

understand how much of a driving force it is to them.

CPL Clyde Haynes from Vestavia Hills, AL, served in the Army Air Corps' 439th Troop Carrier Group during World War II. Mr. Haynes shared the joy of walking with children in France as they rushed out of their houses and filled the streets to celebrate their new liberation from Nazi rule. He said that he "wished he had a picture of that." Even though he does not have a physical photograph, you can tell that he holds that memory near and dear to his heart.

Even though Mr. Haynes is now 100 years old, he is just as moved by that moment now as he was at that time because freedom is a powerful thing. But freedom does not come without cost. There are many servicemembers who pay the ultimate price for our freedom and never return home. There are families left behind who sit down to dinner every night with an empty seat at the table knowing that life for them will never be the same. They, too, have shouldered the cost of America's liberty and deserve our gratitude.

For our servicemembers who do return home, their struggles do not end after they reach American soil. They continue to face challenges from what they have endured while in service and from the difficult reentry into civilian life.

Most of us will never know the full weight of preserving our freedom, never have to endure sleepless nights from the harrowing memories of the battlefield, bear pain from war injuries, or miss important events with family and friends, like Ryan Charrier from Orange Beach, AL, who served as a U.S. Air Force technical sergeant in the war in Afghanistan, with the 442nd Fighter Wing. He received his first deployment when his children were just 8 and 4 years old. Sergeant Charrier said he was a bit older than his fellow fighters. He left behind young children but served with soldiers who missed births of their first children or deaths of family members.

A veteran's life is so much more than just time in service. There is also the reintegration to civilian life, which requires just as much bravery, courage, and sacrifice. Sergeant Charrier's reminder to Americans is powerful:

We as a country promised that we would never forget . . . so I hope that every patriotic American will keep the promise of never forgetting. Just because the war may have winded down, doesn't mean our men and women who served the last 20 years still don't need the support of every American.

These veterans—Edsel Bonds, George Mills, Fred Lacy, Clyde Haynes, and Ryan Charrier—are heroes, just like millions of brave men and women who have selfishly sacrificed throughout the decades. Their stories should inspire all of us to show a greater love for our country and our fellow Americans.

Thirty-three years ago on Veterans Day in 1988, Ronald Reagan said:

We remember those who were called upon to give all a person can give, and we remember those who were prepared to make that sacrifice if it were demanded of them in the line of duty. Most of all, we remember the devotion and gallantry with which all of them ennobled their nation as they became champions of a noble cause.

May we join together as a nation this Veterans Day to honor our veterans who have served this Nation and defended our freedom and values that we hold so dear. To our veterans, I say: Thank you for your sacrifice. Our Nation will be forever indebted to you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, communities across our great Nation are dealing with a startling spike in violent crime. Last year, the murder rate soared by nearly 30 percent, the largest single-year jump on record.

The American people are paying close attention, and they are concerned. A poll this summer found that nearly 60 percent of Americans are worried about crime. The percentage of those who say they are extremely concerned is at the highest point in more than two decades, and folks largely think not enough is being done to address this spike.

A separate poll found that 65 percent of Americans are dissatisfied with policies to reduce or control crime. That is up more than 16 percent from 2020. Perhaps this is an offshoot of the "defund the police" movement that we have seen in radical circles over the last year or so.

With such a dramatic and shocking jump in homicides and violent crime and the clear belief that more should be done to address it, you would expect that the U.S. Department of Justice would be in an all-hands-on-deck posture. After all, this is the highest law enforcement agency in the country. You would think it would take a leading role in finding ways to keep our country and our communities safe.

Unfortunately, leaders at the Department of Justice in the Biden administration believe that they have bigger fish to fry. Forget stopping murderers and violent criminals. The most forceful language we have seen recently from the Attorney General hasn't been about stopping dangerous criminals; it is about going after concerned parents at school board meetings. That is right—communities across the country are worried about violent crime, and the Biden Justice Department is worried about parents who are concerned about what their kids are learning in school.

This all started with a deeply misguided letter from the National School Boards Association about heated school board meetings across the country.

Parents who are concerned about things like critical race theory and other controversial topics, who are

simply worried that their kids aren't learning about American history and civics and the foundations upon which this great country was built, they have taken their concerns to school board meetings—something they have every right; indeed, a constitutional right—to do.

I want to be clear: there is no place for violence or threats of violence in our public discourse. It doesn't matter who you are or what you are fighting for; violence is not the answer.

But rather than allow State and local law enforcement authorities to intervene in those rare circumstances when things go off track, the school board leaders at the National School Boards Association went nuclear. They encouraged the Biden administration to treat these parents like something akin to domestic terrorists. They advocated for unleashing the full arsenal and might of the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation on concerned parents—concerned parents. And the Attorney General was, apparently, happy to oblige their outrageous demands.

The National School Boards Association letter argued that a parent who disagrees with the curriculum in their children's school could be investigated under the PATRIOT Act.

You will remember the PATRIOT Act was passed after 9/11/2001 to address radical extremists who had just killed 3,000 Americans in attacks at the Pentagon and in New York.

Unsurprisingly, this letter from the National School Boards Association was met with fierce and immediate blowback. I don't know how they didn't see it coming. Concerned parents and terrorists don't share anything in common.

Well, after the negative press, the National School Boards Association eventually retracted their letter and apologized. They admitted that there was "no justification for some of the language included in the letter," but the damage had already been done.

A few days later, after the letter was sent, Attorney General Garland decided to get into the game, and he published a memo directing Federal law enforcement to inject itself into local school board elections.

Well, we had a chance to question Attorney General Garland last week, when he appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and he conceded that his decision to send out a memo to the Federal law enforcement was based almost entirely on the letter from the National School Boards Association and "news reports."

Of course, the Attorney General could not cite any specific examples that he relied upon before unleashing the awesome power of the Federal Government on parents, nor could he provide any data or evidence that local enforcement was incapable of handling any incidents that might occur.

In his memo, the Attorney General also encouraged the Federal authorities to take action far beyond any

threats of violence and references to intimidation of school officials.

But you have to ask: What counts as intimidation to the Attorney General? Is an angry, frustrated parent raising their voice at a school board meeting intimidation?

I think not.

What if one of the parents tells a school board member they plan to run against them in the next election or donate to their opponent in the next election; is that intimidation?

Well, to his credit, the Attorney General did finally concede that parents' right to speak their minds at school board meetings are protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It is their constitutional right.

But I ask you, put yourself in the shoes of a parent who reads about this Department of Justice memo—from the Attorney General, no less—at the kitchen table.

Is it going to have an impact on their decision to attend the next school board meeting? Will it cause them to shy away from advocating for their children's education and speaking up about misguided policies that they think have no place in their child's school?

I ask you to consider the chilling effect that this had, and will continue to have, on parents who just want to have a say in their children's education.

Instead of raising their voices in opposition to things like critical race theory or other radical educational policies, parents are more likely to be intimidated and to stay at home for fear of being labeled domestic terrorists by the highest law enforcement officer in the land.

They certainly can't afford to hire a lawyer to defend themselves against these sorts of charges by the Federal Government, were the Federal Government to come after them for exercising what Attorney General Garland said were their First Amendment rights under the Constitution.

In response to the Attorney General's memo, the U.S. attorney from Montana sent out a list of Federal statutes that could serve as a basis for prosecution. He took the Attorney General at his word. Among the Federal statutes that he thought could serve as a basis for prosecution included repeated telephone calls.

Well, last week, I asked the Attorney General if he considered the chilling effect that his memo might have on parents exercising their constitutional rights. He evaded the question. So I asked him again. His answers became more evasive. So I asked him again.

Ultimately, the Attorney General—although he was sworn in under oath, testifying in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee—refused to answer the question. He wouldn't tell me, wouldn't tell the Judiciary Committee, wouldn't tell the country, whether he had put any thought at all into how his actions would impact concerned, law-abiding parents.

Even though the National School Boards Association retracted and apologized for its letter, the Justice Department—the Biden Justice Department—still refuses to do so. Attorney General Garland has doubled down on this colossal overreach and still refuses to take ownership or consider how his swift and uninformed action has harmed public discourse in our country.

But, clearly, it is not only where we are headed, because we are already there. The President and the leaders in his administration aren't making decisions on the basis of the law of the land, but based on demands of their radical left.

Amid an alarming spike in murder and violent crime rates, the Justice Department is focused on the threat of concerned parents, because that is what the radical left wants.

The Department is filing meritless lawsuits against State election laws, like those in Georgia and Texas, because that is what their radical base wants.

The Secretary of Homeland Security has told Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers not to enforce our Nation's immigration laws, because that is what the radical left and the Democratic Party want.

President Biden has signaled that he is not only OK with this kind of selective law enforcement, he actually wants more of it.

One of the most controversial nominees being considered by the Senate right now is Rachael Rollins, who the President has nominated to serve as the U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts. Ms. Rollins currently serves as a district attorney for Suffolk County, MA, where she is embroiled in her own controversy.

Shortly after taking office in 2019, Ms. Rollins released a memo outlining more than a dozen crimes that she said should be ignored by local law enforcement. According to Ms. Rollins, individuals who commit offenses like trespassing, shoplifting, larceny, wanton or malicious destruction of property, and even possession with intent to distribute drugs, she said her office would not prosecute them, so law enforcement should not arrest them.

Now, I have no issue with law enforcement using limited resources to prioritize the biggest threats, but there is a big difference between prioritizing dangerous criminals and offenses and exempting wholesale classes of crimes from enforcement.

What happens when the message is sent that government will not enforce its laws? As being played out in California now, where many businesses are simply withdrawing from places like San Francisco, where, if you steal or shoplift something under \$950 worth of merchandise, law enforcement will not arrest you; they will not prosecute; and thus the stores are left without recourse and, as you can imagine, thievery runs riot.

Well, leaders certainly shouldn't tip their hat to criminals as to what crimes may be committed free of any consequences, and that is exactly what is happening. The Justice Department's priorities are completely out of whack, and radical, partisan U.S. attorneys will only make things worse.

The Biden administration cannot continue to take their marching orders from the radical base of their political party. And the United States should never be a place where concerned parents are treated like criminals and actual criminals get a free pass.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

VACCINES

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I am beginning to feel a little bit like a broken record when I am here on the floor and talking about all the ways that Tennesseans feel like this administration has backed them into a corner.

It doesn't matter if I am going to fill up the car with that rising price in gas, or if I am at the grocery store and could not believe this weekend there is so little on the shelves and they are so short-staffed.

People are very anxious about this. I had a lady that just about was not going to let me go there in the dairy section of the grocery store because she was really upset with what this administration is doing. Whether it is inflation or the vaccine mandate, she is really upset with what she would like to call the "White House P.R. operation." And she knows that inflation and supply chain problems are here. It is not temporary. It wasn't transient. It is something that they are dealing with every day, and Tennesseans are seeing this at every stop along their busy days.

They have watched this administration abandon the southern border. You know, they don't use that term lightly, but I think it is instructive to focus in on that. This administration has abandoned the southern border.

These actions are intentional actions—intentional. Whether you talk to Border Patrol or the local sheriff, they look at what Democrats in Washington are doing, and they see this as being intentional.

They also look at how this administration chose to abandon a productive energy policy. In January, we were an exporter—an exporter—of energy. And, today, we have a President—a very weak President—who is groveling to OPEC, begging them—begging them—to sell us more fuel. What a difference. What a difference.

And this administration—when I was up in Clarksville where Fort Campbell is located, I was out on post, and I was visiting with Tennesseans there in Clarksville. They feel as if this administration has abandoned our troops, abandoned civilians and allies in Afghanistan as we handed over 20 years' worth of hard-fought territory to the