

for the last few years, he would be in my office, and he would say, "I want to go leave a note for Miss Ann," and young Patrick would go and leave notes for her. It is a kind of family.

I think the world of our majority leader. When he told me that he wanted to appoint Ann Berry as Secretary of the Senate, I told him I will forgive him this once only because of her extraordinary capabilities.

I will speak more about her next week, but one thing that is going to give me pride because of who it involves is that on Monday, as President pro tempore, I will administer the oath of office to the extraordinary Ann Berry, and I will do it as one of the proudest moments since I have been here.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

ELECTIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, next week, House Democrats say they will try to recycle failed legislation that would have Washington Democrats grab unprecedented power over how America conducts its elections and how American citizens can engage in political speech.

For several years now, we have seen the political left grow less interested in having normal policy debates within our governing institutions and more interested in attacking the institutions themselves to tilt the playing field in their side's favor.

When their side loses a Presidential election, it is not their fault; it is the electoral college's. When they don't like a Supreme Court's decision, it is time to threaten the Justices or pack the Court. When longstanding Senate rules threaten to frustrate far-left proposals, it is the Senate rules they want to change. And now House Democrats want to try to use their slim majority to unilaterally rewrite and nationalize election law itself. They want to use the temporary power the voters have granted them to try to ensure they will never have to relinquish it.

This year's version of the House Democrats' legislation contains the same bad ideas as their efforts 2 years ago. For example, when the Federal Election Commission was created after Watergate with the sensitive job of regulating American politics, it was designed to require bipartisan consensus. House Democrats want to scrap those rules and turn the FEC from an even-numbered body, bipartisan body, to an odd-numbered partisan body so Democrats can dominate it. Then they want to hand the newly partisan FEC new authorities to scrutinize and regulate an even wider share of political speech and private citizens' activities. Or take election law itself—House Democrats

have looked at the division and the disunity of the last several months and decided that what American elections really need is a one-size-fits-all partisan rewrite by one side here in Washington.

In our country, States and localities run elections. Those of us in the Federal Government do not get a stranglehold over the ways in which voters decide our fates. But House Democrats want to change that. Their bill would take prudential questions about early voting, registration, and no-excuse absentee balloting and resolve them one way for the entire Nation. They want to force all 50 States to allow the absurd practice of ballot harvesting, where paid operatives can show up at polling places carrying a thick stack of filled-out ballots with other people's names on them. They want to forbid States from implementing voter ID or doing simple things like checking their voter rolls against change-of-address submissions. They want to mandate no-excuse mail-in balloting as a permanent norm, post-pandemic. And—I promise I am not making this up—their bill proposes to directly fund political campaigns with Federal tax dollars. They want to raise money through new financial penalties, which the government would then use to fund campaigns and consultants. It is a strange idea. It takes a minute to kind of wrap your head around it. They want the Federal Government itself to send money for things like political ads that half the country disagrees with. What a bizarre concept that nobody is asking for.

This sweeping Federal takeover would be exactly the wrong response to the distressing lack of faith in our elections that we have recently seen from both political sides.

After both 2016 and 2020, we saw significant numbers of Americans on the losing side express doubt in the validity of the result. As recently as late last September, fewer than half of Democrats said they were confident the 2020 election would be free and fair. Just weeks later, however, by mid-November, once things had gone the way they wanted, Democrats' confidence in the election magically skyrocketed up to 90 percent. We cannot keep trending toward a future where Americans' confidence in elections is purely a function of which side won.

A sweeping power grab by House Democrats, forcibly rewriting 50 States' election laws, would shove us further and faster down that path. In this country, if the people who win elections want to hold on to power, they need to perform well, pass sound policies, and earn the support of the voters again. House Democrats do not get to take their razor-thin majority, which voters just shrunk, and use it to steamroll States and localities to try to prevent themselves from losing even more seats the next time. Protecting democracy cannot be a partisan issue.

TRIBUTE TO JULIE ADAMS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a completely different matter, this week, the institution of the Senate is losing a talented leader who has spent 6 years as one of our top officials.

The Secretary of the Senate is a truly unique position in American Government. She or he is essentially the chief administrative officer of the institution itself. Back in the 18th century, that meant keeping the minutes and records and making sure people had ink for their quills. Today, it means managing a sprawling array of offices packed with career professionals, everything from parliamentary procedure to payroll, to public records, to the Senate Library and the page school and much more. The Secretary also fulfills key institutional functions. She or he signs every act that we pass. They carry formal messages to other branches of our government.

It takes major smarts, guts, integrity, and people skills just to survive in this mammoth job, let alone to actually thrive in it, but for the last 6 years, Julie Adams hasn't just survived, she hasn't just personally thrived; she has strengthened the entire institution of the Senate.

I first met Julie back in 2003 when we hired her to help out our press team. I was just starting my time as Republican whip. Julie was new to Washington, but she wasn't new to policy or to politics, and she knocked everyone's socks off right from the start. She combined diligence and professionalism with a heart of gold. She mastered her day job, volunteered for tasks above and beyond, and became the whole office's favorite teammate.

Of course, nobody is perfect; for example, Julie is not a Kentuckian. She is a proud daughter of Iowa. But trust me, she has become an honorary citizen of the Commonwealth many times over.

A few years later, she was stolen away to do important work for First Lady Laura Bush, but in 2009, we brought her back to coordinate operations and administration across both my personal office and my leadership office. She brought great judgment, a quick mind, stellar instincts, and a meticulous eye to a big job and made us all a whole lot better. From short-term crises to long-term relationships, Julie can do it all.

While perpetually juggling 10 tasks for herself, she always found ways to look after everyone else. She made sure each of her colleagues, down to the most junior, got the attention and the resources they needed. Everyone was included. Everyone mattered. She made sure of it.

Her talent and skills made Julie an easy choice for Secretary of the Senate after we took the majority in 2014. Now, there is always the potential for sensitivity when a new leader, appointed by a Senate leader of one party, comes in to oversee huge numbers of dedicated, long-serving, non-partisan specialists. Not surprisingly,

Julie rapidly won the admiration, affection, and trust of the men and women under the Secretary's umbrella. She has championed the professionals who make this place go. She empowered them. She stuck up for them and made sure they were properly insulated from political pressure.

Everyone knows Julie puts this institution and its rules first. Staff trust her. Senators on both sides trust her. Leaders across other branches of government trust her. She plays everything down the middle with total integrity.

And amid all of this, she maintained the generous spirit that everyone admires. Whether she is delivering official Senate correspondence to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court or the Secretary of State or checking in with a Senate employee on a birthday or during a tough personal time, everyone gets the same friendly "hello" and sincere kindness from Julie Adams.

Alas, it is customary to have a new Secretary of the Senate when there is a change in party control. Tomorrow is Julie's last day. I am really, really sorry to say good-bye to such a key player.

So on behalf of the whole Senate, I want to thank Julie's proud parents, Dr. Harold and Leah Adams; her siblings, John and Jessica; and her beloved canine companion Maggie for sharing this great friend and essential colleague with us for many years.

Julie, you made your family proud, you made me proud, and, most importantly, you have been a great credit to this institution. Thank you, sincerely, for your service.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

AGRICULTURE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, on Tuesday, the Senate confirmed Tom Vilsack as the Secretary of Agriculture. It is a role he is familiar with, having previously served as Agriculture Secretary under President Obama. I voted in support of his nomination because I believe he understands the issues facing farmers and ranchers and is sincere in his desire to work with Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to support our Nation's agriculture producers.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of my home State of South Dakota, and fighting for farmers and ranchers is one of my top priorities here in the Senate. I am very pleased to, once again, serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee in this Congress, which gives me an important platform to advocate for South Dakota farmers and

ranchers and farmers and ranchers across the country.

One huge priority for me over the past year has been making sure agriculture producers have the support they need to weather this pandemic. During debate on the CARES Act—our largest coronavirus relief bill to date—I fought to make sure we included relief for farmers and ranchers, and I followed up by advocating for cattle producers with the Department of Agriculture to make sure they would receive funds.

I also worked to ensure that additional relief for farmers and ranchers was included in the COVID legislation that we passed in December. The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program that the USDA established to distribute funding, included in the CARES Act, has distributed billions in direct support to agriculture producers, which has been key in helping them weather this pandemic.

Now that Secretary Vilsack has been confirmed, I urge him to lift the Biden administration's freeze on part of this important program and distribute the additional funding from the December relief package as soon as possible. I also urge the Department of Agriculture to use its authority to provide assistance to agriculture processors like the biofuels industry.

During my meeting with Secretary Vilsack prior to his confirmation, we spent time discussing my Soil Health and Income Protection Program, which became law as part of the 2018 farm bill. That program, the SHIPP program, allows farmers to take their lowest performing croplands out of production for 3 to 5 years. This benefits the environment by increasing soil health and water quality, and it benefits farmers by providing them with a rental payment for the acres they have temporarily removed from production.

I will continue to urge Secretary Vilsack to expand farmers' access to SHIPP by holding another signup this year. I will also continue to urge him to address another priority I brought up in our meeting, and that is the November 1 haying and grazing date for cover crops on prevented plant acres, which is too late in the year for farmers in more northern States like South Dakota.

As I said, one of my top priorities has been making sure farmers and ranchers have the support they need during the pandemic. When it became clear that farmers and ranchers were largely missing out on the Paycheck Protection Program that Congress had set up to help small businesses weather the pandemic, Senator BALDWIN and I introduced legislation to allow more farmers and ranchers to access the program by allowing them to use their gross incomes rather than their net incomes to determine their loan awards. Our Paycheck Protection for Producers Act became law as part of the coronavirus relief bill that Congress passed in December.

Senator BALDWIN and I have continued to engage with the Treasury Department and the Small Business Administration to ensure that the Paycheck Protection Program is working properly for farmers and ranchers. For example, we recently led a bipartisan letter urging a broader implementation of our Paycheck Protection for Producers Act to ensure that farmers and ranchers who are organized as partnerships or limited liability companies are allowed to apply for Paycheck Protection Program loans by using this more favorable gross income formula, as was intended.

These issues are front of mind for agriculture producers in my State, and, last week, I had the opportunity to discuss many of them in person with representatives of the South Dakota Corn Growers Association, which represents and advocates for corn farmers in South Dakota. Another thing we spent a lot of time talking about was biofuels. In addition to helping to feed our Nation, corn and soybean farmers provide essential feedstocks for biofuels, like ethanol and biodiesel, which provide an important source of cleaner energy. I have long been an advocate for biofuels for their clean energy potential and the benefits they offer to the agriculture industry.

When I met with Secretary Vilsack, he committed to working with me to promote ethanol as a form of clean energy—a commitment he echoed at his confirmation hearing.

I recently introduced two bipartisan pieces of legislation to support the increased use of biofuels and emphasize their clean energy potential. The Adopt GREET Act, which I introduced with Senator KLOBUCHAR, would require the Environmental Protection Agency to update its greenhouse gas modeling for ethanol and biodiesel by using the U.S. Department of Energy's GREET model. A recent Harvard study found that ethanol is 46 percent cleaner than gasoline, with some technologies reducing life-cycle emissions by as much as 61 percent. These findings underscore how biofuels can reduce emissions in the near term using our Nation's existing vehicles. Currently, however, the EPA's modeling does not fully recognize the tremendous emissions-reducing potential of ethanol and other biofuels. The Adopt GREET Act would fix this problem and pave the way for increased biofuel use both here and abroad.

I also introduced a bill to advance long-stalled biofuel registrations with the EPA. Regulatory inaction has stifled the advancement of promising technologies, like ethanol derived from corn kernel fiber, even though some of these fuels are already being safely used in States like California. My bill would speed up the approval process for these innovative biofuels. This would allow biofuel producers to capitalize on the research and facility investments they have made and improve their operating margins while further lowering