

The clerk will report the objection made in the joint session.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Objection from Representative GOSAR from Arizona and Senator CRUZ and others, "We, a Member of the House of Representatives and a United States Senator, object to the counting of the electoral votes of the State of Arizona on the ground that they were not, under all of the known circumstances, regularly given."

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The VICE PRESIDENT. The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader and the Democratic leader be allowed to speak and that following their remarks, the majority leader and the Democratic leader each control up to 1 hour of debate time and be authorized to yield up to 5 minutes of that time to any Senator seeking recognition. Further, I ask unanimous consent that the Senators be permitted to insert statements into the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The majority leader.

CHALLENGE TO THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we are debating a step that has never been taken in American history: whether Congress should overrule the voters and overturn a Presidential election.

I have served 36 years in the Senate. This will be the most important vote I have ever cast.

President Trump claims the election was stolen. The assertions range from specific local allegations, to constitutional arguments, to sweeping conspiracy theories. I supported the President's right to use the legal system. Dozens of lawsuits received hearings in courtrooms all across our country, but over and over, courts rejected these claims, including all-star judges whom the President himself nominated.

Every election, we know, features some illegality and irregularity, and, of course, that is unacceptable.

I support strong State-led voting reforms. Last year's bizarre pandemic procedures must not become the new norm. But, my colleagues, nothing before us proves illegality anywhere near the massive scale—the massive scale that would have tipped the entire election, nor can public doubt alone justify a radical break when the doubt itself was incited without any evidence.

The Constitution gives us here in Congress a limited role. We cannot simply declare ourselves a national

board of elections on steroids. The voters, the courts, and the States have all spoken. They have all spoken. If we overrule them, it would damage our Republic forever.

This election actually was not unusually close. Just in recent history, 1976, 2000, and 2004 were all closer than this one. The electoral college margin is almost identical to what it was in 2016. If this election were overturned by mere allegations from the losing side, our democracy would enter a death spiral. We would never see the whole Nation accept an election again. Every 4 years would be a scramble for power at any cost. The electoral college, which most of us on this side have been defending for years, would cease to exist, leaving many of our States with no real say at all in choosing a President.

The effects would go even beyond the elections themselves. Self-government, my colleagues, requires a shared commitment to the truth and a shared respect for the ground rules of our system. We cannot keep drifting apart into two separate tribes with a separate set of facts and separate realities with nothing in common except our hostility toward each other and mistrust for the few national institutions that we all still share.

Every time—every time in the last 30 years that Democrats have lost a Presidential race, they have tried a challenge just like this—after 2000, after 2004, and after 2016. After 2004, a Senator joined and forced the same debate. And, believe it or not, Democrats like Harry Reid, DICK DURBIN, and Hillary Clinton praised—praised and applauded the stunt. Republicans condemned those baseless efforts back then, and we just spent 4 years condemning Democrats' shameful attacks on the validity of President Trump's own election. So there can be no double standard. The media that is outraged today spent 4 years aiding and abetting the Democrats' attacks on our institutions after they lost.

But we must not imitate and escalate what we repudiate. Our duty is to govern for the public good. The United States Senate has a higher calling than an endless spiral of partisan vengeance.

Congress will either overrule the voters, the States, and the courts for the first time ever or honor the people's decision. We will either guarantee Democrats' delegitimizing efforts after 2016 became a permanent new routine for both sides or declare that our Nation deserves a lot better than this. We will either hasten down a poisonous path where only the winners of elections actually accept the results or show we can still muster the patriotic courage that our forebears showed not only in victory but in defeat.

The Framers built the Senate to stop short-term passions from boiling over and melting the foundations of our Republic. So I believe protecting our constitutional order requires respecting the limits of our own power. It would be unfair and wrong to disenfranchise

American voters and overrule the courts and the States on this extraordinarily thin basis, and I will not pretend such a vote would be a harmless protest gesture while relying on others to do the right thing. I will vote to respect the people's decision and defend our system of government as we know it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CHALLENGE TO THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Vice President, as prescribed by the Constitution and the laws of the Nation, the purpose of this joint session is for tellers, appointed on a bipartisan basis by the two Houses, to read to the Congress the results of an election that has already happened. We are here to receive an announcement of a vote that has already been certified by every State in the Union and confirmed by the courts many times—many times over. We are here to watch the current Vice President open envelopes and receive the news of a verdict that has already been rendered. It is a solemn and august occasion, no doubt, but it is a formality.

The Congress does not determine the outcome of elections; the people do. The Congress is not endowed with the power to administer elections; our States are given that power.

By the end of the proceedings today, there will be confirmed once again something that is well known and well settled: The American people elected Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS to be the next President and Vice President of the United States. Yet a number of our colleagues have organized an effort to undermine and object to that free and fair election. They are in the minority. They will lose; they know that. They have no evidence of widespread voter fraud upon which to base their objections. That is because there is none. There is none, not brought before any of the courts successfully.

They know that President Trump and his allies have suffered a defeat in court after court across the country, losing no fewer than 62 legal challenges. And, I might add, many Republican-appointed judges—some appointed by President Trump—rendered those decisions.

They know—you all know—that Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS are going to be sworn in as President and Vice President of the United States on January 20, but they are going to object to the counting of the vote anyway, and in the process, they will embarrass themselves, they will embarrass their party, and worst of all, they will embarrass their country.

This insurrection was fortunately discouraged by the leadership of the majority party, but it was not quelled.

It is a very sad comment on our times that merely accepting the results of an election is considered an act of political courage. Sadder and more dangerous still is the fact that an element of the Republican Party believes their political viability hinges on the endorsement of an attempted coup, that anyone—much less an elected official—would be willing to tarnish our democracy in order to burnish their personal political fortunes.

Over the course of the afternoon and however far into the evening this band of Republic objectors wants to take us, Senators of good will from both sides of the aisle will explain why these challenges must be dismissed. The Senators from States whose electoral votes are being challenged will explain how the allegations of fraud are baseless. And a substantial bipartisan majority must vote to put down these objections and defend the sanctity of our elections and indeed—and indeed—our great and grand democracy because that is what we are talking about today: the health of power democracy, this wonderful, beautiful, grand democracy where the peaceful passing of the torch is extolled by schoolchildren in the second grade but not by some here.

As we speak, half of our voters are being conditioned by the outgoing President to believe that when his party loses an election, the results must not be legitimate.

As we speak, the eyes of the world are on this Chamber, questioning whether America is still the shining example of democracy, the shining city on the Hill.

What message will we send today to our people, to the world that has so looked up to us for centuries? What message will we send to fledgling democracies who study our Constitution, mirror our laws and traditions in the hopes that they, too, can build a country ruled by the consent of the governed?

What message will we send to those countries where democratic values are under assault and look to us to see if those values are still worth fighting for?

What message will we send to every dark corner of the world where human rights are betrayed, elections are stolen, human dignity denied?

What will we show those people? Will we show those people that there is a better way to ensure liberty and opportunity of humankind?

Sadly, a small band of Republican objectors may darken the view of our democracy today, but a larger group of Senators and House Members from both sides of the aisle can send a message, too; that democracy beats deep in the hearts of our citizens and our elected representatives; that we are a country of laws and of not men; that our traditions are not so easily discarded, even by our President; that facts matter; that truth matters; that while democracy allows free speech and free expression, even if that expression is

antidemocratic, there will always, always be—praise God—a far broader and stronger coalition ready to push back and defend everything we hold dear.

We can send that message today by voting in large and overwhelming numbers to defeat these objections. My colleagues, we each swore an oath just 3 days ago that we would defend and support the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that we would bear true faith and allegiance to the same.

We swore that we took this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that we could well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office we were about to enter, so help us God.

The precise words of that oath were shortly written after the Civil War, when the idea of true faith and allegiance to this country and its Constitution took on enormous meaning. Let those words ring in the ears of every Senator today. Let us do our duty to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, so help us God.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I yield up to 5 minutes to the Senator from Texas, Senator CRUZ.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, we gather together at a moment of great division, at a moment of great passion. We have seen and, no doubt, will continue to see a great deal of moralizing from both sides of the aisle, but I would urge to both sides perhaps a bit less certitude and a bit more recognition that we are gathered at a time when democracy is in crisis.

Recent polling shows that 39 percent of Americans believe the election that just occurred “was rigged.” You may not agree with that assessment, but it is, nonetheless, a reality for nearly half the country.

I would note it is not just Republicans who believe that. Thirty-one percent of Independents agree with that statement. Seventeen percent of Democrats believe the election was rigged. Even if you do not share that conviction, it is the responsibility, I believe, of this office to acknowledge that is a profound threat to this country and to the legitimacy of any administrations that will come in the future.

I want to take a moment to speak to my Democratic colleagues. I understand. Your guy is winning right now. If Democrats vote as a bloc, Joe Biden will almost certainly be certified as the next President of the United States.

I want to speak to the Republicans who are considering voting against these objections. I understand your concerns, but I urge you to pause and think: What does it say to the nearly half the country that believes this election was rigged if we vote not even to

consider the claims of illegality and fraud in this election?

And I believe there is a better way. The leaders just spoke about setting aside the election. Let me be clear. I am not arguing for setting aside the result of this election. All of us are faced with two choices, both of which are lousy. One choice is vote against the objection, and tens of millions of Americans will see a vote against the objection as a statement that voter fraud doesn't matter, isn't real, and shouldn't be taken seriously. And a great many of us don't believe that.

On the other hand, most, if not all, of us believe we should not set aside the results of an election just because our candidate may not have prevailed. So I endeavored to look for door No. 3, a third option, and for that I looked to history, to the precedent of the 1876 election, the Hayes-Tilden election, where this Congress appointed an electoral commission to examine claims of voter fraud.

Five House Members, five Senators, five Supreme Court Justices examined the evidence and rendered a judgment. What I would urge of this body is that we do the same; that we appoint an electoral commission to conduct a 10-day emergency audit, consider the evidence, and resolve the claims.

For those in the Democratic aisle who say there is no evidence, they have been rejected, then you should rest in comfort. If that is the case, an electoral commission would reject those claims.

But for those who respect the voters, simply telling the voters, “Go jump in a lake; the fact that you have deep concerns is of no moment to us,” that jeopardizes, I believe, the legitimacy of this and subsequent elections.

The Constitution gives to Congress the responsibility this day to count the votes. The Framers knew what they were doing when they gave responsibilities to Congress. We have a responsibility, and I would urge that we follow the precedent of 1877. The Electoral Count Act explicitly allows objections such as this one for votes that were not regularly given.

Let me be clear. This objection is for the State of Arizona, but it is broader than that. It is an objection for all six of the contested States to have a credible, objective, impartial body hear the evidence and make a conclusive determination. That would benefit both sides. That would improve the legitimacy of this election.

So let me urge my colleagues: All of us take our responsibility seriously. I would urge my colleagues: Don't take, perhaps, the easy path, but, instead, act together. Astonish the viewers and act in a bipartisan sense to say we will have a credible and fair tribunal, consider the claims, consider the facts, consider the evidence, and make a conclusive determination whether and to what extent this election complied with the Constitution and with Federal law.

Mr. SCHUMER. Senator KLOBUCHAR. The VICE PRESIDENT. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I first would like to say I appreciate the words of our leader, Senator SCHUMER, as well as Senator MCCONNELL's call for a higher calling.

January 6 is not typically a day of historical significance for our country. For centuries, this day is simply the day that we receive each State's certified electoral votes, and it has come and gone without much fanfare.

In fact, this is only the third time in 120 years that the Senate has gathered to debate an objection, and as Senator CRUZ well knows, both times these objections were resoundingly defeated. The last time the vote was 74 to 1.

Why? Because Senators have long believed that they should not mess around with the will of the people. They have understood the words of our great former colleague John McCain from the State of Arizona, who once said that nothing in life is more liberating than to fight for a cause larger than yourself.

In this case, my colleagues, our cause, despite our political differences, is to preserve our American democracy, to preserve our Republic because, as someone once said long ago, it is a republic if you can keep it.

Now, I appreciate all my Democratic and Republican colleagues who have joined our ranks of coup fighters, who have stood up for our democracy, who stand tall for our Republic, and who believe in an ideal greater than ourselves, larger than our political parties. That ideal is America.

And Senator CRUZ, he knows this: On January 20, Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS will be sworn in as President and Vice President of the United States. He knows that President-Elect Biden won more votes than any President in history and more than 7 million more votes than President Trump.

Despite the unfounded conspiracy theories Senator CRUZ tells, he knows that high-ranking officials in President Trump's own Homeland Security Department have concluded that the 2020 election was "the most secure in American history."

If he wants to improve the numbers in his own party that he just mentioned of people believing in our elections, maybe he should start consulting with them or maybe he should start consulting with former Attorney General Barr, who said that he has found no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election.

We don't have to go back to 1877, my colleagues. Senator CRUZ knows that 80 judges, including conservative judges, including judges confirmed in this Chamber, nominated by President Trump, have thrown out these lawsuits, calling them baseless, inadequate, and contrary both to the plain meaning of the constitutional text and common sense.

And he knows that all 10 living Defense Secretaries, including both of

Trump's Defense Secretaries—Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, William Cohen—he knows that all of these leaders have come together to say that these scurrilous attacks on our democracy must stop and we must allow for a peaceful transition of power.

Senator SINEMA will fill you in on the specific facts as to why this election was sound and true in Arizona, but a summary: President Trump received 1,661,686 votes in the State; President-Elect Biden won 1,672,143 votes, meaning that he won the State by 10,457 votes.

On November 30, after Arizona's Republican Governor, the secretary of state, the attorney general, and the conservative chief justice of the Arizona Supreme Court certified the results of the election, the Governor actually said:

We do elections well here in Arizona. The system is strong.

Eight postelection lawsuits brought in Arizona to challenge the results were dismissed by judges. Nine Members of the House from Arizona were elected in the same election, including four Republicans. Colleagues, I did not see Senator CRUZ over at the swearing-in at the House of Representatives last Sunday asking for an audit. He did not stop their swearing-in because there was no fraud, and he did not ask for an audit because we had a fair election.

I will end with this. My friend ROY BLUNT, my fellow Rules Committee leader, many years ago found a statue, a bust of a man at the top of a bookcase. He did research. He went to the historians. All he could find out was that no one knew who this guy was except that he was a cleric. Hence, the statue is called "The Unknown Cleric."

Now, at the time, our leaders thought this man important enough that they would warrant a statue for him, but today no one knows who he is. Senator BLUNT's message to schoolkids and Senators alike that visit his office, when he shows them the statue: What we do here is more important than who we are.

Senators, what matters is not our futures, not our own short-term destinies.

What matters is our democracy's destiny because I think many of us know people will not know who we are 100 years from now or 200 years from now, but what they will know is this: They will know what we did today, how we voted today. That is more important than who we are. It is a Republic, if we can keep it.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I yield up to 5 minutes to the Senator from Pennsylvania, Senator TOOMEY.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. I intend later to address the specifics of Pennsylvania if and when an objection is raised in regard to Pennsylvania.

For now, I want to address my remarks to what I think is the fundamental question being posed by the objectors, and that is, does Congress have the constitutional authority to decide which States' electoral college votes should be counted and which should not based on how well we think they ran their elections? This is what the objectors are really asking us to do—to federalize elections by rejecting electoral college votes from States whose processes they say they disapprove of and thereby having Congress select the President of the United States instead of the American people.

The answer, Mr. President, is no, there is no such authority under the Constitution. The Constitution assigns to the States the responsibility to conduct elections. It is clear in article II, section 1. It leaves courts with the responsibility to adjudicate disputes, and it assigns to Congress the ministerial function of counting ballots, except for extreme circumstances, such as when a State sends competing slates of electors to Congress, which brings me to the 1877 President.

Some objectors claim to merely want a commission to conduct an audit and then let States decide whether to send electors. Well, first, the situations are not at all analogous.

In 1877, Congress had before it two slates of electors from several States. There are no Trump electors from swing States; there are just Biden electors.

Second, legislators from the swing States—they have already spoken. They have made their decision. They have chosen not to send us alternative electors.

Third, a commission—really? It is completely impractical, and we all know it, with 14 days to go before a constitutionally mandated inauguration.

Look at it this way: If the electors are right and it is Congress's job to sit in judgment on the worthiness of the States' electoral processes, what is the criteria for acceptable electoral processes? What investigations have been conducted of these processes? What body has deemed that certain States' processes are unacceptable? What opportunities were these States given to challenge the findings? Why are the objectors objecting only to swing States that President Trump lost? What about the ones he won? I don't know—North Carolina? What about California? They have ballot harvesting, I am told. If this is all supposed to be Congress's job, you would think we would have answers to these questions and procedures in place because we would have done this every 4 years, right? But we don't because it is not our job.

If we adopt this new precedent that we sit in judgment of States' processes, then we are federalizing the election law. We would necessarily have to establish the permissible criteria and rules for the States' elections.

The ballot harvesting example—it is illegal in some States; it is encouraged

in others. Does it become mandatory or forbidden depending on who is in control of Congress? And, as the leader pointed out, it would be the end of the electoral college. The electoral college is the mechanism by which the people select the President. But if Congress gets to decide which States get to vote in the electoral college, then clearly Congress is electing the President, not the people. Whichever party controls both Houses of Congress would control the Presidency.

The public would never tolerate Congress picking the President instead of themselves, so they would abolish the electoral college, as many of our colleagues would like to do, and the end of the electoral college, of course, means the Nation will be governed by a handful of big blue States and regions that can drum up very large numbers.

Mr. President, the Constitution does not assign to Congress the responsibility to judge the worthiness of State election processes nor its adherence to its rules. That is the responsibility of the States and the courts.

Let me conclude with this. I voted for President Trump. I publicly endorsed President Trump. I campaigned for President Trump. I did not want Joe Biden to win this election. There is something more important to me than having my preferred candidate sworn in as the next President, and that is to have the American people's chosen candidate sworn in as the next President.

A fundamental defining feature of a democratic republic is the right of the people to elect their own leaders. It is now our duty. It is our responsibility to ensure that right is respected in this election and preserved for future elections. I urge you to vote against this objection.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the Senator from the great State of Arizona, Senator SINEMA.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Senator from Arizona.

Ms. SINEMA. Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise today to share the facts about Arizona's recent election and to urge my colleagues to step away from divisive political rhetoric and step towards renewing Americans' faith in our democracy.

The 2020 Arizona election was a success, not for any one party or individual but as a demonstration of the will of the voters. A record 80 percent of registered voters participated, thanks to local Arizona election officials who ensured our system worked and our laws were upheld. Arizona has offered early voting for more than 100 years, and our vote-by-mail system includes strict safeguards. All ballots include tracking mechanisms and tamper-resistant envelopes. Election staff are trained to authentic signatures. And Arizona imposes severe criminal punishments for ballot tampering.

The Arizona election produced bipartisan results in which members of both

parties won races, and these results have been confirmed by stakeholders across the political spectrum.

The Republican chairman of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors said:

No matter how you voted, this election was administered with integrity, transparency, and . . . in accordance with Arizona State laws.

The Republican speaker of the Arizona State House rejected calls for the legislature to overturn the election, saying:

As a conservative Republican, I don't like the results of the presidential election . . . but I cannot and will not entertain a suggestion that we violate current law to change the outcome.

Eight challenges contesting the Arizona election were brought to Federal and State courts. All eight were withdrawn or dismissed, including a unanimous ruling by the Arizona Supreme Court. The chief justice wrote:

[The] challenge fails to present any evidence of "misconduct," [or] "illegal votes" . . . let alone establish any degree of fraud or a sufficient error rate that would undermine the certainty of the election results.

During a recent committee hearing, I asked a simple question of the former Director of Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security: Did he find any evidence disputing the integrity or fairness of Arizona's election? His answer was simple: "No."

Arizona and our 15 counties should be congratulated for running a secure election. Perhaps the most heartening demonstration of Arizona's election success is Jocelyn from Phoenix. Jocelyn is 18 years old and was a first-time voter in 2020. So was Rachel from Tucson and thousand more Arizonans who for the first time exercised their constitutional right to decide their own leaders. Today's challenge to Arizona's election fails any factual analysis. More disturbingly, it seeks to rob Jocelyn and Rachel and more than 3 million Arizonans of a free, fair election.

Those of us who are trusted with elected office are first and foremost public servants. We serve our constituents. We do not seek to substitute our personal ambitions for the will of the American people. Our system allows for a continuous contest of ideas. And those voters who support the losing side of a free, fair election have not been disenfranchised; rather, they maintain just as important a voice in America's future. Leaders have a duty to serve all of our constituents, including those who voted for other candidates.

Great leaders in our history faced the choice of whether to take an action strengthening our democracy even if a different action would better serve their political ambitions. Many are revered today because they chose our Republic over their self-interests, including my personal hero, Senator John McCain. Following his Presidential loss, Senator McCain said:

The American people have spoken . . . Senator Obama and I have . . . argued our differences, and he has prevailed. . . . Whatever our differences, we are fellow Americans.

He spoke to the nearly 60 million Americans who voted for him, saying:

It is natural tonight to feel some disappointment, but tomorrow we must move beyond it and work together to get our country moving again.

Senator McCain was right.

Today we have serious, significant work to do beating this pandemic and reviving our economy. I urge my colleagues to follow the example of Senator John McCain and so many others, reject this meritless challenge, and uphold the will of Arizona's voters.

Thank you.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I yield up to 5 minutes to the Senator from Oklahoma, Senator LANKFORD.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, in America, we settle our differences in elections. What happens if you don't trust the election count or you are concerned that so many courts denied or dismissed cases within hours after they were given thousands of pages of evidence?

The reason we have a Congress to settle our Nation's divisions and the rules of the Senate make sure that every opinion in the Nation is heard is so issues like this can be addressed.

The constitutional crisis in our country right now is that millions of Americans are being told to sit down and shut up. Their opinions matter.

During the electoral challenge on January 6, 2005, Senator Ted Kennedy stood on this floor and said this. He said:

I commend the many thousands of citizens in Massachusetts and other States who insisted that treating today's electoral vote count in Congress as a meaningless ritual would be an insult to our democracy unless we register our own protest against the obviously-flawed voting process that took place in so many States. We are hopeful that this major issue that goes to the heart of our democracy is now firmly implanted on the agenda for effective action by . . . Congress.

I agree. The U.S. Constitution does not allow me to assign different electors to a State, nor should it. The U.S. Constitution does not give the option to the Vice President of the United States to just unilaterally decide which States are in and out, and it should not. Each State decides its electors through its people.

A small group of Senators, including myself, have demanded that we not ignore the questions that millions of people are asking in our Nation, so we have proposed a constitutional solution. Pause the count. Get more facts to the States before January the 20th. We proposed a 15-member commission, just like what was done after the failed election of 1876. We are encouraging people to spend 10 days going through all the issues so States can have one

last opportunity to address any challenges. Then the States, as the Constitution directs, would make the final decision on their electors.

I have some colleagues who have said that a 10-day commission is not enough time, so they have counterproposed just ignoring the lingering questions.

We need to do something.

(Mr. GRASSLEY assumed the Chair.)

Mr. LANKFORD. My challenge today is not about the good people of Arizona.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 2:13 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 8:06 p.m. when called to order by the Vice President of the United States.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Vice President, as President of the Senate, would like to give a brief statement with the indulgence of the Senate.

Today was a dark day in the history of the United States Capitol, but thanks to the swift efforts of U.S. Capitol Police, Federal, State, and local law enforcement, the violence was quelled, the Capitol is secured, and the people's work continues.

We condemn the violence that took place here in the strongest possible terms. We grieve the loss of life that took place in these hallowed Halls, as well as the injuries suffered by those who defended our Capitol today. And we will always be grateful to the men and women who stayed at their posts to defend this historic place.

To those who wreaked havoc in our Capitol today, you did not win. Violence never wins. Freedom wins. And this is still the People's House.

As we reconvene in this Chamber, the world will again witness the resilience and strength of our democracy, for even in the wake of unprecedented violence and vandalism at this Capitol, the elected representatives of the people of the United States have assembled again on the very same day to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

May God bless the lost, the injured, and the heroes forged on this day. May God bless all who serve here and those who protect this place. And may God bless the United States of America.

Let's get back to work.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The VICE PRESIDENT. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader and the Democratic leader be allowed to speak and that the time not count against the 2 hours of debate in relation to the objection raised on the State of Arizona.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I want to say to the American people, the United States Senate will not be intimidated.

We will not be kept out of this Chamber by thugs, mobs, or threats. We will not bow to lawlessness or intimidation.

We are back at our posts. We will discharge our duty under the Constitution and for our Nation, and we are going to do it tonight.

This afternoon, Congress began the process of honoring the will of the American people and counting the electoral college votes. We have fulfilled this solemn duty every 4 years for more than two centuries. Whether our Nation has been at war or at peace, under all manner of threats, even during an ongoing armed rebellion and the Civil War, the clockwork of our democracy has carried on.

The United States and the United States Congress have faced down much greater threats than the unhinged crowd we saw today. We have never been deterred before, and we will not be deterred today.

They tried to disrupt our democracy. They failed. They failed.

This failed attempt to obstruct the Congress, this failed insurrection, only underscores how crucial the task before us is for our Republic.

Our Nation was founded precisely so that the free choice of the American people is what shapes our self-government and determines the destiny of our Nation—not fear, not force, but the peaceful expression of the popular will.

We assembled this afternoon to count our citizens' votes and to formalize their choice of the next President. Now we are going to finish exactly what we started. We will complete this process the right way, by the book. We will follow our precedents, our laws, and our Constitution to the letter, and we will certify the winner of the 2020 Presidential election.

Criminal behavior will never dominate the United States Congress. This institution is resilient. Our democratic Republic is strong. The American people deserve nothing less.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it is very, very difficult to put into words what has transpired today. I have never lived through or even imagined an experience like the one we have just witnessed in this Capitol. President Franklin Roosevelt set aside December 7, 1941, as a day that "will live in infamy." Unfortunately, we can now add January 6, 2021, to that very short list of dates in American history that will live forever in infamy.

This temple to democracy was desecrated, its windows smashed, and our offices vandalized. The world saw America's elected officials hurriedly ushered out because they were in harm's way. The House and Senate floor were places of shelter until the

evacuation was ordered, leaving rioters to stalk these hallowed Halls. Lawmakers and our staffs, average citizens who love their country and serve it every day, feared for their lives. I understand that one woman was shot and tragically lost her life. We mourn her and feel for her friends and family.

These images were projected to the world. Foreign Embassies cabled their home capitals to report on the harrowing scenes at the very heart of our democracy. This will be a stain on our country not so easily washed away—the final, terrible, indelible legacy of the 45th President of the United States and undoubtedly our worst.

I want to be very clear. Those who performed these reprehensible acts cannot be called protestors. No, these were rioters and insurrectionists, goons and thugs, domestic terrorists. They do not represent America. These were a few thousand violent extremists who tried to take over the Capitol Building and attack our democracy. They must and should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, hopefully, by this administration; if not, certainly by the next. They should be provided no leniency.

I want to thank the many in the Capitol Hill Police and Secret Service and local police who kept us safe today and worked to clear the Capitol and return it to its rightful owners and its rightful purpose. I want to thank the leaders, Democratic and Republican, House and Senate. It was Speaker PELOSI, Leader MCCONNELL, Leader MCCARTHY, and myself who came together and decided that these thugs would not succeed and that we would finish the work that our Constitution requires us to complete in the very legislative Chambers of the House and Senate that were desecrated but we know always belong to the people and do again tonight.

But make no mistake—make no mistake, my friends—today's events did not happen spontaneously. The President who promoted the conspiracy theories that motivated these thugs, the President who exhorted them to come to our Nation's Capital egged them on. He hardly ever discourages violence and more often encourages it. This President bears a great deal of the blame.

This mob was, in good part, President Trump's doing, incited by his words and his lies. This violence, in good part, is his responsibility and his everlasting shame. Today's events certainly—certainly—would not have happened without him.

Now January 6 will go down as one of the darkest days in recent American history—a final warning to our Nation about the consequences of a demagogic President, the people who enable him, the captive media that parrot his lies, and the people who follow him as he attempts to push America to the brink of ruin.

As we reconvene tonight, let us remember, in the end, all this mob has really accomplished is to delay our