

event. It is a great event. I love going every year. It is a lot of fun. So many Alaskans, Native and non-Native, are there. It is fantastic.

So Julie has built all of that. AFN is one of the most important organizations in our State.

Thirty-four years later, Julie talks about some of the seminal programs and initiatives created during her time. AFN helped establish the Job Corps center, which is still thriving in Palmer, AK—a beautiful campus there—training Alaskans in their jobs. It is fantastic work they do.

AFN worked to establish Alaska Native education equity, the growing recognition and importance of Tribes.

Julie Kitka also did a great job working with our military and Alaska Natives and AFN. Alaska Natives, like Native Hawaiian and lower 48 Indians, serve at higher rates in the military than any other ethnic group in the country. Special patriotism, I like to call it. That is what they do.

Julie Kitka did a great job focusing on those issues and forming dozens of joint Federal and State partnerships that have lasted for decades. Julie said that none of this would have been accomplished without bridge building:

It was always about partnerships—nothing was ever done alone. We had conferences all the time to break down barriers and self-limiting silos.

Partnerships—what a great way to focus on leadership, Madam President. That is what she did.

So after 34 years as the president of AFN and 40 years as an employee of AFN, Julie has now decided to step down. What a career. What an impact on Alaskans.

And, by the way, she shows no sign of slowing down yet. This April, the full Alaska congressional delegation, myself included, selected Julie to lead the Denali Commission, an independent Federal Agency, to work on economic development and infrastructure issues in rural Alaska. So we certainly have not seen the last of her incredible work or work ethic on behalf of Alaska and all of our fellow Alaskans.

Julie, to you, congratulations. It has been an honor working with you on some of these critically important issues. I know that everybody at AFN, all Alaskans, Native and non-Native, send their congratulations. You have built an incredible legacy. You have worked so hard for our State and our communities. And now you have received one of the most prestigious awards in Alaska: being our Alaskan of the Week. Congratulations on a job well done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, before I start, it is an unfortunate position speaking after the Senator from Alaska. I want to thank him formally for his “Alaskan of the Week.” I am very far away in New Jersey, but I do enjoy that I often get to preside when

he speaks about the extraordinary Americans. I know they are Alaskans, but they are extraordinary Americans. I have appreciated that on a regular basis.

I do not understand why the Gallery is not full of journalists, but your colleagues do recognize the wonders of the people of your great State, and I want to thank you for that, in all seriousness.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Madam President, I rise today with a lot of hurt and anguish. I start with these words:

Please don't hurt me.

“Please don't hurt me.” Those were the first words that Sonya Massey said to the officers who knocked on her door on July 6. She had called 9-1-1 for help. She dialed those digits out of distress. She thought there might have been a possible intruder at her home.

Two officers responded. They were supposed to help. Less than 5 minutes later, she was dead, with a bullet to the head. The officer who killed her stopped the other officer at the scene from rushing forward to render aid by saying these words: “Nah, that's a head shot, dude,” he chuckled, “She's [dead].”

Sonya Massey's words: “Please don't hurt me.”

Her words: “Please don't hurt me.”

Four words: “Please don't hurt me.”

Sonya Massey was a mother and a daughter. She was a friend and a neighbor. She was young; she was just 36 years old. This African-American woman was in her home and needed help. She should be alive today.

We all grow up being taught in school that when we need help, police will be there. We know and are taught that they are to protect and serve. All across America, there are extraordinary stories of officers who do just that. I know it intimately. Some of the bravest people I have ever encountered are men and women who serve as law enforcement officers. They do keep our communities safe. I believe overwhelmingly that the overwhelming majority of American officers are not just good people, but they are good people who do great things in times of extraordinary distress.

I have had such incredible experiences and forged incredibly close bonds with many police officers. As mayor of New Jersey's largest city, I actually oversaw a police department. I sat with officers for countless hours—hundreds of them—in patrol cars. I went out with them in patrols in some of our more challenged neighborhoods in the late hours of the night. I watched them put themselves in harm's way. I watched them intervene in life-and-death situations.

I know countless police officers who report to work day in and day out and carry out their oath to protect and serve faithfully and professionally, often going above and beyond the call of their duty. Yet I also know a small

fraction of those officers, from some of the worst tragedies that this country has had to witness too often—I know there are people that should not be officers, that have not merited those badges, should be kept away from the profession. I have seen some of it in attitude, in conduct, and behavior of people that view it as an “us versus them.” They don't see themselves as guardians of the community; they often see themselves as warriors. They don't know the neighborhoods they are serving or respect them. There are some—a very narrow, small fraction of a percent—of our officers who don't do their job, who are quick to jump to conclusions, who often see people of color or poor people or homeless people or those suffering from addiction as threats.

We are a nation that must do better. There are people that somehow get onto our police departments in America that are unfit to serve.

The officer that killed Sonya Massey should never have had a badge and a gun. While we still do not know all the details, here is what we do know: We know that he had worked for six different police departments in less than 4 years. He was discharged from the Army for “serious misconduct.” He had pleaded guilty to two charges of driving under the influence. He also failed to obey a command while working for another sheriff's office in Illinois and was told that he needed high-stress decision-making classes.

Unfortunately, this officer is not the only one who has managed to go from department to department, escaping scrutiny and accountability. This is because in the United States of America, we have no real system to keep bad officers from simply jumping over to the next town if they are fired.

Think about this: So many of our local communities have police departments. They have people that apply for those jobs. And there is no national system or database that they can check to see if that officer came from a different State or a different city and was bounced out of their job for misconduct. In one of the most important roles in American society, this is often the difference between life and death.

Where you have the power and the capacity to fire weapons, where you have to operate and act under high-stress situations, we have no national way, no database that departments can check to see if the officer they are hiring has shown, in other jurisdictions, behavior and conduct unbecoming of an officer.

Sonya Massey should not be dead. This could have been prevented. We have known this is a problem in our country because of past tragedies.

This November will be the 10-year anniversary of a little boy's death. His name was Tamir Rice. Tamir was 12 years old, doing something that I did in my childhood, that I imagine lots of kids have done in their childhoods—play with toy guns. A 12-year-old was

playing when an officer drove up to him, jumped out of the car, and shot him within 3 seconds of leaving his vehicle.

I talked to other police officers 10 years ago when this happened, and they bemoaned the fact that that child died. They talked about how no well-trained officer should ever let that happen, that good police officers would have never made that fatal mistake. But this was not a good police officer. This officer had been fired from his previous police job. He had been deemed unfit for his duty in another jurisdiction and then left that jurisdiction and applied for a job. Was there a database in our Nation that that department could have checked to see if this officer was fired for just cause in another jurisdiction? No.

This was a decade ago. This was a little boy. But here I am, talking about this problem and the death of another American, an unnecessary murder of another American, a preventable murder of another American by someone who should have never been hired by a police department.

I appreciate that President Biden has taken steps to correct this issue. I appreciate that under his administration, in America, we established a police officer accountability database to try to track bad officers and make sure they are never hired again so that they never put people in danger again. But right now, departments aren't required to report these officers into that database. They are not required to check that database before hiring an officer. This is the change that is needed. It reflects best practices. It reflects what police leadership, police professionals, and others have said we should have in America.

This is not some effort to federalize police departments. It is simply about keeping the public safe and officers safe. It is about doing things that deepen the trust and the faith in those who are sworn to protect us. We have rules and laws for doctors, rules and laws for lawyers, rules and laws for manufacturers, rules and laws for the energy sector, rules and laws even for the media sector. How is it that we can't demand that every police department has to check a database to make sure the person they are hiring or thinking of hiring doesn't have something in their background that puts the community they serve in danger? This is not too much to ask. This is common sense.

Every police chief I have ever talked to does not want to hire an officer that has been fired for misconduct or conduct unbecoming an officer from another jurisdiction. It is just common sense.

We should not resist the kinds of changes in this body that could make sure that deaths like Tamir Rice's or Sonya Massey's do not happen. It is change that is overdue.

When George Floyd was murdered 4 years ago, our country had a reck-

oning. So many people from every end of the political and ideological spectrum acknowledged that we could improve police accountability. We heard this from every sector. People came out in every State demanding that we take commonsense measures to improve one of the most important jobs we have.

I sat with police leaders who talked about steps we could take—common sense—to improve the profession, to create higher standards that our officers could meet because they want to. But here we stand again on the Senate floor talking about another death that could have been prevented by a commonsense measure.

I worry about this reality that we still live in a nation where parents teach their children—their often young, African-American children—survival techniques about police encounters; have a conversation with them that shouldn't necessarily have to be had, but when you have example after example, like with Sonya Massey, who herself evidenced fear when the police came to her house; a 12-year-old boy shot because of a toy gun; a woman afraid when she calls the police.

I have been fighting for greater police accountability my entire time in the Senate, and I stand with others who have done the same. One of those people is Representative Sheila Jackson Lee. Today, we mourn her loss. She passed on July 19. With her passing, our country lost an extraordinary, fierce leader in Congress. In the nearly three decades she spent in Congress representing the people of District 18 of Texas, she fought not only for her constituents but for Americans across the country.

She was the daughter of Jamaican immigrants. Ms. Jackson Lee was born in Brooklyn, NY, in 1950. She went on to graduate with a degree in political science from Yale University and a law degree from the University of Virginia. This was not a thing that many Black women at the time did, but she broke down barriers of race and gender that kept so many like her from these elite institutions.

She went on to become a municipal judge before she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1994. One of the very last bills Ms. JACKSON LEE introduced was the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

She had not stopped fighting for what she believed was right to raise standards of accountability, to increase transparency, to create higher standards of professional conduct.

I received a voice message from Sheila Jackson Lee just days before her death. I could hear in her voice the illness that was taking over her body. I could hear her voice shaking but still just as strong and defiant. And one of the last things she said to me in that voice message days before she died was calling on me to not give up, to press forward with the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

I think about that. I played this message over and over on my phone, that the last thing she said to me was about the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act; that one of her last communications with her colleagues, one of her last calls to a U.S. Senator days before her death was about police accountability, about police transparency, about raising professional standards.

I know she would have condemned the death of Sonya Massey. I know she would have stood on the floor of the House of Representatives and demanded change.

She would have said that her death would not be in vain, and she would have said that we need to create a mandatory database that has to be checked before you hire officers in the United States of America. She would have demanded that the principles and pillars of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act be put into place.

So I will heed her call. In the coming days, I will reintroduce the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act here in the Senate with my colleagues, to bring about that accountability, to bring about that transparency, to raise those standards of professionalism.

I will work to make sure there is not a day again in America where people unnecessarily die; where when people call the police, they can be confident that they will be protected, not shot dead; where the most important profession, perhaps, in our Nation, those who every day get up and go to bed with this firm commitment to protect us; where thousands of officers every single day do not have their professions besmirched by that narrow few who violate our values, who abuse their position, and commit crimes like the one that killed Ms. Massey.

There is an old proverb from the Old Testament that says:

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to act.

It is within our power to act. It is our duty to act, to do the commonsense things that could prevent the deaths of people like Tamir Rice and Sonya Massey. It is an oath we take in this body. It is the call of our country, first and foremost, to defend our citizens.

These tragedies must stop. These unnecessary deaths must stop. We must rise in this moment to be instruments of justice, to make sure that the oath we swear is more true and more real that we are a nation of liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 594, Dafna Hochman Rand, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the