

quickly fulfill—any urgent Israeli requests for assistance and do all we can to fully support Israel.

Now, colleagues, the Constitution of the United States lays out our responsibilities. Congress—Congress—has an important constitutional role in determining how the United States will respond to any additional acts of aggression.

As we support and stand with our allies, we also must be crystal clear about what has happened. The attacks on the people of Israel orchestrated by Hamas were barbaric, depraved—they were evil. Long supported by the Iranian regime, Hamas's stated mission is to destroy the Jewish people.

That is right—at the core of Hamas burns an age-old sickness: anti-Semitism. It was the twisted inspiration for their massacre. This broken thinking, this horrific ideology liberates not a single life; instead, tragically, it will cost only more, including those of innocent Palestinian civilians.

For the past 15 years, many peace-keeping Palestinians in Gaza have had their lives upended and exploited by the Hamas terrorist group. We acknowledge their suffering. We hope for change.

Those in our media, on our college campuses, or even those serving in government who ascribe the actions of Hamas to anything else other than hatred; those who are so quick to decry injustices elsewhere but place murder and rape in some sort of perspective; those who provide context for savagery; those who sigh that both sides are equally guilty—to all of you, I say you are providing cover for monsters.

The world view of Hamas must be added to the rollcall of evil ideologies that failed to destroy the Jewish people. And that is why we must stand with Israel. That is why. But that alone is not enough. You see, the murder of thousands of Jews brought reminders of the Holocaust and echoes of Russian pogroms and so many centuries of trials and tragedies. So we must also stand vigilant against and always oppose anti-Semitism wherever it appears, whatever movement it is attached to, whatever banner it marches underneath.

In these difficult days, we echo the old prayer sung across synagogues to the Jewish people:

May God have mercy on them and remove them from distress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption, now, speedily, and soon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EDUCATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, we have an issue in Louisiana—I wouldn't call it a problem—that I would like to talk about. Perhaps some of our sister States can learn from our struggles in my State. And the issue is education. I can't think of a more important subject. That is the future of my State. I think it is true in many other States.

I believe that Louisiana's future can be better than its present or its past, but the key to determining whether that is going to be the case or not is education—and I am talking specifically about elementary and secondary education—because that is what counts. In my State, it is not the price of oil; it is not what the unemployment rate is; it is not who the United States Senator is; it is not who the Governor is; it is education, pre-K through 12.

It is frustrating, I know. You know, Americans can do extraordinary things. We can unravel the human genome. We can take a diseased human heart and replace it with a brandnew one and make that thing beat. We can send a person to the Moon. But we in America struggle and we in Louisiana struggle to teach our children how to read and write and do basic math when we have 18 years to do it. I am not blaming anyone. We all share the frustration. And it is not just Louisiana; it is all across America. I understand that.

But decades ago in Louisiana, we made a decision. In fact, it was during my first job in government. I was working as legal counsel to a brandnew, reform Governor in Louisiana. He decided, and the people of Louisiana agreed with him—we all agreed on two things: No. 1, every child can learn. Now, it takes some a little bit longer. Kids mature at different times. But every child can learn. The second thing we agreed on was this: That which is measured gets done. That which is measured gets done.

We decided to implement, 30 years ago, standards for our elementary and secondary schools. One of those standards was and I think still is—that is the subject of my remarks today; I hope it still is—a graduation exam. We call it our Graduation Exit Examination 21, G-E-E. So if I say "G-E-E" or "GEE," I am talking about our graduation exam.

We said we are going to get serious about kids. We can't have our children graduate if they can't read their diploma, and so we are going to test them. The test is not terribly rigorous. It is four subjects. It is English, it is math, it is science, and it is social studies. We grade those exams—and you don't have to pass all four. You have to pass English and math and then either social studies or science. So, really, three out of four.

There are five different grades: advanced, mastery, basic, approaching basic, and unsatisfactory. Let me tell you what that really means: A, B, C, D, and F.

You only have to make a D on your graduation examination. You only have to make a D to pass—not an A, not a B, not a C, a D. So you take four exams. You have to make a D on English, a D on math, and at least a D on either social studies or science. If you don't pass, we will give you another chance, but you have to pass to get a diploma.

Now our Board of Elementary and Secondary Education—we call it BESE—which governs elementary and secondary education in Louisiana, has decided to take us back to the Dark Ages. By a one-vote margin, supported, quite frankly, by my Governor, who is lameduck—he will be leaving soon—he makes three appointments to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Everybody in America is entitled to their opinion, but I think my Governor and his team are wrong on this. They are going to send us back to the Dark Ages.

Here is the new rule: You have to pass the Graduate Exit Examination in the way I just described—unless you fail. Then you have to go to your teacher, and he or she can give you an extra-points project. Come on. Come on. Who are we kidding here?

Now, why do some want to do this? It is not the kids who want to do this; it is the adults, because not only do we grade our kids, we grade our schools, and if schools have kids who don't pass the GEE, the Graduate Exit Examination, it counts against the grade of the school. So this is all coming from the adults. They are putting themselves first, and they are not putting the kids first.

This is a massive step backward. This is an announcement to the rest of America that Louisiana has given up, that our kids are not smart enough, they are not good enough, even when we give them second or third chances, to be able to get a D on the Graduate Exit Examination, and as a result, we have to give them a special extra-points project so they can get a diploma that is not really a diploma.

The people behind this ought to hide their head in a bag. Our kids are better than that. Every one of my kids in Louisiana can learn. Sometimes they need a little bit longer. But it is not going to do them any good to give them a diploma that they can't read. It is not going to do them any good to give them a diploma that the rest of America and, frankly, the world is going to look at and go: That is not really a high school diploma because we know you failed the exam. You just got an extra-points project so the adults wouldn't look bad.

I am embarrassed by this.

This isn't the only problem we have in elementary and secondary education. I will give you one other statistic. Seventy percent of our high schools are graded A or B. Forty percent of the schools below that are graded A or B. Seventy percent of my high schools in Louisiana are not A or B

schools, OK? I wish they were—not when 40 percent of the lower grades are only A or B. Once again, the adults who don't want to be embarrassed are inflating those grades, too, and now they have started on the Graduate Exit Examination. But this is a bridge too far.

All is not lost. BESE, which, as I said, passed this rule change by one vote—and by the way, our superintendent of education was against it.

This rule change is going in front of the Louisiana Legislature for an oversight hearing and the Senate Education Committee and the House Education Committee. I hope that either the Senate or House and hopefully both will say no—no—because this change represents what George Bush, President Bush, called “the soft bigotry of low expectations”—“the soft bigotry of low expectations.” It has no place in this country, and it has no place in my State.

I am embarrassed that the people who are part of the education establishment in Louisiana are telling the rest of the world: Our kids are not good enough. They can't learn. So we are going to give them a diploma that is not really a diploma.

Thank you for the time today, Madam President. I wanted my colleagues to know what is going on in Louisiana. We are going to turn this rule back, and we are going to put our kids first in Louisiana, not the adults.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISRAEL

Ms. ROSEN. Madam President, I rise today as a Senator, as a former president of a synagogue, as the only Jewish mother in the U.S. Senate, as a steadfast supporter of Israel, and as a person who stands firmly against hate and terrorism around the world.

Since October 7, when Hamas launched a horrific and unprovoked terrorist attack on the Israeli people, our hearts—well, our hearts have been shattered. And over the past week and a half, we have learned that 1,300 innocent Israeli civilians and soldiers have been murdered. Thousands more have been injured. And countless families are grieving for loved ones who have been kidnapped, who at this very moment are being held hostage by Hamas—young children, women, seniors, some of whom even were Holocaust survivors.

This past weekend, I met with these families in Israel as part of a bipartisan Senate delegation, meeting with parents whose children—their children, their babies—that is how they called

them: My babies. They have my babies, a mother said.

They were ripped away from them by terrorists. Hearing those stories, seeing the fear and the pain in their eyes, feeling their heartbreak is something that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

And there is one story in particular that I am never going to forget. A woman, whose family member was taken from her by Hamas, spoke to us, and in speaking about her pain, she said:

We no longer live in the same world as you.

We no longer live in the same world as you. For her and her family, she said, every moment is an eternity. Just think about that, think about what they feel every single day that they are separated from their loved ones, not knowing how they are doing, not knowing if they are being tortured, if they are in pain, if they are even still alive.

And with each passing day—each passing day—these families, they anxiously await for their loved ones, hopefully, to be returned to them. And these stories, these stories demonstrate why I am going to do everything in my power to make sure that these families are made whole again.

We know that Hamas is currently holding nearly 200 innocent people, including Americans, many of them in dire need of medical attention. So we cannot stay silent. We must speak out until every hostage is released—every single one of them.

And that is why last night, I introduced a bipartisan resolution condemning Hamas for its brutal, brutal, premeditated attacks on Israel and demanding that Hamas immediately release the hostages so they can be reunited with their loved ones.

After what I saw, after what I experienced on the ground, I know we need to take decisive, bipartisan, and immediate action to help Israel. Let us take action to free the hostages, pass supplemental funding, aid to our ally in its greatest time of need, and provide Israel with all the support it needs to defend itself from acts of terrorism.

And at the same time, we need to make sure that Palestinian civilians receive humanitarian aid and that it does not ever, ever, end up in the hands of Hamas terrorists. Israelis and Palestinians alike have been victims of Hamas's terror. We have seen how Hamas uses Palestinian civilians as human shields to—which has led to the death of countless—countless—innocent residents in Gaza.

And so we will continue to support Israel's efforts to eliminate Hamas once and for all and limit civilian casualties. And as we do this, let's use the full force of the Senate, both sides of the aisle, to send a clear and decisive message to Hamas.

Let us all tell those cowards who kidnapped children, who kidnapped seniors, that the United States will not stand by and let these crimes occur. We will not rest until the hostages are free, until justice is delivered.

So I urge all of my colleagues to support my resolution and send a clear—and united message to the world.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1390

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam President, last Saturday, October 7, we saw evil personified. We saw the deadliest attack on the Jewish state since the Yom Kippur War, over 1,400 dead Israelis. And, for context, think of that. If that were America, it would be over 40,000 dead Americans. On top of that, we have seen 30 Americans lose their lives because of the evil brought upon Israel. We saw Hamas—an evil, terrorist organization—launch an unprecedented, unprovoked, undeniably devastating attack on the Jewish state.

I can't think of anything more evil than the images that we saw coming out of Israel where grandmothers were taken captive, where babies were burned alive, and where babies were beheaded. For what reason? For what reason did we see the atrocities and the evil brought upon a people? Simply because they were Jews.

Hamas, their goal is to eliminate the Jewish state, but that is not where they stop. They want to annihilate every single Jewish person on the planet, with more than 6 million living here at home in America. But they go one step further. They despise Western democracy. They want the elimination, the annihilation, of our entire way of life.

Fighting that war with the single-minded focus is exactly what we should expect from the Jewish people, from the State of Israel, from the Prime Minister, Prime Minister Netanyahu. He needs to have a single-minded focus.

But that is not the case because we have seen, in the last 24 hours or so, the emergence of a different kind of war that they now must fight. It is the war of misinformation. The disinformation, the misinformation war could be just as deadly, if not more deadly, than the actual attack we saw last Saturday, October 7.

One might ask the question: Why would I say that? Well, I would say that because immediately what we have seen since the devastation in Israel was Prime Minister Netanyahu sending the signal that they were coming into Gaza, giving people, the Palestinians, a chance to find themselves out of harm's way.

But the misinformation campaign takes a different turn, a different spin,