

and a woman of color—is being held to a different standard, and we need to name it. We have to come to grips with the reality that, time after time, strong women, especially women of color, are attacked when White men with the same views are welcome to walk right through that door, unopposed.

At their worst, these efforts—these attempts—to portray Representative HAALAND as extreme and unqualified show how much work we still have to do to reckon with our country's history of disparaging, disrespecting, and erasing Native people and how this tragic history has been reflected in the biases on exhibit during Representative HAALAND's confirmation. This is clear when we see how few Republicans could even acknowledge the historic nature of Representative HAALAND's nomination, choosing, instead, to focus on hostile questions about her tweets and whether she understands the law.

Now, sadly, these attacks that Representative HAALAND has been subjected to are not unique. We have seen this dance play out time and again with Biden-Harris nominees, especially with women of color. Excellent nominees, like Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Buttigieg, faced relatively tame confirmation processes. The vast majority of questions were about policy goals and their experience. No Senator referred to these nominees as “extremists” or “radicals.”

Yet how did the women of color fare?

In the Banking Committee, my Republican colleagues grilled Secretary FUDGE, our new Secretary of Housing and Urban Development—and a Black woman—about her intemperate comments on race. This was less than 3 weeks after our former President incited an insurrection of White supremacists, among others, and faced essentially no consequence from his own party. Neera Tanden was forced to withdraw her nomination to lead the Office of Management and Budget after some declared that her Twitter account was too divisive.

Well, if we had only known that mean tweets could disqualify you from public office, we could have saved ourselves 4 years of division and chaos and two impeachment trials after a torrent of inflammatory and hateful rhetoric from the former Twitter account of our former President, which most of my Republican colleagues said they tried to ignore or just hadn't read. Strong opinions from strong women of color are deemed unacceptable and cause for disqualification. I am just not buying it.

In my first floor speech in this Chamber, I said that, when you really listen to women, you begin to understand all the ways in which women are made less and are denied opportunities to contribute to their communities and to their country.

So I urge my colleagues: Don't let this be one of those times. Let's not silence these women and deny them op-

portunities to lead because we are uncomfortable with their power.

During Representative HAALAND's confirmation process, I started to get text messages from women friends, especially from Native women, who were horrified by the yelling and the condescending questions that were directed her way. We were proud of how she responded—with grace and with dignity—and we all knew how it felt.

I would bet that every woman in this Chamber knows what it feels like when this happens. A man talks down to you. He uses his power to explain something that you already know and signals in a hundred different ways that you don't belong in the room where it happens. Well, for a long time, women have found ways to respond to these affronts with grace as did Representative HAALAND, MARCIA FUDGE, Vanita Gupta, and Neera Tanden.

When I was a young woman, my mother was a very strong woman herself. She used to advise me to just ignore these folks and go about my business. Even today, as I worked on this floor speech, I wondered: Am I going to offend anybody? Am I going to sound too shrill? I bet there is not a man in this room who has ever worried about sounding too shrill.

So, colleagues, tonight, we will vote on Representative DEB HAALAND's confirmation to Secretary of the Interior, and we will all have a chance to restore dedicated, capable, passionate leadership to this important Department.

The choice to confirm Representative HAALAND is, indeed, historic, but it is not an abstract opportunity. As Secretary, Representative HAALAND will play a consequential role in combating climate change. She will also honor Tribal sovereignty and strengthen the government's relationship between the United States and Tribal nations. Maybe, just maybe, her leadership will help us see the strength of Native women and of all women and to not be threatened by that. Our country will be the better for it. I urge my colleagues to support the confirmation of DEB HAALAND for Secretary of the Interior.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, on behalf of the people of California, it is my honor to address this body today. I stand before you, humbled and inspired by this moment in our Nation's history, as the Senator from the most populous and most diverse State in the Nation and as the first Latino Senator from the State of California. Let me begin by saying what a great country this is.

My name is ALEX PADILLA.

(English translation of statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

I am the son of Santos and Lupe Padilla.

I am also the proud husband of Angela Padilla and the proud dad of Roman, Alex, and Diego.

I love you guys.

Colleagues, my family's journey is central to my public service. My parents immigrated to California from Mexico in the 1960s in search of a better life. They arrived from different regions of Mexico, with little formal education but with a tremendous work ethic and big dreams. They met in Los Angeles. They fell in love. They decided to get married and apply for green cards—in that order.

I thank the U.S. Government every day for saying yes to those applications, because, if they had been denied, no doubt my life story would be a lot different.

For 40 years, my father worked as a short order cook—hard work, honest work—and as he will proudly tell you, his kitchen never failed an inspection. For the same 40 years, my mom worked tirelessly cleaning houses. It seemed like she never had a day off, but, together, they raised three of us—my sister, my brother, and me—in a modest, three-bedroom home in the proud, working-class community of Pacoima, CA, in the northeast San Fernando Valley.

Now, our neighborhood had more than its share of challenges—from poverty to crime to unhealthy air. It might not have been the safest neighborhood, but my mom felt blessed that we had the sanctuary of a backyard and a strong sense of community. It was there that my parents taught us about the values of service to others and of getting a good education.

Today, my sister, my brother, and I are all public servants. My sister has been a teacher, a principal, and, today, she works in administration for the Los Angeles Unified School District. My brother serves as chief of staff to Los Angeles City Council President Nury Martinez. If you pay close attention there, yes, I am the middle child. It may explain a lot.

Think about that. In one generation, our family has gone from being immigrant cooks and house cleaners to serving in the U.S. Senate. That is the California dream. That is the American dream. That is the dream I was raised to believe in and the dream that Angela and I are working hard to keep alive for our children and for future generations.

I think about my parents often, and I think about all of the hard-working people in our State and in our Nation who are hurting right now. I rise today on their behalf.

I rise on behalf of the cooks, the dishwashers, and the domestic workers who have seen their jobs and their lives upended by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I rise on behalf of the farmworkers and delivery drivers and nurses who have been on the frontlines of this pandemic and who have never stopped showing up.

I rise on behalf of the 4 million small businesses in California and the business owners, many who are hanging on by a thread and stretching like they

have never stretched before to meet payroll.

I rise on behalf of the nearly 2.5 million California families who are behind on their rent or behind on their mortgages, with bills piling up, wondering how they will ever climb out of the hole.

I rise on behalf of the 11.2 million California adults who struggled to meet basic household expenses last year, including many who relied on food pantries just to get by.

I rise on behalf of the 56,000 California families and the more than 530,000 families across America who have lost a loved one, many who died alone in a hospital room or a nursing home, deprived of the last chance to hold hands or say goodbye.

The people of my State are hurting; the people of our country are hurting, and we have a long way to go before we get back. The greatest crisis of our lifetimes demands bold action. "Building back better" demands that we build back better for everybody and that we leave nobody and no community behind. To do so requires that we open our eyes to the deep, systemic inequities that have been exposed and exacerbated by this crisis.

In my State, the reality is that there are two Californias just as there are really two Americas—one for families who struggle to pay the rent and make ends meet, who struggle to keep hope alive, and one for those who can afford to work from home or from a second home, who can more easily weather this storm.

We see two Californias where Latino, Black, and Asian households are three times as likely to be behind on the rent. It is the story of the single mom who lost her job due to the pandemic and who has depleted her entire savings to keep a roof over her family's head.

We see two Californias where employment has actually increased for people earning more than \$60,000 a year while some parents are left to make the impossible choice of either paying for food or paying their utility bills so their kids can still log into online class.

We see two Californias, where the stock market reaches new highs for some, while in the San Fernando Valley, too many families depend on city or church food distribution sites to feed their children.

We see two Californias, where there is a stark disparity in who is getting vaccinated and who is not.

Just take, for example, the city of Beverly Hills, where more than 25 percent of residents have received their first shot. That is a good thing. What is not so good is that in South LA, less than 15 miles away, the rate is just 5 percent.

And we see two Californias in the impact the pandemic has had on immigrant communities—communities on the very frontlines of this crisis.

I recently announced my first bill, the Citizenship for Essential Workers

Act, which would provide a well-earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who have risked their health as essential workers. These are the workers whom we have all depended on during this pandemic.

Now, millions of us have offered tremendous gestures and thanks for their heroism and their hard work. Let's be honest with ourselves. Many of these workers woke up before dawn today and took a bus to work so that others could "Zoom to work" from the comfort of their own homes.

These essential workers take care of our loved ones. They keep the supply chain moving. They grow and harvest our food, stock the shelves at grocery stores, and will even deliver it to your door. They risk their lives so that others can stay safer at home.

We cannot, in good conscience, praise them as essential workers in one breath while denying them the essential human dignity they deserve with the next.

Yes, dignity, respect, and a pathway to citizenship for essential workers is personal to me, but it is also in the best interest of our Nation.

These immigrants are paying more than their fair share. They are deemed essential by the Federal Government for good reason, and they have earned the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. We cannot allow the American Dream to be a casualty of this pandemic. Relief and recovery must be for everyone.

Now, the American Rescue Plan that this body passed and President Biden just signed into law is a \$1.9 trillion downpayment on this promise. It will speed vaccination production and distribution, expand testing and contact tracing, outfit our schools so kids and teachers can safely return to the classroom, provide emergency mortgage and rental assistance to families in need, and it will extend a lifeline to keep millions of American small businesses from going under.

Now, I will tell you what it means for my home State. In addition to what this bill will deliver to fight the virus, it also means immediate food assistance for 4.3 million families, an increase in the standard of living for 8 million California children, \$15 billion for California schools, \$590 million to help combat homelessness on the streets of California, and billions in direct checks for struggling families.

The American Rescue Plan provides a lifeline for American families, workers, and businesses to survive what we all hope will be the last months of this crisis.

It is one of the most transformational and progressive pieces of legislation in our history, which will cut child poverty in half, including for half a million children in California.

But our work is far from over. I believe now is the time to lead an American comeback that leaves no working family behind—a comeback that heals the longstanding divides in our society

and unites our country, a comeback that confronts the systemic injustices in our country so that we can build back equitably.

It took almost 10 years to recover from the great recession. We lived through the consequences of the moderate response to the financial crisis—slow growth, poor pay, and millions without jobs. We cannot let that happen again. We can and must build back better.

That means investing trillions in our infrastructure in a way that uplifts communities and provides millions of good-paying union jobs and in a way that addresses our climate crisis to help ensure that every person has access to clean air and clean water.

It also means passing commonsense immigration reform that brings humanity to our immigration system and recognizing that providing a pathway to citizenship for people living and contributing to our country is part—a strategic part—of our economic recovery as well.

That means protecting and strengthening our democracy by passing voting rights and civil rights legislation. We should be making it easier, not harder, for eligible people to register to vote, to stay registered to vote, and to vote in every State in the country.

But as President Obama said in his farewell address, "the work of democracy has always been hard. It's always been contentious. Sometimes it's been bloody. For every two steps forward, it often feels like we take one step back."

It is no surprise that reactionary State leaders around the country, fearful of losing elections, fearful of losing power, are mobilizing to suppress the vote as we speak.

Enough is enough. This Senate must act aggressively to protect the right to vote, to strengthen the right to vote—no more steps back, only steps forward. We must act boldly because that is what this moment demands of us. We can't let anything keep us from bold action and progress, including outdated rules and traditions.

We must end the filibuster. For decades, the filibuster has been leveraged to obstruct progress. It helped maintain Jim Crow segregation, and it continues to entrench inequality in America today. We cannot allow the filibuster to prevent us from doing what is necessary to lift up millions of working families in every corner of the country.

I believe we will beat this pandemic and get through this crisis. We will do it the same way we always have, the same way my parents did, the same way that American families and millions of immigrants throughout our history have done—by going to work and getting the job done.

To my colleagues, I am so honored to serve with you and look forward to working alongside you for years to come.

To my constituents, I am honored to represent you, and I will work hard every day to make you proud.

And to Angela, Roman, Alex, and Diego, I love you. Thank you for your love and your support of my public service.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators LUJÁN, CARPER, and myself be allowed to complete our remarks before the rollcall vote.

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

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Thank you, Madam President.

The southern border. The situation at our southern border has devolved into chaos. That is what I am hearing from some of my former House colleagues who have been on that border today.

According to them, we are once again facing a crisis. Thirteen days ago, Customs and Border Protection announced that they were deploying more agents to help manage the spike and apprehensions of adults and unaccompanied alien children.

Then, last Monday, news broke that Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas had sent an email to DHS staff begging for volunteers to go to the border and help with logistics and humanitarian aid.

It is obvious they need help on the border. In January alone, the Customs and Border Patrol detained nearly 78,000 people—more than double the number of apprehensions in January of 2020.

In February, that number jumped to more than 100,000 arrests and detentions. CBP took more than 9,000 unaccompanied minors into custody that month, prompting the administration to open two overflow detention centers to house them.

Listen to these numbers: 100,000 arrests and detentions in February; 9,000 unaccompanied minors being taken into custody that month—having to open 2 overflow detention centers.

New data released last Wednesday shows that our agents are now detaining more than 4,000 people along the border every single day—4,000 every day.

Our facilities and resources are exhausted, and so are the agents responsible for controlling this out-of-control situation.

It did not have to be this way. Secretary Mayorkas has accused the Trump administration of “dismantling our Nation’s immigration system.” That is his quote. But if he wants to know who is really responsible, he should look to the current White House.

I have stated time and again how disastrous President Biden’s policy of governing by Executive fiat has been. Thirty-four Executive orders in his first 50 days—34.

Also, he has suspended construction of the border wall, jeopardizing our na-

tional security. He has embraced DACA. He halted most deportations. He cut domestic immigration arrests by 60 percent and dismantled the migrant protection protocols.

This administration threw our existing immigration law out the window and let the world know that when it comes to illegal entry, not only will we look the other way, this administration is encouraging them to come. Even their Cabinet nominees are playing by these new rules of encouraging individuals to break our laws, to come to the country illegally. They are encouraging this.

Last week, this Chamber voted to discharge Xavier Becerra’s nomination from committee. I voted no. He is one of the most flagrant offenders out there when it comes to sending these signals. He has openly admitted he would like to decriminalize illegal entry and offer Medicaid to anyone who manages to get across the border.

They have made a lot of promises that they know they are not going to be able to live up to, and now they are trying to walk it all back, walk back the hope that sparked in thousands of people because they have heard that the border was going to be open. They are even wearing the T-shirts with the slogan, “Biden, let us in.”

They are going to have to walk back the mess that is there on the border, and I am fearful and concerned that their walk-backs are not going to work because from what we are hearing about the border, they have lost control of that border.

I look forward to traveling to the border for a briefing on the situation. This administration does not want their critics to see what is happening down there. There are days you would think they have got a news blackout going at the border.

This isn’t just a problem in Texas or California or Arizona or New Mexico. Every town is a border town and every State is a border State because of the drugs, the human trafficking, sex trafficking, and gangs that are streaming across our border.

You know, it means that no matter how hard you try, you can’t hide the tragedy that inevitably unfolds when your immigration policy is to have zero immigration policy at all, just open the border and let them come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

NOMINATION OF DEBRA ANNE HAALAND

Mr. LUJÁN. Madam President, I rise today in anticipation of a historic vote that the Senate will take in a few moments to confirm DEBRA ANNE HAALAND as Secretary of the Interior. I am incredibly humbled to be able to preside over this body’s confirmation, in just a few minutes, of my good friend and fellow New Mexican.

This marks the first time that a Native American will take her seat in the President’s Cabinet, making her the second highest ranking Native Amer-

ican to ever serve in the Federal Government.

As a Pueblo woman and 35th-generation New Mexican, DEB HAALAND has a long overdue perspective to contribute to the Department of the Interior’s mission of protecting our natural resources and public lands, and honoring America’s trust responsibilities to Tribal nations.

She is uniquely equipped to begin to repair the relationship between the Interior and the domestic nations it serves—to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, these indigenous nations, these sovereign nations, these important departments, the Indian Health Service, the Bureau of Indian Education.

Speaking to Pueblo and Tribal members in New Mexico, I know the significance of her confirmation, how it transcends policy. For young people in our State, she is the embodiment of the old adage that if you see it, you can be it.

Knowing my friend DEB, although she will be the first, she is committed to not being the last.

As former vice chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, DEB HAALAND also brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her role as the Interior Secretary. She has been a longtime champion of climate action, creating good-paying jobs, clean energy, and outdoor recreation.

She played a key role in passing the Great American Outdoors Act out of the House of Representatives, successfully protecting New Mexico landscapes and setting ambitious goals for conservation with her Thirty by Thirty Resolution to Save Nature. But of all the qualifications and accomplishments that DEB HAALAND will bring to the Department of the Interior, there is one that stands out to those who know her best—her empathy.

DEB’s experience as a single mother struggling to keep a roof over her family’s head allows her to connect with compassion to her constituents and informs every aspect of her work. It is fitting that she will serve under a President who has made empathy the trademark of his administration.

I have no doubt that Secretary HAALAND will leave a mark on the Department of the Interior and on history as we know it. I look forward to continuing to work with my friend to make a difference for the people of New Mexico.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, one floor above this Senate Chamber, near a bank of elevators, sit the marble busts of two leaders of the Ojibwa, or Chippewa, people who came to Washington, DC, in 1855 to sign a treaty with the U.S. Government.

The terms of the treaty had been dictated by the U.S. Government: The Ojibwa people would surrender more than 2 million acres of their ancestral homeland in northern Minnesota. In exchange, the Tribes would receive less than \$20,000 in cash, goods, and services, and assistance to resettle on two reservations.