

Charles E. Schumer, Brian Schatz, Benjamin L. Cardin, Robert Menendez, Tammy Duckworth, Christopher A. Coons, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Jacky Rosen, Patrick J. Leahy, Mazie Hirono, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jack Reed, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tammy Baldwin, Richard J. Durbin, Chris Van Hollen, Tina Smith, Ben Ray Lujan.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. LUJÁN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the cloture motion on Calendar No. 364 and that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, October 7, be waived and that the cloture motion ripen at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, October 19.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LUJÁN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TEXAS ABORTION BAN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last night, a Federal judge in Texas did what the U.S. Supreme Court should have done. He issued an injunction blocking Texas' clearly unconstitutional bounty hunter abortion ban from being enforced while challenges to the law make their way through the courts. The ruling by U.S. District Judge Robert Pitman came in response to a challenge of the Texas ban brought by the Federal Department of Justice.

The Texas abortion law, known as S.B. 8, is the most restrictive abortion law in the Nation and the most serious challenge to Roe v. Wade in 50 years. It was deliberately crafted to outlaw most abortions while allowing State lawmakers to evade judicial review. It deputizes private citizens to enforce the ban by suing anyone who "aids and abets" a woman seeking an abortion. And it offers rewards of \$10,000 or more to plaintiffs who bring suits.

In his ruling, Judge Pitman wrote that Texas politicians had "contrived an unprecedented and transparent statutory scheme" that has "unlawfully prevented [women in Texas] from exercising control over their lives in ways that are protected by the Constitution."

The Supreme Court order allowing the Texas law to take effect was a product of the Court's "shadow docket" of cases that are decided without full briefing or oral arguments—and without transparency or accountability.

The 5–4 order, from the Court's conservative majority, was criticized by some of the Court's own members, including Chief Justice John Roberts, who warned that Texas lawmakers had created a "model for action," that other States could copy to undermine constitutionally protected rights.

The Chief Justice was right. Since the Court's ruling on S.B. 8, elected officials and political candidates in a number of States have vowed to introduce similar abortion bans.

With Judge Pitman's wise ruling last night, that rush to use citizen bounty hunters to avoid legal accountability while denying the constitutional rights of women and perhaps others is on hold—at least for now. But the threat to constitutional rights remains. Texas has already filed a notice of appeal in the conservative Fifth Circuit.

Abortion providers remain at risk of facing bounty hunter lawsuits if they perform abortions prohibited by the ban while the injunction is in place. Anti-choice organizations have vowed to be "vigilant" in suing individuals retroactively if the order is reversed.

I hope that justice—and the Constitution—will prevail in the coming days as this litigation continues. The fundamental rights of millions of Texans are at stake.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise today in recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month to celebrate our Hispanic and Latino communities and their immeasurable contributions to our Nation. Hispanic and Latinos have been with our country since its very founding and have helped make America exceptional. Hispanic and Latino Americans play vital roles in our communities. They are our teachers, our healthcare heroes, our entrepreneurs, our essential workers, our public servants and elected officials, all vital to the fabric of our Nation.

Hispanic Heritage Month started as a commemorative week that Congress established in 1968 and expanded to a full month in 1988 to recognize the critical role the Latino community has played in the civil rights movement. Celebrations start September 15, a significant date, as it is the independence date for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, while Mexico celebrates its independence on September 16, and Chile celebrates its independence on September 18.

This month, we celebrate the nearly 61 million Latino Americans across the country and the more than 600,000 Hispanic or Latino residents in Maryland. Maryland is proudly one of the most diverse States in the Nation. We are home to people with origins in Central and South America, with sizeable populations of Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans.

America is a nation of immigrants; people from far and wide have settled in the United States, the land of oppor-

tunity. Since the Immigration Act of 1965, millions of individuals from Central and South America have immigrated to the United States for numerous reasons, including economic instability or violence in their native country.

We take this month to highlight the importance of the Hispanic and Latino communities, including the election in 1822 of Joseph Marion Hernandez, the first Hispanic in Congress, as Florida's Delegate. Today, according to the Congressional Research Service, there are 54 Hispanic or Latino Members—a record number—serving: 47 in the House, including two Delegates and the Resident Commissioner, and seven in the Senate.

Though the Hispanic and Latino communities have been essential to America's identity, from the scientific innovation to art, culture, music, food, and so much more, we must still recognize the disparities that these communities face. For the second year, we are celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected people of color at disproportionate rates in terms of economic distress and case severity. The Hispanic or Latino unemployment rate soared to 18.9 percent in February of 2020. Hispanic or Latina women took even larger losses compared to their male counterparts. The unemployment disparity is due to the overrepresentation of Hispanic or Latino workers in the food preparation or serving industry, as well as building and grounds cleaning and maintenance. These sectors suffered some of the harshest economic effects of the pandemic. Even though the unemployment rate has decreased to 6.4 percent in Hispanic and Latino communities—6.2 percent in Maryland—they still have not experienced the same economic recoveries as their White counterparts.

For the immigrants who do not have a green card, their likelihood to have lost a job is even higher. Many say that at least one family member in their household has lost a job or wages. Families are suffering; they are worried about putting food on the table or even losing their homes. The financial toll of the last year and a half has exacerbated the prepandemic inequalities that the Hispanic or Latino communities were already facing.

Hispanic or Latino people are also more likely face the harshest health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Hispanic or Latino people are twice as likely to catch COVID, 2.8 times more likely to be hospitalized, and 2.3 times more likely to die compared to their White counterparts. In my own home State, Hispanic or Latino people are 14.3 percent of the case rates when they only make up 10.6 percent of our population. With the widening gaps of healthcare coverage, Hispanic or Latino families face large hospital bills for their bouts of COVID. Twenty percent of non-elderly Hispanic or Latino people are

uninsured. Although the Affordable Care Act and President Biden's expansion of the Affordable Care Act have helped many receive healthcare coverage, people of color remain less likely to have healthcare coverage.

It is our duty in Congress to ensure that our Hispanic and Latino communities have the resources and access to healthcare they need so we can close the gap between them and their White counterparts. This comes with educating these communities on how to sign up and receive healthcare. It also comes with comprehensive immigration reform to provide an easier pathway to citizenship so people can come out of the shadows.

Regardless of the repercussions of the pandemic, Hispanic and Latino Americans remain optimistic, filled with love and pride for their families, communities, and the United States of America. I want to take this opportunity to thank Hispanic and Latino Americans for their contributions that have made the United States the country it is today. I want to thank the hard-working Hispanic and Latino essential workers who have put their lives at risk to keep our country running during the pandemic. I want to thank the Hispanic and Latino communities who love our Nation and strive to change it for the better. Thank you for being an important part of the American story.

REMEMBERING AMBASSADOR GEORGE S. VEST, III

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I would like to bring to the attention of colleagues the recent passing of long-time U.S. diplomat George Southall Vest, III, a long-time resident of Bethesda, MD. He was 102 years old. His career with the State Department spanned the Cold War era, from 1947 to 1989. As chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, I want to draw particular attention to Ambassador Vest's representation of the United States at the initial multilateral discussions of 35 countries that led to an historic summit in Helsinki, Finland, from July 30 to August 1, 1975, where the Helsinki Final Act was signed.

An all-European summit was not a priority for the United States in the early 1970s. Indeed, it was a long-standing Soviet proposal, and Washington was wary of its use to confirm the division of Europe, give added legitimacy to communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and provide an opportunity for Moscow to divide the United States from its European allies. Washington agreed to engage but saw little value in the effort. As Ambassador Vest himself was quoted as saying, "This was the first time after World War II where all the Eastern European countries, all the Western European countries, together with Canada and the United States, sat down to talk about security and cooperation . . . I had very, very few instructions. I was left pretty much to feel my own way."

The early work of Ambassador Vest and his team and that of his immediate successors led to the Helsinki Final Act, which included 10 principles guiding relations between states that serve as a basis, to this day, of our response to events in Europe, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine and other neighbors. The Final Act provided a comprehensive definition of security that includes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the basis for us to address today's brutal crackdown on dissent in Belarus and authoritarianism elsewhere. It also provided for a follow-up to the Final Act with regular reviews of implementation and development of new norms, a multilateral effort now represented by today's 57-country Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with its important institutions and field missions.

Ambassador Vest, left pretty much to feel his own way, may not have intended to make such an impact on European security. Keep in mind that he represented the United States in these negotiations during the tumultuous time of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, an oil crisis on the horizon, the growing Watergate scandal at home, and a rising Soviet threat across the globe. Nevertheless, his initial efforts contributed to an end of the Cold War division of Europe rather than a confirmation of it. That is quite a turnaround. I should add that the Congress later played a major role in shaping the U.S. contribution to this result when it created the Helsinki Commission in 1976. While things have changed since then, the Commission does now what it did in the late 1970s: ensure that human rights considerations are central to U.S. foreign policy and U.S. relations with other countries.

Given the challenges we face today, I hope it is useful to remind my colleagues of Ambassador Vest's legacy as a diplomat. Both before and after the negotiations, he served in positions in which he worked to strengthen ties with Europe, including through the NATO alliance and dialogue with a growing European Union. He was also a mentor to new generations of American diplomats. All of this followed his combat service as a forward artillery observer in Europe during World War II.

George Vest joined the Foreign Service in 1947, after using the G.I. Bill to earn his master's degree in history from the University of Virginia, where he had received his B.A. in 1941. He served as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs under President Carter and as U.S. Ambassador to the European Union from 1981 to 1985. His last assignment at the State Department was as Director General of the Foreign Service. He retired in 1989 as a "career ambassador," a rank requiring a Presidential nomination and Senate confirmation.

George Vest's father was an Episcopal priest and Vest graduated from

the Episcopal High School in Alexandria, VA, before attending U-Va. He was as dedicated to his church as he was to our Nation. He served on the vestry at St. Albans Episcopal Church and volunteered in its Opportunity (thrift) Shop, both located on the Close of Washington National Cathedral. He also tutored students in DC public schools. Two sons, George S. Vest, IV of Fairfax, VA, and Henry Vest of Broomfield, CO, and two granddaughters survive him. I send my condolences to his family and thank them for his life of service. Let us be inspired by Ambassador George Vest and plant our own seeds for a better world tomorrow.

RECOGNIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF MAINE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

Mr. KING. Madam President, I rise today in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Department of Maine, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Maine VFW. Maine VFW was founded in 1921 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving U.S. veterans of overseas conflicts, advocating for all veterans, their families, and their communities, and recognizing the sacrifices America's servicemen and women have made for this great country. Maine VFW, alongside its sister chapters across the United States, represents the oldest war veterans' organization in America. Every year for the last century, it has made a positive and tangible impact for Maine veterans. Maine VFW deserves not only our admiration, but also our gratitude.

Since its founding, Maine VFW has secured an array of remarkable victories for its membership and the many communities it serves. Through the Veterans Affairs office at Togus, Maine VFW helps recoup more than \$5 million in earned benefits every year. Maine VFW also advocates for veterans and their families at the State and National level and has helped shape national security and veterans' policy for generations of Americans. In 2020, for example, Maine VFW helped expand the VA's list of conditions for which there is a presumptive service connection for veterans exposed to Agent Orange and has made important strides to support veterans exposed to toxic chemicals in the first Gulf War and the Global War on Terror. Additionally, Maine VFW has worked tirelessly to improve mental healthcare for American veterans and successfully advocated for the John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, landmark legislation to increase the VA's mental health workforce and strengthen rural veterans' access to care, which was signed into law last year. Pursuant to its commitment to patriotic service, stewardship, and education, Maine VFW also spearheads a variety of community advocacy initiatives, food and blood drives, and Homeless Veterans Stand Downs to respond