

Pittsburghers and injured several others, including police officers, at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. That horrific moment in the history of the Jewish people and the history of the American people reminded all of us of how pernicious and how widespread anti-Semitism is. At that time, I was cataloging the numbers, the exponential rise in anti-Semitism up to that point in time, the end of the calendar year 2022, and how anti-Semitism had grown so substantially in that timeframe.

However, as we all know, since October 7 of 2023, since Hamas terrorists attacked the people of Israel and killed over 1,200 Jews in Israel, those numbers, which are high and exponentially high before, went even higher—an explosion across the country of anti-Semitism. The Anti-Defamation League has tracked the highest numbers of anti-Semitic incidents ever—ever—in the United States in 2023, and those numbers have undoubtedly continued to rise with the ongoing campus protests. There were over 8,800 instances, including 2,177 cases of vandalism and 161 assaults.

No one in this country, none of us, can tolerate any form of anti-Semitism, any form of discrimination abroad or at home, on college campuses, in the workplace, on the playground, in any setting in American life. That is why we must pass the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, a bill that my colleague Senator TIM SCOTT and I have worked on for almost 8 years.

Our bill would mandate that the Department of Education consider a widely accepted definition of anti-Semitism in carrying out its enforcement actions, strengthening civil rights enforcement against anti-Semitism, just like that same office, the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Education, is charged with investigating incidents of racial discrimination or discrimination of any kind on a college campus that rises to a level of a hostile environment on that campus.

The House has already passed its version of the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act. They passed that recently. We must find a pathway here in the Senate to pass this bill. This bill is co-sponsored by 15 Democrats and 15 Republicans all across the length and breadth of the country.

There are objections to our legislation from individual Senators on both sides of the aisle, which so far has blocked unanimous consent, but we are confident the legislation would pass if given a vote.

An additional point on this matter is relevant. I mentioned the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. That is the office that is charged with conducting these investigations of anti-Semitism but, as I said, also charged with the obligation to conduct investigations of racism on a campus or other forms of discrimination.

I have a separate bill that would add substantial funding, absolutely essen-

tial funding, to the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Education. That office has to hire more people to conduct these investigations, to initiate an investigation, to expeditiously gather evidence, complete the investigation, and make that fundamental determination whether there is a hostile environment on a college campus for Jewish students, just like it would make a determination with regard to a hostile environment for Black students in the case of allegations of racial animus on a campus—make that determination of hostile environment or not, making that decision. Once they make that decision, of course, the college or university would be subjected to penalties.

But the only way that can happen, that those investigations can be commenced and be completed, is to have the resources and personnel. The Office of Civil Rights needs to hire hundreds more people to do this, and I think it is a worthy investment. So I would urge Senators in both parties, both sides of the aisle, to work with us to pass that legislation.

I think most of us come to this from a very basic part of our DNA. We know that this kind of discrimination, whether it is anti-Semitism or racism or other forms of discrimination, is a scourge on the country. It is a scourge, and I think it is an insult to our country as a country of free people. We have to figure out a way to combat anti-Semitism, and we can do that by passing the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, but also to take other actions which will stamp out this kind of discrimination in our society, throughout our country, and throughout 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. WELCH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Vermont.

#### ISRAEL

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, last Friday, President Biden announced the elements of a proposed plan for a permanent cease-fire in Gaza. If accepted by both Israel and Hamas, the plan would prevent many more months of death and destruction, it would save countless lives, free the hostages, and offer a way forward to lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

In order for the plan to succeed, the President will need to use the leverage that only he has as President, that leverage with Israel, with Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, and others.

I believe it will also require a very decisive change in our own policy. After 8 months of relentless bombing and shelling, the United States should

stop—should stop—supporting a war strategy that has not only caused massive death and destruction but has failed to achieve either of Prime Minister Netanyahu's key objectives: total victory over Hamas and release of the remaining hostages.

Instead, 8 months into this war, Gaza is in ruins, tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed and many more have been injured, including thousands of women and children. Some 100 hostages remain trapped underground. They are subjected to daily abuse by their captors while bombs explode above them with no idea if they will live to see the light of day.

And on May 26, Israeli Defense Forces—using munitions provided by the United States—attacked a camp of displaced Palestinians in Rafah, where the Israeli military had ordered them to relocate to avoid bombing in the north. The attack incinerated 45 people and injured many more. Mr. Netanyahu called it a tragic mistake. In reality, it was the gruesome result of an ill-conceived, scorched-earth campaign that has gone on for far too long.

For years, Mr. Netanyahu used Hamas as an asset in his very cynical strategy to ensure the Palestinian Authority could not become an effective partner for peace. He steadily expanded Israeli settlements, roads, and other infrastructure in the West Bank to create conditions on the ground to undermine the viability of a Palestinian State.

His policies fueled hatred and violence among Israelis and Palestinians. Yet throughout those years, the United States has supported his government unconditionally.

The Israeli and Palestinian people are now paying the price for these failed policies. Today, over a million Palestinians in Gaza are suffering from acute hunger. Children are starving. The wounded are dying from lack of medical care. Children with life-threatening injuries cannot leave Gaza to obtain the surgery that they need in other countries. Hundreds of trucks carrying food, medicines, and other aid have been stalled in Egypt. And the sea pier constructed by our Department of Defense, using hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, is in pieces.

Despite intensifying criticism around the world, Mr. Netanyahu has responded to his many critics—including Israeli citizens—with reckless defiance.

The time will come when the war ends. President Biden announced a plan to achieve through diplomacy what military force has failed to achieve. But whenever that time comes, Gaza will be uninhabitable. Two million Palestinians will be dependent on international aid for years to come.

Rather than bringing security and peace to the Middle East, I fear that the legacies of this war could be the opposite: more hatred, regardless of what is left of Hamas, more acts of violence against Israelis and Americans.

Last week, Secretary Blinken said Israel must decide if its military actions are worth the cost in civilian lives. I agree.

(Ms. Cortez Masto assumed the Chair.)

But the United States, not just Israel, must answer this question, too: Is Israel's use of our planes, our tanks, our bombs, our ammunition worth the cost in civilian lives?

Is it worth the risk of creating a new generation of terrorists, victims of bombing and shelling who saw their parents, siblings, and friends die, their homes destroyed?

Is it worth the lives of the hostages? I believe the answer is no.

The United States must stop providing offensive weapons and munitions to a polarizing foreign leader who treats billions of dollars in military aid from American taxpayers as an entitlement while he ignores the appeals of the American officials to stop bombing, shooting, and denying aid to Palestinian civilians.

The United States should stop providing offensive weapons and munitions to a foreign leader who promotes policies that are diametrically against U.S. national interests and, by doing so, sets back progress for Middle East peace and puts American lives at risk.

The United States should stop supporting a war strategy that has repeated some of our own worst mistakes in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The United States also should defend the Geneva Conventions and the international tribunals, including the International Criminal Court. Some here have denounced the chief prosecutor for bringing charges against Prime Minister Netanyahu. There is no equivalence between Israel and Hamas to be sure. But there are credible allegations of violations of the laws of war in Gaza. Attacking the Court plays into the hands of war criminals like Vladimir Putin and weakens our own credibility and the Court's legitimacy.

It undermines the universal principle that no one and no government is above the law, a cardinal principle that the United States should strongly defend.

The perpetrators of the October 7 massacre must be brought to justice. Such horrendous crimes must not go unpunished. But destroying Rafah is not going to finish off Hamas. It is not going to save the hostages. It may doom them.

President Biden has outlined a credible plan for peace. While Israel and Hamas will ultimately decide when this war ends, we, the United States, can decide when it ends for us. Secretary Blinken asked the right question, which should have been asked months ago.

The right answer is no. Israel's bombardment of Gaza is not worth the cost in civilians lives, and we should stop supporting it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from New Jersey.

## TRIBUTE TO SENATE PAGES

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I stand here as a Senator of New Jersey, but I think I am going to be representing all 100 Senators when I mark this distinctive moment when the Senate will soon go into recess, and we will end a week in the Senate that is not a typical week. It is a week that happens once or twice every year where we say goodbye to a class of pages.

And the truth of the matter is, it is a time that is emotional. I have been to a handful of graduations. And even though the pages are spending not even half a year here, the bonds that you experience here, the friendships that you make, the fact that you are participating in something so much larger than any one American is pretty significant.

You will have many graduations, I imagine, from high school, from college, some of you from graduate school, some of you from medical school—none of you from clown college, I think, because you lack senses of humor.

But the reality is, this is a meaningful departure, a meaningful graduation. And every year, I try to come down to the floor and express my ire at the class. This one particularly has raised my dander—and it is hard to do because I am bald. But this time something different happened because of the extraordinary people who work in this institution, not the Senators but the parliamentary staff. They made the mistake of telling me that in past years, there were poetry competitions. And I figured that since this class—probably worse than any others—lacked the ability to share with me any jokes, we decided to rekindle this moment that maybe we could have a poetry competition.

Now, I was handed, about 3 weeks ago, this very formal-looking envelope that says, "From the President of the United States," which it is not—it is actually from pages—an envelope with poetry in it.

Forgive the alliteration, Madam President, but a pathetic paucity of pages participated—just a small handful. There was a smattering of page participation. It was very disappointing to me. But I had a chance to review the 10 or dozen or so poems.

And given the poetic wisdom that I have gleaned in my years of education in one poetry class in grade school, I have deemed who the winners are.

And now I would like to read the bronze medal—this is an Olympic year, after all—the silver medal, and the gold medal shining winner. And what do you win? Nothing. I mean, actually, you win the distinction before your peers of having your poem read as the gold medal poem and entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD forever, for eternity.

And so, first, I will do the third-place poem. These were all extraordinary entrants. Everybody who participated is a winner—yada, yada, yada, yada. OK.

I hope you got that, "yada, yada, yada." OK. All right.

This first one was the third-place finisher. And here we go.

Division

Scrolling through your phone,  
You don't see the friendship between Senators Booker and Britt—

Sidebar. The only reason this one got into third place is because it actually named my name. You do get awards in this place for being obsequious, sycophantic, and more. Going back to the top—

Scrolling through your phone,

You don't see the friendship between Senators Booker and Britt,

Not if you are at home,

But only if you sit where we sit.

Seen as division,

But united as one.

While ideas do bring collision,

We still stand under the same sun.

Watch them argue on the news,

See them as friends on the floor.

Even when it seems win or lose,

Their debates do not mean war.

The only way to realize, is if you see it with your own eyes.

(Poem by Kathryn Murchison.)

That was actually really good. Bronze medal. Yes, we can have applause in the Chamber, which is not technically allowed.

I didn't see anything. Raise your hand if that is yours.

It was tremendous.

All right. Names will officially be read into the RECORD later. But I am going to go to No. 2.

O Capitol, Our Capitol

Here the Capitol lies

The Titan of the city

Standing to bridge divides

With many a committee

Busts and paintings they loom

And stairs trodden by masses

With halls that have seen history bloom

So quickly it all passes

Ideas come in and out

Always a deadline due

Change some bring about

But from what I know is true

The path we choose to follow

Will lead us to t'morrow

(Poem by Miriam Tsegay and Mira Murphy.)

Raise your hand if that was yours, by the way.

Oh, my gosh. Oh.

Why did you raise your hand then?

It was a collaboration. I don't know if that is fair. Not only is this page class not funny, but they cheat.

No, no, no. Collaboration is important. It is important.

All right. This is the winning poem. The Gallery is full of media—at least one person—to the tens of people watching on CSPAN at home.

No title for this one. It doesn't need it. It is the winning poem.

My country 'tis of thee.

My parents' eyes gleamed with a dream.

Red, white, and blue stretched from sea to sea.

They were told "work hard but don't run out of steam."

Late dinners to unpredictable shifts.

Staying with my grandma felt like living in a world away.

It was almost too good to notice the reality of it.