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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The President pro tempore offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Give us the wisdom, the strength, and the faith to trust in You in all things and above all things.

Let us pray for this great country—a great country, even when its democracy is threatened. Let us pray that we keep it together.

In Your Name we pray. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Amitabha Bose, of New Jersey, to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it is difficult to put into words what it is like to stand here on the floor of the U.S. Senate on this day of all days.

For 163 years, this space has been the home of the upper Chamber of the American Congress. What has taken place inside this room over the centuries has determined in very real ways the trajectory of our Nation. In this room, we carry on the mission handed down to us by the Framers to assure the voice of the people is heard and represented and acted upon.

But 1 year ago today, on January 6, 2021, mob violence descended upon this Chamber and upon this Capitol. Thousands of rioters, possessed by equal measures of rage, conspiracy, and spurred into action by the sitting President of the United States, attacked the U.S. Capitol in an armed, violent, and deadly effort to halt the peaceful transfer of power.

Its windows were smashed. Its offices were vandalized. And lawmakers and our staffs—everyday citizens who love their country and work here every day—feared for their lives. Nearly 140 police officers were injured, and at least 5 people lost their lives that day or in its aftermath.

The warnings of history are clear. When democracies are in danger, it often starts with a mob. That is what

happened a year ago here in this building: a mob attack. And for mob violence to win the day, it doesn't need everyone to join in. It just needs a critical mass of people to stay out of the way, to ignore it, to underestimate it, to excuse it and even condone it.

The mob can start out as a small number, but if it is allowed to grow and leaders egg on the mob, encourage it, it can become poison. That is what Donald Trump is doing, as even his response to President Biden's speech today showed. And once that happens, the unthinkable could become real. Democracy erodes and could, God forbid—God forbid, horror of horrors—vanish.

The poisonous mob mentality lives on today in the threats against election workers, poll workers, even other public servants like school board members and health workers. This is what erodes a democracy. And Donald Trump today continues to spread his poisonous vile about the Big Lie.

To borrow from President Franklin Roosevelt, the violent insurrection of January 6 was a day that will live forever in infamy, a permanent stain in the story of the American democracy and the final bitter, unforgivable act of the worst President in modern times.

Today, on this first anniversary, Members from both the House and Senate and our staffs, the President, and the Vice President are here today at the Capitol, and one of our purposes is to share memories in commemoration of that day. At noon we will hold a moment of silence in honor of those who were lost because of the attack.

And to all my colleagues and to staff who struggle to get through today, you are not alone. You are not alone. We are here by your side. The Employee Assistance Program has resources available to all Senate staff who are processing what happened a year ago.

Let me share my personal experience on that day. As I have recounted many times since then, my personal experience that day was, in some ways, like

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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the opening sentence of Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities": the best of times, the worst of times.

First came the best of times. Twelve hours before the attack, at 4 a.m. in the morning, I learned—or several hours before the attack, at 4 a.m., I learned that our two Democratic Senators had won in Georgia and we would gain the majority.

At 4 a.m. it became clear. I tried to get some sleep, couldn't, got down in my car, drove to Washington, and got to the floor of this Chamber at 1 p.m., for the first time as the putative majority leader.

Within 45 minutes of sitting there and watching the beginning of counting the ballots, a police officer in a big flak jacket and a large rifle grabbed me firmly by the collar like this—I will never forget that grip—and said to me: "Senator, we've got to get out of here. You're in danger."

We walked out the Senate Chamber door, made a right turn, went through another door. This happened to be captured on the videotape above, and it was shown at the impeachment trial, although I didn't even know they had the tape until I saw it at the impeachment trial. But we go through the door. You don't see us for 20 seconds. And then we are running out of the door at full speed.

I was within 30 feet of these nasty, racist, bigoted insurrectionists. Had someone had a gun, had two of them blocked off the door, who knows what would have happened. I was told later that one of them reportedly said: "There's the big Jew. Let's get him."

Bigotry against one is bigotry against all. And I saw something that I had been told later never happened before—the Confederate flag flying in this dear Capitol. That is just one of many searing, grotesque images of that unimaginable, most un-American day.

There were good moments too. I remember when the leaders—Senator MCCONNELL, myself, Speaker PELOSI, Leader MCCARTHY—were sent off to the secret place. We convened after desperately trying to get the President on the phone to ask him to call the rioters off. We spoke to the Secretary of Defense and the Acting Attorney General, but to no avail. But then the four of us got together and said: We are going to come back. We are going to count those votes. We are not going to let the violent insurrectionists stop us. And count the votes we did until, I believe it was 3 a.m. the next morning. That was the moment, amidst a lot of bad moments.

So now we ask 1 year later, how shall our country move forward? What are we to say and think and do in response to a day when a sitting American President, rather than step down from office, unleashed his own supporters to attack the government through mob violence? How can we help those scarred by that day find solace, find healing? How can we make clear to the American people, to the world, and

even to ourselves that our democracy is still whole?

First, we must begin by commemorating our emergency responders who have died, whether through complications from injuries or, sadly, through suicide in the days and months after the violence: Brian Sicknick of New Jersey; Howie Liebengood of Virginia; Billy Evans of Massachusetts; Jeffrey Smith of Illinois; and Gunther Hashida of Virginia. Today and every day, we remember them; we mourn their loss; we honor their limitless heroism in the face of the unthinkable.

Second, we also thank every single member of the Capitol Police, the DC Metro Police, and the National Guard, who kept us safe and prevented a violent riot from turning into something much worse. That afternoon, our Capitol Police were outnumbered, unprepared, and largely left on their own. Just watching on television the brutal beating of one of them by the mob, another being crushed between a door and a wall, just rips your heart apart. You relive that day, and you remember how the Capitol Police suffered but persisted and helped preserve our democracy. When they held the line, our democracy survived. So not only do we thank them but we commit to continue supporting them and fighting for them as they fought to defend this building.

Finally, the only way we will truly move forward from January 6 is by speaking truth to power—we cannot avoid it—the truth about what happened that day, about what led to the violence, and about what it means for our democracy moving forward.

I say this because too many—often depending on their allegiances—seem desperate to sweep the memory of January 6 under the rug. Too many are working to rewrite the history of what happened, to downplay or excuse or even defend the mob, to excuse an insurrection of this very Capitol. Too many are hoping the American people will just look away and forget that day ever took place. After all, they say, Donald Trump is no longer President, right? That can't happen. We can't let that happen. We have an obligation not to let that happen because history shows us that when you ignore or paint over this kind of violent action, it will recur, often in worse form than it had originally. That is what history shows.

We didn't look away after the attack on Pearl Harbor. We didn't look away after the attacks on 9/11. They may have been from foreign powers, but we still—just because it was Americans who did this, we cannot look away after the attack of January 6. What we must do instead is stare the truth, however ugly, in the face: The attack of January 6 didn't come out of the blue. It was not an act of God. It was not something that came from foreign soil. It wasn't even just some mere protest that got out of hand. No, no, no, no, no. January 6 was an attempt to reverse, through violent means, the outcome of a free and fair election, an in-

surrection—call it what it is, what it was. It was fundamentally rooted in Donald Trump's Big Lie that the election of 2020 was illegitimate, in deep offense to the peaceful transfer of power—indeed, in deep offense to the very notion of truth itself.

Anyone who thinks that the origins of this insurrection are going away should just have listened a few moments ago when Donald Trump did it again—lying and lying and lying about the election, a clear reminder of the threat that he and his lie remain to our Nation.

Alarming—alarming—many of his supporters quickly embraced the lie in the aftermath of the 2020 election. Many of them truly believed and still believe that he won the election and the game was rigged—not a small number, large numbers of Americans; if you look at polls, tens of millions.

It didn't matter there was no proof to any of these claims. Donald Trump kept saying it and saying it and saying it again. And he called his supporters to rally here in Washington in a last-ditch effort to stay in power. We all know this. That is what happened. We can't forget it.

It was Donald Trump's Big Lie that soaked our political landscape in kerosene. It was Donald Trump's rally on The Mall that struck the match. Then came the fire. And pouring gasoline on that fire are many in one branch of our media who spread the Big Lie then and continue to spread the Big Lie even though they know it is false, and millions listen to these people and believe it.

Here, too, is another terrible truth: The disease of the Big Lie continues to this day. The attacks on our democracy are ongoing, if not by the force of baseball bats and pipe bombs, then certainly through a quieter and much more organized effort to subvert democracy from the bottom up.

Just as the Big Lie inspired the attack of January 6, the Big Lie continues like a disease across State legislatures throughout the country, where we are seeing the most restrictive voter suppression efforts since Jim Crow—since Jim Crow—in 21st-century America, turning the clock way back.

Let's be abundantly clear. These new anti-voter laws are on the books today only because their authors cited the Big Lie, cited the fictitious bugaboo of voter fraud and are trying to succeed where the insurrection failed.

Unless we confront the Big Lie, unless we all do our part to fortify and strengthen our democracy, the political violence of January 6 risks becoming not an aberration but, God forbid, the norm. And we have seen it, too, with the threats against election workers, teachers, school administrators, healthcare workers. We cannot put our heads in the sand. We cannot brush this over.

What does that mean for the Senate? I think we have to talk about the realities here today too. It means we must

pass legislation, effective legislation, to defend our democracy, to protect the right to vote. We must pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act so that our country's destiny is determined by the voice of the people and not by the violent whims of lies and even mob rule. We must also guard against the false hopes of solutions that don't deal with the problem, that try to cover it up or push it away because people don't want to deal with it.

Some say the answer lies in doing the bare minimum, like reforming the Electoral Count Act that my friend the Republican leader has floated in recent days. Let me take this opportunity to make clear that that plan, the McConnell plan—that is what it is—is unacceptably insufficient and even offensive. Scorekeeping matters little if the game is rigged.

As we know too well, State legislatures are working day and night to undermine our democratic process from the get-go by empowering partisans to potentially say which ballots count and which do not. What good is it to accurately count a result that is compromised from the start?

Senator MCCONNELL's plan to reform the Electoral Count Act would do nothing more than codify the Vice President's ceremonial role in the counting of the electoral college votes, effectively guaranteeing that partisan State legislatures could overturn the elections without fear of recourse. Look at what it does. Look at what it does. It is a cynical idea. It is an idea to divert attention from the real issue because they don't want to confront the real issue.

This cannot be. This should not be about one party versus another. Voting rights have always been bipartisan—supported by Bush, H.W., and W., supported by Reagan—passing this Chamber with large votes from both sides of the aisle. That is what always used to happen until the Republican Party was taken over by Donald Trump.

So it is not about one party versus another. It can't be. It is about one terrible lie against democracy itself, the kind of lie that, if let stand both verbally and in action, erodes our democracy—erodes our democracy.

If a majority of people—there is already a substantial minority who don't believe our elections are legitimate, aided and egged on by Donald Trump and rightwing media. What if a majority of this country, because of these pernicious actions, starts believing it? A majority of Americans don't believe that elections are on the level? Just ask yourself what will happen. I can't predict the details, but I can predict that it will diminish the greatness of this country in small and even large ways.

So we cannot—this should not be a partisan issue. It is about falsehood versus truth. In the history of this country, we have always disagreed on ideology but never on facts until recently and in such an important area.

If lying about results of an election is acceptable, if instigating a mob against the government is considered permissible, if encouraging political violence becomes the norm, it will be open season on this grand democracy, this noble experiment, and everything will be up for grabs by whoever has the biggest clubs, the sharpest spears, the most effective lies.

I do not believe that is the ultimate destiny of our country. The mob may be strong, but the counter is stronger—the roots of democracy, the feelings of the American people. And the affection and love for this grand, noble experiment in democracy are stronger as long as we speak out, as long as we act.

The wellspring of democracy is deep, and even in the most difficult of times, Americans have rallied and risen to the occasion. Since the early days of our Republic, Americans launched mighty movements, fought a bloody civil war, and, yes, passed Federal election laws and voting rights laws to expand the promise of democracy until there were no more boundaries.

We are called on, importuned by the millions who have lost their lives, to defend this democracy, to defend it once again. I call on all Americans—Democrats, Republicans, Independents—to rise to the occasion and ensure that the mob, the violence, the lies do not win the day. Let the anniversary of January 6 forever serve as a reminder that the march to perfect our democracy is never over; that our democracy is a precious, sometimes fragile gift, purchased by those who struggled before us and that all of us now must do our part to keep the American vision going in the present and into the future.

Somehow, in ways I can't predict but I know are true, I am certain that God's mysterious hand will guide us, and truth and right will prevail.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Thank you, Senator SCHUMER, for your leadership and your work and your words today.

As I stand here, I look at the faces of the staff. I remember the moment when we were pushed out of this Chamber for security reasons. I remember the words of one staff member, Leigh, who yelled out: Take the boxes. Take the boxes. She was talking about the mahogany boxes that were filled with the electoral ballots because we knew they would be destroyed if they were left behind.

I remember my own staff—one of them is here today—hearing their stories of being in a closet, hiding in a closet with only forks that happened to be next door to protect themselves, right next to the doors where the insurrectionists had invaded.

I remember the staff throughout this building who were marooned in places and the faces of the police officers, the cuts on their faces, the anguish, and the words of Officer Dunn, who said, at

the end of the day, that he had been called the N-word multiple times and that he had looked to his friends, as they collapsed in the Rotunda, and said: "Is this America?"

"Is this America?"

The haunting words of the police officer on the police radio that was heard broadcast in the middle of the whole thing: "Is there a plan?"

"Is there a plan?"

There were many breakdowns that day, but the biggest breakdown was the breakdown of our democracy; that some people actually felt that they could take the law into their own hands; that they could invade not just a building but our very Republic.

I look back at the words and the speeches that people gave that day, not only after the insurrection, but what was telling was what they said before it started. I think I would urge people to look at those speeches. That discussion that we were having about this had been raging for weeks and for months.

I remember standing at this very place right before we closed down the Senate because of the insurrection and going through the facts—going through the facts about how President-Elect Biden at the time had won more votes than any President in history; the facts that 10 living Defense Secretaries had actually stood up at the time, including both of Donald Trump's Defense Secretaries, including people like Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld and William Cohen, and came together and said that the scurrilous attacks on our democracy must stop, and we must allow for the peaceful transition of power.

Then I looked at the very end of my remarks, and I ended with this right before we were invaded. I said this:

My friend Roy Blunt—

Whom I still have immense respect for what he did that evening.

My friend Roy Blunt, my fellow Rules Committee leader, many years ago, found a statue, a bust of a man at the top of a bookcase. He did research. He went to the historians. [And][a]ll he could find out was that no one knew who this guy was except that he was a cleric. Hence, the statue is called "The Unknown Cleric."

Now, at the time, our leaders [in this great place] thought this man important enough that they would warrant a statue for him, but today no one knows who he is. Senator Blunt's message to schoolkids and Senators alike that visit his office, when he shows them the statue: What we do here is more important than who we are.

And I ended with this:

Senators, what matters is not our futures, not our short-term destinies.

What matters is our democracy's destiny because I think many of us know [that] people will not know who we are 100 years from now or 200 years from now, but what they will know is this: They will know what we did today, how we voted today. [And] that is more important than who we are. [As someone once said,] [i]t is a Republic, if we can keep it.

"It is a Republic, if we can keep it." Those words ring more true now than

they did a year ago because, as we know, the haunting shrieks of the police that day, the officer pinned between the doors at the hands of rioters—there were people who stood up for our Republic, and there were people who attacked our Republic.

I remember Captain Carneysha Mendoza, a 19-year veteran of the Capitol Police, who testified before the Rules Committee, who suffered chemical burns to her face while commanding the officers in the Rotunda while they struggled to hold the doors open.

Who can forget Officer Eugene Goodman, who after saving Senator ROMNEY from walking directly into the mob, ran by himself to take on a group of rioters with his baton and then diverted that mob away from the Senate Chamber, allowing us to safely depart?

Mr. President, who can forget the image right there where you sit on that dais of the insurrectionists rifling through papers on people's desks, opening up their offices and desks?

Tragically, five officers who reported for duty have since passed away—five officers. You wonder why you see sad faces today on many people in this building who were their friends. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick died the day after the attack. Four other officers died in the days and months that followed—Capitol Police Officer Howard Liebengood, DC Metropolitan Police Officers Jeffrey Smith, Gunther Hashida, and Kyle DeFreytag.

Many more suffered physical injuries and even more sustained emotional trauma from the events of that day. We also remember, of course, Officer Billy Evans, who tragically died doing his job at his post in April.

Recognizing the sacrifice of those heroes to defend our democracy is the least we can do. Senator BLUNT and I led legislation, with the support our leaders, honoring those who protected the Capitol on January 6 with the Congressional Gold Medal. It was an honor to stand with officers and their families in August as President Biden signed this bill into law.

We have made many, many improvements to the security of the Capitol. I think it is very important for staff and officers alike and those who work there to know that.

I want to thank Senator SCHUMER for his work in installing a new Sergeant at Arms, Karen Gibson, for the Senate. We have General Walker over in the House, and we have a new Police Chief, Chief Manger, who did an excellent job yesterday in describing the changes. We know there are many challenges ahead.

Last, but not least, is that we do not have enough police officers right now to fill vacancies so people are working double shifts; they are working vacations; they are canceling vacations. We have over 400 openings, an experience that many police departments throughout the country have right now, but one that is very important, and the Chief has committed to fill those vacancies.

But what have we done, the progress? Well, we have, one, gotten new personnel in. Two, we have passed a law in this Chamber and signed into law by President Biden that makes it easier for the Chief to call in the National Guard in the case of emergency. We have made sure that there are operational plans in place as there were this summer when major events occur.

One of the saddest memories of that day was the fact that 75 percent of the police officers asked to defend this Capitol were in plain clothes—75 percent. In many cases, they had less protective gear on than the invaders of the Capitol. That has changed—no more equipment that is going to be locked on a bus that they can't access. With Senator LEAHY's leadership with Appropriations and Senator SHELBY's leadership, we have been able to obtain more funding to get them the equipment that they need. All of those things are important.

But as Senator SCHUMER noted, the other piece of this is our democracy itself. And that means getting to the bottom of what happened. Something is happening right now with the House Select Committee that is working to get the facts. We would have loved to have an independent Commission like the 9/11 Commission to do that, but they are doing that work over in the House.

Yesterday, we heard from Attorney General Garland, who pledged to look at this at every level and to go where the facts will lead. Those were his words. Accountability at every level for what happened here is key, and it is the largest investigation we have seen in the history of America. Over 700 people have been charged. That is a big piece of this work as well—accountability.

As Senator SCHUMER noted, this is also about carrying on the torch of our democracy. The voting rights legislation that we are working on right now couldn't be more important because what was not accomplished with bear spray and bayonets has now been passed on to others to pass bills as we have seen in Wisconsin, where a bill actually passed that would have allowed for only one ballot dropoff box in the entire city of Milwaukee. That one was vetoed by Governor Evers. But others have passed in States like Georgia, in States like Texas. And across this country is a concerted effort to undermine our democracy.

So it is on us, when we take an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States, no matter what party we are in, to hold our democracy dear. It is a precious, precious thing and it is very fragile and it is in our hands to protect, just as our police officers protected it on January 6.

When you have 9,600 threats against Members of Congress—double what it has ever been in the past—that is not a small thing; that is January 6 continued. When you have election officials who have to leave their posts because,

in the words of the election official from the city of Philadelphia, his own family was threatened, their names, their addresses, their house put out on the internet; Katie Hobbs, secretary of state in Arizona, receiving a voice mail saying: "I am a hunter—and I think you should be hunted;" people in rural areas who are elected officials who cannot have the kind of security that people may have in this building—that is January 6 continued.

And we cannot forget our duty going forward. I will end with that image that I will always cherish and the hope that democracy will prevail. At 3:30 in the morning, when Senator BLUNT and I and Vice President Pence took that long walk over to the House with the two young women with the mahogany box filled with the last of the electoral ballots up through Wyoming—there was broken glass on all sides; there was spray paint on statues. It was the same walk we had taken in the morning, which had been so joyful, the celebration of our democracy, so ceremonial—and there we were, the last ones left taking that walk into the House Chambers where we finished our job. So when I look back at that day, that is the lasting image; that in the end, democracy prevailed.

Two weeks later, there we were under that beautiful blue sky with leaders of both parties on that inaugural stage saying that, yes, our democracy stood tall. It brushed itself off, and we moved forward as one Nation under God, with liberty and justice for all, as we always do. And that is the spirit with which we must go forward in the coming weeks as we debate the importance—the importance—of keeping that democracy strong with election laws; that we continue to improve the security in this Capitol; and that we hold the people who did this not just to us, not just to this building but to our very Republic—accountable for what they did.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, these are among the most somber and sorrowful remarks that I have had to make as President pro tempore and also my several decades of service in this body.

What an unthinkable event it is that we are marking today—an attempted coup incited not against a President but by a President, who promoted and still promotes a litany of lies to overturn the results of the election in order for him to hold on to power that he no longer possesses. We are in the business of words, but there are none to adequately capture the damage that he and his henchmen have done and are doing to our country.

I am certain that no one serving here ever thought such an attack on our democracy by a violent insurrectionist mob who stormed the Capitol—the very citadel of our democracy—could ever happen in our beloved country, the world's most enduring democracy.

This very Chamber where we are gathered today was breached. It was desecrated as was the rest of the Capitol.

This morning, in my capacity as President pro tempore, I called the Senate into session. As I looked around the Chamber, so many memories came to mind. I first saw this Senate Chamber as a teenager, visiting from our home in Montpelier, VT, with my parents and my sister, coming to this Capitol.

And then later as a Georgetown law student, I would sit in the Visitors' Gallery and just watch. I saw the Members of the Senate in both parties speaking to the conscience of our Nation—the conscience of our Nation—and trying to protect our Constitution.

In 1975, I came onto the floor of the Senate as the junior-most Member of this body. I was in awe of the Senate then. I never expected to become the dean of the Senate.

But a year ago, I sat on the floor of the Senate as Vice President Pence was announcing the certification of ballots. I saw him doing this in a straightforward and honest way, even though he knew that, at the end of the count, he would soon no longer be Vice President nor would Donald Trump be President.

We were all in the Senate paying attention when suddenly officers came rushing onto the floor, and they took the Vice President off the dais and out the door. CHUCK GRASSLEY, the then-President pro tem, went to the dais and prepared to recess the Senate.

As for most of us, I remember looking around here. We were wondering what was happening, until I saw 2 feet from me a man wearing a vest that said "police" on the Senate floor. He was carrying a submachine gun. I had never seen anything like this in the U.S. Senate. And you recall the police rushed us to the back door to the basement of the Capitol, and they shuttled us off to a secure location. I was still trying to sort through my mind what was happening.

Officers were going through the halls. And one officer came along, took my arm, and said: "We're going to watch out for you, Shamrock."

So many memories flooded back because Shamrock was the police code name for me when I was a recipient of a deadly anthrax letter addressed to me that killed and maimed others. Ahead of me I could see the brave Parliamentarians, and others had grabbed the cases with the certification of ballots. They also grabbed an ivory gavel that is right in front of you now, the same gavel I used today to call the Senate into session.

And when we were in the secure room and were starting to see the television, we saw a mob, Americans who turned into a mob and turned their back on our Nation's constitutional history. They were rejecting everything that made America great. They were ignoring our laws, our customs, and, most of all, they were ignoring our history.

The destruction and rampage was something you would see in a movie. I never expected to see it in the Capitol, a building that has always been a symbol of our democracy.

A suggestion was made when we were in the secure room that we use our authority under the law to vote and make the secure room the Senate Chamber. I said: No, we should not be hiding here. As soon as we are safe to go back to the Senate, whenever it is, we should go back there, all of us, and have the American people see us there.

I said: It may take an hour, it may take 10 hours, but we should be there carrying out the Constitution and saying no criminals can destroy our history, our Constitution, our America.

And I was relieved when virtually all of the Republicans and Democrats who were in that room stood and said loudly that they agreed with me and that we would wait until we went back.

I was standing next to the Parliamentarian and the leather boxes carrying the certification of election. We both looked at them, and I am sure we were both thinking the same thing: We will protect our Constitution. We will protect the Senate. We will protect America.

To the credit of the Members of the Senate and the House, we reconvened after the siege. We fulfilled our constitutional duties to certify the confirmed results of the election—results that every State and Federal court has upheld in the face of blatantly frivolous challenges.

So my thoughts today are not only about how fragile our democracy is but about the heroes of the day: the Capitol Police officers, some of whom lost their lives or suffered grievous and enduring injuries; and those who joined in the Capitol's defense, especially from the Metropolitan Police Department.

That day, 1 year ago, was such a sad and wrenching day. So disturbing was it to see such hatred—hatred and anger—to see the Confederate battle flag paraded in the Capitol, where it never was brought, even during the Civil War, and to see Nazi emblems and other symbols of hate and violence carried by some of those in the mob.

It was so horrifying to see our brave police officers, many of them war veterans who defended America in Iraq and Afghanistan, not just disregarded and disrespected but brutally attacked, even by the wielding of poles bearing the American flag used as bludgeons and spears.

In the aftermath, the National Guard from several of our States were called in to protect the Capitol. I visited with members of the Vermont National Guard. I know that many other Senators did that with their States' Guard troops.

In the moment, that night, and the next day, Senators on both sides of the aisle called this out for the travesty that it was, but amnesia has set in since then in some quarters. There has

been a concerted effort to downplay or grossly mischaracterize the terrible events of that day by some Members in both Chambers of Congress. It was not, as has been said, "just another day in January"—what an insult to those who lost their lives and to those who suffered injuries from which they still struggle to recover.

The question begs and answers itself: What are we in the Senate here for, if not to defend the Republic and our Constitution?

There is a clear need for justice, and the courts are doing their essential work. There is a clear need to know the truth, and even some of the former President's closest supporters are heeding their duty to respond to the bipartisan congressional investigation into what happened that day.

There will be a clear need to learn the lessons, to safeguard and strengthen our democracy, to protect those who serve and protect the Capitol and those who work here.

The courts are dealing with these crimes, but it is detestable how so many were so callously used as cannon fodder. Their actions were wrong, but many believed they were acting as patriots. The former President told them so and egged them on, and they believed him.

Meanwhile, he and so many of his cronies, unlike many of his followers who stormed the Capitol, have paid no price for their roles. They must be held accountable for planning and promoting this travesty and, in his case, doing nothing to stop the assault, even when appealed to, repeatedly, by his closest advisers.

The New York Times has observed our Nation faces an existential threat from a movement that is openly contemptuous of democracy and has shown a willingness to use violence to achieve its end. No self-governing society can survive such a threat by denying it exists. To deny it is to be complicit in what happened.

But, more than anything else, today is a day to remember, to feel sorrow that our great Nation ever suffered such violence and division, to mourn those who died and were injured and to mark the day as history will: the first time in 244 years that our exceptional country was almost prevented from carrying out a peaceful transfer of power, a sacred principle, a tradition in which we have taken pride for generations and which we have taken for granted throughout our entire lives and that we have held up as an example to people everywhere.

Now, our job in Congress is different than the prosecutors' roles. Democracy needs a foundation, and that foundation is nothing less than the truth. It has been said that trust in the rule of law is built in drops and lost in buckets.

Our job is fundamental: Defend and advance the truth. Protect the rule of law itself. And as dean of this body, that is what I will do until the day I walk off this floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip and Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, a year ago today, we witnessed one of the worst assaults on our democracy in living memory. For those of us who were in the Chamber—that includes virtually every Senator—there are images which are emblazoned in our memory. Mine, like others, was of a Vice President sitting, where you are sitting, who shortly after 2 p.m. in the afternoon was pulled off of the dais by two of his security detail and hurried out that door. It is an unusual thing to happen under any circumstances, but while we were counting the electoral college returns, it was amazing and unprecedented.

Then they came up and the Capitol Police instructed us: Stay at your desk. This is going to be a secure room. We are going to start bringing in all the staff, and they will be lining the walls here. We will keep you safe.

Well, we all sat there in anticipation of the next thing to happen and, not 10 minutes later, another Capitol policeman came up and said: That last directive is off. Evacuate this body, this room, as quickly and orderly as possible.

And we all started piling out the doors. As we left and went down the exit stairways just outside the doors of this Chamber, I looked out the window and saw a sea of Trump signs converging on the Capitol. It was an image I won't forget.

We went to what we considered to be a safe location and witnessed over television what most of America was watching.

How serious was it? Well, one misguided soul, a Republican Congressman from Georgia, said it was just a group of tourists—tourists—in the Capitol.

Yesterday, the Attorney General of the United States, Merrick Garland, had a press conference and remarked on the first anniversary of January 6. And among the things he said was this: All of the investigations—the criminal investigations of what happened that day—have disclosed some horrible things: evidence of perpetrators punching dozens of law enforcement officers, knocking them unconscious. Some perpetrators tackled and dragged law enforcement officers. Among the many examples of such violence, one officer was crushed in a door, another was dragged down a set of stairs facedown, repeatedly tased and beaten, and suffered a heart attack.

Some perpetrators attacked law enforcement officers with chemical agents, burning their eyes and skins. We saw it—didn't we?—spraying the bear spray in the faces of these officers.

Some assaulted officers with pipes and poles and other dangerous and deadly weapons. Perpetrators targeted, assaulted, tackled, and harassed journalists, destroying their equipment, and that launched the most comprehensive and perhaps largest criminal

prosecution in the history of this Nation.

According to the Attorney General, 725 individuals have been charged with a Federal crime, and 145 pled guilty already to Federal misdemeanors. Over 325 have been charged with felonies, many for assaulting officers and many for corruptly obstructing or attempting to obstruct an official proceeding. Twenty defendants charged with felonies have already pled guilty, and the investigation continues.

They talked about the assistance they received: over 300,000 tips from ordinary citizens to help our government bring to justice those responsible for January 6. I say that because I listened in disbelief to the polling data which suggests that it really wasn't an attack on the Capitol; it was only a visit of tourists who were in an orderly fashion visiting this building. The videos don't lie. The facts are the facts.

Individuals are paying a criminal price, and their lives will be changed because of their bad decisions to leave the Trump rally and follow his instructions to come up to this building. That is the reality of what happened that day.

But the grimmest reality was the death of five of our law enforcement officials, who have been named and should be named every time we stand on this floor—Officer Brian Sicknick, Officer Howard Liebengood, Officer Jeffrey Smith, Officer Gunther Hashida, and Officer Kyle DeFreytag—and 140 other law enforcement officials who were assaulted, many of them seriously, and are still paying the price for that day in their lives when they stood in defense of us, in defense of this building.

That is the reality, and if nothing more comes of this speech, commemoration today, I hope that all of us, regardless of our political persuasion—the most conservative Republican to the most progressive Democrat, Independents in between; Black, White, and Brown; men and women; rural, urban across America, will finally come to agreement on one thing: Violence has no place in a democracy.

Those who resort to violence, wherever they fit on the political spectrum, do not fit on that spectrum, do not belong in this country. And what we saw a year ago today was violence unbridled, violence provoked by a former President of the United States, and many innocent people paid a price.

I listened as the President and Vice President spoke this morning in Statuary Hall. It was a somber and meaningful occasion, as they talked about what was at stake on January 6 and the challenge we face today. And I thought for a moment what a difference it would have made, in fact, as the President spoke, if Republican and Democratic leaders stood by his side, but that was not to be the case.

You see, when the proposal was made for a bipartisan commission of Democrats and Republicans—commissions

we have seen in the past, from 9/11 and other events that marked our history—that was stopped by Senator McCONNELL, the Republican leader of the Senate, by the threat of a filibuster.

He wouldn't agree to a bipartisan commission to look into the origins of January 6 and what we need to do to avoid them in the future. So I want to salute Speaker PELOSI for organizing a bipartisan committee in the U.S. House of Representatives, who is investigating this matter.

I want to salute my fellow Congressman from Illinois, ADAM KINZINGER, who has had the courage to step forward and be part of it, as well as Congresswoman LIZ CHENEY of Wyoming and the Democrats who are part of that effort. They are serving this Nation as they should: bringing forth the facts, fighting the resistance from those who don't want to tell the truth.

But there is more that we must do. It has been mentioned several times and bears repeating: What is happening across America since January 6 is equally alarming to this assault on the Capitol, and that is the effort by dozens of States across the Nation to restrict Americans' right to vote.

To think of it, in that last election in 2020, we had the largest turnout in the history of the United States to cast votes in the Presidential election, and the response by so many of these States controlled by Republican legislatures is to try to do their best to make sure that never happens again; to restrict the opportunity to vote for eligible Americans, when we should be doing just the opposite.

I have won elections, and I have lost elections. As long as they were fair elections, I accepted the results, and they all were. I was lucky. Sometimes, I won; sometimes, I lost. But I felt at the end of the day that they were fair elections. We should feel the same way about the election that occurred the year before last, in 2020, with the election of Joe Biden as President of the United States.

It was a fair election. It has been certified. I marvel at my colleagues on the Republican side who come to the floor and say we have no right to tell these States what their laws should be when it comes to elections.

This little booklet is in each of our desks. I would commend to my colleagues, particularly on the Republican side, to consider opening it and consider reading article I, section 4. I would like to read into the RECORD: "The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of choosing Senators."

And you go further in and read the Bill of Rights and the amendments to the Constitution. And then Amendment 15 says:

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the

United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Section 2 of the amendment says:

The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

And yet Republican after Republican comes to the floor and questions how we can have the audacity to suggest that we are establishing standards so eligible voters across this country have an opportunity to vote.

It is our constitutional responsibility to do it, and simply making that eligibility turn into an actual exercise of that right is consistent with our democracy.

I know other colleagues are here to speak today. I will close by saying this: What brought that mob to this Capitol was the inspiration of a former President, who provoked them, incited them, and turned them loose on this building, and now, we are led to believe that he sat back and watched on television, as the events unfolded, doing nothing—not picking up the phone, not calling on anyone to stop the violence, to stop the bloodshed, to stop the death that took place in this Capitol. He did nothing for hours until, finally, enough forces came in to reclaim this building.

When I saw the images, the photographs, and the videos of people who were clowning in this Chamber, posing for photographs, going through my desk and other desks, and others taking photographs with their phones, sitting in that chair to pose for pictures to send back home, it makes me sick to my stomach. This is a sacred place. It is not sacred because I serve here or anyone else does. It is sacred because it was built to be a symbol of this great Nation.

It was during the administration of a man from Illinois named Lincoln, who completed the Capitol dome in the midst of a Civil War so that this building would always be a symbol of the unity of our Nation and the promise of our Nation.

That symbol was desecrated on January 6. And now, the question arises: Will we summon the courage to come together and lead to extend the opportunity to vote to more and more Americans, to make this democracy more complete and more just? Or will we step back and accept the verdict of history that we are going to go back in time instead of forward as a Nation?

I trust we will move forward. These American people are great people. Regardless of their political persuasion, they have one abiding knowledge, and that is the fact that we are blessed to live in this country, and we each bear a responsibility to its future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today, along with colleagues, to look back at a year ago, January 6, 2021—I wish this was actually a bipartisan coming together today—a horrible, tragic day in our Nation's history.

But it is not enough to look back. We also need to look at what is happening today because the threats against our democracy didn't go away when those black metal fences came down. Some of these threats against the democracy have found fertile soil right in this very Chamber.

January 6, 2021, will go down in history as one of the worst days our Nation has ever faced. It was disturbing. It was frightening. It was enraging. I know that I will never, ever forget it. Many people who were working here that day still carry scars. Some can be seen, and some can only be felt.

The Capitol Police, the DC Police, the National Guard members, our other first responders, Capitol staff who were there that day are really heroes, and they deserve our thanks and our continued support.

What we all witnessed that day was nothing less than a violent insurrection against the very seat of our democracy and our American form of government. It was sparked by a big lie, concocted by a political loser, and fueled by a network of his supporters.

So let me take a moment to remind everyone that Donald Trump lost the 2020 election fair and square. In my home State of Michigan, in the middle of a pandemic, more people voted than ever before, 5½ million people. And Michigan voters clearly and resoundingly chose Joe Biden to be our President and KAMALA HARRIS to be our Vice President.

But instead of accepting defeat gracefully, like every other President in our history, Democrat or Republican, Donald Trump claimed that the election had been stolen from him. No one likes to lose an election. I have done both, winning and losing. It is not fun. But the election was not stolen from him.

But this Big Lie has fueled the entire movement, people who will stop at nothing, including deadly violence, to undermine our Constitution and our country. They attacked our Capitol a year ago today, on January 6. They will use and incite violence to disrupt future elections if they feel they need to.

And now, they are organizing on the State level to challenge the rules and take away people's freedom to vote. And tragically, our colleagues across the aisle are standing by and allowing this continuing attack on our democracy. We should be standing together, Democrats and Republicans, saying no to this assault on our Constitution and our country.

Republicans said the right things that day. The senior Senator from South Carolina said, soon after the riot, that he was humiliated and embarrassed for our country and that Trump should "count him out." But a few short weeks later, Trump counted him in for 2 days of golf and dining at Mar-a-Lago.

And then there is the Republican leader. He said that the January 6 riot-

ers were "fed wild falsehoods by the most powerful man on earth because he was angry he lost an election." He added that Trump was "practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day." And he was right.

Then the Republican leader and the majority of Republicans voted no on impeachment. They opposed a bipartisan commission to investigate the events of January 6. They blocked three bills to protect our freedom to vote, and they endorsed a Senate candidate who agrees with Trump that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

In total, 147 Republican Members of the House and Senate—147—voted to overturn the results of the 2020 election. And a number of those eight Republican Senators still won't admit that Joe Biden is our duly-elected President.

Why am I focusing on this?

Because our country has reached a critical crossroads: either we are going to come together as Americans, defend our democracy, and look back on January 6 as a painful low point in our Nation's history, or we can turn our power to a mob that is willing to do anything and say anything to dismantle our democracy and destroy—

Mr. SCHUMER. Would my colleague yield for a minute?

Ms. STABENOW. I would be happy to.

Mr. SCHUMER. OK. We are about to approach noon, where we will have a moment of silence, not only in memory of those who were lost and those who were injured, but in all of the workforce here on Capitol Hill, who worked through that day under dire circumstances—they did an amazing job—and in recognition of the great job they do for us every day.

So we thank not only the floor staff, but all of those who work here.

And with that, I think we will commence the moment of silence, and after we finish, I will call on Senator KLOBUCHAR and then Senator STABENOW, who will resume. OK?

So if we might now at 12 noon—well, it is a little before. It is 2 minutes before.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I want to recognize the heroic efforts of our staff, many of whom are here with us today; of our law enforcement who, in the face of overwhelming numbers and an unprecedented violent assault, valiantly placed their lives on the line for this Republic.

It is also an opportunity to remember to recommit ourselves to making sure nothing like this ever happens again. As President Biden said today, our democracy held. We, the people, endured; we, the people, prevailed.

And we devote this moment of silence to those who stood up, not only for this building, not only for the people that worked here, but for our very democracy itself.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President I ask we commence a minute of silence, a

moment of silence, for all of those who have helped us then and help us now, the staffs and everybody else.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now observe a moment of silence in observance of the events of January 6, 2021.

(Moment of silence.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, let me just conclude by saying that either we are going to come together as Americans, which I hope and pray we do, to defend our democracy and look back on January 6 as a painful low point in our Nation's history or we can turn over power to a mob that is willing to do anything and say anything to dismantle our democracy and destroy this grand experiment called America.

The January 6 insurrection tried to overthrow our Capitol, and their side-kicks in suits and ties are trying to overthrow our elections. Just as we shored up our security here to protect the people's House, we need to upgrade our election laws to protect people's freedom to vote.

Today is a day to remember, to be grateful for all of those who risked and lost their lives to protect us, to be grateful for all of those who stood up for democracy and continue to stand up every single day. Today is a day to be grateful that we live in this great democracy called America, and it is a day to reconnect ourselves to protect our freedoms for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, this morning, I have been listening to my colleagues, watching the news, watching our President, and reflecting on this day a year ago and where I was during this incredible insurrection that we now know happened on the Capitol.

I was in my Capitol office here, as we all have an office here in the Capitol. I was getting ready to come to the floor of the Senate and certify that Joe Biden had won the Presidency in a free and fair election. The senior Senator from Minnesota had organized many of us to stand in defense of that free and fair election, and I had been asked to stand in defense of the certified electoral votes in Arizona. And what I had been told, they were going to challenge Nevada. It was a significant moment.

Even before President Biden's victory, people had been spreading lies about the election for political gain, and I had planned to deliver a speech to combat those lies and explain in detail that the 2020 vote count was fair and accurate. So as I left my Capitol office and was walking to the Senate to deliver that speech, it became clear that something unprecedented was happening, because on my way out of my Capitol office, I came across two of my colleagues, one of them here today, Senator SMITH, and Senator MURKOWSKI. They were standing outside an

open door to a restroom that we share amongst our Capitol offices, and I asked them what was going on.

They said: There is a Capitol Police officer in there. He has got something in his eyes, and he is flushing his eyes out with water.

I leaned in, and I saw the officer at the bathroom sink. I thought to myself and I said aloud to my colleagues: I think he has been pepper-sprayed.

I asked him: Have you been pepper sprayed?

He said: Yes, but don't worry. Everything is fine. I am going to keep you all safe.

With that, he dashed back out the door, up the stairs, and outside to protect all of us and everyone else in this building.

Now, I knew there had been a rally going on near the White House and that there were protests. What I did not know that morning was just how close the protesters were to forcing their way into this Capitol.

Now, everyone knows what happened next. As we sat here, all of the Senators, all of the staff who work with us day in and day out, our partners, the next thing we heard was this Chamber being shut down by the Capitol Police, claiming that the Capitol had been breached. They told us to stay in our seats.

This is the safest place for you to be right now, and we will protect you.

At that moment, we could all hear outside the doors. We didn't know what was going on, because we can't see beyond this room, what was happening outside, but we knew. We could hear the voices, and we could hear what was happening. We also could hear, outside of the one set of double doors that we call the hallway with the Ohio Clock that leads to the Rotunda, a lot of noise. It was at that moment, as the noise was working its way toward the Rotunda, that the Capitol Police officers then told all of us to get up and move quickly. We moved out these opposite doors right here, moved as quickly as we possibly could.

That is when everybody came together, all of the Senators—I don't care if they were Republican or Democrat—our floor staff who was with us, grabbing those electoral votes, and we all started going up and down stairs, through hallways, up and down stairs, through hallways, until we could get to a secure location.

As we were going through the hallways and when we got to the secure location, it was clear why this was happening. We were under attack because insurrectionists had been whipped into a frenzy by the false claim that the election in Nevada and in other States was fraudulent. That is exactly what the speakers said during that rally before the violence began.

We saw the same false claims in Nevada, where extremists tried to challenge our election results in an effort to prevent Joe Biden from becoming President. The former President's cam-

paign and his supporters filed a total of five lawsuits challenging the security of the election system and targeting our secretary of state in Nevada. Every one of those lawsuits was thrown out or failed, every single one of them in Nevada. When the official tally was completed, President Biden won Nevada by 33,596 votes.

The Nevada secretary of state not only certified the election, she also investigated each and every claim of election fraud, and she made clear that her office found no evidence of widespread fraud.

Now, I was the attorney general of the State of Nevada for 8 years, and I can tell you from personal experience, when we find voter fraud, we prosecute it. I also know there was, again, no widespread voter fraud in Nevada in the year 2020.

Let me explain what "widespread voter fraud" means because that is now being challenged by some of the former President's supporters. "Widespread" means that there was not enough to have changed the results of the election; that it was still a safe and secure election and Joe Biden is our President. In fact, not only Nevada's elections were safe, accessible, and secure, but across the country, they have been proven to be safe, accessible, and secure.

I also want to share with the rest of the country that in my State, in Nevada, we have enacted important protections for protecting voting rights, including automatic voter registration, vote by mail, early voting, and same-day registration. In the 2020 Presidential election, almost half of Nevadans—people from both parties—took advantage of our vote-by-mail laws.

But because the defeated former President and his supporters were upset that he lost the election, some of them publicized the lie that he had won, and that lie, in turn, spurred members of the public to violence that resulted in five deaths and countless injuries.

Now, we all know, after the Capitol Police helped us move to safety, my colleagues and I from both parties talked about what to do. We knew the insurrectionists were trying to stop us from certifying the election, and we knew we had to finish our job, no matter how late it was. We all agreed that we had to go back to the Senate Chamber so that we could show the rest of the country that we would not let our democracy be subverted by violence; that we would honor our Constitution and the peaceful transfer of power in this country.

I want to make this clear. I would have stood up to certify the valid results of the 2020 election no matter who won. This isn't about partisanship; it is about patriotism. I took an oath to uphold the Constitution and protect it against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and nothing and no one will prevent me from doing that sworn duty.

So I walked back to the Senate floor on the evening of January 6 to finish

my work. I will remember what I saw for the rest of my life. As I walked back, furniture had been thrown everywhere like matchsticks. Trash and broken glass littered the floor. It was like a war zone.

That night, I stood up and spoke in defense of our democracy as I had planned to do hours before. And at 3:42 a.m., Vice President Pence announced that Joe Biden was the President-elect.

We honored the Democratic transfer of power for the 59th time in American history, but I am here to tell you, there is so much to do to ensure that there will be a 60th time. Our democracy is more fragile than it has been in decades. The same bad actors who fueled the violence in the first place, including the defeated former President and his supporters, continue to spread the Big Lie that the election was stolen, and they are using these false claims to pass legislation threatening our very democracy.

Around the country, more than 400 State laws were introduced to restrict voting last year alone. In Nevada, we expanded vote-by-mail drop box locations, but in Florida, Georgia, Iowa, and Indiana, new laws make it harder to use those drop boxes. Nevada has same-day voter registration, but Texas just made it harder to register, not easier. In Georgia, it is now even illegal to give food or water to people waiting in long lines to vote. The list goes on and on.

These are partisan laws. They are designed to favor one group of voters over another. That is not democracy. A real democracy honors everyone's right to be heard. It makes sure that everyone gets a vote and that every vote is counted.

Democracy is a remarkable thing—a system where the people get to choose their own leaders. We all need to stand up for it, just as the countless heroes of our history have done, from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Abraham Lincoln, to Martin Luther King, Jr.

I will not stop fighting to protect our country and our democracy. I will continue working with my colleagues to pass voting rights legislation. We need to follow Nevada's lead and protect access to the polls. We cannot let anyone silence America's voice in their own government.

I also want to recognize many of the heroes who protected us that day, like the Capitol Police officer I encountered that morning. After the attack was over, I learned that 140 police officers I pass in the halls of Congress every day had broken bones or worse. Four of them later took their own lives. These are brave men and women who put themselves at risk every day to protect not just the people's elected representatives but our dedicated staff and the hardest working people here at the Capitol, from the janitors to the cafeteria workers, to the postal employees. All of these people carry their own memories of January 6, and we need to make sure they never have to go through something like that again.

So many of them are still here at the Capitol, still doing their jobs, like the Capitol Police officer I saw earlier who had been pepper-sprayed. But I will tell you what: They give me hope, and they remind me that all of us have a job to do just like we did on January 6. One year later, it is clear that we all must stand united in defense of our democracy. I hope we can do just that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, a year ago, thousands of supporters of then-President Donald Trump—marching under banners supporting secession, conspiracy theories, and White supremacy—violently stormed the U.S. Capitol and breached the Senate and House Chambers in the hopes of overturning a free and fair election in which 7 million more Americans voted for President Biden. There was, of course, no proof and no truth to the claims of aberrant voting that Mr. Trump invented in order to fuel the mob.

The assault on the Capitol was an attack on the United States and on democracy itself. We have the brave men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police to thank for defending the country against what can accurately be called an insurrection, and while the assault failed that day, thanks to the efforts of these officers and their partners from neighboring jurisdictions, an insidious campaign against our democracy continues through the baseless lies and antics of the former President and his associates.

Mr. Trump set the events of January 6 in motion when he refused to say that he would accept the results of the November 2020 election, and he continued to value his ego over our democracy when he urged the mob to march to the Capitol and disrupt the election certification process. He repeatedly lied that the election he lost by 7 million votes had somehow been stolen, when the facts and the courts demonstrated that was clearly not the case.

Stoked by his vitriol, Mr. Trump's supporters used pipes and flagpoles to brutally beat police officers. Some of the attacks were also directed at or were planned to be directed at our own Members in both the House and the Senate, and anyone who refused to subvert the election was a target of the insurrectionist mob. That included Mr. Trump's own Vice President, Vice President Mike Pence. Mr. Trump, who lit the fuse and stood by, his actions sent a demoralizing signal to billions around the world as they watched his supporters assault the Capitol.

One year ago today, the U.S. Capitol Police, Federal, State, and local law enforcement partners, and the National Guard physically cleared the Capitol Building and grounds. The House of Representatives impeached Mr. Trump for his actions. Yet most of my Senate Republican colleagues made the tortured arguments that his actions were reprehensible but not technically im-

peachable. As a result, the democratically defeated former President continues his rhetorical assaults through lies and misinformation. He would rather rip our country apart and undermine our elections and democracy rather than to accept the will of the American voter.

The bipartisan House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack on the U.S. Capitol is working tirelessly to get to the truth of that day. It is methodically collecting and following the evidence despite there being a lack of cooperation from Mr. Trump and his inner circle. The committee must continue to be transparent, and we must all continue to call out the repeated lies of Trump and his enablers.

Every American, regardless of party affiliation, who believes in the right to vote and in upholding the Constitution, should want the truth about January 6 to come out. Congress must rise to the occasion. The stakes could not be any higher. Because of the former President's actions a year ago and his relentless lying since then, a significant minority of Americans now indicates that violence is an acceptable way to resolve political disagreement. We cannot afford to have such a sentiment persist. Together, we must accept the truth, restore trust in one another, and take steps to improve political discourse.

One step we must take is to honor the officers of the Capitol Police, not just with our words but with real support. Last year, we passed a supplemental appropriations bill that provided over \$107 million in additional funding, including roughly \$35 million for overtime, retention bonuses, hazard pay, and student loan repayments for officers. It also provided critical funding to address the trauma experienced by our officers and helped support their mental health needs. But we can't stop there. We have to continue in this fiscal year, 2022, to support our police and to continue to support those who protect us.

I am afraid, if we don't quickly resolve our differences, that we could fall into the state of a continuing resolution, which would actually deny our police—the Capitol Police—and our security forces the tools they will need not only to protect us and protect themselves but also to sustain their morale and their mental health. So I hope we can make progress, at least on that point, of reaching a budget agreement on behalf of the men and women who protect us and who literally, on that day, gave their lives for us.

Now, in addition to that, we have a critical role to play when it comes to safeguarding the rights of the American voter. We have before us the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act ready for passage. We have the opportunity, and the time is now. I continue to urge my colleagues, both Republicans and Democrats, to work together to swiftly pass these critical voting rights bills

that are needed to protect our elections and our democracy.

We must bolster the security, accessibility, and transparency of our elections in order to mend the wounds of January 6 and begin to heal as a nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleagues, and I would like to particularly thank my colleague, the senior Senator from Minnesota, for bringing us together today.

I rise today with my colleagues to commemorate the first anniversary of January 6—the attack on our Capitol and the attempted coup to overturn our democracy.

You know, I have thought a lot about this day over the last year, and I speak today because I think it is important that we are clear about what happened on January 6, how it connects to what has happened since, and what needs to happen next. So let me be direct.

On January 6, there was a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol, led by insurrectionists with the explicit goal to overturn our free and fair elections and the election of Joe Biden. The attack happened because former President Trump and his allies encouraged his supporters to come to Washington. They told them, falsely, that the election had been stolen. He incited them to violence. Then he sat and watched while the Capitol was attacked. These are the facts, and there was no attempt to hide it. It is as plain as that wintery January day.

Now, I am sure that all of us in this room have vivid memories of what happened on that day. Moments of crisis leave a deep impression. For us, of course, this violence happened in our workplace while we were doing our jobs. The Capitol, on January 6, was full of Members of Congress, of national political leaders of both parties, and of a Vice President whom the former President had exhorted his angry mob to hunt down. It was also, though, full of journalists, custodians, and cafeteria workers. In this Chamber were our clerks and colleagues and Parliamentarians and the stenographers. They are here, hour after hour, making this place work.

You are public servants who were thrown into violent chaos and danger by the former President.

As for law enforcement and first responders, let's remember that January 6 was one of the worst days for injuries to law enforcement since 9/11, as a violent mob bludgeoned and crushed and wounded and killed. That is what happened, and no amount of whitewashing is going to change it.

It also happened, when we came back into this Chamber to finish our jobs and to certify the people's votes, that some Republicans spoke the truth about the terrible tragedy of that day.

Senator MCCONNELL said:

The mob was fed lies. They were provoked by the President and other powerful people.

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, sitting right over there, declared in reference to the disgraced former President:

Count me out. Enough is enough.

So, for a moment, it seemed like we would unify in condemning the political violence incited by a President who had betrayed our fundamental democratic principles, but later that night, Senator CRUZ and Senator HAWLEY and six other Senators voted to overturn our free and fair elections, continuing down this reckless path.

Within days, Republican Party leaders and rightwing media outlets began turning away from the facts of January 6. Former President Trump was impeached for his seditious actions, but his hold on the Republican Party was so strong that only seven Republican Senators voted to convict.

Republicans, to this day, continue to promote the Big Lie that the election was stolen from Trump. They claim that the people who stormed the Capitol with zip ties and bludgeons were tourists. They have attempted to portray the violent insurgents as martyrs rather than as domestic terrorists. This is why, today, 58 percent of Republicans believe, falsely, that the election was stolen from President Trump.

The insurrection and coup attempt on January 6 was, ultimately, unsuccessful, but this fight continues in State legislatures across the country, and they are prevailing. According to the Brennan Center, in 2021, 19 States passed laws restricting Americans' voting rights and giving partisan officials, Republicans, unprecedented control over the certification of election results.

Their plan is right out there in plain view. Step 1 is to make it harder for some people to vote. Step 2 is to give partisans at the local level the power to ignore and overturn the people's votes. This is a coordinated strategy connected directly to the events of January 6, and it is the path to overturning our democracy if we allow it. We cannot allow it.

Through the January 6 Commission and through the Department of Justice, we must hold accountable those responsible for the crimes of that infamous day, including those at the top. We also need to pass the Freedom to Vote Act, which provides for basic standards for free and fair elections and fulfills the promise of our Nation that, in this democratic Republic, the people decide.

Not a single Republican Senator is willing to join us Democrats in this endeavor, and that is a tragedy.

Colleagues, I implore you: We cannot let Republicans hide behind Senate rules and block us from taking this commonsense step to protecting our democracy.

In a democracy, a majority of the people decides. That is how it works in township meetings and city halls and

county board meetings and in State legislatures, and that is how it should work in the U.S. Senate. We Senators have the power to protect our democracy, and we have no excuse not to use that power.

On January 6, I woke up early, and I wrote down a few thoughts as I was heading to the Capitol. I had been sworn into office for the third time in 3 years just a few days before. My husband, Archie, had been with me for the swearing in, and he had headed home the day before.

As he left, he said: Are you going to be OK?

And I said to him: For sure. The U.S. Capitol is one of the safest places in the country. I am going to be fine.

Here is what I wrote that morning before I came to the Capitol.

I wrote:

Today is a remarkable day. This morning, I'm filled with optimism. Georgians turned out in record numbers to elect Reverend [Ralph] Warnock [to the U.S. Senate], pastor of Dr. King's home church. And it looks very likely that Jon Ossoff will be victorious, giving Democrats a majority in the Senate. For me, this means the work that Minnesotans sent me to do in Washington can actually get done.

"We will get through this day," I wrote that morning.

I truly believe our democracy is resilient and can withstand this desperate coup attempt. But it's a reminder of how hard we [need] to fight for our core principles, that no one is above the law and that . . . a democracy [is when] the people decide.

Now, little did I know. But my optimism still holds, and my faith also still holds—my faith that we can be worthy of the promise laid out in our Constitution.

"We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Prosperity"—that is our oath and our promise.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise, as so many of us have done, on this day to do a couple of things—No. 1, to reflect and remember. That is important for so many reasons, but we are also here, I think, to express gratitude and commendation for so many who work in this building, the staff and the Capitol Police and so many others who kept us safe 1 year ago today on that awful day.

I will get to some other issues in a moment, but I want to start with just some reflections on what I remember about that day but also what I think the country experienced on a day of horror and terror and desecration—a day when a group of Americans came to this building to stop the counting of the electoral votes, and they were told to do that by the then-President of the United States.

We know all the death that ensued from that, especially of law enforcement officers; something on the order of 140 injures, some of them grievous, permanent injuries to law enforcement—all based upon the violence based upon a Big Lie, a deliberate falsehood that started long before even election day. It started during the course of the 2020 election.

But despite that Big Lie—I don't want to spend all of today talking about that—despite that Big Lie and the violence that flowed from that Big Lie and the near collapse of our democracy, despite that, we know that something on the order of 60 judges throughout the country—Federal judges and State judges appointed by Democrats and Republicans and even some appointed by the former President—called out that Big Lie by rejecting the arguments based upon that Big Lie in about 60 different matters before those judges.

So we know what happened, and I think the January 6 Commission will continue to put the evidence on the record and hold people accountable, but I think on a day like today, I want to focus on two issues. One is to express that gratitude that I mentioned before for the thousands of Americans who work in this building, the thousands who are not Members of Congress who helped us on that day, everything from getting us to safety to making sandwiches for us when we were in a safe, secure room—something that basic.

But, of course, so many Americans now know, after all these months have unfolded, about the sacrifices made by so many on that day, especially law enforcement, but people in this building, who work in this building—have done so for years—they, too, were terrorized on that day. It wasn't just Members of Congress and the Nation more broadly.

We even had the image—the horrible, disturbing, racist image—on television of an American walking through the halls of this building with a Confederate flag. It never happened before. Not even during the American Civil War had that happened.

So when we talk about those who have done so much, here is what we are talking about: We are talking about people who suffered devastating injuries, as I said before, some of them lifelong. The emotional toll that this violence imposed upon members of the staff here in the building, both during the siege and in its aftermath, is almost incalculable. So we are grateful for their service on every day, every day of their work, but especially on that terrible day.

I also want to thank—and we can't do this enough; we can do it a thousand times, and it wouldn't be enough—the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department for all they did to protect us, to ultimately quell the violence, and to literally protect our democracy. These officers were bruised and beaten. They were attacked with

bolts and bricks and bats and bear spray, as we saw so much, as well as stun guns. They had broken bones. They had concussions, chemical burns, scars, stitches, and on and on. That is what violence does to a human being.

They were also subjected to—those who happened to be Black Americans in law enforcement or in communities of color—they were subjected to horrific racial epithets, the kind of language that should never be tolerated not only here in the Capitol but anywhere in our country. Some of them were even attacked by an American flag—by a flagpole with an American flag on it.

So what this all adds up to is, unfortunately, not just a mob going into a building; this is about domestic terrorism. I think it is an important day to be thankful that so many stood up to that domestic terrorism in law enforcement. So we both offer our gratitude and try—as inadequate as it is by mere words—on a day like today to bestow some measure of both gratitude and commendation for what they did on that day.

Finally, Mr. President, I think today is a day for resolve, to be determined to take action, legislative action. The best way we can do that is by passing the Freedom to Vote Act. That is the best thing we can do, not only for the next couple of weeks, but really it might be the most important thing any of us work on.

I want to thank Senator KLOBUCHAR and so many others who have worked on these issues, not just in the aftermath of January 6 but for thinking about the future—the future of our democracy, literally the future of whether someone will have a clear pathway in the right to vote, the ability to vote in ways that so many Americans were able to vote in the midst of the pandemic.

There were a lot of people back in 2020 who said: Oh, you know, in Pennsylvania, you had a big turnout for President in 2016, but that turnout is going to go way down because it is a reelection, and there is a pandemic, and people won't vote, and people will be afraid to vote.

Guess what happened. We went from about 6 million votes in 2016 to almost 6.9 million votes. Almost 900,000 more people voted in Pennsylvania than did just 4 years earlier—probably the highest turnout in more than 120 years in our State, just like it was for the Nation.

Now, that didn't happen in our State just because people were more interested; it happened because we had pathways by way of a change in State law to allow them to vote, very similar to what we are trying to do by enacting into law the Freedom to Vote Act—being able to vote early, being able to vote by way of a mail-in ballot, having a drop box.

What if you are 90 years old and you live in a rural area in Pennsylvania? We have 48 rural counties, by the way.

What if you live in a rural area, and you can't get to the county election bureau to drop off your mail-in ballot? Shouldn't you have a drop box if you are 90 years old and you want to vote? What if you live on a farm? What if you are running a farm and you have a busy life or you are running a small business? Shouldn't you have the opportunity to vote or should you just be restricted to 1 day in the year, 1 day every year for a general election, and if you can't get to vote that day, then you are not able to vote? Why would we go back to those days? But apparently a lot of people in this Chamber are supporting efforts all across the country—hundreds of voter suppression bills.

As Reverend WARNOCK said, seems like some people don't want some people to vote. I don't understand that, after we had record turnout in Pennsylvania from 2016 to 2020 because we had different pathways for people to vote. That is what we are trying to do with the Freedom to Vote Act, to have national standards so people will have a chance to vote in the way that they want, in a way that is helpful in terms of their family life or their work life. But we are at a point now where the Big Lie is perpetuating itself in more ways than one.

Let me conclude with one thought. My hometown newspaper, the Scranton Times-Tribune, published an editorial today.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD and as part of my remarks an editorial entitled "Long year after 1/6/21, it continues," which is dated today.

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

[From the Times-Tribune, Jan. 6, 2022]

LONG YEAR AFTER 1/6/21, IT CONTINUES

It would be sobering enough today to look back on the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, thus on the people of the United States and the nation's representative democracy, as a singular event. That's impossible because the attack continues. It carries on in statehouses like Pennsylvania's, where lawmakers continue to question the outcome of the 2020 presidential election—the most transparent and heavily scrutinized vote in the nation's history—craft bills to diminish the sort of heavy turnout that carried President Joe Biden to victory, waste public money on fraudulent searches for fraud, and gerrymander congressional districts in the cause of minority rule. More than 60 Republican members of the Pennsylvania Legislature endorsed disqualifying Pennsylvania's electoral votes, which would have disenfranchised 6.8 million Pennsylvania voters, on the preposterous claim that the election law that they had passed less than a year earlier unconstitutionally had skewed the election.

It continues in the person of disgraced politicians, such as Republican Reps. Dan Meuser and Fred Keller of Northeast and Central Pennsylvania, who supported a lawsuit spawned in Texas that aimed to disenfranchise their fellow Pennsylvanians. Then they voted in the Congress of the United States, after the mob attacked it, not to certify the duly vetted Electoral College results from Pennsylvania.

It continues in the movement to replace, with partisan hacks, the professional election administrators who resisted pressure in 2020 to cook local and state election results in favor of President Donald Trump.

It continues in the shameless efforts of many Republican members of Congress—who sensibly ran for their lives as Trump-inspired rioters invaded the Capitol—to characterize the Jan. 6 insurrection as anything other than what it was and is.

Another day of infamy.

Americans who care about the future of U.S. democracy cannot view Jan. 6, 2021, as a one-off. It is a date that should be considered in the same sentence as other insidious attacks—Dec. 7, 1941, and Sept. 11, 2001.

Though the Capitol insurrection was not as deadly as the other attacks, it potentially is more serious because it came from within. And the ongoing results are profound. There is no doubt that it has emboldened totalitarians abroad to challenge democratic regimes and movements. It is not coincidental that Russian strongman Vladimir Putin has amassed troops on the Ukrainian border and that Chinese dictator Xi Jinping crushed a democracy movement in Hong Kong and increased menacing conduct toward Taiwan in the wake of the insurrection.

Just as sustained action was required following the 1941 and 2001 attacks, so it is required in the wake of the 2021 insurrection.

Congress must pass the For the People Act, which would establish a host of election reforms, and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Acts, which would restore protections for voting that the Supreme Court foolishly has diminished by weakening the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

That will require suspension or elimination of the filibuster in the Senate, which undoubtedly would produce political howling. But the filibuster is a mere procedural rule in one chamber of the Congress. Allowing any one of 100 senators the power to diminish the voting rights of millions of Americans is not how a representative democracy is supposed to work.

Likewise, Congress should update the Electoral Count Act of 1887 to eliminate its potential to be a vehicle for a coup.

And the select House committee investigating Jan. 6, along with the Department of Justice, aggressively must move to hold accountable not only the rioters, but those who facilitated them in any way.

At some point, Americans might be able to view Jan. 6, 2021, as a crisis that U.S. democracy survived. But that day is not today.

Mr. CASEY. I won't read all of it, obviously, but the point that this editorial makes is that the attack continues today. It is not over. It is not some event in the past that we are just reflecting upon, as important as it is to reflect and remember and offer gratitude and commendation. Here is what the editorial says, and I will just read a short portion of it. It says:

[T]he attack continues. It carries on in statehouses like Pennsylvania's, where lawmakers continue to question the outcome of the 2020 presidential election—the most transparent and heavily scrutinized vote in [our] nation's history—craft bills to diminish the sort of heavy turnout that carried . . . Joe Biden to victory, waste public money on fraudulent searches for fraud, and gerrymander congressional districts in the cause of minority rule.

It goes on from there, saying that the attack continues by all of this work to lie about the election of 2020 and to pass voter suppression bills all across the country.

The good news is, that is not going to happen. We are not going to allow a partisan minority to prevent us from passing legislation to keep that pathway to the right to vote clear in the ways that it was clear so that so many Pennsylvanians and many Americans—as I said, in my home State, hundreds of thousands more voted in a pandemic than voted just 4 years earlier.

So on this day when we remember with horror that day just a year ago and we say thank you to those law enforcement officials and others who work in this building and did so much for us and for the Nation, we also are determined to move forward to protect our democracy and ensure that this great American experiment continues for generations.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, we will be joined shortly by your colleague from the great State of Virginia, and I wanted to address some of the incredible work done by the Maryland and the Virginia National Guard, which was so important that day.

We have fixed a lot of the issues going forward about how they get called in, but that moment when they had to stand up, they did. So we really, truly appreciate their help, as well as other National Guards—from as far away as New Jersey and as close as DC—for helping out that day. They made a critical difference.

I see the Senator from Michigan is here, and we thank him for his leadership of the Homeland Security Committee and the work that we did together in the aftermath of this insurrection to make sure something like this—and to guarantee to the staff and the officers in this Capitol that something like this never happens again.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I thank Senator KLOBUCHAR.

One year ago today, a shocking, violent, and unthinkable attack on the U.S. Capitol shook the very foundations of our democracy. I was here, in this Chamber, as we were conducting the ceremonial certification of our election, and I just remember so vividly as the proceedings were so abruptly paused and the Vice President was hurried off of the podium by the Secret Service and the confusion as we evacuated this Chamber.

And, in that moment, none of us were aware of the brutal altercations that were unfolding all around us as our heroic law enforcement officers and first responders fended off the violent mob of insurrectionists.

The images from that day are absolutely horrifying. They are images that I and this country will hopefully never forget. We are forever indebted to the brave U.S. Capitol Police officers, the DC Metropolitan Police, the National Guard, and others whose valiant efforts

defended a democracy that day and thwarted an attempted insurrection.

Not only did this attack leave front-line officers with serious physical injuries, but it also took the lives of several. The attack has taken an unimaginable mental and emotional toll on first responders, the Capitol Hill community, and Americans all across our Nation who witnessed this assault on the heart of our democracy with their own eyes, either here in person or watching it on television.

Sadly, as we mark this solemn anniversary, the threat that we all watched become a violent act 1 year ago has only continued to grow. In my role as chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, along with Rules Committee Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR, we were proud to lead the first bipartisan oversight hearings—investigation—and report on the immediate changes needed to secure the Capitol and to prevent a future attack.

Since that report was released last June, nearly 16 of the 20 recommendations that we made have been implemented or are well underway. The Capitol is secure, and we are much better prepared for a future attack.

But let us be very clear: We must do more to tackle the threat of domestic and violent extremism, especially as more and more people embrace conspiracy theories and outright lies and report that they believe that violence can be justified to get their desired political outcomes. Once relegated to the fringes of our society, these kinds of views are now creeping further into the mainstream, and that presents a grave threat to the future of our democracy.

There is no easy one solution to address this matter, but there are actions that we can take to protect our democracy and strengthen it for generations to come. Most significantly, our Nation's political leaders, no matter their political affiliation, must condemn the violence that occurred on these grounds 1 year ago and speak out against the lies and conspiracies about the 2020 election that have compelled further threats and acts of violence.

We must also address how this disinformation and other extremist content spreads online, reaches new audiences, and drives too many people down a rabbit hole of radicalization. We have seen all too clearly how the spread of such extreme content online can swiftly become real-world violence. More actions must be taken to limit the amplification of disinformation and extreme content online and to prevent extremist views from reaching that tipping point into violent acts.

And our counterterrorism agencies must ensure that they are effectively focusing on the threat at hand by ensuring that they have sufficient personnel and resources devoted to domestic terrorism and domestic violent extremism.

And finally, today and every day, all Americans must remain committed to

protecting our democracy. We cannot take our democracy for granted. It is built on the promise that every American is committed to the same core values of free and fair elections, the peaceful transfer of power, and an accountable government for all of the people.

If we lose this shared commitment to continue upholding our most cherished principles, we risk losing the very freedoms and the rights that have made our Nation a beacon of light for the entire world.

Every Member of this body—every American—has a vital role in strengthening our democracy. Elected officials on both sides of the aisle and at every level of government should make clear that the lies and violent action that took place on January 6 have no place in our country and commit themselves to restoring faith in our democratic institutions by ensuring that everyone can make their voices heard in our democracy through the ballot box.

One year ago, we saw our democracy endure against a violent attempted insurrection, but we must be very clear-eyed moving forward. We cannot let efforts to weaken and erode confidence in the future of our democracy continue.

Let's come together and take the very real challenges our Nation faces head-on. In times of adversity, our country persevered because we came together as one. We must channel that spirit and strive to create a more perfect Union today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, thank you for that recognition, and it is great to see you safe and secure, out of your vehicle, presiding over the Senate.

It is a great honor for me to follow my friend the Senator from Michigan on this important day, and I want to start by thanking my friend and chairperson of the Rules Committee, the Senator from Minnesota, for organizing us to come together today to commemorate or acknowledge what was a dark, dark day in American history, what happened a year ago.

I want to thank—and I will do this in a more formal way in a moment—all the folks who helped protect us on January 6, a year ago. And I want to commend an organization that I know the Presiding Officer is aware of, as is the Senator from Minnesota and the Senator from Colorado—the World Central Kitchen, led by Jose Andres, who is right now downstairs—Jose is not, but the organization is—serving Capitol Police and other Capitol personnel free meals today.

It is a wonderful organization that supports those in need all across the world and all across the country, and the fact that they are here today saying “thank you” to our Capitol Police and others is appropriate.

Mr. President, I rise today to mark the anniversary of the January 6 insurrection in which a mob broke into this

Capitol, broke onto the floor of the Senate, in an effort to overturn the 2020 Presidential election. This was an effort to undermine democracy, plain and simple.

In the last year, I think most of us have reflected a lot on the effort by our U.S. Capitol Police, the DC Metropolitan Police, the Virginia State Police, and the Maryland State Police that day. They quite literally held the line to protect our democracy. I am personally indebted to those individuals who saved so many lives and some of whom lost their own.

And while others, I know, have already come before me and talked about the incredible role of the Capitol Police and other allies—the Metropolitan Police—as the Presiding Officer knows, the first State police to arrive on the scene were Maryland and Virginia. They actually got here quicker than the National Guard.

But I would like to highlight in my comments today another group of people who helped quell the insurrection, and that was the Virginia National Guard, a group of men and women that I and the Presiding Officer have great pride in. We both have served as Governors of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and one of the most important roles in being Governor—beyond the fact of the incredibly important title you carry when you are Governor—is the fact that we served during those each of our 4 years, the Presiding Officer and I, as the commander in chief of the Guard.

One of the most meaningful parts I recall was seeing off those Guard members, young and old—these are folks who have day jobs and lives and studies and work—seeing them off, deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and to respond in the aftermath of hurricanes and floods and welcoming back these citizen soldiers in a way that oftentimes doesn't get the recognition that they deserve.

But I, again, think back to January 6. As the crowds grew here on Capitol grounds and steadily advanced their positions, eventually into this building itself—and, again, so many of us were here. And I think the Senator from Oklahoma was speaking as we heard the glass break and people shouting, “Quick, let's secure the doors.”

I think all of us who work here, our pages, the great members of the floor staff, with particular recognition of the Parliamentarian staff—we come racing in, and we think about those doors upstairs, which are, frankly, pretty flimsy. We all remember that day and those moments. It was obvious pretty quickly that we were going to need additional force to augment the Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police.

Now, a year ago, it took much too long than was needed to get the National Guard to provide that assistance. We had, at that point, a convoluted system in place that resulted in delays in getting the Guard to the Capitol. I am proud to say that since then Congress—again, under the lead-

ership of our chair of the Rules Committee, Senator KLOBUCHAR—has passed on a bipartisan basis and the President has signed into law the Capitol Police Emergency Assistance Act, which empowers the Capitol Police chief to request the assistance of the DC Guard or other Federal law enforcement agencies in emergencies without the prior approval process that was used in the past: the Capitol Police Board and the kind of bureaucratic hurdles that, frankly, didn't allow the Guard to get called in a year ago.

When the decision was finally made to utilize National Guard personnel, men and women from the DC National Guard, the Maryland National Guard, and the Virginia Guard were literally the first ones to be called up. Within hours of the riot and the Capitol being stormed, while personnel here on the ground were still working to secure and fully regain control of the Capitol Complex, men and women in the Virginia National Guard were ready for deployment.

(Mr. KING assumed the Chair.)

As I mentioned earlier, those of us—and I see now the Presiding Officer is the former Governor of Maine. He had that same responsibility that I had and the previous Presiding Officer had as Governors to be commander in chief of our Guards.

We know firsthand that the National Guard in each of our respective States is a civilian force. These men and women who were called up on January 6 and 7 were called from their jobs, their studies, and most importantly, their families. They were called from cities and towns and big cities and small farming communities all across the Commonwealth. Within hours, they mobilized for a domestic deployment to our National Capitol.

I remember one Guard member I met, who lived in Arlington—he was working, got the deployment call, rushed back home to pick up some clothes, take a shower, and had, frankly, to drive all the way down—I think they were mustering in Newport News at that point and then were redeployed up here at the Capitol the next morning.

On January 7, the morning following the riot, the first National Guard personnel arrived on the scene to support the ongoing security effort and to protect against the possibility of future threats.

Folks in this room remember how uncertain the immediate aftermath was. The men and women of the Guard arrived in DC fully armed and had been told to prepare for the possibility of confronting heavily armed rioters and protesters—not tourists; heavily armed rioters and protesters—and even the possibility that some of those rioters and protesters might bring bombs or IEDs that could have been placed in the vicinity of the Capitol. We still haven't found the source of those bombs that were placed at the Democratic and Republican National Committees.

The weeks leading up to the inauguration, after the 7th and before the 21st, even more National Guard personnel poured into DC from across the country. The Virginia National Guard continued to perform a critical and outsized role in this response, with nearly 2,500 men and women—close to 10 percent of the total Guard presence in DC—securing the Capitol grounds and Library of Congress, providing quick-reaction capabilities to Capitol, Metropolitan, and Park Police, and adding critical communications, medical, logistical, and chaplain support.

I want to specifically highlight the Virginia National Guard's 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which played a leading role in protecting our Capitol in the weeks following January 6.

The IBCT, under the command of COL Chris Samulski, led a task force of more than 7,400 airmen and soldiers from 12 different States and was responsible for maintaining the physical security of the Capitol grounds leading up to the inauguration.

Twice during their mission here at the Capitol, I had the privilege of meeting with the Virginia Guard. What I heard time and again was the great mix of emotion that came with this deployment. These women and men had volunteered for duty to serve the United States and protect our Constitution, but what they normally expect that duty to ensue was protecting us against our foreign enemies.

I see my friend, my colleague from Virginia. I know he visited with the Guard as well.

Many of these men and women had been deployed—in some cases, multiple times—to Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of these soldiers and airmen had been deployed in the aftermath of hurricanes and storms and natural disasters. None of them, not only from Virginia but from any other State that was mustered here, had ever been deployed when the frontline against people who wanted to overthrow our government was not abroad but right here in our Nation's Capital. They were as shocked as all of us that this very building where we work every day needed National Guard protection.

The truth was, they would spend weeks on duty, camped out in our Capitol and around the congressional office buildings. Again, I thank the chairman of the Rules Committee. When sometimes they didn't get a fair shake or tried to get pushed aside, many of us, under her leadership, said: No, these folks should not be pushed out in the cold because somebody wants their parking space back.

I remember their kind of uncertainty. They were kind of saying: Senator, we didn't think we would ever be here. But I also remember their pride in serving as part of this historic mission and their direct role in safeguarding our democracy. Their presence during that time, all the way through the inauguration when there

were still concerns that the mobs might be back, I think helped calm the Capitol, not just Members but those who were pages at that point and the many, many staff. They helped calm the Capitol and our country.

While we faced and still face unprecedented challenges as a nation, the work and dedication of the men and women of the Guard demonstrated that our democracy is stronger than the destructive behavior of any mob.

This is important because the events of January 6 were not an isolated event. What happened that day was the product of the Big Lie, perpetrated by a former President and cultivated by those who wished to chip away at the sacred values upon which our Nation was founded. Those same individuals—those same individuals—in many instances continue to stoke that lie that our elections are not secure and that they are better off in the hands of partisan officials with the authority to overturn the results if somehow those partisan officials don't like the results of the people.

Fueled by the Big Lie, a number of States across the country are changing laws to undermine the right to vote in free and fair elections. The rights of all Americans but especially minority Americans—people of color, young Americans—are being attacked, and the basic tenets of our democracy are under siege.

These changes to voting laws are un-American; for example, what happened on Wednesday, where, as we heard yesterday—oftentimes in precincts of color, particularly precincts with a heavy concentration of African Americans, you wait not an hour or 10 minutes in line; you wait 2, 5, 8, 10 hours in line. So the idea that we can't give you any water or food while you are waiting that 10 hours in line, who is going to vote? In States like Texas, where they are saying a local government can overturn the results of a local election—that is not democracy. It is despicable that some people want to make it harder for eligible Americans to participate in our democracy.

One of the things that we saw and that I am very proud of in the Commonwealth of Virginia is that we dramatically expanded our voting rights this year. We had an unprecedented turnout. It resulted in favor of one party. Our candidate of choice didn't win. The Republican candidate won because he helped turn out the early vote.

The notion—I don't understand those who are trying to restrict. What are people afraid of when more people participate? Consequently, that is why we need to act now to protect our democracy by passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act. Since the Senate has shown it cannot do this basic duty and find 60 Senators to support basic voting rights, it is time to change the Senate rules so the filibuster can't be abused to continue blocking vital voting rights legislation.

I can think of no better way to honor the sacrifices that were made in defense of our democracy last year than by passing these bills to prevent further subversion of our electoral system and safeguard our democracy for future generations.

I note my former colleague passed today. I wish many of my Republican colleagues were here so they, too, could stand up and express their views and thoughts on what happened a year ago. I hope, even if they are not here today or tomorrow, that next week, they will come to the floor as well. Let their voices be heard. What do they think a year after on January 6? Is that acceptable behavior? What do they think about the efforts to try to restrict voting all across many places of the South? But that is going to change as more and more State legislatures come in this year. What are their views on these critical issues? Where do they stand on protecting Americans' right to vote and preserving our democracy, which was under assault a year ago?

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues in marking a very solemn anniversary. A year ago, our former President, Donald Trump, and his Big Lie about the 2020 election incited a violent insurrection on our Nation's Capitol and an attack on our very democracy.

We must never forget this dark day in our Nation's history. We must never forget the heroic work of the Capitol Police, the Metropolitan Police, and the National Guard to protect all of us and this institution and its critical work from that violent mob. We must never tolerate such an attack on our democracy and our democratic values.

That disgraceful day led to the deaths and injuries of brave people in uniform, created lasting scars for countless members of our community, and further opened the door to undermine our trusted democratic process for generations to come.

I applaud the ongoing efforts of the House Select Committee, bipartisan in nature, to uncover the truth, to provide accountability, and to ensure that this never happens again in our country. But Congress cannot stop at making clear to the American people how January 6 came to be and ensuring those who contributed to this tragic attack on our Nation and its institutions face the consequences of their actions.

We must also act to protect the right of every eligible American to vote and to secure the integrity of our elections against partisan interference because the Big Lie hasn't gone away—far from it. Across the country, Republican State legislatures are using it to justify attacking our democracy time and time again.

In the last year alone, more than 400 pieces of legislation—bills—that restrict access to voting have been introduced in 49 of our States, and in at

least 19 of those States, these measures have become law.

In my home State of Wisconsin, the Republicans in the State legislature are willing to disregard the clear reality that Wisconsinites from across the political spectrum exercised their right to vote in record numbers in a secure, fair, and safe election in 2020. Instead, they are pushing Trump's Big Lie to gain a partisan advantage by curtailing voting rights and putting up barriers to make it harder to vote.

They are today fleecing taxpayers to support a sham, partisan process under the false guise of election integrity, undermining people's faith in our elections. At the same time, they are advancing a redistricting proposal that will double down on Wisconsin's unprecedented level of partisan gerrymandering, all while our hard-working election officials are facing threats against their lives simply for doing their jobs.

Enough is enough. That is why the Senate must take up and pass the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act without delay.

Regardless of where you live in this country, you should have the same access to the ballot box and faith that our elections are fair and safe. Voting rights has long been a bipartisan issue, but, unfortunately, my Republican colleagues are obstructing us from taking up this incredibly important legislation and obstructing us from taking action to stop voter suppression and protect voting rights.

The Freedom to Vote Act will counter election interference by protecting election officials from the kind of threats, intimidation, and harassment that we are seeing across the country and, very specifically, we are seeing in Wisconsin. It will put an end to the partisan gerrymandering that lets legislators choose their voters, something we have seen all too clearly in my home State. And it will ensure that there are commonsense, nationwide standards on early voting and voting by mail that make it easier for more people to exercise their constitutional right to vote, particularly in challenging circumstances like this global pandemic.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act will restore protections under the Voting Rights Act against the type of efforts to restrict access to the ballot that we continue to see in States across the country.

January 6, 2021, is a day none of us will ever forget. The images of insurrectionists assaulting our brave people in uniform, our seat of government and democracy, will forever be burned into my mind. But far too many would like to whitewash the violent day and pretend the insurrection was not an existential threat to our democracy.

We have colleagues who have inexplicably and falsely said the violent mob was a group of mere "tourists." My Republican counterpart from

the great State of Wisconsin even called January 6 a "peaceful protest." These fly in the face of the truth. This is not right, and we cannot allow the truth to be buried.

We must all condemn this insurrection in no uncertain terms, as well as the Big Lie about the 2020 election that drove the mob to desecrate this hallowed Chamber. And we must honor and strengthen our democracy by passing legislation that puts an end to these ceaseless attacks on voters and the integrity of our elections.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I feel grateful to have the chance here to join my colleagues to mark the anniversary of January 6. I thank the chair of the Rules Committee, Senator KLOBUCHAR, for her leadership in all of this.

We had an insurrection here a year ago that could have very easily turned into a conflagration if it had not been for the incredible bravery of the Capitol Police and the other law enforcement who were summoned to the Capitol too late but nevertheless here. The National Guard, as my colleague from Virginia was talking about, kept this place from being burned down. They kept people from getting killed. They lost their lives on that day and in subsequent days because of the trauma that they were exposed to. They suffered racial epithets that nobody in America should have to suffer, shouted in the halls of this Capitol—T-shirts with the most racist, holocaust-denying slogans on them.

And there are people here, as my colleague from Wisconsin said, who were claiming that they were acting like tourists. That is a really big lie too. This was an incredibly dangerous situation, and we were saved, not just us but the staff all over this Capitol and everybody else.

I just heard somebody downstairs in the basement walking by, and they were pointing out one of those pictures that is down there of newsboys standing in front of the Capitol when they were kids. And the guy said: Those were my great-uncles. Because this place and the people who work here—not talking about the Senate but the people who work here who are the staff whose grandparents worked here, whose great-uncles who are on the pictures downstairs—to them, this was a family, and it was attacked. It was assaulted on behalf of people who came summoned here by the President, who claimed that the election had been stolen from him, who was perpetrating a big lie about what had happened in the election.

There shouldn't have even been a surprise about the results in the election. There was little reason for suspense. And it is tragic that a year later, we still have to come here and say Joe Biden won the election—and he did by any fair study of what happened that day—on election day. He won Arizona

by 10,000 votes. He won Georgia by 11,000 votes. He won Wisconsin by 20,000 votes. He won Pennsylvania by 80,000 votes and Michigan by 150,000 votes. In every one of those swing States, he won by more votes than Donald Trump won in his election against Hillary Clinton. So this wasn't some razor-thin margin. This margin was bigger in those States, except Arizona, than the margin that Donald Trump had won when he won the election against Hillary Clinton. Joe Biden won this election by 7 million votes.

Donald Trump actually lost the popular vote when he won the election by 3 million votes. But his election wasn't seriously contended by anybody, and it shouldn't have been because he had won the electoral college, just as Joe Biden had won the electoral college. And he still claims the election was stolen, even though there is no evidence that that is true. His own Attorney General said it is a lie. His lawyers—Donald Trump's lawyers—had been thrown out of more than 60 courtrooms by State and Federal judges, some of them appointed by President Trump, himself, saying that there was no evidence that there was fraud.

A year later, there has been another incredibly expensive audit or review of the election—this time, the election in Georgia. Do you know what? There were four people down there who were dead who voted—four people. They didn't actually vote. They were dead, but people cast ballots on behalf of them. Four people out of 5 million, and one of those cast a vote for Donald Trump. But President Trump continues to say that there were dead people voting all over the United States of America.

The Associated Press did a review of all those swing States that I was mentioning earlier, and they found that if you just looked at the disputed ballots—so these aren't even fraudulent ballots because they haven't been identified as fraudulent; they are just disputed ballots. In all these cases, the disputed ballots came to about 1.5 percent of the margin in any one of these races. In other words, in not a single one of these swing States where there is a dispute that President Trump has brought would it make a material difference, even if it were true what he alleges, which it is not.

He has still doubled down on the Big Lie, and the result is, as my colleagues have said here today, there are more than 400 bills nationwide in the name of that Big Lie, making it harder for the American people to vote, making it harder for them to register, making it harder for people to vote early or to vote-by-mail because of a myth, because of a lie.

Slashing the number of polling places and drop boxes. In Texas, they are down to one drop box per county. In Colorado, I can practically cross my street and vote at a drop box. This is an effort to subvert elections to cling to power. That is what is happening

here, and it is based on a massive falsehood, the Big Lie.

I think one needs to ask oneself, even people who support President Trump: What future does the “stop the steal” movement imagine for our country? What future do they imagine for this democracy—where every election is going to be contested; where political violence replaces the ballot box; where elections are decided by strongmen, not votes, turning us into Russia or China.

Is that really what we want our legacy to be here in the country? Do we want to be the first generation of Americans to decide that it is just too hard to do our duty to the people who founded this country, the people who fought from the time this country was founded until today, who died for the sake of democracy; that it is just too hard; that somehow our differences are unique or so important that we are going to give up on our shared commitment to the democracy in favor of those disagreements?

I think we need to ask ourselves at a moment like this what we owe the generations of Americans that have fought to make this country more democratic, more fair and more free. What do we owe the 158 million Americans—a record—who showed up during a plague, this COVID pandemic, to cast their votes for Donald Trump and for Joe Biden? What are they owed and what do we owe our kids and our grandkids? I think the answer is very clear, which is a stronger democracy and economy that works for everybody, not just the people at the very top.

And where do we begin? You know, Colorado, I think, is a great example where we have made it a lot easier for people to vote. We have one of the highest voter turnouts in the country. I always have to say, especially when the Senator from Minnesota is around, that we are No. 2 in terms of voter turnout. Minnesota is No. 1, but we are coming for you. And that is the spirit we should all have. We should be trying to get more people to vote, not fewer people to vote. We should have vote-by-mail. We should have early balloting. We have all of that in Colorado and one of the highest turnout rates in the Country and no fraud—no fraud.

I am going to just finish by saying we should distrust politicians who can't seem to win people's votes with their argument, just as we should distrust politicians who attack the free press to avoid accountability, even though that free press is enshrined in our Constitution. And we should recommit to each other and the democracy.

Let me tell you something, Mr. President. Last week, we had another tragedy in Colorado, another disaster. Pueblo, CO—or Boulder, CO, started out this year with a mass shooting in a grocery store. Some of you may remember that. And, basically, on New Year's Eve, we had a massive fire that ripped through neighborhoods in the Front Range of Colorado in Boulder

County. A thousand people—a thousand houses were burned. More than 30,000 people lost their homes. I sat there thinking to myself, as I was with my daughters watching those fires on the television set, how much we actually need each other, you know? And there is a lot of evidence out there in those 2 days that the law enforcement who got those 30,000 people out had almost literally no fatalities because of what they did and what they sacrificed. Coloradans stepped up that night and said: You can come to my house. We will put you up in my house. So out of those 30,000 people, there were fewer than 300 people in a shelter that night.

The reporters, the journalists were out there long into the night reporting on that fire so that people might have some sense of whether their house had been lost or their house had been saved. Local county officials have worked tirelessly after flood and after fire and after natural disasters to come together to make sure that we build back stronger, which we always do in Colorado—and even, let me say, the Federal Government's contribution, the Federal Emergency Management Agency—because if there is one reason that we should be one Nation under God, it is for a natural disaster like the one that just occurred in Colorado.

This is our choice: We either save this democracy, which I believe we will, or we let it go. And it is going to be on us. If we let it go, generations of Americans are going to indict us. If we save it, I think they will celebrate the work we did here, just as we celebrate the work of the people who came before us who made our country more democratic, more fair, and more free.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I want to thank my colleague from Colorado for reminding us of how important it is for us to come together as Americans to protect our communities and to protect our country. That is really why we are all here today on the floor of the Senate because, 1 year ago today, we witnessed a violent attack on this Capitol and on our democracy itself.

It was not a sneak attack by a foreign power, like Pearl Harbor. It was not an attack by a foreign terrorist group, like 9/11. It was an attack from within, and it was orchestrated and instigated by the former President of the United States.

One year later, while we have improved the physical security of this Capitol, we have not secured our democracy. Our great American experiment remains under as much threat today as it did a year ago, and we as Americans have a duty to come together to take action to protect it.

The violent mob unleashed by Donald Trump a year ago stormed and sacked this Capitol. Insurrectionists scaled the ramparts, tore through the barricades, and breached this building. They used flagpoles to beat Officer Michael

Fanone and used chemical spray to assault Officer Brian Sicknick, who tragically died the next day. A gallows was built outside of this Capitol while rioters chanted “hang Mike Pence.” Like many others, I recall watching horrifying television footage of a rioter pulling down an American flag and raising up a Trump flag in its place. Confederate flags and banners of far-right extremist groups were paraded through these halls. This citadel of our democracy was violently attacked. The Capitol Hill community was traumatized and so was the country.

But in that dark hour when our democracy was under attack, members of the U.S. Capitol Police, the National Guard, and the DC Metropolitan Police stepped up and answered the call.

There were many stories of bravery from that day, but I want to draw attention to Officer Eugene Goodman, a Marylander who protected our democracy by diverting the mob away from this Senate Chamber. His actions on January 6 saved lives, and Maryland is proud to call him one of our own. It is because of the courage of Officer Goodman, his fellow officers, and many other heroes that the mob was ultimately forced to retreat and the Senate and the House were able to reconvene to finish the certification of the electoral count. That was the job that we had all come here to do on January 6, 2021, and that was the job the rioters had tried to stop.

They were driven to violence by Donald Trump's Big Lie that the 2020 election was stolen, and they were hell-bent on answering his call to overturn the results of that election and overturn the will of the American people. They failed in that effort. On that day, all of us were determined not to leave this place until we got the job done and certified the vote. And that is what we did.

And when we returned to the Senate floor after the attack on our Capitol, I really believed, for those few hours, that most Members of this Senate appreciated the gravity of the moment we had just lived through.

I had real hope that all of us, regardless of party or politics, felt the weight of history upon us. I had hoped that most of us grasped the idea that the machinery of our democracy does not operate automatically; it is not self-executing, that institutions are ultimately only as strong as the people who safeguard them, that it is up to each and every one of us to nurture and protect our democracy, that we are the current stewards of our Republic's tradition of the peaceful transfer of power.

I really believed that night that that was a shared belief in this Senate. In my remarks when we returned that evening, I described the attack as a wake-up call to the country for all of us as Americans. That day showed us exactly what can happen when we fail to come together—not as Republicans or Democrats but as Americans, to stand up for the truth, to stand up for

our democracy, and to stand up against lies that undermine public confidence and faith in our elections.

That day showed us, in a violent and undeniable way, that if we allowed the poison of the Big Lie to continue to spread, our democracy would continue to be under threat. I hoped we would heed the warning of that horrible day.

And I was pleased to work with colleagues here, including the Senator from Minnesota and others, to help fortify the physical security of our Capitol Building. We have delivered additional resources to the Capitol Police. We selected a new Sergeant of Arms and a new Chief of the Capitol Police.

And we are continuing to implement the other key recommendations that have been made to strengthen the security of Capitol Hill. While we are improving the physical security here on Capitol Hill, we are failing in our larger duty to the American people.

We have failed to stop the spread of the Big Lie and its corrosive impact on the confidence in our democracy. We know that Joe Biden beat Donald Trump in a free and fair election, and yet too many of our Republican colleagues put political convenience ahead of country and ahead of our Constitution.

Too many are afraid to state the facts and tell the American people the simple truth. And because of that fundamental failure, the Big Lie has metastasized and represents a clear and present danger to the democratic process throughout the country.

When the violent mob failed to overturn the election results in this Chamber a year ago today, the Big Lie did not end. It materialized in other forms to undermine our democracy. As we speak, Republican-controlled State legislatures, fueled by the Big Lie, are passing laws making it harder for people to vote—especially people of color, people with disabilities, and younger voters.

In addition to putting up barriers to voting, proponents of the Big Lie are stripping power from election officials who dared to challenge Donald Trump's plot to falsely claim victory in the 2020 election. The Georgia General Assembly removed Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger as head of the State election board after he denied Trump's request to "find 11,780 votes," the exact number he needed to defeat Joe Biden in Georgia. It was not enough that Raffensperger, a loyal Republican, had voted for Donald Trump. His offense was failure to implement the Big Lie.

In Michigan, Republicans are moving to saturate election wards with Big Lie loyalists in an effort to control the counting of ballots. And across the country, other laws are being passed at the State level that would authorize partisan officials to change or overturn the results of elections, even after votes have been cast and counted.

What we are witnessing is an all-out, continuing assault on our democracy.

And the longer we wait, the more the threat grows. The clock is ticking. Now is the time to act.

That is why we must establish uniform national standards to protect access to the ballot box and ensure that our elections reflect the will of the American people, not the political wishes of any party or any one person.

That is exactly what the Freedom to Vote Act does and why we must pass it. This bill would defend every American's right to the ballot. The Freedom to Vote Act also helps protect election officials from unfair removal and guards against attempts to tamper with or change election results.

In addition, the bill contains provisions to keep our elections fair and honest, including crucial campaign finance reform and a ban on partisan gerrymandering. An enactment of the Freedom to Vote Act should go hand in hand with the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore the full protections guaranteed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

While I had hoped that action to preserve our democracy would be a bipartisan endeavor, it is clear that our Senate Republican colleagues are not willing to join us in passing these bills.

Efforts to strike a compromise have been met with virtually zero support on the other side of the aisle. Democrats are willing to move forward ourselves to protect our democracy, but our Republican colleagues have weaponized the current filibuster rule and are using it to thwart progress. They have even blocked our attempt to have a debate on voting rights when we raised the issue 6 months ago.

Those actions are undermining the very spirit, the tradition, and function of this Senate. The Senate was designed to promote vigorous and long debate while also respecting the ultimate will of a majority of Senators and a majority of the American people.

Today, we see the opposite: very little real debate on the Senate floor and the denial—the denial—of a majority vote to resolve the big questions of the day, resulting in the denial of the will of the American people.

We can change that. We have to change that. We can change it by adapting the current rules of the Senate to restore the original intent of the Framers. We must do that for the health of our institutions and the good of our democracy.

James McHenry, Maryland's delegate to the Constitutional Convention, wrote in his diaries about a famous exchange between Elizabeth Willing Powell and Benjamin Franklin. He wrote:

A lady asked Dr. Franklin Well Doctor what have we got a republic or a monarchy—A republic replied the Doctor if you can keep it.

A year ago today on this floor, I quoted this exact exchange. And now, on the 1-year anniversary of January 6, we are still met with the same question and same test of whether or not we can muster the will to do what must be

done to keep our Republic. There is still time. We can still repair and sustain our democracy.

One year ago, we did not allow a violent mob to prevent us from staying right here to do our job. We completed the certification of the Presidential election, but our job is not over. We have not finished the job of security or democracy.

Now is the time for us to do that. Let's come together and do what is necessary and right for our Republic, for our democracy, and for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I am so happy to join my colleagues on the floor in a very solemn effort to think through the meaning, at a 1-year anniversary, of the attack upon the Capitol on January 6.

Today is not only that anniversary. Today, in the Christian tradition, is the Feast of the Epiphany. And I remembered, sitting in the Chamber last year, as we were barricaded in, under attack, and with the confusion all around me, at one point I realized: Today is the Feast of the Epiphany—the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6.

What is Epiphany? The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the arrival of the magi at the manger. Wise men of the day saw a portent and disturbance in the sky, and were led to a place where they believed something remarkable would happen.

What they found completely surprised them. It wasn't what they were expecting. It wasn't power. It wasn't pomp. It wasn't majesty. It was a tiny baby, born to a family too humble to even get a room at an inn, lying with his mother in a stable, surrounded by barnyard animals.

They found something that they couldn't have imagined, and it changed their lives and it changed the world.

Why do I reference the Feast of the Epiphany? I reference it because, like many things in the Christian story, it has gone way beyond Christianity.

By the middle 1700s or 1800s, the word "epiphany" now had a broader use. It was not just about the arrival of the magi at the manger. The word "epiphany" now means something much more widespread in the English language. It is defined as a moment in which you suddenly see something in a new or very clear way.

The word "epiphany" comes from a Greek root meaning reveal. All of us—all of us—no matter how long we have been around, have the capacity for epiphanies—deeper understandings of essential truths that reveal themselves in our lives.

I want to talk about January 6 and one epiphany I have had as a result of it.

Before I do, I want to acknowledge five people, five Virginia law enforcement officers, who lost their lives in the days after the Capitol attack.

I thank my colleague Senator WARNER, who talked at really important length about the contributions of the Virginia State Police and the VA National Guard. I want to focus on five people: Brian Sicknick, U.S. Capitol Police, 42-year-old, after service in the military, had been with the Capitol Police for 13 years, dying immediately after the attack because of injuries he received that day; Jeffrey Smith, another Virginian, 35 years old, 12-year patrolman with the Metropolitan Police Department, died after the attack, by suicide; Howie Liebengood, 51 years old, a 15-year veteran of the U.S. Capitol Police, died shortly after the attack, by suicide; Kyle DeFreytag, 26-year-old, 5-year veteran of the Metropolitan Police Department, died a few days after the attack, by suicide; Gunther Hashida, 43 years old, an 18-year veteran of the Metropolitan Police Department, died in the days after the attack, by suicide—all Virginians.

I am haunted by these deaths, and I will say, I am particularly haunted by those who died by suicide, whose families are now fighting to get line-of-duty benefits for their deaths.

All of us, in our lives, have been affected by suicide in families and friends. And suicide is complicated. There is not a single thing, as you dig into a suicide, but I just use the insights I have gained as a member of the Armed Services Committee, together with you, Mr. President.

Over the time we have been here, there has been a slight shift in understanding of causes of suicide within the military.

The conventional wisdom about it, when I came here, was that suicide was driven, maybe, as a principal factor in the military and among veterans because of the cumulative effects of trauma. The trauma was so significant that that led to suicide. Of course, trauma is a key factor, but a more recent understanding of suicide suggests that an even more important factor may not be trauma, but a sense of abandonment.

I was in a military unit. I had a lot of people around me. They had my back. We were close. We were connected. We were really tight. And then I moved into a civilian world, where I didn't have that connection and people didn't have my back, and I was lost, and I didn't know whom to turn to or who would look out for me.

I am haunted by the deaths of these four Virginians to suicide because I wonder if they felt abandoned. Did they feel abandoned by us?

They were fighting that day to save our democracy, to save this Capitol, and to save their lives, and yet 147 of the 535 Members of Congress voted with the mob to overturn the election, to throw out the democracy, to do the bidding of a would-be authoritarian.

If you are fighting to protect these 535 Members of Congress and this institution and you watch nearly 30 percent of the Members side with the attackers, I would suggest that they might have felt abandoned.

When I was here on January 6, I experienced a lot of emotions, and I am just going to describe two: relief and anger.

Relief? How could that day create a sense of relief?

I was relieved that I had told my staff to stay home. My chief of staff disobeyed me. But I was relieved that I had told my staff to stay home. Thank God, they were safe.

I was relieved to look right here and see no pages. I was relieved that pages were not here in this Chamber, because, thank God, they would be safe.

And I was relieved not only because my staff was safe, but I was relieved because I didn't want their youthful, altruistic, public-service motivation to be damaged or demoralized by what was happening that day.

I expressed this to my staff this morning. I sent a note to them, and I said: In the middle of all these emotions, I was relieved that you weren't here; that I had told you to stay home so you wouldn't be in danger like so many were. But I don't want you to be demoralized by what happened.

And I had a staff member come to me right before I came to the floor and said: January 6 didn't demoralize me; it energized me.

Thank God for that.

The second emotion that was so powerful in me, and even so powerful that I couldn't quite understand it, was anger. Now, of course, anger would be an acceptable and completely understandable reaction to what was going on. And I have known anger in my life, but the anger I felt that day was different than what I had felt in 63 years. There was something different about it.

And it took me months—it took me months—to figure it out. Was it just the physical attack? Was it the friends and staff and other people who were in danger? Yeah, that was all part of it.

It took me months to figure out exactly why I was so angry. And then I had an epiphany. I had an epiphany.

No one in my life had ever tried to disenfranchise me. I am a White male, born in 1958. I am a civil rights lawyer in the capital of the Confederacy, fighting for voting rights for all kinds of people. Of course, voting rights were important. I was passionately committed to it in my professional life before I came here, but it was something that I was sort of, you know, trying to do to help others. No one had ever tried to disenfranchise me.

But what was going on on the floor that day was an effort to object to the very first State, as you went through them alphabetically, that had voted for Joe Biden, to object to that State and try to disenfranchise, through that objection and others that were lined up, the 80 million people who had voted for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. All of us who cast our ballots that way, we were being disenfranchised that day.

It had never happened to me before. For some Americans, they had experienced disenfranchisement often in

their lives. Some Americans have experienced disenfranchisement during their whole lives. Some Americans have experienced disenfranchisement not for 4 hours but for 4 centuries. It had never happened to me.

For a few hours, and just a few—and just a few—I felt the pain of those who have faced disenfranchisement efforts to take away or threaten their vote for their whole lives, and I hated it. I hated that feeling. I hated that feeling.

My epiphany was one of empathy: So this is how it feels when others scheme to take your vote, when they try to exclude you, when they try to say you don't count. This is how it feels. It hadn't happened to me before, and for a few hours, it did.

The next morning, I walked into the Capitol and the Sun was shining and the threat to me was past. We had finished the work. The insurrection delayed the certification and peaceful transfer of power, but it couldn't stop it.

But the epiphany of briefly being in the shoes of those who have been disenfranchised throughout their lives has changed me profoundly. It hasn't changed my personality. It hasn't changed my relationships. But it has changed my priorities.

Again, I was a civil rights lawyer doing voting rights work in the capital of the Confederacy. Protecting the right to vote has always been important to me. Protecting the integrity of campaigns and elections have always been important to me. But now it is beyond that. It is not just an important priority, it is an existential necessity that we respond to the mass disenfranchisement effort of January 6, with guaranteeing the franchise; guaranteeing people's right to vote; guaranteeing that, when they vote, they can be secure that their vote will be counted; guaranteeing that they can trust the integrity of the officials that will call the outcomes of elections.

My epiphany of empathy has put me in the shoes, for a few hours, of those who have experienced disenfranchisement, and I have concluded that the only response to that has to be—has to be—a concerted effort to protect voting and protect the democracy that relies upon it.

I will say this and conclude: January 6 will always be remembered as the attack on the Capitol. January 6 will always be the Feast of the Epiphany. January 6 was a day in our history of epiphanies.

But what is the purpose of an epiphany? Is it just to kind of see things a new way?

I think the purpose of an epiphany is to change your life; it is to be surprised. Go and see something that you didn't expect, and then be willing to adjust your life and your priority as proof that you were paying attention.

We will be faced with a most significant decision in the coming days. Having been the 100 Senators out of the 2,000 in history who have inhabited this

Chamber who were here during the attack, will we understand what happened, absorb that epiphany, and then act to protect people's rights to participate in this democracy?

I pray that we will. I pray that we will.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I stand here today with a sober heart. I am a big believer that if America hasn't broken your heart, you probably don't love her enough.

We are here on the 1-year anniversary of one of our great Nation's moments of shame.

We saw a violent attack on this Capitol, ignited and incited by demagogues who were trying to spread a lie; telling people their votes were stolen by a President who broke with our traditions of a peaceful transfer of power and told his supporters to come to this building.

(Mr. VAN HOLLEN assumed the Chair.)

On that day of that vicious attack, we saw heroic actions by men and women who stood in the breach to try to protect the 535 Members of Congress, their staffs—the people in this body who do so much good to keep this Nation's traditions moving. As a result of that conflict, lives were lost. Brian Sicknick from my State died as a result of his injuries.

The feelings of that day are still with me. I was sitting right here next to friends and colleagues as we were told to stay in our seats, as we were told that the Capitol was under attack. I watched the basic decency of people in this room as staffers came in, in tears and in pain, and the comforting that I saw of some of my colleagues, and I watched other staff members protecting historic artifacts, protecting the very boxes that would ensure that our tradition would continue; that here on this Earth, a nation would be formed that values that highest ideals of humanity; that the people can come together and form amongst them a system of government.

We were escorted out that door, and I think the gravity of it really hit me when we came right out that door, and one of the first things I saw was an officer down.

I rushed over, and I said: "What happened?"

He said: "I was hit. I was hit."

All along our retreat in that ignominious moment, all along that retreat, we saw officers injured.

I eventually walked and worked my way to my office, and I will never forget this moment as long as I live. I felt not just my own pain, but I thought immediately of my dad, and I felt the pain of my ancestors because, when I turned on that screen, the very first thing I saw was the Confederate flag, and it all came rushing to my heart, and I felt an ache and a hurt. My heart was broken.

I know that day shocked a lot of people, but when I saw that flag, it connected to a current of the dark eddies of our Nation's history that have persisted because violent mobs from the beginning of our country have tried to stop our democratic traditions.

That flag in so many communities in this country is carried by Klansmen, carried by those who took democratically elected officials—Blacks in Southern States—ripped them from their offices, dragged judges out into the street, beat them, lynched them. That was their flag.

As I watched from my office, I saw swastikas. I saw Muslim hate. I talked to Black officers here, and as they defended the country they loved, they were repeatedly called the N-word over and over again. You can't be surprised. You just can't.

As we have always, in every generation, tried to make a more perfect union, this is part of that story—people who want to stop the march of democracy. Do you think that the suffrage movement didn't face violence? It did, as people tried to intimidate and beat and stop the equal franchise. Do you think the civil rights movement didn't face violence? How many martyrs' names do we know, people who were shot down and killed because they did not want them to have equal representation?

Why did I ache for my ancestors? Because those were the stories of my grandparents, those were the stories of my father, of the fear and intimidation of just trying to exercise their franchise.

Why are we surprised by demagoguery and hate in our Nation? It is a part of our story. But the greatness of our country is not that that existed but the good people who have come together in every generation and said: Not on our watch. We are better than this. We will pull together, out of the great, vast diversity of our Nation, a rainbow coalition of people dedicated not to a race or religion but to a national ideal.

I am here as a Senator, just the fourth Black person ever elected popularly in our Nation's history. I am here because White folks and Black folks and Asian folks and all Americans didn't just hope for a better democracy, didn't just condemn violence; they worked to preserve and protect and advance our Nation.

What are we doing now? Is this going to be a day where we just condemn what happened? Is this just going to be a day where we point fingers of blame and feel good in our contempt for those who were at the core of that? If that is what this day is about, it is for naught because we fail then to recognize this is not about a day. This was not 1 day. It was not one moment. It is a part of our story, and the threats continue. How can we be blind to the violence that has continued since that day?

Threats on Federal judges—we had a Federal judge's family shot and killed

in my State. They are up 300, 400 percent. Threats on Members of this body, threats on all 535 Congresspeople are up around twofold.

Do you think this is about a day, when election officials, nonpartisan people, all across this country are now seeing threats? Reuters documented more than 850 threatening, hostile messages aimed at election officials. In Philadelphia, a Republican who dared to tell the truth about the election, mirroring the words of then-President Donald Trump's highest official that the election was fair—what happened to him? Threats and intimidation. People calling his home, literally threatening to murder his three children.

You think this is about 1 day in time?

A survey from the Brennan Center for Justice in April of 2021 found that one in three U.S. American election officials feels unsafe because of their job, and about 20 percent listed threats to their lives as a job-related concern.

This is not a foreign country. This is the United States of America, and our election officials, nonpartisan individuals—Republicans, Democrats, fellow Americans—are afraid to do their job because they tell the truth.

This is not about 1 day. This is not. This is a story of the founding of our country. As our Founders tried to break with the course of human events and establish here the greatest experiment of humanity, there were people who wanted authoritarianism; there were people who wanted bigotry; there were people who wanted to protect with violence the kind of despotism that we broke away from.

We make a big mistake if on this day, we just talk about what happened here. We have protection. We have security. But all across this country right now, there are believers in this democracy who have the same fears that my grandparents did, the same fears that my father did, the same fear that Blacks and Whites who joined arms to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge for voting rights did. This is a cancer. It has always been here. And we make a tragic mistake just by talking about this day, because when I survey the United States of America, I am so worried. There has never been a time in my life where I have been more worried about this democracy.

I grew up with stories of family members who talked about the preciousness about what it is to vote. They love the heroes of John F. Kennedy and Medgar Evers and these people who fought for them from all backgrounds. My parents taught me to love people—Jewish people, like Abraham Joshua Heschel and Joachim Prinz; people who knew that in America, if you just fight for your own rights, who are you? This is a nation where we know we are all in this.

But I stand here today to ask you, why aren't we talking about the fact that in States right now, laws are being passed specifically designed to

disenfranchise people? Don't take my word for it. The year I came to this body, in 2013, a Federal judge in North Carolina looked at that voting law and said it was designed "with surgical-like precision" to disenfranchise Black Americans.

But I don't need to go back to 2013 to see reason for us all to be concerned. When early voting started in the fall of 2020 in Georgia, some voters had to wait up to 10 hours to vote in six metro areas in Georgia counties—six metro areas.

At polling places where minorities constituted more than 90 percent of active, registered voters, the average wait time in the evening for those Black communities was 51 minutes. When Whites comprised 90 percent, in those communities, the average wait time was 6 minutes. Think about this for a second. Are we satisfied with a democracy where in some communities, the Black communities will have to wait eight times longer to vote? Is that what we mean, equal justice under the law? Is that what we mean when we look at our flag and say "liberty and justice for all"?

There are States right now passing voting laws to make it harder to vote. What happens when a working mom with three kids shows up, and the line is a 1-hour wait or a 2-hour wait? What does she do? Is it fair to her? Then they go as far in Georgia—say that person does want to wait and brings a folding chair and sits there for 2 and 3 and 4 hours. They make it illegal, for that person who might have diabetes, illegal, for that person who might have a mental condition, for someone to bring them water.

I am sorry. I grew up—and I confess it on the Senate floor—with the naive belief that the stories of my father and the stories of my grandparents were history; that we wouldn't live in a country where Black people are waiting eight, nine times the wait of White people; that in some communities, the wait would be 5, 6, 7 hours—a day's work for families who can't afford to give up a day's work.

You think this was about a day? I tell you it is about the cancer in our democracy that has been here from its start. This country's very survival has to be faced every generation. Democracy is not certain. It is not automatic. Democracy is hard.

Democracy takes work. Democracy takes sacrifice, but as we sit here now, in dozens of States, laws are being passed that disproportionately impact the disabled, that disproportionately impact Native Americans, and that disproportionately impact people of color.

So when I go back to the Confederate flag I saw waving just feet from where we stand right now—a flag that got so much currency during the backlash after Reconstruction and that got so much currency during the backlash after *Brown v. Board of Education*—I know it is part of a larger problem and that none of us who love our Nation and love this democracy can ever rest.

There are two people I want to mention before I conclude, both men I have come to admire. Both men risked their lives for this country. They weren't like our great, great veterans who fought nobly—and many of them died—but I hope we don't cheapen the truth of their stories because they did the work here at home, evidencing our highest values when our Founders wrote in the Declaration of Independence that we must mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

Both of these men happen to be Black, but it is a value that is evidenced in all backgrounds and all people. I am here because of that truth. Both of them were riddled with hateful words, called the N-word over and over and over again. One of those men I had the privilege of serving with, and both of these men were violently attacked. John Lewis was violently attacked as he tried to advance this democracy. He was beaten and had his head cracked open on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. He was spit on at sit-ins, and he won battles with others. He came to Congress, and he worked and fought and defended.

Republicans and Democrats supported the voting rights bill, but then it was gutted by the Supreme Court. Maybe you will have the experience I have had of when your heroes become your friends. I would ask him how it felt to watch part of his life's work be torn apart and have these new voting laws that disproportionately impact African Americans. How did it feel?

John Lewis, who was this man of peace and this man of grace, just said to me: You cannot stop the work of this democracy. One generation's gains don't pass on like an inheritance to the next. They have to earn them.

The other person is a guy named Harry Dunn. Like John Lewis, he put his life on the line in defending the Capitol. He is a Capitol Police Officer. When I read and saw his interviews after battling to save our lives against a mob incited by a demagogic President, he was sitting under the Rotunda and turned to another person after being called the N-word over and over again and said simply: "Is this America?"

I hope all of us see that we have a responsibility to answer that question.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act will be part of the answer to that question of whether a little Black boy and a little Black girl and a little White girl and a little White boy who go to vote with their parents can see an equal voting opportunity. That is going to be an answer to that question. Every generation has got to make this country live up to its promise. We are losing ground, and it didn't start on January 6 of last year.

I end with an answer, an inadequate answer, to Officer Dunn, in a poem I learned from my parents and in a poem I shared an affection for with John

Lewis that calls upon every American not to point fingers of blame to others but to accept a responsibility not just to be satisfied in your contempt for some but to rise up as a force of light and love for all.

I end with Langston Hughes' poem:

O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
[But] yet must be—the land where [everyone]
is free . . . the poor [man], [Indian],
[Negro], ME—
Who made America . . .
Whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in
the rain,
Must [make this] mighty dream [live] again.
O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, first, I want to thank Senator BOOKER for his powerful, powerful statement. The whole country has to hear what he said.

I want to thank Senator KAINE for your powerful words as well. It is just so important that people of your stature speak to our country on what we should be aspiring to do. Thank you for your leadership.

Thank you to Senator KLOBUCHAR for organizing this incredibly important moment on the first anniversary of the insurrection against the Capitol.

One year ago, my colleagues and I started the day in this Chamber, ready to ratify the electoral college votes and declare Joe Biden the next President of the United States. Instead, Members of Congress were forced to take shelter under their desks and under Gallery benches, place gas masks over their heads, and pray that they would make it home to their families that day. Our staffs, journalists, Capitol workers wondered if they would live through the day, and their views of their workplace changed forever.

Instead of a day celebrating the workings of our democracy, our Nation was met with anti-democratic, White supremacist forces storming their way inside this building, violently attempting to overturn the results of the 2020 election. It was an insurrection.

One year ago, the people's Houses changed, but even though the ratification process, which recognizes the will of the American people, was interrupted, it was not defeated. On the night of January 6, 2021, as Members of Congress returned to the Chamber to ratify the results of the election of 2020, our democracy prevailed.

We thank the Capitol Police. We thank them for what they did that day. Some lost their lives. Some were injured. Some still suffer from the traumatic impact of what they had to do in order to protect these Chambers, in order to protect the electoral college votes that were in the well of this Chamber. The whole country owes a

debt of obligation to those police officers and what they did to stand here and to protect all of us—the staff, the Members, the Parliamentarians—but to, more importantly, protect democracy because we were able to return here after 8 p.m. that night in order to cast those votes. We owe a great debt of gratitude to those police officers who sacrificed so much on that day.

Tragically, former President Donald Trump's Big Lie has turned into the Big Threat to our democracy. The insurrectionists were unsuccessful in overturning election results, but the death, injury, and breach of national security they caused must be held to account.

I want to thank the House of Representatives' Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack for their commitment to that ongoing mission as well as the hard-working men and women of the Department of Justice who have already brought charges against more than 725 individuals for their involvement in the insurrection.

Donald Trump does lie, but the video, texts, and messages from January 6 do not lie. We all saw what happened that day, and anyone who orchestrated, abetted, or participated in the January 6 attack must be held accountable. That includes those at the very highest level of our government. It means, as Attorney General Merrick Garland said yesterday, "follow[ing] the facts wherever they [may] lead." If the facts lead to Donald Trump's criminal responsibility for the insurrection, then he should face the same consequences as anyone else, even if it means the only place he will be in 2024 is in jail.

Even as we now reflect on this day 1 year later, we must understand that investigation and prosecution alone will not prevent another attack on our democracy. This problem is larger than any one person or candidate or election cycle. We cannot forget the role that online platforms played during the lead-up to the insurrection. Make no mistake, social media platforms have become hotbeds of disinformation, hate speech, and dangerous conspiracy theories. Today, the seeds of offline harms are planted, grown, and spread online.

In the days before insurrectionists attacked the building, social media platforms, black boxes, algorithms promoted election misinformation and political groups that spread Trump's Big Lie. We need to open the hood to the online systems that are pushing toxic content to the public and feeding dangerous social movements online.

But the January 6 mob was fueled not only by the Big Lie but by the global rise of authoritarian and nationalist movements that reject the basic principles of American democracy of quality, freedom, and the peaceful transfer of power. The attack on the Capitol revealed the growing fragility in our democratic processes and institutions and a systemic weakness caused by years of falsehoods and policies meant to undermine our right to

vote in free and fair elections. It is unbearable to think that a big part of America no longer believes in any kind of democracy. They no longer believe in the rules that we all live by and the pursuit of goodness and fairness and progress.

Donald Trump is gone from the White House, but we know that the hate and division that defined his corrupt tenure has been with us since our founding. So many were willing to believe lies about the legitimacy of President Biden's victory because they had lost faith in the integrity of our democratic system. Some were even willing to engage in horrific violence because they believed elections could be stolen. The architects of the January 6 authoritarians, White nationalists, and those who stand to benefit from the continued undermining of our democracy want us to feel this way.

For years, the dangerous coalition has worked to limit access to the ballot box, undermine fair voting districts, and continuously spread disinformation about voter fraud. In the wake of their attack on the Capitol, they now have accelerated their efforts. In 2021 alone, 19 States have passed 34 laws restricting the access to voting, continuing the assault on our electoral system. These efforts have eroded Americans' faith that they can actually choose their own elected Representatives, sabotage public truth in electoral outcomes, and disenfranchise countless voters, especially communities of color, indigenous people, the poor, young Americans, and individuals with disabilities.

The Big Lie is that the election was stolen from Donald Trump in 2020. It was not. The Big Truth is that Donald Trump and his allies have put in place a process to steal the election of 2022 and 2024. That is the Big Truth of what is going on in this country, right now. And the way they are going to accomplish that Big Truth is by having State after State in the United States pass laws which restrict the access to vote for Black and Brown and indigenous, and poor and disabled Americans. That is the Big Truth about what is going on in our country right now—a systematic plan to steal the election of 2022, to steal the Presidency in 2024.

And the Republican Party has become a wholly owned subsidiary of Donald Trump on the issue of voter suppression, on the issue of making it impossible for this body, for the U.S. Congress, to pass laws which protect the rights of every American to vote.

But we do have a chance, right now, on the Senate floor, to stand up to this anti-democratic movement and to banish these discriminatory policies and put them in the political dust bin of history.

The Senate can and must take action to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act, and we must abolish the filibuster, if just for this issue, to protect the right to vote for every person in our country.

With these bills, if we modify the filibuster, American voices will no longer be drowned out by special interests, by redistricting that keeps Black and Brown communities marginalized, and by voting laws that are reminiscent of poll taxes and literacy tests that were used for centuries to stop Black voters, minority voters from participating in our democracy.

We need expanded early and mail-in voting. We need automatic and same-day voter registration. We need to make election day a national holiday. We need to get rid of hours-long voting lines. We need to ban partisan gerrymandering. We need to get dark money out of our elections. We need to end the discriminatory voting laws that restrict access to the ballot box on the basis of race and age and income and more.

We now have the opportunity to make sure that every voice is heard in our democracy: the 85-year-old Black woman in Georgia who has waited hours to cast her ballot without even a bottle of water; the newly naturalized family in Arizona who took the bus 45 minutes to the closest voting location, energized by the chance to fully participate in American democracy; the mother of four in Massachusetts who works two jobs just to make ends meet and desperately needs that mail-in ballot. These are the voices that the ugly mob of hate and violence and division that attacked the Capitol on January 6 do not want to be heard in American politics, in 2022, in the United States of America.

But will we stand up? We have to ensure that at our moment in American history, there is enough evidence to convict us of having stood up for democracy, of having fought for all of those who will otherwise be disenfranchised this year, 2022, in the United States of America. Otherwise, we will have been found wanting in preserving the foundations of our democracy, that we will have fixed this broken system of government that is being dismantled by Republicans across this country, State after State, with Republicans here in Washington unwilling to cast a single vote—not one Republican willing to stand up and say: We must pass laws to protect against what is happening in State after State to suppress the votes of Black and Brown and disabled and poor and indigenous Americans.

With the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act, we will not only guarantee that all Americans can exercise their vote—their right to vote in free and fair elections—we can also counter the distrust and the disenfranchisement that the insurrectionists exploited on January 6. These reforms can restore Americans' faith in the peaceful transfer of power and prevent another attempt at insurrection by ensuring we have a government that is truly of, by, and for the American people.

One year after the attack on the Capitol, we understand how fragile our democracy is and that the fight to protect it requires vigilance and clear-eyed determination. The very least we can offer the American people—all American people—on this day is our commitment to protect their right to vote.

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who helped draft the original Voting Rights Act in 1965, once said:

A right is not what someone gives you; it's what no one can take from you.

Let us pass this historic legislation so that no one can take the fundamental right to vote away from those who rightfully have it today.

The job of building and protecting a healthy and strong democracy is the sacred duty of this institution. The fate of the United States depends on us doing our jobs. May this day, January 6, always remind us that we must never give up that fight. And, here, in 2022, let us win this fight on the floor of the U.S. Senate to protect the right to vote for every American, regardless of the State they live in, regardless of their color, their religion, their country of origin. That is our historic responsibility.

God help the Senate if it does not respond to this historic challenge.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before he leaves, I want to thank my colleague from Massachusetts. We have worked often together on these democracy issues, and I look forward to doing that in the days ahead.

I also want to commend Senator KLOBUCHAR from Minnesota because she has been our point person on the Rules Committee, which is central to this whole debate. I think we all understand what is at stake. That is what my colleagues have been outlining. And I think we have been very fortunate to have Senator KLOBUCHAR at the helm. She and I have worked together on one of the issues I am going to talk about, vote by mail, but I just want people to understand how valuable she has been.

Mr. President and colleagues, a year ago today, not far from where we stand this afternoon, domestic terrorists tried to beat our democracy to the ground. They might have been successful were it not for the police officers who defended our democracy as they were viciously attacked and beaten. Before anything else is said, in my view, by an elected official, we need to salute these officers and all those who work day in and day out alongside them here in the Capitol. For their courage, we ought to be internally grateful.

The insurrection on January 6 was instigated by the former President, who wanted to undo the results of a democratic election. Let's also understand that, unfortunately, inciting the mob wasn't the end of it. Donald Trump didn't exactly walk quietly off

into the sunset after the Biden inauguration. The effort to undermine our democracy, to end free and fair elections in America, goes on as we speak.

Support for the Big Lie is essentially unchanged from where it was a year ago. An awful lot of Republicans who said after January 6 that they were done with the former President have cozied back up to him just 12 months later. The only reason the mob is not here today is Donald Trump didn't summon them back.

Now, in my view, it is our job to ensure that another attack like this, or by any other means, never succeeds. We will have more to say about those issues in the days ahead.

In my view, protecting the vote has got to be step one in protecting democracy. A guiding principle for the Senate must be that while politics may guide a citizen's vote, it should never determine whether they are allowed to vote. To act otherwise would undermine the very foundations of a representative democracy, empowering voters with a system built on integrity and accountability, a system that promotes participation rather than discourages it, a system with a real history of bipartisanship.

I say to the Presiding Officer and colleagues, that is the kind we have in my home State of Oregon. Oregon believes so strongly in the right to vote that everybody gets a ballot sent straight to their home.

I am honored to say that I was the first U.S. Senator elected in an all vote-by-mail election. Back then, it was Oregon Republicans who were pushing to expand vote-by-mail. A Democratic Governor even vetoed a vote-by-mail bill in 1995. Right after my election, the Oregon Republicans flipped back, and vote-by-mail was suddenly, oh, so bad.

Everything flipped a few months later, when my friend, Gordon Smith, a Republican from eastern Oregon, became the second U.S. Senator to be elected by mail. At this point, Oregon voters said: We have just had it with everybody looking for some kind of partisan slant here. We just think vote-by-mail is a really terrific idea. They went out to vote on a ballot measure, and they chose to make Oregon's elections all vote-by-mail, passing it with 70 percent of the vote in 1998.

This, in my view, was the culmination of a process that started 40 years ago with some local elections in Linn County, a small county in the western part of our State. It grew and grew from there. Election officials learned that when you let people vote at home, participation goes up, and the costs go down.

One of the biggest defenders of Oregon's vote-at-home system was the late Dennis Richardson. He was our secretary of state. And by his characterization, he was about as conservative—a Republican as you could get.

But when the Trump era came along and people criticized our elections and

said, "Oh, there is all this fraud," spouting lies about it, the late Dennis Richardson stood up and said: I am a conservative Republican. They are wrong. They are wrong in what they are saying about Oregon.

He even wrote to Donald Trump in 2017: "We are confident that voter fraud in last November's election did not occur in Oregon."

Every election now, young Oregonians watch their parents voting around their kitchen table, and it is a real inspiration to the next generation to make sure they are committed voters. Voting at home gives you the opportunity to be more informed. If there is a particular measure, initiative, or a race that you haven't researched, you get time to look into the options.

When you are done, your ballot goes into a security envelope, you sign the outside, and off it goes. For me, that is when I head from our home in Southeast Portland to the Sellwood branch of the Multnomah County Public Library, drop my ballot in the collection box, and head home—no long lines, no glitchy touchscreen systems, just hassle-free voting.

A recent analysis in the Election Law Journal said that of all 50 States, voting is easiest in Oregon. And Senator KLOBUCHAR, I have heard colleagues go back and forth to say who is No. 1 in participation and who is No. 1 in all of these aspects. And I think, like a number of other States, we are all kind of competing for the highest turnout rates. We get some of the highest in the country. We have been a leader in terms of increasing turnout among Black and Latino voters. Voter registration is automatic. It is as easy as a trip to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

For myself—and Senator KLOBUCHAR and I have talked about this so often over the years—I have been proposing legislation to have universal at-home voting since 2002. That is what my Vote at Home Act would do. It would give every American the right to vote the Oregon way, the vote that my neighbors and I can do. I will say here on the Senate floor that I guarantee that, if you do it the Oregon way, it will be a nationwide hit immediately.

Letting people vote at home is also the best defense against some of the really horrendous methods of suppressing the vote; for example, what we have seen over the last few years with State and local governments shutting polling places, particularly ones that serve Black and Latino voters—what unforgivable actions.

These days, in some areas, Republicans are making it illegal to give food and water to people standing in line to vote. It shouldn't be a test of physical stamina to be able to vote. Nobody should have to wonder if they will be able to vote if they step out of line to go to a bathroom. Nobody should have to sacrifice an entire day to participate in this incredible, incredible democratic system that is America.

That is why I proposed the People Over Long Lines Act, called the POLL Act. The bill says State governments have to guarantee that everybody who votes in person can do so within 30 minutes. Anybody who is forced to wait longer has a legal action they can bring. If they sue and win, it is 50 bucks for waiting longer than 30 minutes and 50 bucks more for every hour after that.

A free bit of advice to States: Get ready. Make sure people don't have to wait in lines. One of the best ways to make sure they don't have to wait in lines is to let them vote at home.

It is not just Oregon, by the way, that votes by mail. And I think, Senator KLOBUCHAR, we heard some of our colleagues talk about their States and voting by mail. If you need another example, let's think about the U.S. Armed Forces. Most servicemembers and their families vote by mail in every election. All of the people who wear the uniform of the United States can vote by mail in every Federal election. It has been that way for decades.

So the bottom line is that we think it is time to get the Oregon system into every nook and cranny in America. We feel that way because it works. It raises voter participation, it lowers the cost of running elections, it helps voters be more informed, and it is safe and secure. And if you are resisting safe and efficient elections with higher voter turnout, then you are suppressing democracy in America.

My home State of Oregon shows the way to preserve America.

I am going to close my remarks, but I think we will have Senator KLOBUCHAR speak for all of us here in a moment. But, in my closing, I want to touch just for a moment on my family that I am so proud of.

My German family fled their homeland, a place where they were deeply rooted in that nation's society, as my grandfather was a Member of Parliament and served on the Berlin city council.

My family was forced, as Jews, to flee the fascists who had taken over their democracy. They fled to America as the last remaining beacon of freedom. With that freedom, my dad chose to serve in our Army, which fought against German fascism, and my dad has been recognized for his unique contributions.

We were so thrilled, for example, to have the Senators from Maryland talk about the Ritchie Boys. My dad was one of the Ritchie Boys, a German kid who taught himself English so he could be out there fighting the Nazis. And I remember the good work of the Senators from Maryland and how thrilled our family was about that.

My dad was about the greatest patriot around. He felt he was so lucky to be an American, to be in our Army, to stand up for American values. And my final remark here today is about my dad. If my dad were alive today, he would tell us: Senators, make sure that

the light in America's beacon of freedom never goes out.

With that, I yield the floor.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oregon. We have had a day of tributes to those who work in the Capitol, those who protected us. We have had a day of reflection, and we have had a day of hope as we look to the future for our democracy that we hold with such care.

I want to thank the staff that was there that day. And for those of you—I am looking at the pages—who are new in the Senate, over the next few weeks, it is worth talking to one of the staff members who was here that day to hear their stories, to let them reflect on what happened to them, whether they were people who were assigned to the hallways or the trams or the cafeteria. What happened to them that day? The Sergeant at Arms, so many employees there who were here that day because this was the day of the peaceful transition of power in this Chamber and in the House. The Parliamentarian's office, those that work there—that was one of the most difficult moments, to walk into their office late in the morning, 4 in the morning. Senator BLUNT and myself, when this was all done, after we had done our work with Vice President Pence and the House, we walked around downstairs. It was eerily quiet. There was no one there. And you walked into the rooms, and there was glass from people's personal photos in the Parliamentarian's office that cracked, things thrown on the floor, their personal belongings.

And you wondered: Why did they go in that office? Was it just a fluke? No, they actually understood where that office was. We later found out they knew exactly that that office was in charge of these electoral ballots and in charge that day of the proceedings and had a special place in our democracy. And they actually knew where that office was and deliberately went into that office and invaded that office.

Everyone from the Capitol physician to the floor staffs, both Democratic and Republican floor staffs, who were here that day, charged with making this day move like it had over and over and over again every 4 years when, no matter who wins, we go and we do our work that is demanded of us under the Constitution.

I remember, 4 years before that, my candidate certainly didn't win in 2016, but we went and we did our job. And I remember at the time, Vice President Biden was presiding over that proceeding because it was the end of his time as Vice President, just like Vice President Pence was involved this last time. And he did his job.

I think about what the Senators have talked about today, and we have heard from so many of our colleagues—Senator WARNER and VAN HOLLEN and Kaine talking about the National Guards of Virginia and Maryland and their police that came in—not planned

that this was going to happen this day—and came in and helped protect the Capitol and, along with National Guards throughout our country, including from my own State of Minnesota, then stayed on for weeks and weeks and months and months until we could get the security in order in this place.

The Capitol Police—and so many of my colleagues, including Senator BOOKER, have shared the stories of the Capitol Police that day. And I know we have used some famous examples of those officers, but I think it is really important to note that every officer did something that mattered that day, some act of heroic duty, by doing their jobs.

We thank the work that has done by the staffs of our Rules Committee, who are here today—Senator BLUNT's and my staff—as well as Homeland Security, with Senators Peters and Portman, who immediately took on the task of holding very public hearings about what went wrong on the security side and then the decisions to hire new leaders for our Sergeant at Arms; with Senator SCHUMER's work on that, as well as the police chief with Chief Manager, who testified at length yesterday in a very bipartisan hearing, actually, in the Rules Committee about the changes that have been made, the changes when it comes to equipment, as we remember that 75 percent of the officers that day were in plainclothes and only 25 percent had riot gear—the horrifying image of the riot gear locked onto a bus that no one could access while the Capitol was being invaded; the lack of a plan, in the words of the police officer broadcast on the police radio: Does anyone have a plan? Does anyone have a plan?

And, sadly, the answer was, literally, no. That has now changed, as the chief has told us, when events have happened in the last few months in the Capitol—plans in place, operational plans, drills that have been conducted in this Capitol.

The lack of resources, which had been demanded in the past, that Senator LEAHY in the Appropriations Committee and Senator SHELBY have come to the floor and have worked to get them the resources that they need.

But the challenges that still remain, the vacancies on the police force, people working double shifts and overtime and people not being able to take their vacation and be with their families because they are still working to protect our Capitol. And the police chief's pledge to work to recruit 200 or so more officers in just the next year with retention benefits and all the work that is being done.

The other piece of this that we heard a lot about today was accountability. We heard from Senator DURBIN and members of the Judiciary Committee and Senator BOOKER about the need—and Senator MARKEY—for accountability. And this includes the select committee over in the House and the

investigation that they are conducting with not just Democrats but also two very strong Republicans who have been willing to basically put their careers on the line because they believe so much in this democracy that we must get to the bottom of what happened.

The work going on in the Justice Department, which has now been, as of yesterday, as the Attorney General of the United States described to us, the biggest investigation in the history of America, because I don't think people had envisioned that we would have an attack like this, but we did.

Two hundred forty-four years of democracy—244 years of democracy—that it is our charge to protect, and that is why you see this investigation. That is why you see over 700 people charged. This is why you see the Attorney General pledge to follow this to every level and to follow the facts to where they go.

We must remember, in the end, as my colleague from Oregon Senator WYDEN has addressed, this is not just and was not just an attack on a building; it was an attack on our Republic.

I was looking back at the Inauguration Day and that beautiful moment with that blue sky, and there were little snowflakes coming down. I remember hearing the beautiful words of Amanda Gorman, in her gold coat, that day, with that amazing poem, the singing. I remember Garth Brooks singing "Amazing Grace." I looked up at the sky and thought that anything and everything is possible and our democracy has prevailed.

I remember the words of Abraham Lincoln, actually, which I quoted in my brief speech that day, when he gave his first inaugural address in front of this Capitol. The dome was only partially constructed—it was braced by ropes of steel back then—and he promised he would finish it. He was actually criticized for spending funds during the Civil War on the dome, as it was somehow frivolous. To those critics, he replied: "If people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on."

When we gathered that day on that inaugural stage, there was still spray paint on the columns. They actually couldn't get it all out because the insurrectionists had first come to that platform because—just as they knew what was going on in the Parliamentarian's Office, they targeted that platform because that is exactly where President Biden and Vice President HARRIS were going to receive their oaths of office. There were still traces of spray paint. The windows behind us weren't the real windows; they were makeshift windows. But we all gathered there. The President-elect, now President, would not have his inauguration in a bunker. Senator BLUNT and I strongly believed that this should be a public event. As we stood out there, "The Capitol shall go on"—that was the message we were sending to the country.

So what does that mean right now, a year later, this anniversary, "The Capitol shall go on"? Yes, it means that we have better security, and we do better by our police officers, and we have their backs. It means that. We do better by the staff in this great building. Yes, it means we have accountability for the people who had the audacity to invade this Capitol and take the law into their own hands and commit acts of violence. But the other thing it has to mean a year later is that we carry on that torch of our democracy, as the Senator from Oregon explained, that we make sure our very democracy is protected.

(Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

That means guaranteeing that people have the right to vote.

What was not accomplished that day with the bear spray and the bayonets and the flagpoles sadly carried on because these bills that have been introduced in so many States and passed across the country—over 400 of them passed in many, many States across the country or proposed, seriously proposed, in others—bring us backwards. It basically says: You know what. Democracy—the people who propose these bills—is not about who votes for whom, regardless of who wins; it is about us choosing our voters and deciding haves and have-nots and who is going to be able to vote and who isn't going to be able to vote.

When you think about what the people of this country will do to preserve that right to vote—I think about those people in Wisconsin with homemade masks and garbage bags, standing in the pouring rain at the beginning of the pandemic just to exercise their right to vote.

I think about the veteran I met when we did our field hearing with Senators WARNOCK and OSSOFF and Senators MERKLEY and PADILLA down in Atlanta. This veteran told us that he had signed up to serve our country, and there wasn't a waiting line, but when he went to exercise his right to vote, he had to wait hours and hours—4, 5 hours—in line in the hot Sun just to exercise his right to vote. He told the stories of older people who had left because they couldn't stand the heat, they couldn't stand out there anymore.

That is not what our democracy is supposed to look like. It is not supposed to look like one ballot box in the entire county of Harris County, which includes Houston in Texas, over 5 million people with one ballot drop-off box. That is not our democracy.

But the American people in that 2020 election said: You know what. No matter what you do to us, we are going to go vote. And they voted in droves. They voted more votes than in the history of America. Part of that was because, because of the pandemic, changes were made to the law, including that some States took away ridiculous requirements that you have to get a notary public. Think about it—in the middle of a pandemic.

Right now, by the way, South Carolina has put this law back into effect. To get your mail-in ballot because you can't go vote in person because you have COVID, you have to have a notary public. There are stories reported in the news of people having notary publics, through the glass windows of hospitals, sign off on the application of ballots. All of that is designed, in the words of Reverend WARNOCK, so that some people don't allow some people to vote. That is what that is about.

So it is on us right now to carry on the democracy. And that feeling we had when the leaders of both parties all stood on that inaugural stage or when we took that last walk, Senator BLUNT and Vice President Pence and I and the two young women with the mahogany box with the last of the electoral ballots—that feeling was a good one, and it was a celebration of joy for our country and the peaceful transition of power.

As pointed out in our speeches on the Senate floor right after the insurrection—I remember Senator SHAHEEN standing right there talking about how the world is watching our democracy. Well, this is another moment. The world is watching as we see dictators coming into power in other countries around the world, as we see the former President still out there rallying the troops around this Big Lie that he somehow won the election when every single local election official in this country knows that is not true. This is our moment to stand up to that because the people are watching. Our kids are watching. And the democracy stands in the breach. This is our moment. We must pass the Freedom to Vote Act, and we must uphold our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. 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.

SOUTH SUDAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, several months ago, I spoke of the hope we all felt that after decades of civil war, famine, and political turmoil, after millions were killed and millions more became refugees including thousands of "lost boys" and "lost girls," South Sudan's independence and a peace agreement would be the beginning of a period of lasting stability and progress.

Regrettably, what has unfolded since then is the antithesis of stability or