

would never know it. She was just beaming with pride and happiness, and I thought, what a remarkable human being.

She became not only an acquaintance but started to become a friend and has become a very dear friend to me today. I am so honored that we have this good relationship as we do. It is perfect. I am for TAMMY. Whatever she is for, I am for TAMMY, and I found that is a good standard to live by in Illinois and American politics.

I worked with her through several political campaigns. Her first race for the House of Representatives ended up in defeat—big disappointment—but she never gave up. She never does. She ran again and was elected to the U.S. House, and eventually, filling the vacancy of Barack Obama when he moved to the Presidency, she became my colleague and the Senator from the State of Illinois.

We have a great political friendship, a great governmental friendship, a very great personal friendship.

I remember the day I was driving from Springfield in Central Illinois to Bloomington, IL, for a meeting. The phone rang, and it was TAMMY DUCKWORTH calling. I said: What is up TAMMY? She said: I have some news that I am sharing with very few people, and I wanted to share with you.

I said: What is that? She said: I am about to become a mother.

I couldn't believe it. I literally couldn't believe it. After what she and that valiant body of hers had been through in the combat for the United States, I couldn't believe that she had that opportunity to start a family. And she did.

The reason, of course, was in vitro fertilization. She had been working on it for a long time with Bryan to have their first child.

They had all but given up when a mutual friend of ours, Judy Gold, in the city of Chicago said: There is one more expert you have got to see. He never fails to create a family.

She went to this man; and, thank goodness, it worked. She became a mother, and it was a remarkable achievement after all she had been through and all her body had been through that she could reach that point.

I can't tell you the pride that was beaming in her face when I first saw her with the baby. She really believed that she had achieved something that many people didn't think was possible.

Fast forward, if you will, to several years later, and she said to me on the floor of this Senate: I need to talk to you about something personal.

We went up to my office and closed the door. She said: I am going to have another baby. I said: I can't believe it. She said: The IVF worked the second time. So she now has two daughters, a beautiful family. She loves them dearly.

I think about that when I think about the debate that is going on now,

the national debate, that was manifest in the decision of the Alabama Supreme Court last week when they decided—that court decided, consistent with the Dobbs decision, that IVF will no longer be legal in the State of Alabama.

As a result of that decision, IVF clinics were threatened, and some even closed in the area for fear of criminal prosecution for bringing to this earth children for loving families, just like TAMMY'S. Well, TAMMY DUCKWORTH has spoken out, even this morning, on the issue and what it means to her personally and what it means to all of us who value those individuals who fight so hard to create a family, which is what she did and so successfully.

It was nearly 2 years ago that the Supreme Court's rightwing majority made the disastrous decision to overrule *Roe v. Wade*, striking down the constitutional protections that afforded women the right to decide when, how, and whether to have children. That is at the heart of this whole debate. It is at the heart of the IVF issue.

Now we live in a world of Dobbs where Republicans have seized the opportunity to restrict the reproductive rights, health, and freedom of families across America.

Since the Dobbs ruling, Republican-led States have imposed abortion bans that threaten women's lives, and Republicans in Congress are attempting to pass a national abortion ban. Now it has gone one step further, as we knew it would.

Last week, the Alabama Supreme Court, which is made up entirely of Republican appointees, ruled that frozen embryos are legally children and that their destruction can be treated like the wrongful death of a child. That decision cited Dobbs multiple times. And, I might add, if you read excerpts of the decision, they not only relied on a warped view of the Constitution and other statutes, at one point the chief justice said that what was at issue was the wrath of God. The wrath of God—think of that for a moment. In a civil court in America in the State of Alabama, that was his basis for part of his ruling.

This unprecedented decision has already had serious consequences for reproductive rights in the State of Alabama, as major healthcare providers have halted in vitro fertilization out of fear of prosecution.

For those who desperately want a baby but struggle with infertility, for cancer patients who must safeguard future reproductive options as they undergo treatment, for same-sex couples who use IVF to expand their families, this ruling is devastating.

How can congressional Republicans call themselves pro-life, the pro-family party, when they are actively preventing women from using modern science to start a family? How can they be for life when they are supporting laws that endanger women's lives?

Predictably, Republicans are scrambling away from their earlier thinking.

Fearing that this extreme, unpopular measure will hurt their election chances in November, Republicans are simultaneously claiming they support IVF while continuing to support the bills to codify that life begins at conception.

Look at the record. In December 2022, when Senator DUCKWORTH asked for unanimous consent to pass a bill that would have established Federal protection for access to IVF and other fertility treatments, the junior Senator, the Republican Senator for Mississippi, blocked it on behalf of the Republican caucus. That was just 2 years ago.

Because of these extreme Republicans, we now live in a country where women are forced to carry pregnancies, including victims of rape and incest, women carrying nonviable pregnancies, and women whose pregnancies put their own lives at risk. And because of these same extreme Republicans, we live in a country where women who desperately want to become mothers but who need the help of IVF may now be denied that opportunity.

It is unconscionable that Republicans would go this far, but not surprising. Remember that quote from Maya Angelou: When someone shows you who they really are, believe them the first time.

Republicans have told us that they will continue to attack women's rights. Sadly, I believe them. We would be foolish not to take them at their word. Remember when Donald Trump promised to appoint Supreme Court Justices who would overrule *Roe v. Wade*? He did, and they did.

I am committed to working with my Democratic colleagues to safeguard women's reproductive rights, and I do this in honor of my great colleague and friend TAMMY DUCKWORTH. She is standing up for women all across America who want the chance to fight for the opportunity to create their own families.

I hope this country comes to its senses. We are going to have a hearing on this issue on March 13 in the Senate Judiciary Committee. It is important enough, it is timely enough that we do it and do it effectively.

THOMSON SPECIAL MANAGEMENT UNIT

Mr. President, I want to raise another topic in the jurisdiction of the committee. In December of 2021, Bobby Everson was killed while he was in the care and custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, allegedly by a cellmate.

At the time of his death, he was housed at the Federal prison in Thomson, IL, in a special management unit, a unit notorious for poor management, harsh conditions, even before the Bureau of Prisons moved into Thomson from USP Lewisburg in 2018.

After an investigation by the Marshall Project and NPR found that Thomson had become one of the Nation's deadliest prisons, I asked the Inspector General Michael Horowitz to examine Thomson as part of an investigation into the hundreds of deaths at Bureau of Prisons facilities.

One year ago, the special management unit at Thomson was finally closed for good, and now we have the findings of the inspector general's investigation. The inspector general found things that are truly disturbing about our American prison system.

He reports that operational and managerial deficiencies within the prison system have created unsafe conditions and presented critical threats to incarcerated individuals. Significant recurring issues like the failure to comply with policy, understaffing, insufficient mental health and substance abuse treatment have increased the risk and contributed to more and more deaths that are preventable. A prison sentence should not be a death sentence in America.

The inspector general's report also highlights that over half of the deaths in its scope were suicides, and almost half of the suicides occurred in restricted housing, otherwise known as solitary confinement.

Earlier this month, the GAO released a compelling report on the BOP's use of solitary confinement. The findings were extremely troubling. As of October 2023, the Bureau of Prisons housed almost 8 percent of its prison population in solitary—almost 8 percent.

In many cases, people were confined in their cells for 23 hours a day. We know that the overuse of solitary confinement causes lasting, irreparable mental harm to incarcerated people. That is why I will soon reintroduce the Solitary Confinement Reform Act—legislation that would greatly limit the use of solitary confinement in our Nation's prison system.

Depriving incarcerated adults of basic human rights and endangering their lives is no way to achieve justice. The Bureau of Prisons must do more to create safer and more humane conditions.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary, I am going to establish the practice of holding annual oversight hearings for the Bureau of Prisons. Tomorrow, we will hear from Bureau of Prisons' Colette Peters and the IG Michael Horowitz to discuss this IG report and examine what led to these deadly failures. The goal of our criminal justice system must be to rehabilitate offenders and prepare them to successfully reenter our society. Solitary confinement is not the avenue to pursue for assimilating these people back into society.

It is long past time for the BOP to achieve this goal, and it will only do so through transparency, accountability, and reform.

It has been years now since I read an article in *Atlantic Magazine* by Atul Gawande, a physician in the Boston area who is now working in the Biden administration for USAID. I think he is an extraordinary observer of the human scene, and he wrote an entire article about the impact on the human mind of isolation and confinement.

He started talking about prisoners of war—like John McCain, a national

hero, and the impact 5 years-plus of incarceration had on him and his attitude toward life—and he went on to say that the incarceration in our penal facilities is really not the right preparation for individuals who, most ultimately, will be released into society.

I held two public hearings on solitary confinement and brought in one man who had been on death row in Texas for 10 years. He was an emotional basket case. He will never have a normal life as long as he lives. Another man who was in a similar circumstance in another State seemed to have assimilated well. He is now an over-the-road truck driver in the Midwest.

They each told about what it meant each day to have 23 hours of isolation and then one hour where they knew there was another human being on earth. That sort of treatment is inhumane at its heart.

Sometimes it is absolutely necessary to maintain order in the situation, I understand that; but it should never be encouraged.

Unfortunately, I am sad to say that, despite my interest in this issue, I have not made an appreciable difference in the number of people who are in solitary confinement in our prisons. We can do better; we must do better. The hearing in which we will be hearing from the inspector general gives us the guidelines to follow to improve this situation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, also, I would ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to complete my remarks prior to the scheduled rollcall votes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, President Biden's war on American energy continues. Last month in a move apparently made, in part, to satisfy climate activists on TikTok and win a few votes in the upcoming election, the administration announced a pause on liquefied natural gas export approvals, threatening both domestic energy projects and the energy security of our allies.

It is difficult to count all the ways in which the President's export approval pause is a terrible decision. But let's start with the national security concerns that it presents.

At a time when Russia and Iran are flexing their power—with Russia now entering the third year of its unjustified war of aggression with Ukraine

and with Iranian-backed militia threatening shipping and security in the Middle East—the President's action threatens to enrich these two countries by increasing demand for their natural gas, and Russia and Iran are ready to oblige. Russia is currently constructing a new liquefied natural gas export facility, and Iran is working on one as well.

It is ironic that, as the President talks about the importance of opposing Putin, he is taking a step that could actually strengthen Putin's hand by increasing global dependence on Russian energy. Europe, of course, struggled to wean itself off of Russian energy when Russia invaded Ukraine, and American exports played a significant role in replacing Russian imports.

Now, President Biden's decision is calling American reliability as an export partner into question and, as a recent article noted, "is spooking Europe's fragile energy industry."

And let's be very clear. The President's export pause, ostensibly taken for climate-related reasons, will do nothing to reduce global emissions. In fact, it runs the risk of increasing global emissions by pushing other countries to import natural gas from less environmentally friendly exporters or to continue to rely on other forms of energy like coal. Russian natural gas production, for example, is nowhere near as environmentally responsible as American natural gas production, and we have nothing to gain and much to lose environmentally by pushing countries to import gas from places like Russia.

Finally, of course, there is the risk that the decision will undermine the strength of the U.S. energy sector, something we should be seeking to build up, both for the jobs it provides Americans and because of its ability to strengthen U.S. influence globally.

President Biden's decision to pause liquefied natural gas export approvals is, of course, just one in a string of decisions he has made throughout his Presidency that imperil future domestic production and threaten our Nation's energy security. Since the day he took office, President Biden has pursued an agenda that is hostile to conventional sources of energy—namely, oil and natural gas—and he has done everything he can to push our Nation into a Green New Deal regime that our current energy system simply cannot cope with.

At the top of the President's agenda has been a determination to force Americans to adopt electric vehicles on a broad scale within the next decade, a deeply concerning move because our supply chain and electric grid are nowhere near capable of supporting that kind of a widespread transition to electric vehicles. In fact, our Nation's energy grid, which has been stretched by increased demand and the move away from conventional energy sources, is already in serious trouble. We are rapidly approaching a situation in which