

I am proud that S. 2747 also includes my Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act. Spreading false or misleading information or intimidating the electorate remain regularly employed and effective methods to keep individuals, particularly Black Americans and racial minorities, from voting. Advancements in communications, including the rise of social media platforms, have made it easier for bad actors to use these strategies. My provisions prohibit individuals from knowingly deceiving voters about the time, place, eligibility or procedures of participating in a Federal election. It criminalizes intentional efforts to hinder, interfere with, or prevent another person from voting, registering to vote, or aiding another person to vote or register to vote.

The late John Lewis of Georgia was a dear friend and a former colleague. We first won election to the U.S. House of Representatives on the same day. Representative Lewis recalled an important lesson that he learned from the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he said that “each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up, and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act. And each generation must do its part.”

Well, we need to follow Congressman Lewis’ admonition. We can do our part by passing the bipartisan John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, S. 4. Congress has a historic and bipartisan tradition of coming together across party lines to safeguard and strengthen the right to vote, which is the bedrock of our democracy.

Congress passed and the States ratified the 15th Amendment after the Civil War, which declared that “the rights of citizens of the United States to vote should not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

The 15th Amendment also states that Congress—Congress—has the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

That is exactly what the Senate is trying to do with the John Lewis legislation. The bill would restore key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that the Supreme Court severely weakened in its *Shelby County v. Holder* decision.

Fifty-seven years ago, Congress designed the Voting Rights Act to protect equal access to elections for all eligible Americans and passed the measure to respond to widespread disenfranchisement—particularly of racial and language minorities—between the post-Civil War period and the 1960s.

S. 4 would require the Federal pre-clearance for certain changes to voting laws and procedures. It would block changes that restrict the right to vote, particularly changes that disproportionately disenfranchise minority communities. The bill would allow plain-

tiffs and the Justice Department to bring lawsuits that deny or abridge the voting rights of minority voters and restore legal tools needed to enforce nationwide, permanent Federal bans on voter suppression efforts targeting minorities.

We cannot pass voting rights legislation as long as the Senate Republicans continue to filibuster even just to proceed to S. 2747 and S. 4. Inaction on voting rights is not an option as we prepare for our 2022 elections, which must be free and fair so that the American people have faith in our elections and their outcomes, particularly after the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6.

We need to change the filibuster rule. As President Biden just said before the holidays, “If the only thing standing between getting voting rights legislation passed and not getting it passed is the filibuster, I support making the exception of voting rights for the filibuster.”

I agree with President Biden. We cannot take action to safeguard voting rights if we don’t start right now. States are already drawing their 2022 political boundaries to comply with population changes from the 2020 census, and we cannot start our work unless my colleagues allow us to proceed to this issue on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

I urge my colleagues not to filibuster the right of the U.S. Senate to start the debate on protecting voter integrity, where each Member will have the opportunity to debate the issue and offer amendments. Many Senators have offered suggestions about how we can improve these two voting rights bills. Collectively, we have a chance to come together for the American people, something they elected us to do.

We will not reach a consensus if we cannot even proceed to the bills. I will support changing the Senate rules, returning the Senate to its historic role of debating and voting on critical issues.

Voting rights legislation needs to be debated in the Senate and voted upon by a majority vote in the U.S. Senate.

Our noble experiment representing democracy is in grave danger. Let us come together and protect the integrity of the Senate, respond to the threat we saw on January 6 of last year, and take up and pass voting rights legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, January 6, 2022, marks 1 year since the attempted coup at our Nation’s Capitol.

I am deeply grateful for the Capitol Police for their heroic acts on that dark day. The American people will always remember the sacrifices they made to protect our democracy.

But marking this date has another purpose, too. The January 6 insurrection made painfully clear that Amer-

ican democracy is seriously at risk. In November of 2020, American citizens braved a deadly pandemic to cast their ballots. But following that election, the defeated President refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power.

Instead, he falsely sowed doubt about the legitimacy of the election and inflamed his most dangerous supporters to attack this Capitol. His attempts to cling to power through lies and violence were a violation of his oath of office and a grave abuse of power that can never be tolerated in a free and democratic society.

We mark this anniversary not only to reflect on that dereliction of duty, but also to call out the ongoing efforts to undermine our democracy.

Threats to our democracy are not new. For years, in State after State, Republican legislatures have passed laws making it harder to vote, all on a purely partisan basis with simple majority votes. They have imposed strict voter ID requirements and purged voter rolls to disenfranchise minority voters. They have made it harder to vote by mail and register to vote. They have gerrymandered districts for partisan political gain.

Over the past year, these shameless efforts have become even more brazen. Just as the former President was clear that he wanted to overturn the results of the 2020 election, Trump and his allies are entirely transparent about their goal of overturning future elections. Today, Republican opponents of democracy are exploiting every possible avenue to allow their party to maintain control, even if that means overturning the will of the American people.

Rather than putting a stop to these attacks on voting rights, the Supreme Court has enabled them. The Roberts Court gutted the core of the Voting Rights Act, which is why Republican legislatures right now can pass anti-voter laws with ease.

Last year, they destroyed what was left of the country’s landmark voting rights law, making it nearly impossible to block laws with racially discriminatory effects. They twice overturned key protections against dark money in our elections, and they gave a green light to partisan gerrymandering.

The Senate must not turn a blind eye while the Federal judiciary and State legislatures lead an all-out assault against free and fair elections in America. It is clear that Donald Trump’s Republican Party is embracing an increasingly authoritarian movement.

In 2006, the Voting Rights Act was reauthorized unanimously in the U.S. Senate. And yet today, only one Republican supports the Voting Rights Act, and none have endorsed the Freedom to Vote Act. The Senate filibuster means that MITCH MCCONNELL gets a veto and Congress cannot protect the sacred right to vote unless Republican politicians agree, all while they are actively undermining our democracy in State after State.

My view on this is simple: We did not swear an oath to protect a procedural rule like the filibuster, which has been the tool of racial segregation and Jim Crow. No, we swore an oath to defend the Constitution. When the Senate rules stand in the way of voting rights legislation, then those Senate rules must change.

A year after an insurrection at our Nation's Capitol, we must do more than speak up about the importance of democracy. Now, we must act. It is time to end the filibuster, time to protect voting rights, and time to defend our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, all the Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee sent Attorney General Garland two letters about the Justice Department's involvement in local school board matters.

The first one was in October. Then in December, we asked why the FBI's counterterrorism division was getting involved in parents' expressing their concerns at school board meetings.

Now, just to be crystal clear, there is no excuse for real threats or acts of violence at school board meetings, but if there is such threats, these should be handled at the local level, and the Attorney General should withdraw his memo that started this whole thing off.

Well, a couple days before Christmas, the Justice Department responded to us Republican members of the Judiciary Committee with a single-page letter. In that letter, the Department of Justice had nothing to say about why the FBI's counterterrorism division was involved in local school board matters. The Department of Justice just simply said "We're not going to withdraw the memo."

So the Feds may be keeping track of school board meetings, even if it creates a horrible chilling effect at those meetings and maybe even discourages people from coming to those meetings. And, of course, the FBI looking over your shoulder would then have a chilling effect.

Now, next week, the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on domestic terrorism, and I hope the committee will be focusing on the serious threats facing our country, and I hope no one thinks the focus is going to be on our Nation's parents.

School boards have to be accountable to the parents and the taxpayers that they serve. Some school boards across the country are still shutting down classes, even though vaccines have been available for a long time and dramatically reduce the chances of major illness to teachers.

Meanwhile, millions of kids across the country are struggling to catch up. They are under enormous stress from being separated, one kid from their friends in the classroom or in the school building. Schools are seeing far

more behavioral problems than they ever have before.

Parents, then, are right to be concerned about these situations in their local schools, and it is their right to ask questions. They should be telling their school board districts that they want to see changes. But will they see changes or will they be afraid to speak up at school board meetings? Will the FBI's counterterrorism division be keeping track of them as parents ask for changes from their school boards?

The Department of Justice owes the American people a better answer than just a single-page letter that says nothing about why the FBI's counterterrorism division is involved in local school board matters.

Now, more than ever, parents should be their kids' strongest and their kids' best advocates. They have a God-given right to do so. And, of course, the Justice Department ought to be doing everything it can to protect that constitutional right, not scare these parents out of exercising their constitutional right.

Attorney General Garland should withdraw his memo, and he should take Congress' oversight and concerns for parental rights more seriously.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. President, on another matter and the last issue I am going to speak to, I want to visit with my colleagues on the continuing rise of violent crime across the country.

We have all heard about the unprecedented 30-percent spike in murders that began in the summer of 2020. It continues to this very day. Over a dozen cities set new homicide records in the year just passed.

The rise of violent crimes coincides with the defund the police movement and widespread de-policing. Cutting police budgets combined with an antipolice sentiment fostered by local elected officials has led to violence against our police officers, so we have seen a dramatic increase in on-duty deaths in the last year.

I want to quote the Fraternal Order of Police. That organization says that 63 officers were murdered and 346 officers were shot. This organization also reported ambush-style attacks on law enforcement officers spiked 115 percent from 2020. The FBI has reported that unprovoked attacks against officers in which the officers had no official contact with the offender prior to the attack "continued to outpace all circumstances of felonious officers' death."

Other forms of violent crime are also up, as police are forced to retreat from the streets, including carjackings. Chicago saw 1,646 carjackings, compared to 603 incidents in 2019. Minneapolis Police report that carjacking shot up by 537 percent. Carjackings in New Orleans have doubled since 2019. Oakland Police say carjackings increased by 85 percent. Washington, DC, reports a 141-percent increase from last year. In Louisville, KY, carjackings have in-

creased 185 percent. And similar reports come out of cities across the country.

So, you see, criminals are emboldened by what is going on in our country, either through not showing respect for law enforcement or from efforts to cut the budgets of police departments.

Flash mobs—another sort of new lingo that is just new because of the increase in crime—flash mobs have made large organized smash-and-grab robberies a way of life in many cities. You have seen this on television—break down the doors, go in with the hammers, steal everything you can, do it within 2 or 3 minutes, and get out of there. So in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Boston, Houston, Atlanta, Sacramento, Baltimore, Las Vegas, and Seattle, groups of dozens make off with hundreds of thousands in merchandise.

I requested a briefing from the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security on these organized retail crime groups.

This rise in violent crime ought to be unacceptable to everybody, and I am stepping up to find solutions to these issues.

This past December, Chairman DURBIN of the Judiciary Committee held a field hearing in Chicago concerning gun trafficking and violent crime. I submitted questions for witnesses concerning the crisis level of carjackings, the terrible attacks on police, like the murder of Chicago Police Officer Ella French, and failed policies in blue cities that allow violent crime to continue.

I hope the Judiciary Committee will hold a full committee hearing here in Washington on the spike in violence and the challenges that law enforcement is facing, including ineffective bail policies, the cumbersome restraint on police officers, and the impact of the progressive prosecutor movement. Every minority member of the committee, led by myself as ranking member, has written to the chairman to request that we do have this hearing. I look forward to working with him on setting that up.

I hope my colleagues will join me in looking for ways that we can do more to combat violent crime—from carjackings, to organized retail crime, to an unspeakable rise in murders and the murders of police officers. Let's have a hearing where we can learn more about these trends and how we can support police officers. Let's look for ways that we can strengthen Federal criminal laws and Agencies to fight this violent crime. We can't continue down this path or it is going to lead to vigilante law enforcement.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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