

to the consideration of S. Res. 512, submitted earlier today. Further, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I object.

As chair of the Rules Committee, with oversight of the security of this Capitol, I share Senator HAGERTY's goal and Senator BRAUN's goal of ensuring that this building is open and accessible to the public. I agree with them that it is important to reopen the Capitol, and I personally can't wait to have my constituents back as well for our Thursday morning breakfasts. But we must do this in a way that takes into account the health and safety of everyone who works here and not just the Senators.

This is a decision for the Capitol Police Board, in consultation with the medical experts in the Office of Attending Physician.

While the worst of the Omicron surge is behind us—and that is such a good thing—they have told us there is still work to do. At the same time—and I think this is one of our challenges as we look at how we are reopening and how we do it, because I think we will end up doing this incrementally, and I hope we can start soon—at the same time, ongoing staffing challenges facing the Capitol Police are an important consideration that must be managed carefully by the Capitol Police Board. The Capitol Police are already stretched thin. More than 130 officers have left the force since the January 6 insurrection last year.

At a Rules Committee hearing that I held with Senator BLUNT just last month, Chief Manger testified that the Department is down 447 officers. Let me repeat that: 447 officers. The officers who remain have had vacations canceled and have worked significant overtime. The Department, as we learned at our oversight hearing—we had two in the last 3 months—has taken steps—and I personally asked about this, Senator HAGERTY, because I care so much about reopening the Capitol—they have taken steps to address these shortfalls, including addressing the number of recruit classes, with the goal of recruiting 280 officers per year for the next 3 years. That is additional officers. The Department has also taken steps to retain officers already on the force, including by issuing retention bonuses and hazard pay.

We took a very important step last summer on a bipartisan basis to provide funding for security improvements at the Capitol and to ensure that the Capitol Police have the resources to do their jobs when we passed the emergency funding bill led by Senator LEAHY and Senator SHELBY that the

President signed into law. But, as Chief Manger just said at a public hearing when he explained that we were 447 officers short—which, of course, means who is the at the doors, what doors are open, and what backup do they have—he said we still have a ways to go before he has officers to staff all the posts needed to safely reopen to the public.

So there is still much more work to do. I, for one, am in favor of making changes so we can begin the process of reopening as soon as possible. The Capitol Complex should, of course, reopen so Americans from across the country can visit and see our democracy at work. We are simply relying on the health and security experts to ensure that how and when we do reopen, we do it safely for everyone who works here, including the staff.

For these reasons, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, I greatly respect my colleague from Minnesota, and I have enjoyed working with her on the Rules Committee, but her objection to this resolution provides an unfortunate but clear answer: No, Democrats don't support reopening the Senate.

Hopefully sometime soon, my Democratic colleagues will wake up to the fact that Americans are sick of endless lockdowns and the condescending message that it sends to the American people that they need government to tell them what to do.

With regard to the objection that we need a more measured process in consultation with various officials, I talked to the Capitol Police Chief last week, and we can work with his team and the Sergeant at Arms to address any specific operational issues. We can also work with the Attending Physician. All of that is downstream of the basic question here, which is whether the Senate supports reopening. If the Senate supports reopening, then we can figure out the rest.

Senate leadership sets the policy for the Capitol Building and the office buildings that are under Senate jurisdiction. That is why we have different COVID policies than the House. If it was up to the Attending Physician or the Capitol Police, the policy probably wouldn't change at the midpoint of the Capitol Building, as it does today.

We are the elected officials in the building. We are the ones who were elected to make decisions. We shouldn't dodge that responsibility, and we need to lead by making a clear statement that it is time to reopen the Senate to our constituents. It is unfortunate that many of my Democratic colleagues don't feel the same way. We need to reopen the Senate now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, over the past year, the Biden administration has put out some truly absurd propaganda, but last week, they released something that was so over the top that I had to double-check to make sure that it was real. Yes, of course, it has up here that it was issued February 7, 2 p.m., and it is going to expire June 7 of this year at 2 p.m. It had all the markings of something that was legitimate, but it is so outrageous that I confirmed that it was actually a government-issued document.

Of course, I am referring to the Homeland Security memo that is summarizing the current terror threat to the United States. Under normal circumstances, you would expect a threat assessment to be a helpful document. That is what we have come to expect. But in this case, it wasn't obvious before, but now it is so obvious. It is crystal clear that conventional definitions of the word "normal" no longer apply to this administration.

If you have not read this, you will not believe your eyes. What makes it so uniquely infuriating is the ease with which DHS used an official document to equate violent terrorists with Americans who refuse to fall in line with the Biden administration's narrative of the day. They did it so easily, just laying out their case of threat assessments to the United States.

Alongside descriptions of actual violence and threats against churches and schools, DHS warns of "the proliferation of false or misleading narratives, which sow discord or undermine public trust in U.S. Government institutions." The bulletin specifically identifies "widespread online proliferation of false or misleading narratives regarding unsubstantiated widespread election fraud and COVID-19" as "[k]ey factors . . . contributing to the current heightened threat environment."

Yes, you heard me correct. They identify widespread online proliferation of false and misleading narratives regarding unsubstantiated widespread election fraud and COVID-19.

So let's decode this. They are not just talking about acts of violence committed to achieve a political or an ideological goal; they are talking about dissent. What does DHS suggest someone do if they find themselves menaced in the court of public opinion? They want you to report the offender to law enforcement. That is right—report the offender to law enforcement.

I have come to the floor time and again to detail just how frightened the American people are of Joe Biden's radical agenda, but this bulletin is the best evidence I have seen to date of just how frightened Joe Biden is of the American people. They must be scared to death over there in that White House. How dare anybody question them? How dare anybody call them into question for the agenda that they have? I would even go so far as to suggest that this betrays his administration's desire to police the speech,

thoughts, and opinions of American citizens and to deputize the public to help keep dissenters in line.

The Biden administration is as close as they ever have been to declaring that expressing public disagreement with their agenda is akin to an act of domestic terrorism. Think about this. It isn't just an outrage; it is dangerous for a few different reasons, the most important of which is that it ignores the line differentiating violence and threats from constitutionally protected speech. The former have no place in public discourse. Let me be very clear about that. The former have no place in public discourse. The latter is essential to the functioning of our democracy.

Indeed, this Nation's democracy—one of the reasons we have stayed free and have stayed a democratic republic is because we share respect for robust, respectful political debate. But it appears, with this administration, they have thrown that out the window to say: It is our way or it is the highway. We don't want to hear any dissent. We don't want to hear a point, a counterpoint. We don't want to entertain an objection. We are busy. We are busy pushing our socialist agenda. We don't have time for free-thinking, independent individuals to raise their hands and ask a question. It is "get in line" time. We have a short window. We have to make this happen.

I would suggest also that it cheapens the horrors of actual terrorism and dilutes the perceived danger of violent extremism. It is an insult to the memories of those who died in the September 11 attacks and the Oklahoma City bombing and to those who were at gunpoint at a Colleyville, TX, synagogue. But lastly and most despicably, it suggests that Americans will never be safe until we consent to live in a constant state of fear. According to this bulletin, security is impossible in the face of dissent. It betrays a nightmarish and completely un-American end game.

Today, I sent a letter to Secretary Mayorkas urging him to make it clear that this is just sloppy communication on their part.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have that letter printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FEBRUARY 15, 2022.

Hon. ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS,
Secretary of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY MAYORKAS: On February 7, 2022, the Department of Homeland Security ("the Department") issued a National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin ("the Bulletin") that summarizes the current terrorism threat to the United States. Among other terrorism threats, the Bulletin warns of "[t]he proliferation of false or misleading narratives, which sow discord or undermine public trust in U.S. government institutions." The Bulletin specifically identifies "widespread online proliferation of false or misleading narratives regarding unsubstan-

tiated widespread election fraud and COVID-19" as "[k]ey factors contributing to the current heightened threat environment." To combat these threats, the Bulletin recommends that Americans report "potential threats" and "maintain digital and media literacy to recognize and build resilience to false or misleading narratives."

I am concerned about the appearance of the Department of Homeland Security policing the speech, thoughts, and opinions of American citizens. In issuing this Bulletin, the Department of Homeland Security appears to endorse particular narratives regarding controversial issues that are at the center of our national political conversation. By identifying dissenting beliefs as "[k]ey factors contributing to the current heightened threat environment," the Department comes dangerously close to suggesting that publicly disagreeing with the current administration is akin to domestic terrorism. And by associating opinions that deviate from this administration's chosen narrative with terrorism threats—and asking the public to report these "threats"—the Department of Homeland Security is chilling public discourse across the country.

I urge you to make very clear to the American public that the Department of Homeland Security does not consider those who disagree with this administration to be domestic terrorists. I further urge you to clarify that the Department will not interfere with the rights of all Americans to speak publicly about their political views, including any views that might conflict with the policies and political talking points of this administration.

As the Secretary of Homeland Security, you took an oath to uphold our Constitution. Enshrined in the Constitution is the freedom of speech, and that includes the right to question the government and its preferred narrative. Speech that questions the President's position regarding issues like the COVID-19 pandemic and election law reform falls within the heart of the First Amendment's protections. In fact, the Supreme Court has made it abundantly clear that this kind of "core political speech" is "the primary object of First Amendment protection." It is your duty as the Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure that your Department does not interfere with this core protected speech in any way.

To be clear, violence and true threats of violence are not constitutionally protected speech and have no place in our public discourse. There are real threats to the United States, our homeland, and our citizens from malign foreign governments and terrorists. The Bulletin correctly recognized this fact and aptly referenced the January 15, 2022 attack on a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas as an example of the continuing threat of violence that our nation faces. The Department of Homeland Security is charged with protecting Americans from these true threats. The Department should not, however, police the public discourse of American citizens simply because that discourse might "sow discord or undermine public trust in U.S. government institutions." Indeed, robust public debate—including debate that questions the government and its policies—is central to any functioning democracy.

Many Americans have expressed doubts regarding topics like COVID-19 mask mandates and the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many others have voiced frustration regarding state and federal election laws. Whether this administration agrees with these views is irrelevant; the First Amendment protects all of them from government interference. I urge you to revise the Bulletin to make clear to the American public that it is decidedly not the role of the Department of Homeland

Security to enforce particular narratives or to quash the speech of those who disagree with this administration.

Sincerely,

MARSHA BLACKBURN,
United States Senator.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I would also like to briefly quote for the record precisely what I asked him to do:

I urge you to make very clear to the American public that the Department of Homeland Security does not consider those who disagree with this administration to be domestic terrorists. I further urge you to clarify that the Department will not interfere with the rights of all Americans to speak publicly about their political views, including any views that might conflict with the policies and political talking points of this administration. . . . I urge you to revise the Bulletin to make clear to the American public that it is decidedly not the role of the Department of Homeland Security to enforce particular narratives or to quash the speech of those who disagree with this administration.

This is a very simple request. My hope is that Secretary Mayorkas recognizes his obligation to put everyone at ease by fulfilling it.

I can guarantee there are people in my beloved Tennessee who are very upset, as they have read this bulletin, because they treasure their free speech. They treasure the ability to have robust political debate. They like talking with their friends and neighbors and having those discussions and seeing if they can pull them to their side of an issue, whether it is a local, State, or a Federal issue. They want to preserve that freedom.

This memo says that freedom does go away, that it overrides the Constitution, that it overrides the rule of law. If you do it, somebody can report you, and it will be considered something not tolerated by this administration.

The Biden administration put out this bulletin to highlight a particular danger, but the real danger lies in the document's subtext.

Even if Secretary Mayorkas makes good on his oath to defend the Constitution and if he moves forward to revise the bulletin, I fear much damage has already been done. Through this document, the Biden administration has made it abundantly clear that they view dissent as a threat and that punishing dissent is the cost of maintaining public safety.

I wish I could dismiss this as yet another political spat, but the White House is the world's biggest and most powerful bully pulpit. When the Biden administration talks, people listen, and they take them seriously.

If what I have laid out today is not the position of the Biden administration, it is their obligation to speak up and to correct the record. If it is their position, it is our obligation as elected representatives to put ourselves between the American people and any official who would dare tolerate such a dystopian power grab.

Also, we should remind those officials that how they feel about our constitutional right to dissent is absolutely irrelevant.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF SARAH BLOOM RASKIN

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I rise today regarding President Biden's nominees to the Federal Reserve. I just came from the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, where we met in order to advance an extraordinary group of candidates who were nominated to the Federal Reserve. As our Nation's top economic policymakers, these nominees will be charged with steering our country through one of the most difficult environments the Fed has faced in many years. But Republicans have decided to block any attempt for the Banking Committee to consider this group. Why? Because they object to one of the nominees, whom they have pummeled with particularly desperate attacks.

Professor Sarah Bloom Raskin will bring deep experience to the role of the Fed's Vice Chair for Supervision. During the height of the 2008 financial crisis, she was on the frontlines as the State of Maryland's top financial regulator. As our country sloggled through the aftermath of the crisis, Professor Raskin was a Governor of the Federal Reserve, facing difficult policy decisions as she worked to help families rebuild. She then served as Deputy Treasury Secretary, helping to shepherd our Nation through the postcrash economic expansion—an expansion that has turned out to be the longest on record right up until the pandemic struck.

Professor Raskin has unparalleled expertise in both the monetary policy and financial regulatory components of the job. Few people in the entire Nation are as qualified for this role as she is.

Now, I understand that Republicans are launching hysterical attacks on her over climate issues—never mind that her views align with those of the rest of the nominees; never mind that she has a history of sound judgment at the Fed; never mind that community bankers have spoken glowingly of how well she worked with them during a time of great stress; never mind anything.

The Republicans are also launching bad-faith attacks about ethics without the facts to back them up. If we are going to discuss ethics, then let's be clear. Professor Raskin has voluntarily committed to the strongest ethics standards and postemployment limitations of any nominee to the Federal Reserve ever.

In fact, each of these nominees has voluntarily committed to stronger ethics standards, except one—Jerome Powell. That is right—Republicans on the Banking Committee are united in voting for the only one of the five Fed nominees we are considering today who has refused to voluntarily commit to stronger ethics standards. This is particularly hypocritical because Chair Powell is currently presiding over the biggest ethics scandal in the Fed's more than century-long history.

We should recognize these attacks on Professor Raskin for what they are. There is no actual concern about Professor Raskin's ethics or about her extraordinary qualifications. No. These are bad-faith attempts to take down a highly qualified candidate who is committed to actually doing the job of regulating the biggest financial institutions.

Let's be absolutely clear about what is happening here. When President Biden decided to renominate Jerome Powell to run the Federal Reserve, he did so over the objections of myself and others who believe that a Trump Republican who is a lifelong Wall Street banker and whose record clearly demonstrates an allergy to financial regulation is a dangerous choice for the Fed Chair. I lost that argument. And the President instead extended an olive branch to all of the Republicans in this Chamber who urged the Democratic President to let Republican Jay Powell stay on.

What has been the Republican response to that olive branch? They are lighting that branch on fire. The Republican minority is getting their preferred Federal Reserve Chair, a member of their party, but they won't support the President's extraordinarily qualified Vice Chair for Supervision. Instead, the Republicans are smearing her daily with unfounded accusations and ugly innuendo.

Now, they are threatening to break the Senate by using a loophole to blow up the process we all agreed on last year for how to deal with nominees in this closely divided Senate. The Republicans lack the votes to block this nomination from going forward, so now they refuse to participate in the process that they previously agreed to follow in the hopes that they can prevent a nominee with majority support from getting a confirmation vote.

If Republican Senators want to boycott the Raskin nomination, that is their choice, but Democrats are the majority in this body, and we can choose how to respond. Republicans who want to vote against Raskin are free to do so, just as I intend to vote against Powell, but we should not reward this effort to block nominees with majority support from even receiving votes.

Every one of these five nominees of the Fed should move together and should get votes on the floor of the Senate. If Republicans refuse to abide by the spirit of the agreement they

made last year, then it is up to the Democrats to enforce it. We need to advance all five of President Biden's nominees to the Federal Reserve, and we need to do it now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, as you know and as my colleagues know, our budget process is finally moving.

I wanted to come down to the Senate floor today to say a few words about the need for disaster relief. I am going to talk about Louisiana but not just Louisiana. Two States in particular come to mind: Kentucky and New York. I hesitate to single out specific States because I don't want to denigrate the needs in other States. We have a number of States that need disaster relief, and the way to address that issue, it seems to me, is in our budget bill.

As you know, Louisiana has, like many of our sister States, suffered many natural disasters throughout our history. My constituents, my people, are very tough. They are very tired, but they are very tough. The reason they are tired is because they have been through a nightmare in the past year and a half—I guess 2 years now. They faced what has felt to me like a nonstop series of hurricanes, of storms, of floods. No matter how many times you have been through a natural disaster, I can tell you, it doesn't get any easier to see your home demolished or to see your home flood or to see your business blown away.

That is why, as we are working out a government budget deal—and I hope we can work out a budget deal—I want to make sure that Washington doesn't forget about my people in Louisiana or forget about the other Americans who, through no fault of their own, have sustained damage from a natural disaster and need a little help.

The storms and the floods that hit Louisiana in the last year and a half are not just a distant memory for many of my people. Louisiana families are going to have to live with the consequences of everything the gulf has been throwing at us for a while. That means broken buildings. That means wrecked homes. That means destroyed businesses. That means debris cluttering the streets. And that doesn't even begin to describe the mental anguish of having a hurricane uproot your life and your livelihood and your kids' education and your ability to go to church on Sunday.

I wanted to remind all of my colleagues today of the litany of catastrophes that have befallen my State. I mention this list not to ask for your pity. Let me say it again. Louisianians are tough. We are tough as a boot. We are tired. But I want my colleagues to understand that I am not talking about a simple rain shower here. My people have been through a lot.

In August of 2020, Hurricane Laura made landfall in Louisiana. Hurricane