

It hasn't been that long ago that Republicans and Democrats stood together and agreed that this was the right thing to do—to make sure that there was no discrimination against American voters. The last time we did this was 16 years ago, in 2006, and on a nearly unanimous basis.

One of the Republicans who voted in support of it was the senior Senator from Kentucky, now the Republican leader, who said at that time, when he voted for the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act in 2006, “[T]his is a piece of legislation which has worked.”

Well, let's make sure it can keep working. I hope my colleagues will come together, in a bipartisan fashion, and join us in supporting the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act as well as the Freedom to Vote Act. Join us in defending American democracy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

H.R. 5746

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I was out here a little while ago talking about why it is so important for us to move forward and vote on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and to uphold the voting rights of American citizens, something I feel very strongly about.

I have had the good fortune to be in the U.S. Senate since the year 2000 and I got here—I should say the election was in 2000; I took the oath of office in 2001. I got here in an election that was decided by 2,229 votes. It took 3 weeks to decide the election. It took recounts. It took verification by counties—and, yes, the vote-by-mail system which was pretty much the majority of votes at that point in time. Not everybody voted that way, but a big portion of votes at that time was a system that was starting to flourish in our State.

And when I think about the year 2000 and the close election, I give thanks to my predecessor Slade Gordon for, even though it was a close election, not contesting the election. If people remember, that was the same year that there was such a close election that people considered what was the outcome in Florida. And yet Al Gore conceded the election to George Bush.

My point is that where have we gotten to today? Because all of those people, George Bush, Al Gore, me, Slade Gordon, even though we had close elections, we had confidence in the outcome of the election, and we moved forward.

We moved forward so much in fact that when our country was attacked just a few months later, we all pulled

together to work together to build a more secure nation. We didn't sit around and say—Slade Gordon didn't sit around and say, “I lost by 2,229 votes.” Al Gore didn't sit around and say he lost Florida by so many votes and the votes weren't counted.

No, we moved our country forward, and here in the U.S. Senate, we even discussed voting rights, and we discussed our Federal role, and we discussed what reforms we wanted to have in the system to build more confidence in our electoral system. We didn't disintegrate into voter suppression activities. I can't say that there wasn't some.

I now call it nostalgia. There were some who said, “Oh, yeah, vote-by-mail. Maybe we shouldn't have it.” I remember one of our colleagues here on the Senate floor, he was saying, “I so much like to go into the polling place. It is my patriotic duty. I like to sign my name. I like to get on with it. I don't want to get rid of that and I don't like vote-by-mail.”

Well, myself and Senator WYDEN, Senator MURRAY, and others successfully defended vote-by-mail. And we can see today where it has now been more embraced in the United States of America and more than the nostalgia that my friend had.

Trust me, I could say a lot of nostalgia about going into a voting place and voting. My childhood was spent getting the vote out because that is what you did in my family. You spent the day getting the vote out; you helped. I remember 1 year, I said to my father, “I'd miss too much school, and I didn't want to miss anymore school, and I had to go to school on election day.” He told me there was no greater education than getting the vote out and that I was going to be doing that. So I can be nostalgic, too.

But right now, I am proud of the 84 percent turnout in the State of Washington in a Presidential election year, thanks to vote-by-mail. And I am proud that vote-by-mail, I think, is the antidote to the accusations that people have about a voting system that they think can be attacked by a foreign government or undermined in an electronic voting system. The fact that when you vote-by-mail, you sign your name, both on the registration form, sign your name on the mail-in ballot, rip off a tab, basically mail in that ballot, and you have proof that you voted. And your signature is the verification. I am going to talk about that in a minute.

Your signature is the verification that that system works. So, yes, I am not very happy that we are here because a lot of the tactics that we are hearing about around the United States of America is about limiting vote-by-mail. It is about trying to stop it or slow it down or raise accusations about how it doesn't work.

And part of the initial establishment of preclearance in the United States in the 1965 Voting Rights Act was about

the great disparity that existed in the United States between States, that some States had very different turnouts than other States in a Presidential election, maybe 20 percent or 30 percent different. And so people were starting to say, “How are you affecting us if some States aren't really empowering their citizens to vote, and the consequences is suppressing voter activity?”

I definitely believe in the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. I definitely believe that, starting in 1965, we had disparity in States and the way they voted, and we did something about it. And we did something about it because people were being discriminated against, and that was the premise of the law, stop the discrimination.

Stop the discriminatory tactics that States were using to discriminate against people so that their votes couldn't be cast. And now, we have updated that law many times over the last several decades in a bipartisan fashion, most of the time signed into law by Republican Presidents. So I don't get the stumbling block here. I don't get the stumbling block why people won't come to the table and help us write the next version of the 1965 Civil Rights Act that is just called the 2022 Civil Rights Act. I don't get it. I don't get why people aren't coming to the table to do that. But I know this, that one of the big lies out there, and the Republicans—I see my colleague was here from Alaska, and I do feel a great affinity.

People may not understand the relationship between the State of Alaska and the State of Washington, but it is a very true affinity. We come from the same part of the world. Our economies are integrated. We have many people who live in both places. We share commonality of culture, of our environment. And my colleague from Alaska was here talking about their vote-by-mail system.

And so the fact that people are telling lies and trying to suppress the vote by suppressing vote-by-mail or calling it fraudulent is very frustrating. It is very frustrating, and it is one of the reasons we should come together in a bipartisan way and support vote-by-mail. We should be empowering people, and particularly in a pandemic, to cast a vote so that we know their voting is counted, so that we can have confidence we had an election and people spoke.

Here, we have Newt Gingrich who said numerous times now, “The biggest way to expand voter fraud is to expand vote-by-mail.” Now, he said that on FOX News. It has been quoted in the paper—not once, he said it several times—or maybe they keep reading the same clip over and over again.

Then his next line, which I didn't put on a chart, is, “And the Democrats want universal access to vote-by-mail.” Well, I am not sure what is wrong with vote-by-mail. We are going to talk about that because I am not sure what is wrong with vote-by-mail.

Seriously, I have seen it over the 20 years I have been in office expanded in our State and in Oregon and now used as the majority of the way that people vote. And so I don't take kindly to his comments or to the former President's comments that somehow this is a fraudulent system. It is not.

(Ms. BALDWIN assumed the Chair.)

Madam President, first of all—I have got a lot of charts here, so you will have to excuse us.

First of all, when you get a voter registration form for vote-by-mail, it says right on the form you must be a citizen of the United States of America to vote. You must be 18 years of old the next election, or—yeah, or 18 before the special election. That is what it says right on the form. There is no mistaking about it. There is no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

You are going to sign your name and attest to these issues. In fact, the attestation basically says, “Knowingly providing false information about yourself or the qualifications for voter registration is a class C felony, punishable by imprisonment or a fine up to \$10,000, or both.” That is a pretty hefty fine. That is a pretty serious issue. I don't think most people are going to say, “Oh, I want to help perpetrate voter fraud because I want to go to jail or I want to pay this fine.”

And the notion that somebody illegally in the United States is going to sign up for this—most of these people are just trying to earn an income and stay on a low profile. I don't think any of them—if you are an illegal immigrant and you sign up for vote-by-mail and you vote-by-mail, you will be deported. You will be deported.

So I don't think people are out there doing this voluntarily because they think this is some great way to gain the system. In fact, the statistics just done by a major report shows that there is less than 1 percent of voter fraud in this system. It is not really this notion that the former President would like to perpetrate.

Well, the biggest reason why vote-by-mail works is what is here, but you don't see it. I guess I should sign my name—because right here, I declare the facts on this registration form are true. I am a citizen of the United States. I live at this address, for at least the last 30 days before the election which I am going to vote in. I am old enough to vote in that election, and I understand the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections; you can't currently be serving a sentence for a felony conviction or incarcerated for a federally or out-of-state Federal conviction.

OK. Right there, you have to sign your name right below that. So this attestation and requirement—oh, by the way, part of the requirement on the form that you get is you also have to put in your driver's license or an I.D.

Now, in many States, you are moving to this enhanced driver's license requirement, which you have to prove

you are a citizen of the United States. Not every application you get at a driver's license office you have to prove that, but this is the information on your voter registration card that you have to prove that you are attesting to the fact that you are a citizen of the United States. It is information that can be searched.

So, now, we come to the actual ballot. I don't know if we have a copy of the ballot here. Well, we will have to go grab one of those. But on your ballot, you do the same thing. You get a ballot. Your ballot has to have that signature on it. You vote who you say you are going to vote for. You put it in a privacy envelope. You stick it in another envelope. And you mail it in. So at the county auditor, they match that signature that you signed on your voter registration card with the signature on that ballot. And that is how they know you are who you say you are.

Now, that is no different, really, from most of the way voting has worked in our country for decades. When you go into the polling place, they ask you for your name. You go to a book, if you noticed, your name and address were there, in a blank space. And they say, Sign your name.

Most Americans probably never noticed at the top of that page was also an attestation that said, “If you are lying about who you are, yeah, you are going to pay a fine, and you are going to jail.”

So when you went to a polling place and you signed your signature, they went back and saw it was the signature that you had on your registration card. So vote-by-mail is replicating that same system. An application card matched to a signature on your ballot. And that is what happened.

Now, that is not to say there isn't attempts at fraud, not to say that there isn't attempts at monkey business, because there is. But it says the system is based on something that is safe and secure and can be validated. I am going to shock some people, I am sure, by saying this, but when I went to vote in the last election, somebody had requested several ballots in my name—several ballots in my name. I am sure it was ill intent. There was nothing good about it.

And when I looked to see that they hadn't counted my ballot, even though I had voted very early in the process, I became alarmed and called the auditor and said, “Why haven't you counted my ballot?”

And he said, “Several people have filed ballots under your name.”

I am sure there was ill intent and monkey business by somebody. So I decided I am going down to the courthouse to see what this was all about. But by the time I got there, the auditor had sorted it out and said, “I found the one signature that matches your signature, and we have counted your ballot.”

So if they hadn't done that, they probably threw it in a pile—“Oh, we

got 10 ballots under this name”—whatever it was. Why did that happen? I don't know. But I know the system worked because he pulled them all aside and, when he got to it, they matched my name with the ballot that existed.

Now, for us in Washington, because we have had some very close elections, the vote-by-mail system has got a lot of scrutiny. We got a lot of scrutiny in a Governor's race a few years after I got elected, and the race got down to several hundred votes, really, I think in the end. It was several hundred votes.

And we had people admitting that they had voted for dead spouses. We had all sorts of things at the end, when people knew that the level of—most elections aren't that close. But when you are down to hundreds of votes and you know that there is going to be scrutiny, the system works. It doesn't mean there won't be a mistake somewhere and that you won't have to redo the count and find it. It doesn't mean that there is absolutely zero, zero, zero, zero fraud.

It means that there is a system based on a safe and secure measure and that you can go back and check it. Now, I love our vote-by-mail system, and the voters are proving it, at 84 percent turnout in the last Presidential election. Sometimes, in off-year elections, we get as high as 70 percent turnout. So it is working in off-year elections.

Who is not for empowerment and enfranchisement of people? Apparently, Newt Gingrich isn't because he thinks it is a mastermind theory or some scenario where we are going to try to take over the world when, in reality, I would say it is the next phase of voting, particularly in an era of pandemic and that we need to have our elections be more secure.

I would say that if people are going to fool around and create distrust in your election system, have a system where you get to tear off a tab and keep it at home and know that your ballot was cast and know that you can count it and know that you can count it again.

In my election when I won by 2,229 votes, the tallies weren't the same each time. They weren't. It changed. It didn't mean they were wrong. It just meant that various mistakes were made, they verified their work, and they were corrected. But my predecessor did not undermine the U.S. democracy by claiming he lost. He didn't go out and try to pass voter suppression laws. He came back here and worked on the 9/11 commission with all of us and tried to defend our country.

But that is not where we are today. We are here with Mr. Trump—President Trump—and on January 6, I sat outside and listened to the President. I really thought, “I am going to go ahead and give a speech that night.” I had no idea what was going to happen to us.

I thought I was just going to speak on the floor that night. I thought that

was it. I had no idea that we were going to face an insurrection. So I was taking notes, I thought I was going to give the speech. Turns out, I didn't get to give that speech. We had kind of a truncated session that night. We give a few speeches. A few people talked. But I didn't give a big speech.

I have been waiting to give this speech for a long time. I have been waiting to repudiate what the President said at his rally for a long time. And the reason is because I cannot stand to have our election system, the basis of our democracy, the basis of our country, why we are the gold standard around the world—I am not sure anybody should go on a codel anymore to witness an election in another country until we get our election system right here.

What are you going to say when you get there? What are you going to say if you are going to go to another country and witness their election? “We know how to do it in the United States”? Because right now we are not proving that. We are showing that we can't move forward on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

Let's go over what President Trump said that night because President Trump claimed that—his first claim that the Michigan secretary of state flooded the State with unsolicited mail-in ballots sent to everybody on the rolls in direct violation of State law. That is what he said last, that is what he said. That is what he said at his rally. “Go down there. Go down there.”

You know, there is moments in this craziness when you realize there are people who will stand up. And I am not trying to embarrass anybody, but I was probably the last person to leave this Chamber, and the Parliamentarian refused to let anyone touch the ballots, even though she could barely walk down the hall, even though she could barely carry all those supplies.

She knew that allowing anybody else to touch these certifications of the election would give somebody the claim that, somehow, somebody had interfered. So people were doing their job, and in this case, the secretary of state, in response to a 2018 vote by the people of Michigan, they approved, in a vote by the people, a no-excuse absentee voting law. That is what the people of Michigan voted for.

So the secretary of state sent out ballots. Some people didn't like that. Some people challenged it. And in September of 2020, the Michigan court of appeals upheld the decision that the secretary of state, citing the Constitution and their authority over elections, that they had the authority to mail those ballots.

The supreme court of Michigan didn't take up that case. They didn't refute it. So it is false. He is trying to say mail-in ballot applications were illegally sent. It is not true. The people voted for it. The secretary of state did her job. The courts upheld it.

He tried to say 17,000 ballots were cast by deceased voters. OK. I mean, to say nothing of the fact that there are probably a lot of people with the name of John Brown in Michigan, there are a lot of people by the same name. But there is a system that uses the Social Security Administration to flag death of deceased voters. And ballots in this case of those who have died are not counted in the Michigan election.

In the State of Washington, if you cast a ballot and you mailed it and you die 2 days later and the election is not until the next week, your vote counts. Now, your spouse can't cast it after you die and say, “My wife intended to vote for so-and-so.” No, no, no.

But once you fill the ballot out and you put it in the mailbox or ballot box, your vote is good, even if you die the next day. That is our State—in Michigan, no. So they did not do this. They did not have this claim that the President had.

And then he claimed the turnout in Wayne County was 137 percent of registered voters—or 139 percent, somewhere in there—also not true. In Wayne County, it was 61 percent of the vote of more than 1.4 million registered voters. So all that he said about Michigan that night was false. It was false. And the courts upheld it. It was just a big lie.

Let's go to the Presiding Officer's State. Let's go to Wisconsin. Trump claimed 170,000 absentee ballots were counted without a valid absentee ballot application. Now, the President knows that her State is infamous—famous, appreciated, for the same-day voting. And in Milwaukee and Dane Counties, a total of 170,000 people did vote absentee ballot, in person in the 2020 election.

They filled out an absentee ballot application, located in the envelope like I showed, and sent in the ballot. So they know who those people are. They know that they were legitimate voters. They didn't vote without an application. They filled out the application as well. So this, too, is part of the Big Lie.

And then Trump claimed that 100,000 ballots were backdated by U.S. Postal workers. That is what he claimed. The U.S. Postal Service Inspector General investigation to the allegations in all of the USPS workers and contractors refuted these allegations. There was no evidence—there was no evidence. There was no evidence that that occurred.

And then the famous thing that the other side of the aisle constantly talks about—which I just don't—I don't understand—ballot harvesting. They think that, somehow, this is going to lead to ballot harvesting.

So Donald Trump claimed that Madison had 19,000 ballots collected by human dropboxes. I don't even know what a human dropbox is. I don't know what he means by a human dropbox or operatives. Well, facing influx, Madison and the city clerk held a pair of events in which people could go to a park and drop off their absentee ballots at sta-

tions set up and staffed by poll workers.

What is wrong with us if we are trying to make it harder to vote in America? What is the premise? If the premise is that you want to certify that people are actual citizens of the United States, great. We have a system. If you want to certify they live there, great. We have a system. We have a fine. We have a penalty. We have a way to investigate them. We have a way to catch fraud.

So what is it? You just want to make it harder to vote? No, no, no. Democracies are about enfranchising the vote. It is a constant effort. The same things we did in 1920 don't apply in 2020. In 2020, it is an information age, and we had a pandemic.

What is wrong with making the vote available to people? So the ballot harvesting, that he claims, did not happen. That is also part of his speech that night. He went on for 45 minutes. He went on for 45 minutes, whipping people up to come down here and attack the Capitol based on these lies that weren't true—big lies that weren't true.

Then he went on to Georgia. He claimed over 10,000 ballots in Georgia were cast by individuals whose names and birth dates matched Georgia residents who died in 2020 prior to the election. He later revised that down. He was like, “Oh, wait. No, that is too high.” He said it was 5,000. And the State election board in Georgia conducted a comprehensive investigation of deceased voters submitting ballots and found four cases—four cases. Four cases.

Again, I don't know what Georgia's law is. I don't know if it is like Washington, I don't know if it is like Michigan's, I don't know what it is like but they found four people. But it wasn't 5,000; it wasn't 10,000. Trump claimed that there were 66,000 people that were under the age of 18 who voted.

I think this has gotten a lot of attention because I think there is been some public accounting of this in the press. I think the secretary of state refuted this several times. But in general, the secretary of state said that there were zero individuals under 18 who voted in the election based upon a comparison of people who voted in the 2020 election in Georgia to their full birth dates. So that also was refuted.

And then Trump claimed—I showed you that attestation on the Washington ballot, the certification that you have to sign, what it says. You can't vote if you are incarcerated or a felon. So Trump claimed that there were 2,500 ballots cast by incarcerated felons in Georgia prison. So there was no mass incarcerated voting of felons.

They did investigate and did find 74 potential felons who they think could have cast a ballot. And guess what happened? They pulled them, so they weren't counted. That is how the system works. That is how the system works. That is what you are supposed

to do. That is why you have the system. So just like the other States—no, those voter claims were false.

OK. Let's go to Arizona, also another claim. He has made a lot of claims since then, but I am just focusing on the ones mostly from that evening because that is what sent people down here and, now, that is what sent us on where we are with candidates all across America pledging Trump-think to run for office, which is undermining our election system and undermining our democracy. And all I want is our colleagues to work together on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. That is all I want.

This can't be more tumultuous than 1965. I am not saying that the former President isn't stirring up a lot. He is. But I have got to believe that we can work together. So he said 36,000 ballots were illegally cast by noncitizens.

Why am I going through this? Because I get a little tired of everybody just saying, "Oh, the courts decided. The courts decided. He was wrong, the courts decided. He was wrong."

No, no, no. People need to have faith in the system. We need to work to build faith in the system. We need to work in a bipartisan fashion to build faith in the system, and we need to stop the discrepancies between States.

The 2020 turnout in Washington was 87 percent; Alaska, 60 percent; West Virginia, 63 percent; Georgia, 66 percent; and Wisconsin, 72 percent. I don't know. I think it is probably a little higher. I don't know. Preclearance was based on that there was 20 percent difference in States voting; 20 percent difference still exists today. How are we working to protect our democracy and enhance voting rights if we are here trying to suppress those rights through these various State actions?

So in Arizona, the President said 36,000 ballots were illegally cast by noncitizens. Well, I showed you that attestation that you have to sign that basically says you are going to jail or you are going to be deported or you are going to pay a fine. And in Arizona, the Supreme Court basically had previously struck down a law requiring that proof, and so they did submit proof of their—they do submit and attest to their citizenship. So they do attest to their citizenship, and since then, Arizona has further enhanced their laws.

And 22,000 ballots were returned that were scheduled to be mailed out. I love this all the time—I love this all the time, this notion that, somehow, somebody leaked a bunch of ballots, as if they all don't have a barcode on them. They all have a barcode on them that you know where they are. They have a number attached to them.

But because we have so many people who vote overseas or vote even here in the Washington, DC, area—some of my staff here get a ballot earlier than I would get a ballot at my home in Edmonds, WA, and the reason is because they know that they live here and it

takes a long time to get the ballot and get it back to the secretary of state.

So they are probably referring to ballots that were being mailed out. The claim was really just a misreading of data that parties that mailed in the ballot on the first day that literally could have been overseas ballots before the ballots actually went out because a previous batch of ballots were already sent.

There was a claim that there were more than 11,000 ballots cast, the numbers of registered voters in the same State in the 2020 election. The secretary of state reported 3.4 million votes were cast out of 4.3 million registered voters for a turnout of 79 percent.

So there weren't more—there might have been at some moment. I mean, one of the things that you see in close elections, particularly in our State because it takes a long time to count vote-by-mail, because, again, you are doing the verification of signatures, is counties will list how many ballots that they have left. No county ever overestimates how many ballots they have.

They don't know because you are still getting them in because of the vote-by-mail. Nobody says they have more ballots than they do because then everybody is going to say, "Where are those ballots," so people underestimate the number of ballots. The consequence is you have different numbers that come in every day.

It doesn't mean there is something wrong with the system—the system, again, based on your signature, on your registration, on your attestation. Again, it is not to say there won't be less than a decimal percent of 1 percent fraud. There will be some things that happen, but it is not pervasive to the system. And there is a way to catch them. There is a way to penalize them.

And 150,000 voters were registered in Maricopa County without voter registration deadline—after the deadline had passed. And a Federal judge, basically, in that case, cited the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and there were 20,000 ballots that basically were registered after October 5. The court legally extended that deadline because of COVID-19.

So the notion that these were all illegal, you may not have liked the court decision—I know the former President does not like the court decision, but this is what the court decided in these cases. These are what voters decided, what States decided. He just doesn't like the outcome of the system.

And the reason why we are here today on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and to try to pass these laws is because our country, based on a democracy, knows that enfranchisement, voter enfranchisement, is something that we have to constantly be working for. I talked about a couple of companies earlier. I would like to talk about a few more, if I could.

The reason I am saying this is because, right now, we need to unite the

free press, the business community, the general public, everybody we can, to say, Let's get behind free and fair elections. Let's get behind the verification of the system. And let's strengthen the democracy we have in the United States of America.

But what did Best Buy say? They support the John Lewis Act. They say, "An election cannot be free or fair if every eligible voter is not given a full chance to vote or if the law exists that make it harder for them to do so."

Michael Dell basically said, "Those rights, especially for women, communities of color, have been hard-earned. Government should ensure citizens have their voices heard. HB-6 does the opposite, and we are opposed to it."

PayPal, an organization, said, "The passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 is pending now in the U.S. Senate and will be an important step towards making free and fair access to voting a reality for all."

These are all corporations who know the importance of doing business in the United States, the importance of a democracy, and they have to be scared about what they are seeing. They got people coming up on stages in rallies all over the United States basically saying, "I will overturn the 2020 election."

Do you think people want to do businesses in countries like that? No. People want to do business in stable countries where you have a free and fair election and you keep going. That is the beauty of the democracy—the people have spoken, as I talked about earlier.

Microsoft, they are really trying to rally everybody: "We hope that companies will come together and make it clear that a healthy business requires a healthy community. A healthy community requires that everyone have the right to vote conveniently, safely, and securely."

So they obviously get it. They know what this is about.

Salesforce, another organization, they basically have said, "As voting rights have come under attack in places like Georgia and Texas, we have used our platform to advocate for the right to vote based on nonpartisan principles and action."

Let's go, the Greater Phoenix Leadership—GPL—"Disenfranchising voters is not election reform. These efforts are misguided and must be defeated."

And this was in an op-ed opposing Arizona Senate bills 1485, 1593, and 1713. And it was signed by 50 Arizona business leaders. The reason I am saying this is because these businesses right now are leading the charge on efforts to try to stop these voter suppression tactics in States, and they are trying to tell us, "Hey, you guys do the same thing here, please. You guys please join the effort and do the same thing here, please."

There is another—well, Coca-Cola, I think they have been pretty clear, although we should see what they say.

This is a statement on Georgia's voting legislation. They say, "We want to be crystal clear and state unambiguously that we are disappointed in the outcome of Georgia's voting legislation. Our focus is now supporting Federal legislation that protects voting access and addresses the voter suppression across the country."

Major League Baseball, they have been pretty clear on this. There is been quite a debate about this. It happened—you know, I don't know what is going to happen this week. I don't know what is going to happen. But I know when we raised questions about the Washington Football Team and spoke directly to the team, we said, "This is the wrong approach. You need to change." They said, "We don't want to."

In the end, the business community, supported by many Native American organizations, the business community told the Washington team it was time to change. So the business community is telling us here, Do not suppress the rights of voters in the United States of America.

So we may not be successful here, but I guarantee you the business community will continue to be loud about this because they know that voter suppression and undermining democracy is undermining healthy communities here in the United States.

So "Major League Baseball fundamentally supports the rights for all Americans and opposes restrictions at the ballot box."

And the Black Economic Alliance, this was a statement on the Georgia voting legislation signed by 72 Black economic and business leaders: "While the use of police dogs, poll taxes, literacy tests and other overtly racist voter suppression tactics are a thing of the past, Georgia and other States are rushing to impose new and substantial burdens on voting laws following an election that produced record turnout for both parties. The disproportionate racial impact of these allegedly 'neutral laws' should neither be overlooked nor excused. The stakes for our democracy are too high to remain silent or on the sidelines."

So all of these organizations—I want to just end with one last one, the Civic Alliance. The Civic Alliance is an organization signed by 1,200 member companies that basically said: "If our government is going to work for us, for all of us, each of us must have equal freedom to vote, and elections must reflect the will of the people. We cannot elect leaders in every state capital and Congress to work across the aisle. We call on elected leaders in every capital and in Congress to work across the aisle and ensure that every eligible American has the freedom to easily cast their ballot and participate fully in our democracy."

So these are the statements of people who are ringing the bell of concerns about voter suppression across the United States of America. These are

the people who are saying it is time for us to act. They are not saying, Figure it out in a few years. They are not saying, This is something you can deal with later. They are asking us to act now.

Usually, the business community doesn't get that involved in stating legislation by House and Senate bill numbers. They usually don't do that. They are usually a little more reticent. They are not reticent now because they know doing business in a democracy is way better than in some scenario of voter suppression.

So I ask my colleagues to join us in getting this done. I see my colleague who has been the leader on this effort overall, the Senator from Minnesota, and I thank her for her leadership on this issue. This has been a hard-fought battle and something she has put a lot of energy into, and I want to personally thank her for that leadership and continuing to fight this fight.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Minnesota.

H.R. 5746

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I first want to thank my colleague from the State of Washington, Senator CANTWELL, for her passion for people and the rights of people to vote, and her willingness to actually go through the details of the groups outside of this Congress that feel so strongly about this, including businesses, as pointed out, that understand that you can't do business overseas—having just come back from Ukraine, from which I just arrived an hour ago—and uphold democracies overseas, if we are allowing our democracy to go to shambles by allowing voter suppression laws to pass, as they have in numerous States across the country.

Just this week, we marked the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and, today, we are considering legislation that goes to the very heartbeat of the democracy—the freedom to vote—that so many have fought and died for.

We are here because a flood of State laws to roll back voting has surged up since the 2020 elections, when in the 2020 elections, in the middle of a pandemic, more Americans cast a ballot than ever before. They were willing to take those risks, and the laws were changed in red States and blue States and purple States to allow them to do that.

But now what do we see? A rollback. A rollback in the Presiding Officer's great State of Wisconsin. We see rollbacks attempted across the Nation in places like Montana, with same-day registration in place for 15 years. And 8,000 people took avail of it in the last election to either change their address or register that way.

So then what happens? Well, say the Republican legislature in Montana says: Why don't we get rid of some-

thing we have had in place for 15 years? Why don't we do that?

Guess what that creates, my friends. Maximum confusion and ultimate voter suppression.

With that core freedom of voting now at stake, it is on us to stand up and to take up the torch that Dr. King and so many brave Americans carried decades ago and acted to preserve the foundational right of our democracy. And while that may sound like an ambitious task, it is one within our reach. By passing the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act, we can meet these challenges and turn back the tide.

Today, I want to address a topic that has loomed large over this historic debate, and that has to do with the very rules of this Chamber.

This week, every Member of the Senate will have a chance to cast a vote that will determine if this is a legislative body that will rise to meet a test. The test is participation and voting. The test is actually being able to take on the issues of our day.

It won't be the first time. Indeed, four times already this Congress, our Republican colleagues have blocked us from even considering legislation to protect the freedom to vote. But we are here again this week. We are here because, to quote Ella Baker, a granddaughter of slaves from Virginia who worked alongside some of the great leaders of the civil rights movement, "We who believe in freedom cannot rest."

So while much has been made of our colleagues who have not committed to join us in this effort to change the Senate rules, we must remain steadfast in the truth that the right to vote in this country is not negotiable. We must forge ahead.

I want to start by responding to some of the points that have been raised as reasons not to move forward with legislation at this watershed moment, as reasons not to do what it takes when it comes to protecting this most sacred of rights—the right to vote.

Some have argued that allowing voting rights legislation to pass the Senate without clearing a 60-vote threshold would be a mistake that would open the door to somehow leading to wild swings in Federal policy. I am trying to imagine this place ever being involved in such a thing given how slowly we go and how many people understandably want to make sure we are careful in how we pass laws, but that is one of the things that have been raised for why we need some kind of a 60-vote threshold, which, of course, is not in the Constitution. The words "filibuster" and "cloture" are not in the Constitution. In fact, legislatures across this land, some of which do very good things, do not use a 60-vote threshold. In fact, democracies across the world do not use a 60-vote threshold.

The truth is this: We have tried for months to persuade our Republican colleagues to join us in supporting legislation, to work with us, to debate it,