

Advertisers buy the data to influence consumer and voter behavior. The bottom line for every American ought to be ensuring that constitutional protections aren't archived—out of sight, out of mind—in the annals of history.

I am not saying Big Tech is a bad actor, but I am calling on Big Tech to be a good actor. Take responsibility for the online ecosystem you created.

Congress also must take a good, hard look at this famous section 230 we all talk about that has given these platforms great protection—more protection than they probably deserve—and whether, in regard to section 230, there is a need to reform immunity laws on the books. I think there is great reason to do that.

We have seen what happens when conversations take place online versus in person. Take it from me. The tone of conversation was neighborly and civil when I talked with these Iowans last week in Forest City, IA, or Ogden, IA, to answer their questions. However civil that is, it is sure offset by the incivility on these platforms. Incivility outflanks kindness, I think, tenfold in the responses posted on my Twitter account.

We need to work together to heal the unholy civil divide that has taken root online. It is bleeding into our way of life, pitting neighbor against neighbor, and harming the ability of elected leaders to build bipartisan consensus for the public good.

I am here to put social media platforms, the mainstream media, Congress, and the American public on notice: The digital landscape needs a reboot. What we do with this space will influence how young people participate in civic and political life for generations to come.

So, in closing, in the coming days, I am going to have more conversations with my colleagues on this through a series of speeches. I will be talking more about social and mainstream media, censorship, and freedom of speech, particularly on college campuses.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). The Senator from Maryland.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, each February, we mark Black History Month by coming together to highlight the achievements and contributions of Black Americans to our national story and remember the centuries of struggle that have shaped our society.

At every turning point in American history, Black American achievements and calls to action have driven our Nation's cultural, economic, and social progress forward, helping to hold to account the promises of freedom and equality for all people that our founding doctrine failed to uphold.

For too long, this history and the names and faces of those who marched, sacrificed, and fought for change have been obscured by prejudice and hate. It is our charge to remember those who

marched for justice and the forces they marched against.

When we ignore the injustices of our past, we cannot make amends in the present. The consequences of such inaction are grave and live on in present day: the ongoing racial and religious profiling, brutality, and killing of Black Americans by police; the high rates of COVID-19 transmission and death in Black communities; and the disproportionate impact this current economic crisis has had on Black workers and Black-owned businesses.

The unemployment rate for Black workers reached 9.9 percent, for instance—far beyond the national average of 6.7 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

These issues, including the broader economic and health consequences of the pandemic, result from systemic failures in place far before the current crisis, and they threaten to worsen racial gaps in wealth, health outcomes, and opportunities for years to come.

Last year, our Nation's fight against racism gained new urgency by a police officer's callous killing of George Floyd in May. The Trump administration and law enforcement's response to peaceful protests further displayed the double standard that still exists in our society today. Protesters were attacked with tear gas and rubber bullets across the Nation and here in our capital as they organized and marched to make it known that Black lives matter. We watched on television as the National Guard forcefully removed peaceful protesters from Lafayette Park to make way for President Trump to walk to St. John's Episcopal Church for a photo op. President Trump brandished a Bible in front of the church while he continued to fan the flames of bigotry, hate, and racism.

The historic election of KAMALA HARRIS as our Nation's first Black female Vice President serves as a reminder of the power of collective action. The Biden-Harris administration gives us opportunity to take meaningful action in government to create a more just society. In the year ahead, we must work together to advance the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to bring accountability to law enforcement and the JOHN LEWIS Voting Rights Act to combat voter suppression and restore the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

It is our charge to mobilize all levels, from our communities to the Oval Office, to advance social, economic, and civil rights and justice to all Americans. It is time to expel all remaining vestiges of slavery and White supremacy that continue to plague our Nation.

As our National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman said so eloquently in her inaugural day address, "[B]eing American is more than [just] a pride we inherit, it's the past we step into and how we repair it." Black History Month is a reminder to look to this past and to act on our responsibilities in the present to make our Nation a better place for all of us.

We are still fighting against the vestiges of the institutions of slavery, of targeted violence and resistance in the Reconstruction and the Jim Crow eras, and of the tactics to keep Black Americans from the polls and out of government.

They are not merely footnotes in our history textbooks; they are the lineage of our Nation, the obstacles that have left millions of our citizens behind in the effort to obtain the American dream.

The realization of justice and true equality depends on our work to build a country committed to righting historic wrongs, closing gaps in the opportunity to achieve, and dismantling vestiges of inequality in our foundations. The 28 days in February must set the tone for the entire year—a continued commitment to justice, equality, and opportunity.

Celebrating Black experiences and culture contributes to the greatness of our diverse society. Such a celebration is aspirational, highlighting one of the many fundamental components that make this Nation a beacon around the world despite our flaws.

For the past 40 years, House Majority Leader STENY HOYER celebrated Black History Month by hosting a breakfast for political and civic leaders and inviting illustrious keynote speakers. Past speakers included then-Senator Barack Obama and Congressman John Lewis. Congressman ANTHONY BROWN joined the effort to bring so many of us together for this 40th Annual Black History Month Celebration and featured Vice President Harris as the honored guest and keynote speaker.

I would like to acknowledge the planning committee for this year's event, including Jackie Rhone and the former chair, Betty Richardson. Through their hard work, the celebration is a true success that everyone who participates looks forward to year after year.

This year's event focused on the identity, representation, and diversity of the Black family. Maya Angelou once said:

I sustain myself with the love of my family.

The lasting bonds we have with our families sustain us through life. For many, our families serve as our home base through times of triumph, trial, and tragedy.

The past year was a tumultuous year, from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately harmed African Americans much more severely than others, to the resounding calls for racial justice and racial equity, which have long been overdue. Through all of the turmoil, 2020 brought us together to appreciate and celebrate the gifts of life, family, and diversity. As we celebrate Black History Month and moving forward, we can recommit ourselves to promoting and celebrating diversity and advancing civil rights in our society. Black history is American history. It is a story of oppression, struggle, and, if we are to be true to our founding premise, redemption and equality.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 436 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. COLLINS. Seeing no one seeking recognition, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

REOPENING SCHOOLS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I know that some of my colleagues have been talking about schools, getting children back to school, getting schools reopened. Indeed, in Tennessee, that is a topic that has received a good bit of conversation. All but two of our school systems have been open and working this entire school year, and those other two systems have recently reopened since the first of the year. Our school superintendents, our directors of school, our parents, our teachers, and the students have all worked together as a team—a solid, cohesive team—to make this happen.

I think there are two main points that we have seen, and as we are holding meetings with our county elected officials and city officials and as they talk about the efforts that they have made in getting children back into the classroom, we hear a lot about one point. That is that our Governor, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, made it clear that the school districts would be responsible for the "how" they were going to open and the "when" they would be reopening. I really thank him for listening and recognizing that local officials and individuals in the community really do know what is best for their school districts and their students.

The second point is that these plans didn't just drop out of the sky. As I said, this has been a team effort in our communities, and it has happened because there was this agreement between the administrators and the parents and the teachers that they were going to make decisions that were going to be best for the children. So when you look at Tennessee and how they have approached this—indeed, the schools reopening and how they proceeded—it was done with the children in mind.

Last week, I had the privilege of speaking with school administrators from West Tennessee, who played a part in developing their own reopening plans. I cannot adequately describe to you with the time that we have on the floor today the amount of work and the thoughtfulness that they put into these schedules, from health and safety con-

siderations, to scheduling changes, to the complicated logistics of social distancing and cramped classrooms. They thought it all through by walking through the day and listening to what teachers and parents had to say as to how they would walk through this day.

They took the millions of dollars in CARES Act funding that the area received, and what did they do with that money? They invested in the best possible plan for these kids—no Federal mandate or sweeping litmus test required. They said: We are going to do what is right by these children.

Then, of course, they turned on the TV, and they saw that the Biden administration was busy walking back their own enthusiastic scientific guidance on safely reopening schools—walking it back—and they didn't have to flip too many channels to figure out why. Powerful teachers unions had taken their own stands in refusing to make a plan, in refusing to think things through, and in some cases in refusing to go to work at all—not doing what is best for the children but doing what was going to serve their interests first and, in their opinions, what would best serve their interests. That, I think, they will see were regrettable actions.

Educators in Tennessee were not just confused by what they saw; they were insulted because they knew exactly what was happening. On January 26, CDC officials released a study showing that, if we were careful, safe reopening was indeed possible. Administration officials touted that report as a light at the end of a very long COVID pandemic, but now, just a few weeks later, those same officials are defying their own experts, insisting that safe reopening can only happen if Congress approves additional funding contained in the Democrats' latest, untargeted spending bill.

Students in this country are suffering. They are lonely, they are bored, and many of them are struggling with clinical depression and anxiety. Teen pregnancy, teen alcohol, and suicide rates are rising. Children need to be in in-person school.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has repeatedly stated—bear in mind, this isn't something that I am saying; it isn't something that is partisan; it is the American Academy of Pediatrics—that it is not only feasible but necessary for students to be back in school, back in the classroom, back to seeing their friends, back to participating in extracurricular activities and sports.

I would ask my colleagues across the aisle to keep this in mind when they hear from so-called stakeholders who are willing to hold a child's mental health hostage in exchange for a political win that will serve their power and their purposes and not that of the child's. They might have powerful voices in the cable news circuit, but those sound bites will provide you no cover back home with the teachers and

administrators who have rolled up their sleeves, have gotten to work, and have figured out a way to get schools open for the children.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, outrage—that is what American families should be feeling right now, and many are. We are seeing President Biden and the Democrats support opening the border, the southern border, for illegal immigrants while bowing to political pressure and keeping many of our Nation's schools closed for our students—opening the southern border for illegal immigrants, closing our Nation's schools for our students.

Schools across the Nation remain closed to in-person instruction largely due to teachers unions and their influence on many of our local and Federal leaders on the other side of the aisle—all, unfortunately, to the detriment of the education and the health of our students.

In States and localities where schools remain closed, America's youngest and brightest minds are posed with challenges that generations before have never dealt with. Children are continuing to cope with the unprecedented hardship of virtual classrooms, a lack of social interaction with their peers, and other impediments to their education. But this isn't because of the pandemic itself; it is because President Biden, the Democrats, and local leaders have caved to the political pressures of teachers unions and have kept many classrooms closed and students at home despite what the available science and other experts are telling us. The science is clear: Schools are not major COVID-19 spreading grounds, and younger students are a low-risk group. Studies indicate that students across the country are months behind where they should be academically.

The hardships our students face go beyond academics because the mental and physical health of children has also taken a toll. We are seeing depression and anxiety rates skyrocket among our young people. I was on a call today, a Zoom call, with several elementary school principals in Montana, hearing their firsthand, frankly, tragic accounts of what is happening with the mental health of our students in elementary school and hearing about elementary school students assaulting teachers. A whole year without full-time, in-person learning has done irreparable damage. The status quo is truly devastating to many of our students. Despite this—despite the science, despite the overwhelming data—schools across the country, in many parts of our country, remain closed.

Frankly, it is unacceptable that many of my colleagues across the aisle and the Biden administration are standing by while this happens to our students across our country. They have chosen to play politics with our Nation's students instead of ensuring that