

He reassured them that they could still have the lives they dreamed of, and his words had weight because he was living proof that that was possible.

He would wink and joke: Listen, having an amputation is better than having a puppy. Trust me, you won't have any trouble getting the ladies.

And then he would answer any questions they had because he knew they needed to hear from someone who had already journeyed on the road they were about to travel.

For years, Tom and El came into Walter Reed every Tuesday and Thursday without fail. El was known as the Cookie Lady because she would bring in dozens of homemade cookies that she collected from folks at her church.

For those of us who were in the hospital a long time, El knew our favorites. Mine were oatmeal raisin. If I was at physical therapy or in surgery or getting my wounds debrided when El made her rounds, she would make sure to leave a little bag of cookies by my bedside table. It was a real treat in the midst of the painful, early stages of recovery—something to look forward to every week.

Tom and El. El and Tom. The two of them became family for all of us. They would bring me and my husband to their lakeside home, feed us home-cooked meals, and let me fall asleep in their hammock overlooking the water, knowing the good that getting out of that fluorescent-lit hospital room would do me.

As someone who loved and was desperately missing the ocean, I can't begin to describe how restorative those days by the lake were.

There are no words for how right it felt to be drifting off to sleep to the sound of waves hitting the shore rather than to the beeps and the buzz of the hospital machines that had been my nightly soundtrack for too long.

And there is no possible way to express just how grateful I am to Tom and El for making that a possibility; for giving me a taste of home, right when I felt most like a stranger to myself; for enveloping me in something good and whole right when I felt untethered from what I felt was my life's mission; and for simply being who they were—kind and fierce, as compassionate for the people they loved as they were passionate about the causes that they believed in.

They were our advocates, our heroes, our Tom and our El.

I am so sorry for your loss, El. We miss Tom every single day. Thank you both for all you did for me and what you did for all of us. We miss you desperately.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Mr. REED. Madam President, we are debating the President's nominee to succeed Justice Stephen Breyer, who has served this country admirably and with great distinction.

As a law student, I was fortunate to have Justice Breyer as an adviser, and I remain grateful for his guidance, encouragement, and counsel as I began my legal career. I have immense respect and admiration for him as a Justice, but even more so as a person.

When Justice Breyer announced his retirement, I stated my belief that the next Justice on the Supreme Court should be someone with Justice Breyer's integrity, independence, and keen intellect—someone with real-world experience who reflects the depth and breadth of the American people. You could not find someone who better fits that description than Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, and I rise today in wholehearted support of her nomination to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court is a powerful arbiter of justice in our Nation, with few checks on the decisions of the Justices once they are on the Court. Therefore, a vote on a Supreme Court nominee is one of the most consequential that any Senator can cast. The Constitution makes the Senate an active participant, along with the President, in the confirmation of a Supreme Court Justice.

Article II, section 2, clause 2 of the Constitution states that nominees to the Supreme Court shall only be confirmed "by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate." The Senate's role in the confirmation process places an important democratic check on America's judiciary. As a result, this body's consent is both a constitutional requirement and a democratic obligation. It is in upholding our constitutional duties as Senators to give the President advice and consent on his nominations that I believe we have one of our greatest opportunities and responsibilities to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

As I have stated before, my test for a nominee is simple and is drawn from the text, the history, and the principles of the Constitution. A nominee's intellectual gifts, experience, judgment, maturity, and temperament are all important, but these alone are not enough. I need to be convinced that a nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court will live up to both the letter and spirit of the Constitution. The nominee needs to be committed not only to enforcing laws but also to doing justice.

The nominee needs to be able to make the principles of the Constitution come alive—equality before the law, due process, full and equal participation in the civic and social life of America for all Americans, freedom of conscience, individual responsibility, and the expansion of opportunity. The nominee also needs to see the unique role the Court plays in helping balance the often conflicting forces in a democracy between individual autonomy and the obligations of community, between the will of the majority and the rights of the minority. A nominee for the Supreme Court needs to be able to look forward to the future, not just back-

wards. The nominee needs to make the Constitution resonate in a world that is changing with great rapidity.

Judge Jackson passes these tests with flying colors. Beyond her unquestioned intellectual gifts, her legal career over the past two decades demonstrates that she has the deep fidelity to equality, justice, and the Constitution required to be our next Supreme Court Justice.

We want Justices to be familiar with the Federal court system. Judge Jackson is. Indeed, soon after law school, Judge Jackson chose to clerk at three levels of the Federal courts, gaining valuable insights into the courtroom and learning directly from incredible jurists, including Judge Bruce Selya of Rhode Island, who was President Reagan's nominee to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, as well as Justice Breyer himself.

We want Justices to understand that a guilty verdict involves the hard task of deciding the appropriate punishment. So while many of her law school classmates likely plotted paths to law firm partnerships, she chose instead to serve as Assistant Special Counsel and, later, Commissioner and Vice Chair at the U.S. Sentencing Commission, working to prevent unjust disparities in sentencing.

We want Justices to embody the fundamental notion of fairness at the heart of our justice system, that defendants have a right to counsel and must be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. So Judge Jackson chose to serve as a Federal public defender. If confirmed, she will bring this valuable, real-life perspective to our highest Court, where it is very much needed.

Over the past 10 years, first as a district judge and then as a circuit judge, Judge Jackson has been evenhanded and impartial in her decisions from the bench, without regard to partisanship, personal views, or ideology. Her opinions showcase an admirable commitment not only to fairness but to transparency. She takes the time to ensure that the parties fully understand her rulings and that the record clearly captures her thought process in deciding a case. She does not hide the ball—there are facts, there are arguments, and everyone is invited to read and understand them.

Beyond her career choices and accolades, she demonstrated her judgment, maturity, and equanimity during her recent confirmation hearings. In the face of hours of questioning, some of it quite pointed, political, and discomfiting, she showed incredible patience, resilience, and grace. Her independence, integrity, and deep understanding of the Constitution shined through in her answers. Her cool in that crucible was not only admirable, it was inspiring.

Judge Jackson is a trailblazer, not in the least because she is the first Black woman and first Federal public defender nominated to the Supreme

Court. While her individual accomplishments are personal, Judge Jackson's elevation to the U.S. Supreme Court will bring America closer to the ideal our country aspires to. Her service on the Supreme Court in the years to come will ensure that the Justices better reflect the diversity of our great nation and may help restore the people's faith in the fairness of the Court and in our justice system.

It is with great pleasure that I support her nomination to the highest Court in the land and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

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

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

ENERGY

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the need for more American energy.

On Thursday, President Biden announced that he is going to release even more oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. To me, this is another desperate Hail Mary pass. It is a short-term effort to deal with their midterm election crisis. It is a crisis that has been created by the policies of this administration.

The real crisis is the cost-of-living crisis, and it is a crisis that is punishing American families. Inflation is at a 40-year high. Gas prices recently hit the highest price ever. Why is it happening? It is economics 101. The supply of energy is not keeping up with the demand for energy.

We are now producing about 1.3 million barrels of oil per day fewer—less—than we were in 2019. Yet, for the last 14 months that Joe Biden has been in the White House, he has done absolutely nothing to increase the supply of American energy. He has not sold one lease to produce energy on public lands—not one. President Obama, at this time into his first term, had already held 47 Federal lease sales—in his first 14 months in office. For Joe Biden, the number is still zero.

This just shows that when it comes to energy, Joe Biden is to the far, far left of any previous American President. Joe Biden is already the most anti-American energy President we have ever had. He refuses to do any of the things that would actually help our country in terms of our energy needs. He won't increase oil production by a single drop. No. He wants to release some from the strategic reserve but not actually produce any more American energy.

What he is essentially doing is burning through our savings account. This is now the third time that President Biden has released energy from the strategic reserve. He is on pace to burn

through a third of our oil savings in less than 2 years in office. Soon, we are going to have the smallest amount in our reserve, the smallest amount in our savings account, since 1984.

In November, Joe Biden conducted the largest release in history from the strategic reserve. He released 50 million barrels. So what was the result? He made a big announcement of it. The Secretary of Energy did as well. The price of gas went down by 2 cents—2 cents. The White House was so proud of itself that they actually sent out a press release congratulating themselves. Prices went back up almost immediately. The result was an utter failure. So now Joe Biden said he is going to release 180 million barrels over the next 6 months, which is a million barrels a day for the next 180 days—in other words, between now and right before the elections.

The strategic reserve is meant for emergencies. It is not meant for the cynical, political coverup of what the President has done to our American energy policy. Some people call it an election-year gimmick. I call it dangerous—dangerous because we are going to be less prepared for emergencies and be less secure as a nation. We will be less safe.

Now, 180 million barrels sounds like a lot. It is about the amount we use on an average of 9 or 10 days. We use about 20 million barrels a day in the United States. We are currently importing a lot more than that.

Even the President admits that it won't have a big impact, but he doesn't know what else to do. On Thursday, he said this would reduce prices by as little as 10 cents a gallon. We are still over \$4 a gallon nationwide in terms of the national average. I expect it is going to remain that high, over \$4 a gallon, through the summer.

So who do the American people blame for this? Well, in poll after poll, they blame Joe Biden because he is the one who proudly stood there and beat his chest and said: I have killed the Keystone XL Pipeline.

The day Joe Biden took office, gasoline was \$2.38 a gallon. America was energy independent for the first time in 70 years. We were energy dominant. We were exporting energy. We were selling it to our friends instead of having to buy it from our enemies. Joe Biden took office and started attacking American energy, and things have deteriorated ever since.

That is why it is no surprise that energy and gas prices were up 13 out of the last 14 months. By the time Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, the average price of a gallon of gas had gone up from \$2.38 gallon to \$3.53 a gallon. So it was already up over \$1.15 a gallon in just over that first year in office for President Biden. Today, the average price of a gallon of gas is about \$4.18.

Prices may actually go higher if Joe Biden gets his way in terms of energy policy. That is because, when the President put out his budget, we found

he wants to raise taxes on American energy. The budget that the President has proposed for the next year contains 36 new taxes, and 11 of them are directly on American energy. It would cost about \$45 billion, which, of course, would be carried on to the people who buy American energy. It would be paid by working families in the form of higher gas prices, higher oil bills. It would cost more to heat your home.

Even NANCY PELOSI, when she looked at the budget, said:

Consumers pay for that.

On Thursday, Joe Biden asked Congress to charge fees on oil and gas leases that aren't even being used. Now, this is another gimmick. People want to use those leases, but the administration is blocking the permission to drill to use the leases. This is just a continuation of the Biden blame game.

If you want to explore for energy in America, the lease is just the first step, the first of many. You need to apply for a permit to drill. In Wyoming, people know all about this. They call it an APD, an application for the permission to drill. You have to pay to apply after you have paid the rent on the lease.

So you apply, and somebody has to make a decision. Those decisions used to be made at the local level. Not anymore. Now the Biden administration has said: We know better than any of you people out around the country. We will make all of the decisions out of Washington.

The decision they have made is they are not going to give any of these permits to drill. That is why the President could say: They are not drilling.

Well, you are not letting people drill.

Now, we are not talking about a couple of leases; we are talking about thousands and thousands—over 4,000 leases—that are tied up that way.

We have another group of leases that is tied up by environmental activists who love to sue to stop energy exploration. They want to keep it in the ground.

So companies are paying their rental fees. They want to explore for energy, but they are being blocked by the administration. Then they are being blamed by that same administration for not exploring for energy.

The President says: Use it or lose it.

Well, that is the law of the land right now. If it doesn't produce oil or gas within 10 years, you actually lose the permit. He doesn't want to explain that to folks.

If the lease does produce energy, if it does produce oil, then the government actually reaps the benefits from that. They get tax money from that. That helps to pay for many of the things that we do as a government. In Wyoming, in our State areas, we use it to help with paying for education, with paying for healthcare. These are vital services in the community that are paid for by the successful exploration and recovery of energy that is currently underground and that Joe Biden wants to keep underground.