

our flag still waves proudly from the walls—I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch—The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country—Victory or Death.

[SIGNED] WILLIAM BARRET TRAVIS.

*[Lieutenant colonel commandant].*

P.S. The Lord is on our side—When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn—We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels and got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves.

TRAVIS.

At the battle of Santa Jacinto on April 21, 1836, the Texans finally secured a decisive victory. We won our independence and formed the Republic of Texas, a new nation. Texas was an independent nation for 9 years before we officially became part of the United States of America in February of 1846.

Sam Houston, the founding father, the George Washington of the Lone Star State, was also born 231 years ago on March 2, on Texas Independence Day. Sam Houston was an extraordinary American. He was born in Virginia. He spent many years in Tennessee, where he served in the U.S. House of Representatives and then became Governor of Tennessee. In Texas, he led the Texans to victory in the Battle of San Jacinto.

When Texas became an independent nation, Sam Houston served as President twice before Texas finally became part of the United States. Later, he served in the U.S. Senate and finally as Governor of Texas. He is the only man in American history to serve as Governor of two separate States.

Sam Houston was a tireless, talented leader and a great statesman who believed in liberty. His words, "Govern wisely and as little as possible," still ring true today, and the Lone Star State still follows that adage.

To every Texan, I wish you a gloriously happy Texas Independence Day.

May God continue to bless the great State of Texas and the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

ACCESS TO FAMILY BUILDING ACT

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I have been called a lot of names in my life: "Tammy," "Lieutenant Colonel," "Senator," and a couple others I shouldn't mention in polite company.

"Mommy," though, is, without a doubt, my favorite name. It is the one my 5-year-old uses when she runs into the house after dance class and pulls on my sleeve, eager to show me what she learned during her lesson.

It is the one my 9-year-old says when she announces her latest life plan. When she was little, she wanted to grow up to be a garbage collector; now, she is leaning towards being an Army cyber warrior.

My girls are my everything. But they, likely, would have never been born if I hadn't had access to the basic reproductive rights that Americans—up until recently—had been depending on for nearly a half century, because after a decade struggling with infertility after my service in Iraq, I was only able to get pregnant through the miracle of IVF.

IVF is the reason I get to experience the chaos and the beauty, the stress and the joy that is motherhood. IVF is the reason that my husband and I aren't just Tammy and Bryan but we are "Mom" and "Dad." IVF made our family. It made my heart whole. It made my life full.

But for countless women in Alabama, that desperately sought-after dream of becoming a mom just became so much harder. Last week, that State's supreme court ruled that frozen embryos created through IVF should be considered children under State law—a ruling that paints women like me and our doctors as criminals and one that throws IVF access into chaos as countless women and doctors try to figure out whether they might be criminalized for simply trying to create a family.

If you are thinking that this makes no sense, you are right. You are not misunderstanding anything; you are not missing something. It is the nightmarish blend of hypocrisy and misogyny that you think it is.

The very people who claim to be defending family values are the ones trying to enact dystopian policies that would prevent Americans from starting their own families.

This is no longer a hypothetical worst-case scenario. IVF providers around the State have already paused treatments out of fear that their doctors and patients could be punished.

Organizations that transport embryos to and from medical facilities in Alabama have already announced that they will stop doing so, meaning that would-be parents there won't even be able to start their families in any other States either.

And now that the first domino has fallen, it seems like it could only be a matter of time before more hospitals and more organizations make the same call, before more State courts issue similar rulings, before more extremist politicians succeed in enacting even more draconian laws nationwide.

Think about that. Think about what is at stake if State courts simply can strip away access to IVF. Think about how many would-be moms might never be able to hear their child's first little gurgle of a laugh. Think about how many hopeful dads might never be able to play tooth fairy when his would-be daughter loses her first tooth.

You know, I lived in Alabama for a bit when I was in the Army, stationed at what is now called Fort Novosel. And I didn't know it at the time, but infertility would become one of the most heartbreaking struggles of my

life, my miscarriage more painful than any wound I ever earned on the battlefield.

I also almost lost the opportunity to even try IVF because a doctor in a well-known Catholic hospital that my VA hospital referred me to told me I was simply too old for treatment; that at 42, I should just "go home and enjoy my husband," instead, and if it was meant to be, I would get pregnant.

It was pure luck that I found out that that doctor was lying to me, that she wasn't basing her advice on medical science but rather on her personal religious beliefs, nearly costing me my chance to have my two little girls.

So it is a little personal when a majority male State supreme court suggests that people like me who became parents with the help of modern medicine should be in jail cells and not nurseries. And I know I am not the only one who struggles to understand how elected representatives who back these kinds of policies can call themselves members of the so-called "party of life."

No, rulings like this one and the bills with the same intent that are being pushed forward in State legislatures around the country are not about being pro-life. They are about catering to an extremist base by exerting even more control over women's bodies, inserting politicians into some of the most intimate, personal decisions anyone could ever make.

Look, back when I was going through IVF, three of my five fertilized eggs were deemed nonviable. If a version of this ruling had been in place then, I might have been forced to implant each of those three nonviable embryos. I might have been forced to suffer through three more miscarriages or else risk me or my doctor being convicted of manslaughter for discarding nonviable fertilized eggs.

That is the kind of extremism that we are talking about here. That is the level of cruelty that we are facing. That is the kind of future we are fighting to prevent, where frozen embryos have more rights than the women who would carry them.

Let's be clear about what led to this moment, the overturning of Roe is what made last week's ruling even possible, as it stripped women of a constitutional right, transferring the power to decide whether or when to start families from us to politicians in State houses across the country.

Donald Trump is the one who brags about taking down Roe v. Wade. Donald Trump is the one who acts as if that is something to be proud of. So while it may now be convenient for him to claim that he had nothing to do with what happened in Alabama, we know the truth. IVF is at risk because of him. He is to blame. Him and every other GOP official who shamelessly kisses his ring, proving with every word they say that they care more about protecting his poll numbers than protecting Americans' freedoms.

After *Roe v. Wade* was overturned—actually, even before then, when the Senate was deciding whether to confirm Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court—I warned that red States would come for IVF. And now they have. But they aren't going to stop in Alabama. Mark my words, if we do not act now, it will only get worse.

There are a lot of nuanced tough calls we must make as Senators. This, simply, isn't one of them. We know what is right, even if extremist courts would like to rob millions of us of our rights. We shouldn't need to wait until women and doctors are thrown in jail before we act to protect them.

That is why today I am begging my colleagues to help me pass my Access to Family Building Act. A bill that would ensure that every American's right to become a parent via treatments like IVF is fully protected, regardless of what State they live in, helping guarantee that no hopeful parent or doctor in this country can be held criminally liable for starting or growing a family through IVF.

The reality is, one in four married women have difficulty getting pregnant or carrying a pregnancy to term. That number doesn't even include partnerless Americans or other families also trying to have kids. That is one in four in red States and in blue States, in big cities and rural towns, in the wealthiest neighborhoods and in the poorest of ZIP Codes, because infertility doesn't discriminate between party lines. It doesn't recognize State borders.

No one should feel that someone else's religious beliefs or partisan slants could rob them of their chance to get pregnant, and no doctor should have to risk a criminal record just to provide women basic healthcare.

So to my Republican colleagues, please, think about how many that one in four equates to in your State. Women willing to go through expensive, painful medical treatments just for a chance to experience the smallest, most banal moments of parenthood. Just to have a newborn to swaddle, a baby whose diaper needs to be changed, a toddler who needs their shoes to be tied. And if you believe that they have the right to be called "Mom" without also being called a criminal, then all you have to do to prove it is to let us pass this should-be-obvious legislation, because in this nightmarish moment, it is nowhere near enough to send out a vaguely worded tweet claiming you care about women's rights, despite a voting record to the contrary.

No, this is where the rubber meets the road. If you truly care about the sanctity of families, if you are genuinely, actually, honestly interested in protecting IVF, then you need to show it by not blocking this bill today. It is that simple.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3612

Madam President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that

the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 3612 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Madam President, I support the ability for mothers and fathers to have total access to IVF in bringing new life into the world. I also believe human life should be protected. These are not mutually exclusive.

Let's be clear about what the Alabama case is about. This was a case brought by families whose human embryos were killed when an unauthorized individual walked into the fertility clinic through an unsecured door, removed several human embryos, and dropped them, causing their deaths.

The court's holding in favor of the parents found that these frozen human embryos are children under Alabama law. It did not ban IVF, nor has any State banned IVF.

The bill before us today is a vast overreach that is full of poison pills that go way too far—far beyond ensuring legal access to IVF. The act explicitly waives the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and would subject religious and pro-life organizations to crippling lawsuits.

Religious and pro-life organizations could be forced to facilitate procedures that violate their core beliefs, including their health insurance plans. This would be the first time the bipartisan Religious Freedom Restoration Act introduced by then-Representative CHUCK SCHUMER was explicitly waived.

The bill's expansion definition of "artificial reproductive technology" sweeps in much more than IVF and has far-reaching implications. It would legalize human cloning. It would legalize commercial surrogacy, including for young girls without parental involvement. It would legalize gene-edited designer babies and lift the Federal ban on the creation of three-parent embryos. It would legalize the creation of human-animal chimeras. Other developed countries like Germany, New Zealand, and Australia, as well as States like Louisiana, have policies that allow for IVF coupled with commonsense protections to respect human life.

Creating rights to human cloning, the genetic engineering of human embryos, and surrogacy is too extreme and goes far beyond IVF. This bill misses the mark.

We should strive to do both, and this bill does not do that. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Illinois.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I have the greatest respect and admiration for my friend from Mississippi, but I have to say that I disagree with her interpretation of my piece of legislation.

This bill does three things and three things only: It protects the right of individuals to seek assistive reproductive technology without fear of being prosecuted for seeking that technology. It preserves the right of physicians to provide that assistive reproductive technology without fear of being prosecuted, and it also allows insurance companies to cover assistive reproductive technology.

That is all that it does. It does not force anyone to seek reproductive technology; it does not force anyone to offer it; it does not force anyone to cover it. It simply says you have a statutory right, should you choose to pursue assistive reproductive technology that you will be able to do so.

I also want to note that in Louisiana there is already State law that prohibits the "discarding" of frozen embryos or of frozen fertilized eggs.

This has already started. In Florida, there is a bill pending before the State legislature that would deem that a fertilized egg is a human being and provide the opportunity for penalties to be put into judgments for those who would discard those fertilized eggs. So this is a real threat today.

With that, I would like to yield to my colleague from Nevada.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, first of all, I want to start off by thanking my colleague Senator DUCKWORTH for not only sharing her story of her wonderful family and beautiful two daughters—I have seen myself what an incredible mother they have, and they are fantastic girls. I also have to thank her for bringing forward this important legislation.

Women across the country use IVF to start their own families. You are hearing that not only from Senator DUCKWORTH. I have heard it from so many people in Nevada and really across the country. They make that choice in consultation with their partners, their families, and their doctors, not a government official—not a government official.

There is no logical reason to deny women that right, and yet, after *Roe v. Wade* fell, we could see from a mile away that IVF was in danger. Senator DUCKWORTH was one of the first to come forward in recognizing that, and that is why her legislation is so important. Why? Because attacking IVF was yet another chance for anti-choice Republicans to erode women's rights in this country.

They have introduced a Federal abortion ban that would supersede State laws. They have stacked the courts with anti-choice judges. They have limited funding to women's healthcare,