvesting, for taking away the basic rights of Hong Kong citizens.

Invariably, I watch my Democratic colleagues; they won't stand up against Communist China. I don't understand it. This is a party that clearly wants to dominate our society, our way of life. They completely disagree with our way of life.

I want to thank Senator TED CRUZ for his continued fight for rights, for all the rights that we have in this country but fighting for those rights so people, whether in Hong Kong or in Communist China or in Taiwan, have the same freedoms that we have.

So I want to thank Senator TED CRUZ for showing up today and doing this.

Mr. CRUZ. Thank you.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 806

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, today what I want to talk about is religious freedom. Religious liberty is our

first freedom under the Constitution of the United States. Americans have the right to freely exercise religion, a sacred right that I will always fight for.

There is no pandemic exception to the First Amendment. Unfortunately, we have seen liberal Governors and mayors across the country use the coronavirus pandemic to go after churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship. For months, they have argued that houses of worship should not meet and congregants could not sing. They have condemned in-person worship services as a threat to public safety, all while they applaud massive political protests.

We saw it happen right here in the Nation's Capital. Mayor Bowser refused to grant a waiver to the Capitol Hill Baptist Church for religious gatherings but supported mass protests that violated her own orders. The church had to sue the city in Federal court for the right to gather, and the court ruled in favor of the church.

It is simply hypocritical and unconstitutional to target religious institutions while letting other businesses operate. We know those on the left will take every opportunity to infringe on Americans' First Amendment rights, but we won't let it happen.

This year has been challenging, and for many of us, our faith and our communities have helped us through it. Government doesn't have the right to take this away from American citizens.

I am proud to lead a resolution today with 15 of my colleagues to call out those who have wrongly tried to prevent Americans from practicing their faith. This is about rights granted to Americans under our Constitution.

What is the one thing every American believes in and has agreed to uphold. It is our Constitution, which we have each sworn to uphold as elected officials also.

We each took the same oath of office:

I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.

There is no reason anyone should object to upholding our Constitution. I will always fight for the religious liberty of all Americans, and I look forward to my colleagues passing this important resolution today.

However, I now am going to wait because I understand one of my Democratic colleagues is going to come object to upholding the Constitution and the First Amendment, the Bill of Rights. This is shocking to me.

As if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 806, submitted earlier today; further, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to re-

consider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, my colleague Senator SCOTT has chosen an interesting point in this pandemic to object to public safety measures intended to protect human life and ensure scarce resources are not squandered.

Over 17 million Americans—17 million—have contracted COVID, that we know of, and over 300,000 of our friends and our neighbors and loved ones are no longer with us. Think about that.

September 11 was a great national tragedy. I know because I lost 700 of those 3,000 citizens, on that fateful day, from New Jersey. This is 100 times more than what happened on September 11.

The people we have lost are not just some nameless numbers but mothers and fathers and grandparents. Essential parts of our hearts are gone forever due to a pandemic that has been mishandled and mismanaged from the start. And now, when this virus is running unchecked through our communities, we have before us this resolution that is riddled with misstatements of fact that I find deeply concerning.

No Governor wants to see their constituents cut off from their daily lives, and I think we can all agree that the administration here in Washington—their inability to guide us through this crisis—has left our Governors holding the bag when it comes to securing resources, providing guidance, and making the difficult calls about the right public policy to prevent COVID-19 from rampaging like an unchecked bull in a China shop through our States because they know, the Governors of our States, that the lives of their residents—our neighbors, brothers, sisters, children, and parents—rest in their hands and these difficult decisions they must make.

We are still losing Americans from COVID-19 at an unprecedented rate. Hospitals throughout the country are providing an amazing level of care with exhausted providers and continued resource issues. And our economy is cratering because we cannot fully reopen it until it is safe.

I am deeply troubled to see a false claim about my State and the Governor banning indoor religious services. Let me be clear, houses of worship were never ordered closed—never. In fact, today, religious gatherings are allowed to have substantially higher capacity limits than most other gatherings.

While New Jersey restricted the capacity of indoor religious services, as they did with all indoor gatherings, religious gatherings were never—never—designated as nonessential or essential, as this resolution suggests. That distinction was only applied to retail businesses.

Perhaps religion is different in Florida, but our houses of worship are not

retail businesses. Houses of worship and religious organizations have been subject to neutral restrictions that equally burden religious and nonreligious entities. They were put in place to do what? To save lives, not under the guise of doing so and certainly not for the purpose of targeting religious groups.

I am a man of strong faith and conviction. I have always found deep solace in the rituals and shared worship of my church. I know many of us have. But perhaps the most important part of my faith is the duty, the responsibility to care for my neighbors up and down the State of New Jersey and all across the Nation. Our faith calls us to ensure the health and safety of this Nation before all else.

As a matter of fact, I am reminded of a passage in the Bible of James 2:14. It says:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and get your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

As for me, I will continue to work for the people of New Jersey, our healthcare workers struggling to care for the thousands filling ICU hospital beds, for the families who don't know how they will pay next month's rent and keep food on the table, for the small business owner trying to keep his doors open, and, yes, for the churches that want the see their parishioners safe. I, however, do not intend to play these partisan games. For those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, freedom of religion shouldn't be controversial. This is a fundamental right of our Nation, as stated in our Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

What this resolution says is that the Senate affirms its support for the rights, liberties, and protections enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.

There is no pandemic exception to the First Amendment. For months, across this country, liberal politicians have targeted churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship. To let this happen undermines the principle of our Nation and the Constitution we have each sworn to uphold as elected officials. I don't understand why my colleague, who swore to uphold the Constitution, would object to a resolution that simply reaffirms our commitment to upholding the Constitution.

We are blessed to live in a great nation that respects religious liberty and

the right to worship, especially as we see countries around the world like Communist China and Iran deny their citizens these same rights. Americans have the right to worship, and government doesn't get to decide for them.

I am clearly very disappointed that my colleague doesn't want to protect the First Amendment, but I will continue to stand against these misguided and hypocritical attempts to target religious institutions. I am never going to stop fighting for the religious liberty of all Americans, even during a pandemic.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I know that my colleague, I understand, is going to be the next chair of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, and he has every right to do that, but what he has no right to do is misrepresent in this resolution what, at least in my State, is going on.

You cannot say that churches were designated by the State of New Jersey as nonessential or essential. That simply is not true. It is simply not true. You cannot suggest that somehow these purposes are to target religions. They are to save lives.

Now, maybe if my colleague and others here had spoken up when the administration was asleep at the switch as this pandemic was raging, maybe if my colleagues had spoken up when we found out that the President knew back in January, early February of this year, of how vicious this pandemic could be, how contagious it could be, how it was transmitted, but said nothing to the American people—and that silence was echoed in this Chamber—well, maybe then we wouldn't in the position that we are in. Maybe we wouldn't have lost 300,000 of our fellow Americans.

So I find it really, really upsetting that, in the midst of a raging pandemic, one would seek to obtain a political value out of something that is simply not the case—simply not the case. I think there is a lot more to be done in this Chamber to stop this pandemic, to stop more lives from being lost, to save our brothers and sisters, to help those who have been ravaged by the pandemic, but not to pick a few States that happen to be Democratic—please.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT. So if my colleague from New Jersey's concern is the paragraph numbered 4 on page 3, I would ask him if he would object if we just take that paragraph out and then he would be willing to affirm that the Senate believes in religious freedom.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. The resolution is replete with inaccuracies, and, therefore, I will continue to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Let's remember, the concern was that he didn't like the section about New Jersey and said that was inaccurate, but the idea that the Senate will support religious freedom, he is not willing to stand behind. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator from Michigan.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, we truly don't have any time to waste. The American people are in desperate need of help. And I want to start by thanking all of my colleagues who have been working so hard together across the aisle to bring us to a point where we can actually provide some help, albeit temporary, to the American people. So, thank you, and I am pleased to have been involved in elements of that negotiation and appreciate it.

But we are stuck right now, and I just want to remind people of a few numbers. More than one in three American adults in a recent survey said they are struggling to pay household expenses, including rent and mortgage. If we don't get something done in the next hours or days, we are going to see thousands of people in Michigan lose their homes in the middle of the winter.

There are 7.8 million Americans who have fallen into poverty since June—7.8 million people have fallen into poverty since June. The number of people applying for unemployment keeps rising. There were 885,000 people who filed initial claims last week, and thousands and thousands and thousands of people who are self-employed, who are contract workers, and others, will find themselves with zero support right after Christmas, unless we take action.

A recent survey found that one in four small businesses are in danger of closing if the economic conditions don't improve—one out of four. I have talked to so many friends, so many people in Michigan, vibrant small businesses—they put it all on the line for that business they always wanted to have—and now they are barely holding on. They need help, and they needed help before now. They need help now. They are waiting and waiting and waiting and holding their breath.

Up to 50 million Americans are struggling to feed their families right now. One out of four American households have experienced food insecurity in this last year—so one out of four households. People who volunteer at the food bank and people who have always contributed to the food bank now find themselves waiting in their car for hours and hours for a box of food in the United States of America. We not only have a health pandemic; we have a hunger crisis going on, and people need help now.

On top of that, this past Wednesday, 3,638 Americans died in 1 day of coronavirus, and we are now looking at government services shutting down in less than 12 hours—the backdrop of everything that is happening for Ameri-

cans. And despite all the good work that has been going on, on a bipartisan basis, we are now looking at less than 12 hours of services for people and to our country shutting down.

And why? Because my colleague, the Republican Senator from Pennsylvania, thinks it is more important to take away the Federal Government's ability to help people and help businesses and create jobs than it is to actually help people. Now, I want to say, Senator TOOMEY and I had a wonderful hearing this week in our HELP Subcommittee on Finance, of which he chairs, and we have been working together doing really important, meaningful things on Alzheimer's disease, and I very much enjoyed doing that. But on this issue—on this issue, at this time, with so many people in pain and so much hardship at this moment—I don't understand when he said that preventing the next Treasury Secretary and the Federal Reserve from relaunching the emergency credit facilities that support manufacturers and other job providers is “the most important thing” in this COVID-19 package. Really? Really? The most important thing in this package is to take away the tools of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve that have been used when we are in crisis, and we need to be a backstop for our businesses in the credit market, when we need to be supporting job providers and jobs? Really? Really? That is the most important thing?

Tell that to a mom who is afraid her kids will end up on the street because she can't pay her rent in January, which is what, 2 weeks away. Tell that to the small business owner who is having to lay off their entire staff a week before Christmas. Tell that to a senior citizen who is risking his health by waiting in an hours-long line to get a box of food. Tell that to the healthcare workers who are literally putting their lives on the line right now fighting this pandemic.

Really? Taking away economic tools from the Treasury and the Fed are more important than people in our country? Small businesses? Farmers, who have been hanging on? Really?

Tell that to the thousands of American families who are preparing for their first holiday without loved ones who have been lost to the virus. Just yesterday, another loss in Michigan—so many losses, thousands of losses—but a dear friend, a sheriff of Wayne County, Benny Napoleon, his family, today, a funeral for a friend as well in Detroit.

So the most important thing is not supporting families, is not helping people at least get through the winter, at least get through the next several months to put food on the table and a roof over their heads and help their businesses and make sure the vaccines can be distributed and support our healthcare workers and put money into education and all the other things that are needed right now—the most important thing is to have a fight with the