merely ''signing off on them,'' and he ''never veered from the lists of candidates suggested by Leo and others.''

Again, this was not about calling ''balls and strikes.''

If you want ''to have the longest possible impact on the kind of America you want,'' said Leader MCCONNELL, ''you look at the courts.'' That is their goal, to change the kind of America we have—more accurately, the kind of America the far-right megadonors want, I would say.

Trump noticed. ''MITCH MCCONNELL. Judges. Judges. Judges. The only thing he wants is judges,'' said Trump.

We know this happened because the Trump White House, right up to Trump himself, said so. Trump's own White House Counsel joked that he ''insourced'' the Federalist Society into the selection process. As one prominent conservative explained, this was an ''enterprise''—an ''enterprise of building a Supreme Court that will overturn Roe v. Wade.''

Once the anonymous donors behind the Federalist Society Justice-picking operation got the nominees they wanted, then came the dark money front groups rolling out ad campaigns to help ram those Justices through the Senate. Anonymous donations of $15 million, $17 million, $19 million went to phony front groups like the so-called ''Judicial Crisis Network'' to promote those backroom-chosen Federalist Society nominees.

Then, once the Federalist Society Justices were stacked onto the Court, flotillas of dark money front groups appeared before them, both as litigants and as amici curiae, orchestrated by the dozens in little groups to signal the Republican Justices how to rule. And it is pretty likely that the same donor network was behind the nomination turnstile, the propaganda machine, and the flotillas. And by the way, they are winning—winning—with these handpicked Justices at an astonishing rate—80 to 0 by one count.

We see the results of the scheme in this very case. The sponsors of the Mississippi abortion law admitted that they passed the law because they thought the new Supreme Court Justices would uphold it, just like a new legislative body had come in. After Amy Coney Barrett's nomination was rushed through the Senate, the State of Mississippi even changed its position to ask the Supreme Court to overrule Roe in its entirety. It all smells of ''fixery.'' No wonder Justice Sotomayor asked during oral argument whether the Court will ''survive the stench that this creates in the public perception that the Constitution and its reading are just political acts?''

So, if colleagues want to talk about demolition of the integrity and independence of the Court, then they better have something to say about turning the Supreme Court over to dark money special interests, about special interests capturing the Court to serve their rightwing ''enterprise.'' A captured Court, that is delivering for the special interests that stacked it and helping to keep their secrets has had its integrity and independence pretty well demolished already.

The last gasp of the scoundrels is to pretend that it is Democrats calling out this dark money mess who are the ones undermining the integrity of the Court. They even point to a brief of mine where several colleagues and I quoted to the Court a poll showing that a majority of Americans feel the Court is ''mainly motivated by politics'' and that it ought to be ''restructured in order to reduce the influence of politics.''

That is a poll, not a threat.

And the Court better start paying attention to why the American people feel that way, rather than quarreling that anyone that is ''threatening'' or ''bullying'' the Court by pointing that out.

By the way, if threatening is what you want to fuss about, have the decency to be consistent. Here is a quote from FOX News' host Laura Ingraham discussing this actual abortion case after the oral arguments were done.

Forgive my bad language to the pages who are here. I am actually quoting her verbatim.

> We have six Republican appointees on this Court after all the money that has been raised, the Federalist Society, all these big ''fat cat'' dinners. I'm sorry. I'm pissed about this. If this Court with six Justices cannot do the right thing here, the constitutional thing, then I think it's time to do what Robert Bork said we should do, which is to circumscribe the jurisdiction of this Court, and if they want to blow it up, then that's the way to change things finally.

Far from pushing back on that threat to ''blow it up'' and ''change things finally,'' the Senate colleague she was talking to said:

> . . . in a heartbeat.

When you are treating an accurate quotation of a poll as a threat and ignoring a public threat to blow up the Court and change things finally—after all the ''fat cat'' money spent on the Federalist Society, no less—forgive me for doubting your sincerity.

As Senator PADILLA said in the Judiciary Committee last week, have the decency to be consistent at least.

Justice Alito spent over 98 pages trying and failing to justify overturning the decision protecting these rights—overturning a decision he told the U.S. Senate was an ''important precedent of the Supreme Court.''

His opinion isn't persuasive to me at all as it reads as snide and cruel, but that is not going to stop these Justices from trying to throw us back into an age where women aren't free to make their own choices about their own bodies and their own futures. It looks like the fix went in on that a while ago, and we just weren't told about it in the hearings.

So, tomorrow, the majority leader will bring before this Chamber legislation to protect those rights nationwide, to protect that freedom across this country, and I am eager to vote for it. We have got to stand against this assault on women's constitutional rights, and I hope some Republican colleagues will join us.

Particularly, I hope, in the weeks and months ahead, that we can find ways to unravel the dark money scheme that has brought this Court and our country closer to the brink because the Court that dark money built—it is not done. It is not done trying to reshape America against our will to suit the extreme ideology of the rightwing billionaires behind the scheme.

There is one good thing in all this darkness, and that is that the American people see this nonsense and have had enough.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

WOMEN'S HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, the recently leaked draft opinion in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization signals what many of us have feared would happen: At least five rightwing Supreme Court Justices seem poised to overturn Roe v. Wade and abolish the constitutional right of women to have an abortion.

In my view, the U.S. Senate cannot and must not allow that to happen. We cannot go back to the days when women had to risk their lives to end an unwanted pregnancy. We cannot go back to the days of back alley abortions. We cannot go back to the days of forcing a woman to carry a pregnancy or go through a childbirth that could cause her illness or death. That, we cannot go back to.

In America today, it is estimated that one out of every four women will choose to have an abortion by the time she turns 45. In 2019, over 625,000 women in America chose to have an abortion. While no one can say with any degree of certainty how many deaths there will be if abortion is made illegal and women are forced to carry unsafe pregnancies to term, there is no doubt that, over a period of time, many thousands of American women will die.

Now, I get very tired of hearing the hypocrisy from the extreme rightwing, who say to ''get the government off our backs.'' How often have we heard that—''get the government off our backs; we want small government''?

Well, I say to those rightwingers: If you want to get the government off the backs of the American people, then understand that it is women who control their own bodies, not politicians.

During the COVID crisis, how many times had we heard on this floor and throughout this country the extreme rightwing say: The government must not force us to wear a mask. How dare the government do that. Government must not force us to have a vaccine. We

have the right to do what we want with our bodies?

Well, hypocritically, these very same rightwing politicians who worry so much about their masks and vaccines now want the Federal Government, the State governments, and their own local governments to mandate what women cannot and can do with their bodies. How hypocritical can you be?

The decision about an abortion must be a decision for the woman and her doctor to make, not the government. That is why I rise this evening in strong support of the Women's Health Protection Act.

This legislation would make Roe v. Wade the law of the land. This legislation would begin to put an end to the relentless assault on the reproductive rights of women that is taking place all across this country.

But let me be as clear as I can be: It is not good enough to just talk about passing this bill. If there are not 60 votes in the Senate to pass this legislation—and there are not—we must end the filibuster and pass it with 50 votes.

You know, I hear a lot of talk from my Democratic colleagues about the need for unity. Well, if there were ever a time for unity, now is that time.

According to poll after poll, year after year, 60 percent of the American people believe that Roe v. Wade should be upheld. Moreover, according to a recent Washington Post-ABC poll, 75 percent of Americans say decisions on abortion should be left to a woman and her doctor, including 95 percent of Democrats, 81 percent of Independents, and 53 percent of Republicans.

In other words, if the U.S. Senate were truly a representative body of the American people—which for a variety of reasons, clearly, it is not—we would easily have 60 votes to pass this bill, and women would be protected.

It is important for us to remember how we got to where we are today.

Five years ago, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL—the Republican leader—and the Republican Party in the Senate ended the filibuster for Supreme Court nominees in order to do what they could not do legislatively, which was to make abortion illegal. They didn't have the votes to do that. So, in order to get Supreme Court Justices nominated, they ended the filibuster.

Candidate Donald Trump promised that he would only nominate Supreme Court Justices who supported overturning Roe v. Wade. Unfortunately, out of the many lies—endless number of lies—that Trump made during his campaign and Presidency, it turns out that this is the one promise that he kept, the one honest statement that he made.

Further, while it looks like, in this rare instance, Trump kept his promise, the Republican Supreme Court Justices, during their Senate confirmation hearings, did not. In fact, Justice Alito and the three Justices nominated by President Trump, all called Roe v. Wade an ''important precedent'' during their confirmation hearings.

Let me quote Justice Alito at his Senate confirmation hearing on January 11, 2006:

> Roe v. Wade is an important precedent of the Supreme Court. It was decided in 1973, so it has been on the books for a long time. It is a precedent that has now been on the books for several decades. It has been challenged. It has been reaffirmed.

That was Alito.

In 2017, Justice Gorsuch said at his confirmation hearing:

> Roe v. Wade, decided in 1973, is a precedent of the United States Supreme Court. It has been reaffirmed. A good judge will consider it as precedent of the U.S. Supreme Court, worthy of treatment as precedent like any other.

In 2018, Justice Kavanaugh said at his confirmation hearing:

> I said that [Roe v. Wade] is settled as a precedent of the Supreme Court, entitled the respect under principles of stare decisis. And one of the important things to keep in mind about Roe v. Wade is that it has been reaffirmed many times over the past 45 years, as you know, and most prominently, most importantly, reaffirmed in Planned Parenthood v. Casey in 1992.

That was Justice Kavanaugh.

But, today, it has become increasingly clear that, despite these statements to the contrary, the three Justices nominated by Trump were hired specifically to overturn Roe v. Wade, and with Justice Alito at the helm, nominated by President George W. Bush, that is precisely what it appears they are set to do.

These are four Justices, all appointed by Presidents who lost the popular vote. Is it any wonder why Americans all over our country are losing faith in their democracy?

Well, you know what I believe: If Republicans can end the filibuster to install rightwing Justices—nominated by Presidents who lost the popular vote—in order to overturn Roe v. Wade, Democrats can and must end the filibuster to make abortion legal and safe.

Let's be clear: If the Supreme Court strikes down Roe v. Wade, abortion bans will immediately go into effect in 22 States throughout America, with 4 others likely to follow suit. In 10 of these States, it will be illegal to have an abortion even in cases of rape or incest.

For example, in the State of Texas, if Roe v. Wade is struck down, it will be considered a felony for any Texas doctor to perform an abortion on a woman who is raped or impregnated by a family member. Furthermore, that law would actually criminalize abortion, punishing both women and doctors, who could face years in prison if they are found guilty.

Other States have passed similar types of legislation. Mississippi's Governor has even refused to rule out the banning of contraception as a next step—the banning of contraception.

Let us be clear: The Supreme Court, no matter how it ends up ruling, will not be able to ban abortion.

If you are wealthy and if you have the means to get on an airplane or drive hundreds of miles to a clinic, you will have access to a safe abortion. But if you are poor or a member of the working class, it is likely that you will not. The reality is that overturning Roe v. Wade would be devastating to low-income and working-class women, who do not have the means to travel long distances to get an abortion.

The issue we are discussing tonight is often framed as a ''woman's issue.'' I disagree. This is a human rights issue. And if there has ever been a time in American history when the men of this country must stand with the women of this country, this is that moment.

I do find it somewhat amusing that the loudest voices in the Republican Party demanding that women be forced to give birth against their will are exactly the same people who oppose virtually every effort here in Congress designed to improve life for children and their mothers.

These Republicans are opposed—and some Democrats are opposed—to paid family and medical leave in America. They literally believe that it is acceptable for an employer to force a mother to go back to her job a week after giving birth. Some Republican colleagues want women, regardless of what they believe, to have a baby, but they could care less about those babies once they are born.

These same Republicans, without exception, are opposed to extending the $300 a month child tax credit that expired in December and went a long, long way to making it easier for working-class families to raise their children with dignity. These same Republicans are opposed to universal childcare and free pre-K.

It is no great secret that women throughout the history of our country have had to fight valiantly for their basic human rights against all forms of patriarchy. Let us never forget that when our country was formed, women were not just second-class citizens; they were third or fourth class citizens.

Women have been fighting for equal rights in this country since the 1800s. They didn't receive the right to vote until 1920. If you can believe this—and people don't know this—women needed a male cosigner on bank loans until 1974. Women had to get a male cosigner for a bank loan until 1974.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s—and way, way before that—women had to fight for entry into certain professions from which they were barred. The fight for equal pay continues to this day.

Let us be clear. When it comes to the rights of women, we cannot go backward. We must go forward. We cannot go back to the days when women could not have full access to birth control. We cannot go back to the days of widescale domestic violence against women. The time has come for all of us to protect and expand women's rights in America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, we are living in the twilight of Roe v. Wade and the incredibly important protections for Americans that flow from it. For almost 50 years, the Supreme Court held that the Constitution safeguarded women's access to critical reproductive healthcare, including abortion, and rightly so. Most American women have never lived without the ability to control their bodies, their health, and their families' economic well-being.

As we learned last week from a draft opinion, the Supreme Court is poised to strip away these fundamental freedoms from women around the United States by overturning its own precedents. This would be one of the very few times in American history when the Court has taken away rights rather than expanding them. If this draft stands, young women today will have fewer choices than their mothers and grandmothers had.

The Senate has an opportunity to pass Federal law to protect the right to choose across this country. I urge my colleagues to take and pass this legislation and do what a large majority of Nevadans and Americans want: to let women make their own decisions.

Here is what could happen if the Supreme Court draft becomes law. If the Supreme Court overturns longstanding precedent in June, the right to choose will immediately cease to exist in about 18 States, and others will act quickly to pass new bans on critical care. And within months, restrictions on reproductive choice will be in place in approximately half of the States, meaning that around the world, half of the women around the country, half of the women of child-bearing age will not be able to get critical care where they live.

The women who have the money and the time will travel to States like mine that have legal protections for reproductive healthcare. In Nevada, we are already seeing women traveling from Texas, where an extreme law offers a $10,000 reward to vigilantes targeting anyone who ''aids and abets'' abortions.

If Roe falls, it would automatically trigger abortion bans in neighboring Idaho and Utah as well. We will see women traveling from Nevada to those States too.

But the vast majority of women seeking reproductive care won't even have the option to travel for care. We know what happens to these women. The research shows that when people cannot get essential reproductive care, their physical, their emotional, and their economic health suffers, as does the health of their families. They can face life-threatening pregnancy complications and long-term health impacts.

This Court decision will strip away women's power to make the best decisions for themselves and their families. That means women will not have the same control over their lives and bodies as men do, and that is just wrong.

Nevadans understand something fundamental about the right to choose. The fact is that you can never know what circumstances another person faces until you walk in their shoes. That is why most Nevadans want to preserve women's freedom to decide what healthcare they receive. They know it is not right to impose their own beliefs on others when Americans have such divergent religious views, economic and family circumstances, and medical histories.

This is why family planning is so important. We have seen it again and again over the years. Far-right, extreme Republican lawmakers want to target the entire spectrum of reproductive healthcare and family planning services.

The laws they are proposing in States like Louisiana and Tennessee would keep women who want to become pregnant from getting fertility treatments. They could stop women who are raped from getting the morning-after pill to prevent a potential pregnancy. These laws could block access to contraception for women who have painful menstrual cycles or other health conditions or who simply don't want to have a child.

It seems that these effects on women don't matter to many on the far right, including MITCH MCCONNELL, who is already discussing a nationwide abortion ban that could threaten even Nevada's legal protections.

That is why my colleagues and I are standing up for legislation that will codify women's reproductive freedoms into Federal law. The Women's Health Protection Act will preserve the right to choose nationally and ensure that women have access to critical care.

If we want our daughters to grow up with the same freedoms we have had for 50 years, we have to act now. We need to stand up for women in America and trust them to make their own decisions about their health, their families, and their lives.

I believe in American women, and that is why this fight for us is now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President and colleagues, this past week, following the leaked Supreme Court opinion that threatens to overturn Roe v. Wade, thousands of Californians have reached out to my office in the form of phone calls, in the form of letters, and in the form of emails, all to voice their support for the right to choose.

It is abundantly clear that Congress must pass the Women's Health Protection Act and codify the right to an abortion into Federal law.

Countless Californians and other Americans have spoken up—many in public, many in private—to share their own abortion stories.

Think about the students who want to finish high school before starting a family. Think of survivors of sexual assault, whose abortion reaffirmed their right to choose for their own bodies. Think of parents who desperately wanted a child but, upon becoming pregnant, learned the devastating news about dangerous health risks associated with that pregnancy. Think of the women whose lives were saved by an abortion, because abortion is often critical medical care. And think about women who remember a time a half a century ago, before Roe v. Wade secured this right, a time when—don't get me wrong—abortion still happened, but they were unsafe secrets at the time, when women risked their lives for the choice that they needed.

I believe that the right to an abortion is a fundamental right, and I am proud to represent a State that fiercely defends abortion access. California is committed to safe, respectful abortion care for all who need it. That is why Californians have stepped up this year, with some even traveling to aid women who were threatened by SB 8, the Texas law that prohibits abortion at 6 weeks. This is the very law that Senator CORTEZ MASTO just referenced a few minutes ago, and it is why so many Californians are speaking up now.

We know that your right to choose should not end at a State border, and it certainly shouldn't rely on your income or your transportation options or whether or not you can afford to take time off from work.

All across America, a strong majority support a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions. We can't stand by and watch while rightwing politicians and judges seem to roll back the clock on women's rights. That is why I am voting for the Women's Health Protection Act and why I urge each and every one of you to do the same.

We must secure the right to abortion nationwide. We must protect the fundamental rights of women across the country—not just in a few States but across the country.

Congress can and must do this by passing the Women's Health Protection Act.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 807 and 809; that there be 2 hours for debate equally divided in the usual form on the nominations en bloc; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that, if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified