

Diversity, for me, means the fullness of diversity. It means African Americans. It means Hispanic Americans. It means women. It means LGBTQ Americans. And, yes, it means Asian Americans.

We need the FCC Commissioners to commit to increasing diversity in media ownership not just in words but with actions. I, for one, will not support nominees for the FCC if they are unwilling to support diversity, including by acting in a way that denies a vote to a diverse applicant. They cannot argue that broadcast station owners should reflect their audiences, publicly saying—this is the FCC—“We need to do better.” Well, that is great. Then you miss the opportunities to expand diversity in broadcasting when it is before you.

In the past, I have tried to address this issue head on through legislation. I will continue to follow that route as well.

Last Congress, alongside Senator PETERS, I introduced a bill, the Broadcast VOICES Act, that would help address the lack of diversity in the industry through innovations in our Tax Code. Through a Federal tax incentive, our bill would ensure that women- and minority-owned stations can compete on a level playing field to provide a benefit to audiences.

It would reestablish a program in order to reincentivize broadcast ownership. I say “reincentivize” because Congress has actually done this before. During the nearly two decades that this tax incentive as outlined in the Broadcast VOICES Act was active, minority ownership and diversity in the broadcast media industry grew fivefold. It grew fivefold. So think about where it was when I referred to the earlier percentages and where we are today. This tax provision helped increase it from virtually nothing to fivefold. That is right—the number of minority owners quintupled when the incentive was in place.

So make no mistake, the task in front of us is clear. Government regulators at the FCC have identified that there is a diversity problem in broadcast ownership. As I have said, there are steps this body can take to address it through the Broadcast VOICES Act, but the FCC has its share of the burden as well. It must more than talk the talk; it must walk the walk on the issue of diversity in media ownership.

I pushed for diverse candidates at every Agency. I will continue to do so. I am hopeful that the administration seizes the opportunity before them to nominate a diverse candidate to the Federal Communications Commission because part of taking proactive steps on industry diversity is ensuring that the regulator itself is more diverse.

My first question to any FCC nominee I meet will be “What actions will you take, if confirmed, to expand diversity in broadcast ownership?” If they are a present FCC Commissioner seeking to be reestablished at the Com-

mission, voted on again to return to the Commission: “What actions have you taken to expand diversity in broadcast ownership?”

Only if we as Members press this issue will things change. It is time to afford our communities the representation in media they deserve, not just representation that others think they deserve.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MENENDEZ. 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.

### TRIBUTE TO JEANNE KOHLWELLES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and congratulate Mrs. Jeanne Kohl-Welles on her retirement following 30 years of work in elected office. Jeanne retires from Washington’s King County Council, where she has served as vice chair of the council and chair of the committee of the whole and been an extraordinary asset to our State and the greater Seattle-King County region for the last 30 years.

Under Jeanne’s leadership, King County Council was able to address countless issues facing King County and its communities. From supporting our communities through the COVID pandemic by leveraging the 13 budgets she passed as budget chair, to leading the creation of the King County Regional Homeless Authority, Jeanne has been dauntless in facing down tough challenges, tackling complex problems head on to make meaningful progress for King County and its communities.

Jeanne’s devotion to King County and the State of Washington as a whole started long before her tenure on the county council. Jeanne spent over two decades in the Washington State Legislature, first in the house and then in the senate. For many of her 20 years in the Washington State Senate, Jeanne chaired the senate higher education and labor and commerce committees and led legislative efforts to legalize medical marijuana and same-sex marriage, tackle income and gender inequality, and address human trafficking and child sexual abuse. Before that, she was an early advocate for addressing hate crimes and homelessness in Seattle.

A constant theme in Jeanne’s work has been her tireless dedication to truly representing her constituents. Jeanne has organized many Women’s History Month panels; expanded access to ballot drop boxes; implemented crucial investments in youth education; and worked with constituents count-

less times to introduce legislation that matters to them, like when she worked with middle-schoolers on legislation to regulate puppy-mills. Jeanne has shown a truly exceptional ability to champion what is important to those she represents. Whether it was pushing for the construction of the current stadium for our Seattle Seahawks, sponsoring legislation to make transit safe and available to all, or securing funding for the preservation of Washington State history—from Pike Place Market to the National Historic Landmark vessel S.S. *Virginia*—time and again, Jeanne has fought for the rights, needs, and histories of Washington State and King County communities.

Being a woman in politics isn’t always easy; when I first got to the Senate, there wasn’t even a women’s bathroom off the Senate floor. Every day, we are having to fight for our most basic rights, even as we advocate for all of our constituents. But every day, women like Jeanne are setting an example for young girls that with hard work, they can follow their dreams and make a real difference. Jeanne’s retirement won’t be a quiet one; she has plans to not only spend more time with her a family and travel, but also to pursue other passions.

It has been a great privilege to work with Jeanne, a true trailblazer, over the last three decades. And it is my honor to thank her for her lifetime of dedicated service to people in King County, the State of Washington, and the entire country. I wish her the very best during her well-earned retirement.

### TRIBUTE TO JOE McDERMOTT

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and congratulate Mr. Joe McDermott on his retirement following 22 years of public service. Joe retires from Washington’s King County Council, where he has represented King County’s eighth district and been an extraordinary asset to our State and the greater Seattle-King County region for his many years in both the Washington State Senate and House of Representatives.

Upon joining the State legislature in 2001, Joe marked the first time more than one openly gay legislator would serve in it. During his time, he contributed to unprecedented progress for the LGBTQ+ community through the addition of sexual orientation and gender identity to our State’s antidiscrimination statutes and protections for transgender persons to our hate crime statutes, as well as recognition to domestic partnerships for same-sex couples. Joe’s contributions have forever broadened the civil rights bill and paved the way to marriage equality.

Joe has also been a pivotal leader in safeguarding public safety. As a councilmember, Joe responded to the public health crisis of gun violence by recognizing the necessity of responsible firearm policy with the 2018 King County Gun Safety Action Plan. As

chair of the King County Board of Health, Joe established the first producer-paid Secure Medicine Return Program in Washington State and second in the Nation, addressing the opiate crisis and ensuring the safe disposal of unused medicines throughout King County. In just 5 years before the program became statewide and thanks to Joe's drive and commitment, 198 drop boxes were provided across the county, and over 115 tons of drugs destroyed.

As a sponsor of the original and 2021 renewal of Executive Dow Constantine's Best Starts for Kids Levy, Joe has played a momentous role in serving more than half a million King County children, youth, young adults, and families in partnership with 500 community-based organizations. He understands, as I do, that our young people are the future and our early investments in their lives will have growing returns for years to come.

The host of community-based proposals and progress throughout his career reflect Joe's extraordinary skills in developing compromise and recognizing individualized needs, even in the most difficult of circumstances. As a champion of the Health through Housing initiative to house 1,600 of the most challenged people facing homelessness and leader for support on long range hotel motel tax revenue allocation for affordable housing and public infrastructure, Joe has never wavered from the deep responsibility and value he holds for King County's low-income people.

Joe's work has been all-encompassing. From the expansion of the light rail service and the guarantee of its equitable fare enforcement, to the addition of new water taxis to meet higher passenger capacities, to the review and approval of King County's public participation in an arena proposal for NBA basketball and NHL hockey, the lengths to which Joe will provide for our communities seem endless.

It has been a great privilege to learn and collaborate with Joe over the last two decades, and it is my honor to thank him for his dedicated service to the people of King County, the State of Washington, and across the entire country. I wish him the very best during his well-earned retirement.

#### FEDERAL DEBT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, if you thought the dangerous theatrics of the Trump years were behind us, I have some bad news. This week, Speaker MCCARTHY plans to gamble with the paychecks of millions of families, as well as the stability of our Nation's economy.

Instead of accepting one of the most basic duties of government—avoid default—Speaker MCCARTHY is choosing high stakes risk. He is threatening to default on America's debt for the first time in history unless Democrats agree

to slash funding for working families, veterans, law enforcement, and small businesses across the country.

Now it goes without saying: This proposal is going nowhere in the Senate. And KEVIN MCCARTHY knows that. So the fact that he is still moving forward with it shows that he does not know the damage he could inflict on the American people. He is willing to hold our entire economy—and the fate of millions of Americans—hostage because, as long as he keeps the most radical fringes of his party happy, KEVIN MCCARTHY has nothing to worry about. But for everyone else, a Federal debt default would be disastrous.

It would wipe out trillions of dollars in household savings; it would lead to millions of Americans losing their jobs and businesses grinding to a halt; and it would crater our economy, likely throwing us into a recession.

Now all this chaos and destruction could be avoided today, if we wanted. Congress could pass a clean bill to pay our debts on time and uphold the full faith and credit of the United States. But of course, with the MAGA majority in the House, it is never that simple. Instead of sitting down with lawmakers across the aisle to find a sensible path forward, Speaker MCCARTHY is manufacturing a crisis. And really, he is giving the American people two unacceptable options: Either suffer the consequences of a disastrous debt default, or face devastating cuts to the services and programs millions of people rely on every day.

Just look at the proposal House Republicans will vote on this week. It is nothing more than a MAGA wish list that leaves every American behind, except the top 1 percent. To start, Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal would decimate funding for our Nation's veterans. It would cut hundreds of millions of dollars for expanding veteran's care, right after we just passed the PACT Act. And it would threaten housing and food security for our Nation's heroes.

And they are not alone because Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal would also gut funding for police officers and first responders. It would wipe out nearly 30,000 law enforcement jobs within the Justice Department alone. And it would require the government to furlough every single Border Patrol agent.

Can you imagine that? For years, Republicans have been saying Democrats want to defund the police and open our borders. And yet, here they are, supporting a proposal to abandon law enforcement and weaken border security.

Additionally, Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal would ship thousands of manufacturing jobs overseas, to countries like China. And perhaps worst of all, it would punish working families who are already struggling to get by. This Republican proposal would jeopardize healthcare coverage for 10 million Americans. And it could eliminate food assistance for more than 1 million families—including children—who are at risk of going hungry.

Now, this MAGA wish list is not bad news for everyone. In fact, there is one group of people in particular who would benefit from it. Can you guess who it is? I will tell you: the ultrawealthy. Speaker MCCARTHY's proposal would actually increase our deficit by allowing billionaires to avoid paying their fair share in taxes.

And it is not like they need any help. Today, there are a thousand billionaires in America who pay an average tax rate of 8 percent. Think about that. That is a lower tax rate than most school teachers and firefighters. Then again, it shouldn't be any surprise that Speaker MCCARTHY is siding with billionaires over working families.

After all, where was he just over a week ago? Was he meeting with working families and small business owners on Main Street who are worried about keeping their doors open? No. He was on Wall Street, meeting with wealthy traders and executives of big banks. And he personally assured them that Republicans will do everything they can to cut funding for hard-working families trying to make ends meet.

Now, here is the bottom line: We can—and should—have a debate on America's tax policy and Federal budget priorities. It is a debate Democrats win because we believe in investing in working families and ensuring the wealthy pay their fair share. Plain and simple. But now is not the time nor place for this debate because in the next several weeks, we have one responsibility: avoiding debt default—and the economic calamity that would follow. That is our obligation to the American people. And it is an obligation we have never once failed to meet in 230 years.

But today, sadly, many Americans are concerned that Speaker MCCARTHY is in over his head. Frankly, I share those concerns. He is leading a caucus that traffics in chaos and brinkmanship. And it is not clear that he can control the chaos.

So here is our promise, on behalf of congressional Democrats: We are ready to get to work. Let's avoid a disastrous debt default—as we always do. And then, let's engage in a fulsome debate on Federal spending priorities. The sooner we prevent a debt default, the sooner we can come together in good faith to work on behalf of the American people.

#### U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we do a lot to protect our identity and financial security from scammers and thieves. We guard our PIN numbers and passwords. We shred bills and financial documents. We are on guard for phishing attacks and cyber scams.

But there is another, growing threat to our financial safety that many Americans are unaware of. Across the country, we are seeing a surge in armed robberies of letter carriers. In many of the attacks, the robbers steal