

Last year, one of the pictures that got, again, a lot of attention was a flotilla of 11 Russian and Chinese warships off the Aleutian Islands. Just a few weeks ago, there was a new flotilla of Chinese military ships that transited the U.S. EEZ off of Alaska. We know they are not going out whale watching or looking at the glaciers. This is activity that is close to Alaska, along our shared maritime border with Russia and just beyond our sovereign territory.

But I share these because these are the events that are happening now. These are the events that are happening now, and they are capturing the attention of the country. So we need to make sure that, as we are paying attention to these current events, we have somebody whose day job it is to do nothing more than monitor, engage, work with the State Department, work with our friends and allies, and work with the administration.

We have made some good progress in recent years on infrastructure in the Arctic. We have done a lot more in partnering from a diplomatic perspective by putting a consulate there in Nuuk, Greenland. We have to do a lot more to ensure our Nation's interests and well-being in the region, and that is why it comes down to the right people in the right place—the right people in the right place.

This is why I am so strong in urging that we take up Dr. Sfraga's nomination to be the Arctic Ambassador at Large. He has over three decades of experience on Arctic issues. He is the Chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission and has been since 2021. Prior to his nomination for Ambassador at Large, he was the founding director of the Polar Institute. He was the director of the Global Risk and Resilience Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC. He was a colead scholar at the State Department for the Fulbright Arctic Initiative. He has served as chair of the Committee of Visitors Review of the Section for Arctic Science, Office of Polar Programs, National Science Foundation. He earned the first Ph.D. in geography in northern studies from the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

The guy knows the Arctic. He gets it. He is clear-eyed about the realities and the intentions of our adversaries. He understands what we need to do to advance our Nation's equities in the Arctic. He knows the people; he knows the scene. And they know him. That is really incredibly important.

They are waiting for us. They are waiting for us to confirm Dr. Sfraga's nomination. They have worked with him in the past, and they are really anxious to have him in this position.

I was at an event last week. It was the going-away for Iceland's Ambassador to the United States. Her next role is a newly created role. She will be Iceland's Ambassador to the Arctic-at-Large. We should confirm our own already.

The Arctic is where our domestic policy meets foreign policy. It is where homeland defense meets the protection of our national fisheries. It is where our changing climate meets increased resource development and shipping and trade. It is where NATO's "other flank"—its western flank—meets Russia and China. It is the most strategically important place in the world.

I know that people are looking at our calendar. They are saying that time is running short. I don't disagree. But I think it is critically important that we have somebody of Dr. Sfraga's caliber in this position. We need to have that representation. I would certainly urge the Senate to act on his nomination, hopefully, before we are able to conclude at the end of this week.

The reality is, if we want to do right by the Arctic and all of our growing interests and challenges in the region, we really can't wait any longer.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

TRIBUTE TO MATT VANKUIKEN

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to my chief of staff and dear longtime friend, Matt VanKuiken, who will be moving on to the next step in his career this week, after 16 years of outstanding service in my office.

Those of you who know Matt understand how passionate he is about golfing. We have all experienced also his witty sense of humor. Matt is a literal political pundit.

With that, Matt, I want you to know there are no ifs, ands, or putts about it. You have been a terrific chief of staff and the best, by par. I could always count on you to drive right in to solve problems, to scramble and find the best approach to any situation, and to stay the course until the job was done.

Matt, from what I understand, my phone calls to you while you were golfing really helped you improve your game over the years. So I want you to know that I have a gift for you back in the office, some golf balls and tees with my campaign colors, so that you won't ever forget about my calls when I am not calling you every day.

True story, Madam President: Matt first applied to work in my office when he was a student at Western Michigan University. We offered him an internship in my West Michigan office, and he turned us down. But, fortunately, we didn't hold that against him. Sixteen years ago, I made one of the best hiring decisions ever when I hired Matt as a legislative aide, handling energy and environmental issues, which I know, Madam Chair, you care so much about, as do I.

He went on to serve in senior roles over the years, including as my legislative director and my chief of staff, including his role now as a key member of our top leadership chiefs. He has had an incredible Senate career.

Since his early days in the office, Matt had a way of rising to the occa-

sion. A perfect example of this happened one day, a late afternoon in 2013. For reasons unknown, Matt was left alone in the office when my private incoming line rang. Unsure of exactly how to answer or transfer the call on this line, he was going to let it ring. He soon realized that the line had no voicemail, and he decided he should attempt to answer it. It was a good thing he did because it was President Obama trying to reach me.

In typical Matt fashion, he figured it out. He kept his composure. The call went off without a hitch, although he claims to this day that President Obama could hear his hand shaking through the phone.

I can point to so many big accomplishments where Matt has played an absolutely instrumental leadership role. Over and over again, he doesn't give up, and he finds creative ways to get things done in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

Getting funds to address the needs of families and fix the pipes in Flint was a herculean effort. Because the crisis wasn't a natural disaster, Flint didn't qualify for certain types of disaster funding. Under Matt's leadership, we found a way to get it done. Today, almost all of the lead service pipes in Flint have been replaced, and the children and families of Flint have access to safe water.

In 2015, Matt was instrumental in getting funding to Detroit and other Michigan cities to tear down blighted homes and rebuild neighborhoods. My goal, which we thought was simple and found it wasn't, was to transfer available funds from one account in the Treasury to another account to address these critical housing issues.

Over and over again, we were told getting support to transfer the funds was impossible. In fact, multiple times, Leader Reid told us it was over. We were playing Whac-A-Mole, as one obstacle after another popped up. But, in the end, with Matt's tenacity and hard work, we succeeded, and it was worth it.

The mayor of Detroit recently told me that the actions we took created safe neighborhoods for families in Detroit a decade sooner—10 years sooner—than they would have been able to do it had they not had those funds.

So, thank you, Matt.

I could go on and on. Matt helped me get an agreement with Canada to limit trash from coming into Michigan landfills from Toronto. He helped established the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, or GLRI—which, again, Madam Chair knows about—our premier funding source to protect our precious lakes. This program has been incredibly successful in Michigan and across our entire Great Lakes region. I couldn't have done all of this and so much more without Matt's leadership and his hard work.

But Matt's legacy is more than our legislative successes. It is most reflected in my incredible staff and alumni from my office. He has been the

best—the best—chief who has built the best team in Congress. He has been a friend, a mentor, and a supportive colleague to so many. He has created the kind of culture that has made my office so effective at getting things done and a great place to work.

At around 11:30 every day, Matt asks folks in the office: “What are we doing for lunch today?” And you will see him with at least two, sometimes more, colleagues heading down to grab food and then coming back to his office to eat together.

During his time as chief, we have had one of the lowest staff turnovers of any office. And it is not just because they love Arby’s or spicy chicken sandwiches, although he has gotten a lot of recruits to do that. When Matt makes decisions, he seeks a lot of input from our office, from our staff, which is so important.

One staffer talked about how, during the pandemic, he would regularly check in with everyone on the team and seek feedback when deciding new protocols and office systems as the pandemic evolved. In chaos and uncertain times, Matt made sure everyone felt supported and competent that they had what they needed to succeed. And, of course, he has always done that for me.

Matt has also effectively bridged the divide between DC and the Michigan staff. This means leading our all-staff retreats, making sure everyone knows each other, and setting the tone of constant collaboration in service to our State. The people of Michigan have benefited every single day from his leadership and service.

Matt’s relationships outside of our office have also been instrumental in so many successes. These relationships are what keeps our office informed and helps us serve the people of Michigan.

When I finally decided not to run again, I knew it was the right decision for me and my family. I knew it was time to pass the torch. But I couldn’t imagine not being with my Senate family every day and not working with Matt every day. It is the hardest decision I ever made—the right decision but the hardest.

Matt will be starting an exciting new job soon. I know he will continue his commitment to excellence and service in this new role and beyond, and I am confident that he will continue his great success in everything he does.

I will be forever grateful for Matt’s contributions to my success, for his loyalty, and his friendship.

I wish Matt continued success and happiness in the next chapter in his life, and I wish him joy and happiness with Heather and his wonderful daughter Sophie, who is with us today in the Gallery.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

KOSA-COPPA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before the Senate adjourned last week, we took a major step forward to ensure

our kids’ online safety by advancing KOSA-COPPA with strong bipartisan support—a vote of 86 to 1.

Thanks to both sides working together, the Senate is on track to pass KOSA and COPPA tomorrow. These bills are perhaps the most important updates in decades to Federal laws that protect kids on the internet and a good first step.

After the Senate passes KOSA and COPPA tomorrow with a strong bipartisan vote, the House should do the same when they return in September. The bipartisan momentum behind these bills is real, and we should seize this opportunity to make a law.

While social media has many benefits, it also, as we know, has many risks. KOSA and COPPA will install guardrails that protect kids from these risks.

Too many kids experience relentless online bullying. Too many kids have their personal data collected and then used nefariously. And sadly—sadly—too many families have lost kids because of what happened to them on social media.

I have met with many of the families whose children took their own lives. We felt the pain of loss together. We have cried together. What they have gone through is impossible to imagine—losing a child and in this way.

But these families, to their everlasting credit, instead of cursing the darkness, they lit a candle. They turned their grief into grace by working so hard to make sure this doesn’t happen to other kids, what happened to theirs.

I thank all of the families who advocate to get kids’ online safety over the finish line. Their efforts will pay off tomorrow.

I also want to thank colleagues who have relentlessly championed these bills: Senators BLUMENTHAL and BLACKBURN, MARKEY and CASSIDY, DURBIN and KLOBUCHAR, Chair CANTWELL, and others.

Getting to this point wasn’t easy; that is for sure. It has been a long and winding and difficult road. But after tomorrow, I am very proud that it will have all been worth it.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Madam President, now on SCOTUS, the Supreme Court of the United States, no democracy can hope to survive if it can’t ensure accountability. That is a hallmark of democracy—and American democracy, in particular. This was the stern warning handed down to us by the Framers of the Constitution. Accountability is how power is checked, how consent of the governed is secured, and how trust between the people and their institutions is preserved.

Later today, President Biden will speak at the LBJ Presidential Library on the need for accountability for the U.S. Supreme Court, where it is desperately needed. The President published an op-ed in the Washington Post outlining his ideas and will expand on them this evening.

I believe the President is right to say aloud what many Americans already think: The Supreme Court is a morass. I am particularly pleased President Biden called for undoing the damage of the Court’s recent immunity decision. I think Congress should pursue the idea through legislation, and I am working with my colleagues on the best way to proceed.

A few years ago, the Supreme Court was easily the most trusted institution in government, but today confidence in the Court is at an alltime low. For over a year, Americans have learned how some Justices have accepted millions of dollars in lavish gifts from rightwing benefactors that, at the same time, had business before the Court. They were funding these groups to pursue their rightwing agenda before the Court. And all of this happened in total secrecy and possibly—possibly—in violation of the law.

And at the same time, the MAGA Justices have rammed through a flurry of hard-right decisions, reversing decades of precedent—they almost seem to ignore it from time to time, when they want to—on reproductive freedoms, on affirmative action, on gerrymandering, administrative law, and so much more. These decisions on choice and so many other issues are way out of the mainstream.

And 1 month ago, the MAGA Justices ruled that the President of the United States is, in essence, above the law when it comes to his “official acts.” The conservative majority’s ruling was the very antithesis of the kind of accountability our Framers envisioned. The MAGA Court more or less echoed Richard Nixon’s infamous view that “when the President does it, that means it is not illegal.”

These fringe rulings and ethical scandals are not the signs of a healthy Supreme Court. They are the signs of a Court run amok.

The good news is that the Constitution provides a remedy to the Supreme Court’s current morass: Congress has the authority to exercise strong checks on the judiciary through legislation, and Congress has the authority to speak on constitutional issues. The Constitution is clear: The Supreme Court does not get the final word.

An option I am seriously considering is drawing up legislation clarifying that the President is not immune from violations of Federal law.

One of the Justices recently claimed there is no provision in the Constitution that gives Congress authority to regulate the courts. I respectfully suggest that this Justice reread the Constitution because it is plain as day that Congress is well within its rights to conduct oversight.

Accountability shouldn’t be a dirty word when we talk about the Supreme Court. Americans across the ideological spectrum agree that checks and balances are necessary for a system to thrive, and they agree those checks should apply to the Supreme Court just