

Senate, the rules of the Senate, the precedents of the Senate, and why we are dutybound to follow them, but I couldn't get this image out of my mind as he spoke: the image of that news that came to us one day that Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia had tragically passed away.

And we all remember what happened next. It was the same Republican leader who sent the word out to his Republican Members: Don't even entertain the possibility that President Obama is going to fill this vacancy on the Supreme Court. We are going to keep this vacancy open in the hopes that we can elect a Republican President to fill it.

Now, that was 8 months at least, maybe 10 months, before the election. And it was the first time in the history of the United States that a Republican leader of the Senate used his power to browbeat his members not even to meet with Merrick Garland, the President's nominee, President Obama's nominee. They wouldn't even entertain an office meeting with him to discuss it. It was out of the question. The Supreme Court was going to have 8 members, period, and not one more because there was an election coming and a Republican opportunity in that election. And so that is what happened. You remember it well, and I do too.

So when I hear about preserving the sanctity of traditions in the Senate, I can't help but remember that vacant seat on the Supreme Court for almost a year. I cannot help but remember that in the last year of Obama's Presidency that he was denied the opportunity which other Presidents routinely were given to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court. That was the reality.

And now there is a question of the future of the filibuster, and I will concede that the filibuster has been part of the profile in the Senate for a long, long time—for many decades. But what the Senate Republican leader fails to note is that the use of the filibuster is out of control.

We now have filibusters threatened on everything in sight. It was by design, not by accident. And it was by design to slow down the business of the Senate and stop the production of the Senate, and that is why day after weary day this Chamber is empty. Nothing is happening because a filibuster is usually looming over the body.

And for those who want to restore the Senate to an actual legislative body with actual debate and amendments on the floor, we are being told by the Republican leader that we are somehow denying the basic birthright of the Senate, and we know that is wrong. We know that the Senate, as many of us remember, has changed dramatically.

It was 25 years ago that I came to the Senate. We voted a lot. We actually had 12 appropriations bills come to the floor of the Senate every year—every year—under an open process where any amendment could be offered and de-

bated and voted on, and ultimately that appropriations bill would go into conference with the House and end up doing what it was supposed to do, funding our government.

I can't remember the last time that happened. I think it has been 10 years now since the subcommittees for appropriations did their normal business with the budget resolution and prepared these bills. It is gone. Why? Why is it gone? Wasn't it the tradition of the Senate that you consider those bills? It is gone because of abuse of the filibuster.

Any amendment that is offered is threatened with a 60-vote requirement and things grind to a halt. And you know the net result of it? We have something called an omnibus. All the spending bills are merged into one massive piece of legislation. Let the staff write it. Let the Members look over their shoulder and see if there is anything in there of interest, and we pass it year after year after year.

Is that another fine tradition of the Senate that we want to protect? I hope not.

Let me say a word about voting, if I can. For as long as we have had this Nation, there has always been a basic question as to who will choose the leaders.

Our Founding Fathers showed a lot of wisdom, but they missed it when it came to voting—at least by this century's standards because they denied the vote to African Americans who, by and large, were slaves in that culture, and they denied the vote to women. And they said that basically propertied individuals were the ones who would choose the leaders of our country.

We have a different view of America's democracy today, and many of us believe that every eligible person in this country should be given an opportunity to vote that is not a hardship.

So in the 2020 election, we had a record turnout. There were many of us who felt we should build on that to have an even larger turnout in the next election—let the people speak, let the people vote.

And in about 20 different State legislatures controlled by the Republicans, exactly the opposite was decided. They decided that they would restrict opportunities to vote. Too many darn people voted in that 2020 election, and the results weren't what some of the Republican legislatures and Governors expected. So they decided they wanted to change it—reduce the opportunity for early voting, reduce the opportunities for registration, reduce the opportunity for same-day registration.

They argued that some States have them and some don't. Well, the bottom line, as we see it on the Democratic side, is if we are going to open opportunity for people across the country who are eligible to vote without hardship, then we ought to do it across the board, and that is why we support legislation—Federal legislation ordained and envisioned by our Constitution to

establish standards that will make it easier to vote.

The Senator from Kentucky likes to come to the floor and say, well, New York doesn't have all those good things. He may be right. But why shouldn't they? As far as I am concerned, Illinois, New York, Hawaii, all States should be governed by standards and give people an additional opportunity to vote.

I would rather come down on the side of a larger turnout of the electorate and let democracy speak than the alternative, which is being suggested by the Republican leader. They want to selectively make it difficult for some people to come and vote. I don't. I think they are wrong.

Time and again, the Senate Republican leader came to the floor and called things fake. I guess we are now into that characterization and can thank President Trump for leading us down that path. What is not fake is this. Throughout the history of the United States, the opportunity to vote has been denied, primarily to people of color and the poor, year after year, in an effort to try to ensure that election results turned out a certain way.

For the longest time, my Democratic Party was guilty of that sin. I readily confess it because history makes it clear, but now that mantle has been passed to the party of Abraham Lincoln, the Republican Party, which is now trying to restrict the right to vote across the Nation.

When you heard that in Georgia you couldn't provide water or food to people waiting in line, it probably struck most Americans as odd. Why would they say that?

Well, visualize, if you will, the lines of voters, and you will find, if your memory is the same as mine, that largely they were minority voters who were standing in line for hours to vote—hours to vote.

And so the Georgia State Legislature and others have said, if you give them water or food, you have violated the law. Let them stand in line without any support.

Really? Is that what it has come down to? The fear that if you give a cup of water to someone waiting in line to vote, you are buying their vote? I just can't believe the thinking that leads to that. But we know behind it were a lot of situations where machinery and voting places were limited to minority populations.

UKRAINE

Madam President, nearly 32 years ago, Lithuania, a tiny nation on the Baltic Sea, dared to reclaim its freedom from the Soviet Union. At that time, the Soviet Union was one of the world's superpowers. The reaction from Moscow took 11 months, and it was brutal.

On January 11, 1991, 31 years ago this week, Soviet tanks rolled in to crush Lithuanian freedom. It would become known as Lithuania's Bloody Sunday. In the capital city of Vilnius, crowds

gathered in TV Tower and Parliament Square to protest and resist the Russians and to defend their new independent national legislature.

I was lucky. I was there to see the efforts by the people of Lithuania of this tiny nation to protect what they were starting with a new Parliament and free elections for the first time in almost 50 years.

Thirteen martyrs died in the Soviet Union's brutal attempt to crush the restoration of Lithuanian independence. But to the astonishment of the entire world, after 2 days of bloodshed and killing, the Soviet tanks turned around and left. Against all odds, that tiny nation of Lithuania threw off 50 years of Soviet tyranny and occupation. They soon were joined by Latvia and Estonia, where similar courage was shown, and then by other Eastern European nations held captive by the Soviet bloc.

Today, I am proud to say Lithuania remains a free and independent democracy. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, at the time he ordered the tanks to withdraw from Lithuania, 31 years ago, came to realize that you can brutalize a people who are determined to be free, but you can't defeat them. Ultimately, freedom will prevail.

It is a tragedy that Russian President Putin—Vladimir Putin—cannot or will not learn that lesson of history. Instead, today, he is intimidating Ukraine with the same discredited tactics that failed in the Baltics three decades ago.

I was fortunate to be invited on a trip in the year 2014 with the late Senator John McCain of Arizona. He never missed visiting the hot spots of the world, and we went to Kiev in Ukraine, and we walked down to the Maidan Square, which had been the place where the people of Ukraine—the Ukrainians—stepped forward to demand their freedom.

Senator McCain invited me to be part of a delegation during an extraordinary moment when the Ukrainian people were preparing to risk their lives for freedom. We were joined on the trip to Kiev by Senators Barrasso, Johnson, Murphy, and others. And we walked solemnly through the makeshift shrines set up in the Maidan memorializing those who lost their lives in Ukraine's peaceful protest for a better future.

They stopped us at one point and pointed to a place and said: One of the protesters was standing here when the government sniper killed him. That is why there are flowers and candles at that site.

We were planning to travel to the eastern part of the country as well, but we were too late. Russians and Vladimir Putin had already invaded with their little green men and had seized the territory of Crimea. Yet in the ensuing years, despite Russia's military invasion and occupation of Eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian people have thrived and built on their democratic aspirations.

As with any democracy, there are always areas for improvement, but the Ukrainian people have clearly decided their future is with the community of democracies and not with Moscow. And yet that basic human desire to be free and democratically choose one's leaders is apparently too much for Russian leader Vladimir Putin who is now threatening a further massive military invasion of Ukraine.

He has amassed some 100,000 troops on their border, preparing for that invasion. It is not enough that Putin denies the Russian people their basic freedom; he is determined to eradicate similar aspirations on Russia's border to protect his undemocratic regime.

President Biden and Members of both parties in this Chamber have been swift to condemn Putin's threatened further invasion of Ukraine. President Biden has made it clear that any such move by Russia would be met with rapid and severe economic sanctions. The chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, BOB MENENDEZ of New Jersey, has drafted legislation that would impose historic sanctions if Russia further invades Ukraine. The bill's approach is sweeping and clear, and I support it. I agree with our President and the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. This is the right message for us to send from the President and the U.S. Senate to Vladimir Putin.

Chairman MENENDEZ's solution also provides assistance to the Baltic States in standing up to both Putin and China—a timely measure I want to thank my colleague for including in this bill.

It is a bill we should actually be debating on the Senate floor. Instead, we will be forced to vote this week or soon on a different and weaker response to the crisis on the Ukraine's border.

The junior Senator from Texas is the author of this weaker approach. He has managed to force a vote on it by holding hostage dozens of President Biden's nominations. His approach includes a provision to remove the waiver for sanctions against a new gas pipeline between Russia and Germany.

Let me be clear. This Nord Stream 2 Pipeline is a proposal I have been critical of for a long time. I have urged our European allies to diversify their natural gas supply away from Russia. President Biden's position on Nord Stream 2 is the same—that the pipeline could effectively undermine European security by increasing reliance on Moscow.

But the truth is, construction on that pipeline did not begin in the last year; it started under President Trump. I don't think you will be hearing that present in the speeches of the junior Senator from Texas. Despite congressional sanctions and restrictions, by the time Biden entered office, that pipeline was nearly 95 percent complete. Where was the Republican outrage when the lion's share of the pipeline was built under the Trump administration? Were dozens of critical

nominations brazenly and dangerously held then? No.

Given the pipeline's near completion this spring, President Biden waived some but not all sanctions on Nord Stream 2 in an effort to mend relations with Germany and its new government. They are one of our closest allies and partners. We need to continue such close cooperation with our European partners so long as they stand with us to effectively deter further Russian provocation.

President Biden announced an agreement with Germany that involves securing Ukraine and Europe's energy sector, as well as imposing sanctions on Russia. This is important. The President still has the authority to impose additional sanctions on Nord Stream 2. In fact, just this November, the administration sanctioned a Russian-linked ship in connection with it.

The bill offered by my colleague from Texas does not provide any new authority to the President; it only takes away his waiver authority to force sanctions, setting a dangerous precedent and jeopardizing the administration's flexibility to respond to escalation by the Russians.

This Cruz bill will hardly deter the potential Russian invasion of Ukraine and only serve to complicate the efforts to repair relations with our European ally Germany, which has critical energy needs.

I believe we should leave the flexibility of how and when to further sanction this pipeline to the President as part of a larger approach in dealing with Putin. For this reason, I urge my colleagues to support the wiser approach by the senior Senator from New Jersey to send a serious, credible response to Russia if it further invades Ukraine.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

ADOPTIONS FROM CHINA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, for over 25 years in the Senate, I have been an advocate for adoption.

Adoption is a way for families to be created out of tragedy. It is a pathway to the joy of raising children and guaranteeing security of a place that now they can call home.

One family, Cate and Ben Bryan from Iowa, made the choice to open their hearts and their home to a child from China and were matched with a little girl named Rosie.

Hundreds of families across the country, including the Bryans and others in Iowa, have chosen adoption from China. They have been matched with specific children and made arrangements to welcome those children into their homes.

Many of these kids being adopted from China have disabilities or other special needs and require specialized health and care services.

These kids are in desperate need of families to take care of them but are being denied the opportunity to come