

than respecting the will of the people, whether it is the vote canvass boards or legislative committees or other State officials having the power to strike down and overturn the results by refusing to certify them or literally disregarding them.

All of this voter suppression is poisonous. It is toxic to our democracy. And we have an obligation, on this solemn anniversary of that horrific attack, to recommit ourselves to holding accountable those domestic terrorists and violent extremists who stormed the Capitol and hunted us—lawmakers and others—ransacked the halls that we regard with so much reverence, defaced and debased not just the building but the concept of democracy. And we should pursue not only prosecutions against the 700 or 1,000 people who can be held criminally responsible for defacing the Capitol or illegally entering or other acts of violence but everyone who aided and abetted them. They must be held accountable, no matter what their rank or their office, no matter how high the facts and the law will go. I urge the Department of Justice to pursue them, to prosecute them, to make sure that they are held accountable.

We also need to fortify those institutions. And that is why passing the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act have to be among our priorities and changing the rules to make that possible.

My colleagues and I will bring to the Senate floor for a vote in the coming weeks, no later than January 17, those measures in an effort to change the rules to enable their passage. We need to do whatever is necessary to pass those measures, including limiting the filibuster.

There is a direct through line from the Big Lie in the January 6 assault, incited by Donald Trump, to violent extremism and domestic terrorism, to voter suppression and the overturning of elections, eventually to the destruction of our democracy. During the peaceful transition of power that eventually did take place last January, President Biden reminded us that a better world is not something that is given to us; it requires hard work. Unity is not inevitable; it is achievable through what we do to make it possible. Democracy is not a spectator sport.

The values and norms and institutions of our democracy are fragile, as threatened now as they are precious, and they depend on people fighting for them in times of adversity. And truly now we are in a time of adversity.

What haunts me, as I think back on January 6, is how close we came to losing our democracy, how close we came to shattering the traditions and norms—much as the windows of this building were shattered—and how a few people continue to believe they could demagogue and enable Trump to stage that coup.

There is no forgetting what some of our colleagues did. There is no denying it. But we have sought to work together because we come here and we are sent here for a common purpose, which is to meet the needs of Americans, especially in a time of pandemic and economic hardship.

This past year has truly been one of hardship and heartbreak for so many. And as we think back to that day, a year ago, we need to redouble our determination to hold dear the democratic values and institutions that mean elected representatives truly represent the people. That is what elections do. That is why every vote should count and every vote must count. And that is the purpose of the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

We have our part to do. We need to do it. And I hope my colleagues will not only relive and remember but act on it—the common purpose of that day when we came back to count the vote—to make sure that we can come together again not just to honor the people who enable us to do it but also to honor the people of America who elect us to do it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

JANUARY 6

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, why January 6? Why were thousands of Trump supporters here in Washington on that specific date, January 6? They were here on January 6 because that was the last possible day that Donald Trump and his followers could overturn the election in which Joe Biden had just beaten the sitting President soundly—81 million votes to 74 million votes. The gap in the electoral college was much bigger on a percentage basis, 306 to 232.

But Trump and his followers decided that they were not going to just give up power just because their candidate lost an election. And their decision to put power ahead of the rule of law is, frankly, totally understandable.

Over the course of human existence, thousands of second-place finishers, either through election or by the dynamics of power succession, have refused to bend to the rules.

Most recently, Russia briefly flirted with democracy until Vladimir Putin and his cronies rigged the rules to set him up in power permanently. And throughout history, many slighted Princes or Generals have just chosen to seize power, through force or coercion, if they couldn't get it through the standing rules. Wanting power and willing to do anything to get power is as old as civilization. And that is why all those people broke into the Capitol a year ago tomorrow. They were called to Washington by President Trump to pressure Congress and State legislators and Vice President Pence to suspend the rules of succession, void the election, and install Donald Trump as President, even though he lost. Let's

not pretend that anything else happened that day.

Senators CRUZ and HAWLEY and many, many other Republicans were, on January 6, trying to get Congress to delay the certification of electors to give Trump more time to overturn the will of the voters. The rioters came to the Capitol to use violence as a last resort to try to pressure Congress to adopt the Cruz-Hawley plan. They stormed the building, and many of them were explicit when they were here that day, that they were inside the building to support President Trump, to support Senator CRUZ. By the end of the day, dozens were killed or badly injured.

It wasn't a spontaneous random act of mass violence. It was a coordinated attempt to use violence, or at least the threat of violence for many, to void the 2020 election and install Donald Trump as an unelected leader of the United States of America.

History has seen this play a million times before.

But I think here in the Senate, we often get lulled into a little bit of a sense of complacency because the last vestiges of the pre-Trump era of the Republican Party still exist here in the Senate. In the Senate, only seven Republicans voted for Senators CRUZ and HAWLEY's attempt to void Joe Biden's victory. And Senator MCCONNELL and some others here said the right thing that day and the days afterward.

Behind closed doors, many of our veteran Republican colleagues often whispered to us how awful and vulgar the Trump rioters are and how dearly they support the rule of law. But almost never do those Republican colleagues say those things out loud because the new mainstream of the Republican Party—the Trump Republican Party—does not believe that Joe Biden won the 2020 election. Pick your conspiracy theory, but 7 out of 10 Republicans—literally, tens of thousands of Americans—believe that somehow Pakistani intelligence operatives or Italian satellites or Venezuelan communists were involved in secretly switching millions of votes from Donald Trump to Joe Biden.

But maybe more importantly, what leads these Republicans to believe these wild conspiracy theories is a more insidious belief, a belief that if a Democrat wins an election, it must be, by definition, illegitimate. That is why this many Republicans believed Joe Biden didn't win, even though they have zero evidence to back up this claim. They don't need evidence because they just believe the Democrats are evil, that Democrats are illegitimate in governance. And if Democrats win, it just cannot be allowed to stand. Defeating Democrats is, to the Trump Republican Party, more important than maintaining democracy.

We know this because some of the most popular and revered national Republicans are calling openly for the suspension of democracy if democracy

keeps electing Democrats. Congresswoman MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE called for States with Republican Governors to disallow people from voting if they showed an inclination to support Democrats. Our colleague, Senator RAND PAUL, said efforts to convince people to vote—if those votes resulted in Democrats winning—should be illegal.

Sensible Senate Republicans—the ones who whisper the sensible things quietly to us here on the floor of the Senate Chamber—will claim that MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE is an outlier, a fringe character, but she is exactly the opposite. She is the mainstream. She doesn't believe Joe Biden won the 2020 election, just like 7 out of 10 Republican voters. The fact that she is willing to say the quiet things out loud, it doesn't make her fringe; it makes her royalty. The best attended Republican event in my State since the 2020 election was an event headlined by MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE.

She and RAND PAUL and their ilk are the Republican Party right now. They are the healthy trunk of the tree. Sensible Senate Republicans who believe Joe Biden is a legitimate President are the dead limbs, bound to fall off soon in a slight wind.

The mainstream of today's Republican Party believes that beating Joe Biden and other Democrats is just more important than preserving democracy. So that is why they are methodically working to clean up their mistakes from 2020. They couldn't declare Joe Biden's win illegitimate because they just weren't ready on January 6. That is what January 6 was about, an attempt to postpone the certification of electors so they could get ready.

Well, in 2022 and 2024, they are going to be ready. At the heart of this plan is an attempt to just make it a whole lot harder for Democrats to vote by eliminating voting sites in Democratic neighborhoods or eliminating days to vote—days that typically Democrats vote on.

But Republicans are also preparing a secret weapon—a backup plan—if on election night, their attempts to depress Democratic turnout don't work out and a Democratic candidate for Governor or Senate or President still wins. And this backup plan is all about changing who counts the votes. It used to be that even in Republican-majority States, Democrats had a role in counting the votes, either through bipartisan panels or through the ability for cities and counties to choose their own election officials, which often meant that in Democratic counties you had Democrats in charge of counting votes and in Republican counties you had Republicans in charge of counting votes. This has been a longstanding foundation of our democracy, making sure that no one party had the monopoly on vote counting.

If both parties are engaged in the process, there is a lot more incentive

for both sides to play it safe and play it straight—but no more. In Republican-controlled State after State, the rules are being changed to put Republicans and only Republicans in charge of counting the votes and, more consequently, deciding which votes count.

Trump and his followers are making sure that only Republicans who are 100 percent loyal to Trump will be the chosen few Republicans in charge of vote counting.

Everybody has heard that phone call from 2020 in which President Trump personally lobbies the Georgia secretary of state to disqualify just enough Democratic votes in order to shift the State's electors to Trump. "I just want to find 11,780 votes," Trump pleads in that phone call. During that hour-long call, he makes it exactly clear what he wants. He wants 11,780 or more Democratic votes to be disqualified through vague made-up claims of fraud in order to flip the election. He tells you exactly what he wants on that phone call: votes to be disqualified on zero basis of fraud in order to flip the election to him.

The new State laws and the purge of straight shooters like the Georgia secretary of state from the party will make sure that in 2022 or 2024, if an election is close enough to flip to Republicans, the obstacles that were in place in 2020 will be gone.

Now, I know that every Republican Senator, and even a few Democratic Senators, think this scenario that I just outlined is hyperbolic. They think it is a scare tactic. But why would you think that? Trump and his allies aren't even trying to hide what they did or what they are doing. Trump lost the election. He lost the election by 7 million votes, and he didn't care. He did everything in his power, including using violence, to try to stay in power, despite the fact that he lost. Since then, he has cheerled all these changes in State laws.

Do any of you really think that he is doing this because he believes in good governance or clean elections? Of course, not. He has told you in words, in deeds, over and over, what his goal is, and his goal is to achieve power, whether or not he actually wins the election. He is not hiding it. His supporters, leaders of the Republican Party, are now openly calling for States to strip from Democrats, and Democrats only, the right to vote or the right to campaign for election.

This is all happening in front of your eyes, out in the open, right now. And only we—the 100 of us—have the ability to stop this. January 6 was just a preview. It was what happens because Trump and his minions hadn't done the necessary planning ahead to steal the election. They panicked, and they brought violence upon this building.

They may not need a physical rebellion in 2022 or 2024 because they will have changed the rules to make sure that Republicans loyal to Trump are installed in power, regardless of whether they win or lose the election.

None of us are helpless here in the U.S. Senate. We can pass laws that take away from States the power to disenfranchise any voters or the ability to put only one party in charge of vote counting.

A few of my Democratic Senate colleagues think that they are saving the Senate by preserving Republicans' right to stop these reforms. They are wrong. If we don't take steps right now to stop Trump's plan, there won't be a Senate left to protect. That is not hyperbole. If the loser of an election for the U.S. Senate gets seated as a Member of this body in 2023, then our democracy is effectively dead.

It is time we started actually listening to what Trump Republicans are telling us over and over again, out loud, that they are getting ready to do. They have made their choice, and they have chosen power over democracy.

I get it. It is always easier to do nothing and hope that the threat will just go away—just shut the door, box your ears, cover your eyes, and hope for the best. But we are the U.S. Senate. We are the ones that are put on the watch. We are the ones that are supposed to meet the threat head-on and stop it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. HAWLEY. Madam President, had there been a recorded vote, I would have voted no on the confirmations of Executive Calendar No. 489, Armando O. Bonilla, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years and No. 490, Carolyn N. Lerner, of Maryland, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

#### TRIBUTE TO TOMMY WILLIAMS

• Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Tommy Williams of Baton Rouge, LA, on his retirement from the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, LCTCS.

Serving as the executive director for governmental affairs of LCTCS for 13 years, Mr. Williams made monumental