

for one another still remains a powerful example for all, including myself, who were fortunate enough to witness their marriage.

And most of all, Lawrence was known as a man of faith who led his life walking hand in hand with Jesus Christ. He was known by his church community as a beloved deacon, elder, Sunday school teacher, choir member, and Stephen Minister.

He lived a life of quiet strength and unwavering faith, continually leaning on the Lord for guidance. Though he is no longer with us, his legacy lives on through his four devoted children, six cherished grandchildren, and beloved great-granddaughter.

I would like to close by reciting a verse that was included in Lawrence's obituary that I believe reflects the man he was to all who knew him, and it was from Micah 6:8.

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

AUTHORIZING REPRESENTATION BY THE SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL IN THE CASE OF DESMOND BELLARD V. RONALD WYDEN, U.S. SENATOR

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 170, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 170) to authorize representation by the Senate Legal Counsel in the case of Desmond Bellard v. Ronald Wyden, U.S. Senator.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this resolution concerns a lawsuit filed in the Oregon Supreme Court against Senator Wyden. That suit was brought by an individual, Desmond Bellard, who is representing himself without the assistance of an attorney and is attempting to use a civil action known as *quo warranto* to remove Senator Wyden from office for alleged State campaign finance violations in the 2022 election. This suit challenges the Senator's right to be seated in the Senate, an issue which the U.S. Constitution commits exclusively to the Senate.

This resolution would authorize the Senate legal counsel to represent Senator Wyden named as a respondent in this suit in order to remove the case to Federal court and seek its dismissal on the basis of the constitutional commitment to the Senate of the power to seat and remove its Members, the Speech or Debate Clause, and the lack of jurisdiction under Oregon's *quo warranto* statute.

Mr. BUDD. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that motions to reconsider be made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 170) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. BUDD). The Senator from New Hampshire.

SUDAN

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, it wasn't that long ago that Sudan was on a path to recovery after decades of violence and civil war.

Back in 2018, Sudanese citizens took to the streets to protest the conditions in their country. This movement pushed Omar al-Bashir, who was indicted by the ICC for a campaign of mass killing and rape, out of power, and this set the country on a course for a better future. Sadly, that future was disrupted when the military overthrew the civilian-led Government of Sudan.

Then, 2 years ago, the Sudanese Armed Forces, led by General al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces, led by General Hemedti, plunged Sudan into war. In the 2 years since, over 150,000 people have died and 12 million more have been displaced.

You can see this poster reflects the results of what is happening in Sudan. In just 2 years, 12 million more people have been displaced and are in camps. This is actually one of the nicer camps.

With acute famine levels at historic highs, 30 million people are in desperate need of humanitarian aid. You can see some of the Sudanese people with their dishes lined up to get some assistance.

As so often happens during war, the impact has been especially devastating to women and girls. During raids by the armed factions, women and girls have been abducted and forced into sexual and domestic slavery. One U.N. report found that gender-based violence skyrocketed by 288 percent last year. Again, you can see the impact. According to UNICEF, 221 children have been raped, including a case involving a 1-year-old baby.

If this is true, we just can't ignore it as another horrific detail of a distant conflict. The world is watching, and we must hold the people who are perpetrating these acts accountable for their crimes.

The U.S. Government has determined that both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during fighting in Sudan. And the Rapid Support Forces have led a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Darfur.

In January of 2025, the U.S. Treasury Department took a positive step. It

sanctioned the leader of the Rapid Support Forces and the leader of the Sudanese Armed Forces for their armies' lethal attack on civilians in Sudan. But more needs to be done.

Cease-fire after cease-fire has failed. Peace negotiations have stalled, and outside countries—the UAE, Turkey, Iran, as well as Russia and China—continue to send weapons to the factions. Why? Well, because Russia doesn't want to give up its port access to the Red Sea, China doesn't want to abandon the nearly \$6 billion of investments it has made in Sudan since 2005, and the UAE doesn't want to abandon Sudan's wartime gold trade. According to mining industry sources and research by Swissaid, nearly all of Sudan's gold trade flows through the UAE.

The United States needs to stand up and say enough is enough.

For people who say "Well, what difference does it make? That is Africa. That is a long way away from the United States. Why does it matter?" well, because, sadly, what happens in Africa, what happens in Sudan doesn't stay in Sudan. If you can't be outraged because of the moral horror of what is happening there, you should be outraged because the terrorism and the potential disease that can cross the borders of Sudan can come to the United States, and we have seen that too often in the past.

As ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle here in Congress as well as folks in the Trump administration because we must hold these groups accountable for their war crimes. We must support them in ending the violence.

Right now, both sides in the war continue to bomb, to raid, to siege schools, markets, and hospitals. The Sudanese Armed Forces are intentionally denying humanitarian aid. They are blocking medicine and other relief items. The Rapid Support Forces continue to lead an ethnically charged campaign of violence in Darfur.

Sadly, so many of the foreign assistance programs that we had in place have been ended or are under review.

The United States, the Trump administration, and Congress must create a clear policy to address this conflict. We must resume foreign assistance to the region and Sudan to limit further humanitarian suffering. We must set aside our differences, bring an end to the violence, and renew our commitment to setting Sudan back on the path to a civilian-led democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. MORENO). The Senator from Iowa.

NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, this month of April is National Donate Life Month. This month is the time to raise awareness about the lifesaving importance of organ donation.

There are over 103,000 Americans on the national organ transplant waiting

list. We should have confidence that our organ transplant system is efficient and fair. Sadly, my oversight dating way back to 2005 has uncovered decades of corruption and mismanagement in this donation system. It has left vulnerable patients to die on waiting lists while unused organs from generous American donors go to waste.

Speaking of waiting lists, I have been concerned about the reports of those on the waitlist being skipped over. This furthers the distrust in the organ donation system.

Through my bipartisan oversight and also the 2023 U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network law, the Federal Government is making long-overdue changes so that we take care and clean this mess up. The law improved the management and the oversight of our organ transplant system and encouraged participation from competent and transparent contractors.

To build onto those reforms, in March, the President signed a continuing resolution that provided authority for the Department of Health and Human Services to collect registration fees from organ transplant member institutions. This ensures the 2023 law can be implemented properly.

I encourage all Americans to consider being an organ donor and understand the impact that it can have on saving lives.

Of course, in addition to oversight of the new legislation, I am keeping my very close eye on how the Federal Government is implementing these new laws to give more people the chance of lifesaving transplants.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the rollcall vote begin now.

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

VOTE ON MEADOR NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Meador nomination?

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 209 Ex.]

YEAS—50

| | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Banks | Graham | Moreno |
| Barrasso | Grassley | Murkowski |
| Blackburn | Hagerty | Paul |
| Britt | Hawley | Ricketts |
| Budd | Hoeven | Risch |
| Capito | Husted | Rounds |
| Cassidy | Hyde-Smith | Schmitt |
| Collins | Johnson | Scott (FL) |
| Cornyn | Justice | Scott (SC) |
| Cotton | Kennedy | Sheehy |
| Cramer | Lankford | Sullivan |
| Crapo | Lee | Thune |
| Cruz | Lummis | Tillis |
| Curtis | Marshall | Tuberville |
| Daines | McConnell | Wicker |
| Ernst | McCormick | Young |
| Fischer | Moody | |

NAYS—46

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| Alsobrooks | Hickenlooper | Rosen |
| Baldwin | Hirono | Schatz |
| Bennet | Kaine | Schiff |
| Blumenthal | Kelly | Schumer |
| Blunt Rochester | Kim | Shaheen |
| Booker | King | Slotkin |
| Cantwell | Klobuchar | Smith |
| Coons | Luján | Van Hollen |
| Cortez Masto | Markey | Warner |
| Duckworth | Merkley | Warnock |
| Durbin | Murphy | Warren |
| Fetterman | Murray | Welch |
| Gallego | Ossoff | Whitehouse |
| Gillibrand | Padilla | Wyden |
| Hassan | Peters | |
| Heinrich | Reed | |

NOT VOTING—4

| | |
|---------|---------|
| Boozman | Mullin |
| Moran | Sanders |

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is made and laid upon the table, and the President will immediately be notified of the Senate's actions.

The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I seek recognition to make a unanimous consent request.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, actually, I am going to ask unanimous consent that we go ahead and confirm General Caine as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but I must say that I do so with mixed feelings.

On the one hand, we need a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff immediately, and there is overwhelming support on the Democratic side and Republican side for this nomination.

On the other hand, passage of this confirmation would pretty much end our week, and that would prevent us from getting a lot of work done later on this afternoon and into tonight and tomorrow if we have to stay until tomorrow to confirm this very important officer as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

So, in a way, we can have it either way, but, frankly, to stay here and get some Congressional Review Act resolutions done so that we can end a number

of the pernicious regulations foisted off on the American people and on our economy by the Biden administration—that has a lot of appeal also.

So with that in mind and in an effort to accommodate Members on both sides of the aisle who really believe we can finish our business today, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motions filed yesterday on Executive Calendar Nos. 75 and 74, making Gen. John Caine Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, ripen at 3 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCHUMER. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I may have other unanimous consent requests, but if I could be heard on this matter for another moment, I would seek recognition for that purpose.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I am happy to yield to my friend from Alaska, who has now vacated the floor. I thought we had this more synchronized.

But let me say this: There was a vote earlier this week in the Armed Services Committee. It passed the Armed Services Committee with overwhelming Democrat and Republican support—23 yeases and only 4 noes. So there is really no reason to delay this any longer.

Frankly, there is so much going on around the world with the four powers that constitute an axis of aggression to the United States that we really should give the President the choice that has been endorsed overwhelmingly by a bipartisan majority of the Armed Services Committee.

With that, having communicated better now with my dear colleague from Alaska, I would yield to the junior Senator from the State of Alaska.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I certainly hope my Democratic colleagues can let us move forward on this, or we are going to stay all night until we get the President's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs confirmed.

Now, look, I know there was some concern about removing General Brown, CQ Brown. I actually really like General CQ Brown. I thought he did a good job. I publicly stated a number of times that he served his country very well.

But here is the deal: The President of the United States is entitled to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs that he wants. You look at history, senior military commanders on the Democrat's side, on the Republican's side—if the President doesn't feel comfortable with them, he has the right to remove them and move on. That is just our history. That has happened with Democrats.

George W. Bush wasn't comfortable with Gen. Peter Pace. He is a marine.

I happen to respect him a lot. He said: Hey, I am not comfortable. I am moving to another Chairman.

President Obama fired two very senior, four-star generals inside of 2 years. One was General McChrystal, one of the most seasoned warriors, you know, in a generation of warfighters, and he removed him.

So President Trump clearly had the authority to remove General Brown. He has now put forward General Caine, who, by the way—everybody on the Armed Services Committee thought he did a great job. He is going to get a really big vote here. So why are we delaying it? I don't know. It doesn't make any sense to me.

The President deserves his senior military adviser. That is what the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is—his senior military adviser. The President needs to feel comfortable with that person. That person is actually out of the chain of command. We have seen throughout history that when the President doesn't feel comfortable, he can remove one general and bring in another one. That is what has happened here.

We should confirm General Caine immediately. I think he is going to do a really, really good job. As a matter of fact, I have interviewed, sat down with, served under hundreds of flag officers. General Caine is one of the most impressive I have ever met. So we need to get on with it.

You know, there are these press stories about why President Trump removed General Brown. I think it is just because he wanted to have a general whom he trusts and feels comfortable with, and that is exactly his right as the Commander in Chief.

So we should move on. General Caine is going to get a very, I think, significant bipartisan vote. He should. And if the minority leader wants to object, we will just grind it out all night and get it done.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I wonder if I could reclaim my time to ask my distinguished friend from Alaska a question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska has the floor, and he can yield for a question.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I yield to my good friend from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, yes, that is correct.

I would then ask my distinguished friend from Alaska: Isn't it a fact that General Caine time and again has demonstrated his aptitude and leadership abilities while actually deployed in combat zones, leading servicemembers in Iraq and Syria, and while serving in various Special Operations forces units and also in the intelligence community and that he ran some of our most secretive programs for the security of Americans?

Mr. SULLIVAN. My good friend from Mississippi, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, by the way—a

Senator who knows probably more about the military than anyone else here—has it exactly right.

General Caine has this breadth of experience, not just as a fighter pilot with thousands of hours, combat hours, in flight but has worked very closely with our intel services and has very significant combat experience in Iraq and Syria.

Very interestingly—and the chairman of the Armed Services Committee knows this—he has private sector experience. You would say: Why does that matter? It actually matters a lot because of our military and the need to integrate our very powerful private sector.

So he brings a wealth of experience that, to be honest—in my 10 years in this position as a U.S. Senator on the Armed Services Committee and my 30 years in the Marine Corps, I have never seen a general that brings it all together. So I think he is going to be outstanding and exceptional.

Mr. WICKER. If the gentleman would further yield?

I just wondered if the gentleman would yield to the distinguished minority leader to ascertain how this matter is going to be resolved differently if we wait until tomorrow. The gentleman has the floor. Perhaps he would do so.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I would yield to the distinguished minority leader. Maybe having him watch this distinguished debate between me and the chairman of the Armed Services Committee has convinced him to bow to the inevitable, and that is the confirmation of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska has the floor. The Senator from New York has not sought recognition.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, maybe the minority leader will explain why he is objecting given that we just laid out very cogent, strong reasons that we need to move forward on confirming the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff right now. It is a very dangerous world. Why would we wait? I am curious on what the minority leader says.

I yield the floor if he has an answer. Mr. SCHUMER. Does the Senator yield the floor?

Mr. SULLIVAN. This Senator yields the floor to answer that inquiry that I asked about.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is an objection.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUDD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I just want the American people who are watching this that care about our national security—the chairman of the Armed Services Committee just had a colloquy here on the floor talking about why we needed to move the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to get confirmed in the Senate here. And I and the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, respectfully, asked the question of the minority leader, Democratic minority leader, why are you blocking this? And you may have seen he just walked off the floor.

He didn't answer. I don't know if he has an answer. If he has an answer, it sure would be good to hear what the answer is because we need President Trump's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff confirmed. And I bet he gets strong bipartisan support, in terms of his confirmation, because he is very qualified. And yet, without any explanation, the minority leader of the U.S. Senate just said, "I object," and he walked off the floor.

I hope the press reports on that. Holy cow. That is kind of big news. And if we have to be here all night, jamming down on them to get the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff confirmed because our country needs it during a very dangerous time, a general who is immensely qualified, then that is what we are going to do.

But it sure would be easier to just agree with us, start moving on the vote, and get this highly qualified general confirmed as President Trump's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

But what you just witnessed, for anyone watching, the American people watching, was a nondebate. My good friend from Mississippi and I were describing why we need to move this forward. The minority leader of the U.S. Senate, who has the power to do it, just said: "I object."

Normally, on the Senate floor when someone objects, they explain why. But he didn't want to do it. He just walked off the floor. So that is what we just witnessed. It is a little bit unusual, particularly when it comes to a confirmation that is so important. There are very few confirmations that the U.S. Senate does that are more important than confirming the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And I guess the Democrats are going to block it for now, and we will go all night to make sure President Trump has his principal senior military adviser, which he needs during these dangerous times.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SCHATZ. 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. WICKER. Mr. 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 Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, just for the information of Senators, as the unanimous consent request has been objected to, and we are not allowed to vote at this point to give the President of the United States a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I just wanted to inform the Senate, based on conversations with the majority leader and his staff, that there are two matters that we can and will proceed to later on this afternoon and perhaps into the night.

The first would be the House version of Senator SCOTT of South Carolina's Congressional Review Act resolution, H.J. Res. 61, providing for congressional disapproval under section 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rules submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "National Emission Standards For Hazardous Air Pollutants: Rubber Tire Manufacturing."

That is one matter that the objection has given us an opportunity to proceed to.

The other would be Senator CURTIS's Congressional Review Act, S.J. Res. 31, a joint resolution providing for the Congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "Review of the Final Rule Reclassification of Major Sources As Area Sources Under Section 112 of the Clean Air Act."

As I said, during my unanimous consent request, proceeding to the vote on the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would give the President the advice and counsel that our Commander in Chief needs during a very dangerous time.

That said, I made the unanimous consent request with mixed feelings because, frankly, there are two regulations—pernicious, onerous, needless regulations—by the Environmental Protection Agency that need to be wiped off the books.

So this will give us an opportunity to do that. It is 10 after 3 at this point, and I am not sure when the distinguished majority leader will schedule that, but Members should be advised that unless we are able to get a unanimous consent request and give the President his choice for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, those are items that can still be the order of the day, and perhaps there are other votes tomorrow.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I join my colleague in expressing some frustration that we can't vote on the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

It is the kind of stuff that drives people crazy back home for an individual that is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Most people back in my State of Oklahoma think this has already been done. But to not be able to move on this, to literally have my Democratic colleagues block it and say we are not going to allow the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for our military to be able to be there, it is just another one of those moments of Washington, DC, gridlock and frustration, especially when this person moved out of committee with a vote of 24 to 4.

That is overwhelming bipartisan support. There is just not controversy about this nominee. But now suddenly to be able to have a game, to be able to say we want to be able to stall this out and maybe block this person until after Easter, so we don't have a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is frustrating for people to say: Come on, just have the vote.

So I join my colleagues on the Republican side to say: What is the problem? Everyone knows this person is going to be voted on and is going to be approved because there is such wide bipartisan support, but for my Democratic colleagues to say: Nope, we want to drag this out for weeks, I just don't think it is the right thing to do. Clearly, they disagree, but I don't think it is the right thing to do.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

Mr. President, next week, Oklahoma and the Nation will pause for a moment, and we will remember, nationally, for a moment, on April 19 at 9:02 in the morning.

And some people will look around and go, "Has it been 30 years?" and other people will say: "What happened 30 years ago?" because it depends on your generation of when you were born and how old you were or if you were even alive in 1995, but if you were alive in 1995, you remember where you were when the news came out that there was an explosion at a Federal building in Oklahoma City.

It was the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. A man who was mad at the government and determined he was going to cause an uprising of people to take down the Federal Government pulled a Ryder truck in front of a Federal building, loaded it with diesel fuel and with ammonia nitrate, lit fuses, walked away, got in his car and drove away.

As he drove away, behind him, the explosion went off that killed 168 people, including 19 children who were in the daycare center on the ground floor. And our Nation was forever changed.

We pause every year still in Oklahoma. We have never forgotten. Every year, we think about those who were killed and those who survived and those who were changed forever. We remember every single year, as we will again this year on the 30th anniversary, and we will pause to remember.

The people that are around us in Oklahoma are our neighbors, they are

our friends, but many of them are also survivors or family members of survivors or family members of those who are lost. There are still police officers and firefighters that have literally never been back to that location because it is too painful to be able to return to a spot where they carried out the bodies of their friends and neighbors.

There are individuals that their family was truly forever changed. And now, 30 years later, they still get together and talk and visit, catch up with each other. There are survivor networks that still engage and still keep in contact with each other, remembering what happens when out-of-control anger took the lives of 168 people.

On that sacred ground, there is still a quiet reflection pool. There are 168 chairs there to remind people of the 168 lives. There is a phenomenal museum that is next to it that people come to literally from all over the world to study terrorism, domestic terrorism in particular, and to be able to walk through what happened in the crime scene and how it was so quickly resolved. We have law enforcement, first responders, families and communities that come from everywhere just to be able to learn and to reflect.

There are children that survived the daycare center that are now adults. Let me give you two: Brandon and Rebecca Denny. Brandon was 3 years old, and he literally barely survived his injuries; in fact, doctors gave him a 10 percent chance of survival, but he did. As an adult, he works to still help and serve others.

Rebecca, she was rescued from the rubble at 2 years old. She now has a family of her own. She speaks powerfully, still, about forgiveness over bitterness.

They were some of those miracle babies that survived. Many of the children around them did not.

This past week, it was really a remarkable moment that a lot of people in this town probably missed, and I understand. There is a lot of things going on right now. But on the south side of the Capitol, there was a spot of dirt that was dug up there and a group of Oklahomans, along with the Architect of the Capitol, buried a seedling tree.

Now, that may not seem like a big deal on the Capitol grounds, but there aren't many trees that are planted on the Capitol grounds. Many of the trees that are on the grounds are 100 years old or some, 200. This is a great historic place and a spot of reflection.

But in one spot there, we just planted a tree. And you may say: What is the big deal about that tree? Well, if you are in Oklahoma, you already know the rest of this story, but I would like to be able to tell this body the rest of that story.

On April 19, 1995, when that truck bomb explosion took place, it took 168 lives. It destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. Across the street was

the Journal Record Building; it just demolished a big section of that as well, blew out all the windows, destroyed it. In the parking lot there in front of that building was an American elm tree. It was a scrubby tree growing in a parking lot. If you have seen a tree in the parking lot, you know it is not usually the healthiest looking thing, but it was just growing there in the middle of the asphalt. But when the explosion happened, it literally destroyed all those lives. But for that tree, it blew literally every leaf off of that tree. But the force of the impact and the heat of the impact was so strong, that it literally turned the tree. The bark literally that usually has this nice little stripe as it grows literally has a turning point in it and around it, and everyone just assumed that tree is dead. No one paid attention to it.

In the year of the cleanup and all of the recovery and what was happening during that time period, no one paid attention to it, until the next spring, that scrubby little tree in the asphalt started sprouting. And people were shocked. It is alive. And suddenly it went from being a scrubby tree in the parking lot that was just going to be cleared out to being a sign of hope.

So we cleared the asphalt and everything else away from it. An arborist came and began to fertilize it and to take care of it. That scrubby little tree is now nicknamed "The Survivor Tree" now, and it is the picture of Oklahoma after that bombing. We survived.

That scrubby little American elm tree is now enormous 30 years later. Its branches and its leaves spread out over that site. It is the shaded spot. And on the morning of April 19, there will be survivors and families that will sit under its branches. And as we pause for 168 seconds and as we read the names of those who we lost, they will be underneath that Survivor Tree thinking again of: We survived. We are still here.

The term "the Oklahoma standard" was born during that time period as neighbor helped neighbor and as we cared for each other and the people who came to our home from all over the world, literally.

If you walk into my office, you will see a picture of the Survivor Tree that is there. How does that seedling that we just planted and that Survivor Tree connect? Well, that seedling is a daughter of that Survivor Tree. A seed was literally picked up off the ground under that Survivor Tree, was planted and grown, and now it is about 3 feet tall. That seedling, that daughter, we just planted 30 years later at the U.S. Capitol so that this Nation will never forget the out-of-control anger that turned to violence and hatred.

It is our prayer from Oklahoma that, as people walk down the path outside, that they would stop and read the plaque beside that little seedling tree. That in the decades ahead, it will grow to be a giant American elm, just like its parent, the Survivor Tree, and that people would remember the lives that

were lost, those who survived, and those who were changed forever.

That is our hope. That is why that tree was planted on the Capitol lawn this week.

My simple request for my colleagues: April 19, it is a Saturday—when it comes, at 9:02 central time, would you just pause with us for just a moment and remember? Join us because we will absolutely never forget.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO JAY RAMRAS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, it is Thursday here in the U.S. Senate, and it is time for a great tradition—I think one of the greatest traditions in the history of the U.S. Senate. It is called "The Alaskan of the Week" speech, which I try to give most Thursdays. It has been a while. For the pages, this is the highlight of the week. Even our friends in the media like this speech because it usually signals the end of the work week, but not right now. You saw the minority leader's objection without any explanation on why on confirming the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, so we might be here for a lot longer.

So I wanted to highlight what is going on in Alaska, as I usually do during my "Alaskan of the Week" speech and just give a snapshot of what is happening back home.

It is still pretty cold, still have a fair amount of snow. Anchorage just got a bunch of snow that lasted a couple of days. The 53rd Iditarod just concluded in Nome with a stunning first-time win by Alaskan Jessie Holmes and his 10-dog sled team.

The Iron Dog Race, that is a snow machine race, longest, toughest snow machine race in the world, was won by—that is done in kind of tandem—Robby Schachle and Bradley George, their second victory of the Iron Dog snow machine race.

Things are starting to thaw, as I mentioned. It is beginning of the summer tourism season, right around the corner. The first cruise ship will dock in Southeast Alaska in less than 2 weeks, and thousands of tourists from all over the world will come to our great State.

Anyone watching in the Gallery, we would love to have you. Come to Alaska.

For many of these tourists, this is going to be the trip of a lifetime. For Alaskans, this is where we live every day. And our Alaskan of the Week does something that is very unusual: He is beloved by Alaskans and tourists—not an easy task—and this person is my friend Jay Ramras.

Like many Alaskans, Jay is a jack-of-all-trades. He owns restaurants and beautiful hotels. He has had a successful political career. He is a prolific philanthropist. He loves history. And more importantly, he loves Alaska and especially his great hometown of Fairbanks—by the way, my wife's hometown.

Now, I love to talk about our Alaskan of the Week. There are so many. We have talked about hundreds over the course of many years here on the Senate floor.

Jay was born in Fairbanks in 1964. His father Dan moved to Fairbanks from Brooklyn, NY, in 1948. And as Jay says: There has been a Ramras in Interior Alaska going on 80 years.

And Jay's entrepreneurial resume, which is legendary in Alaska, began in 1986 at the tender age of 22 years old when he started a chicken wing restaurant, expanding his business footprint to other eateries across Fairbanks and, eventually, purchasing the iconic Fairbanks landmark called Pike's Landing.

For anyone going to Fairbanks, you have got to stay at Pike's Landing.

It was this purchase that led Jay to uncovering some really incredible chapters of Alaskan history—as I said, Jay is a real history buff—and he credits this to his bachelor of arts degree in American history, but it all started with Pike's.

So let's talk about Pike's. Pike's Landing was established after World War II when Lloyd Pike claimed land along the Chena River—the Chena River runs right through Fairbanks—under the Homestead Act.

In 1959—by the way, the same year Alaska became the 49th State—Pike opened the original Pike's Landing. Throughout the years, Pike's Landing cemented itself as a landmark in the Fairbanks community.

When Jay purchased Pike's Landing in 2000, he found himself wondering about the history of the property and the man who established the landmark location of Pike's. The original owner had sort of disappeared from history. So Jay asked around, collecting oral histories from Fairbanks old-timers who had seen the growth of Pike's Landing over the decades.

Jay found that Pike's Landing had long faced congestion at the boat launch due to its prime location right there, as I said, on the Chena River. That was a problem Lloyd Pike solved by building a public launch to clear up some of the demand in terms of getting boats on the river.

The original boat launch was washed away when the Chena River flooded—huge flood by the way—in 1968. But decades later, Jay found himself building another boat launch, unknowingly, right at the same spot. As he said: If I hadn't already been born, I would have believed in reincarnation. I would have thought I had been reincarnated as Lloyd Pike because he put his boat launch right where Lloyd Pike lived. Since then, Jay has been working with Fairbanks North Star Borough Historic Preservation Commission to put Pike's Landing on the National Register of Historic Places. I have no doubt that is going to happen. "It was so important to me that we rescue Lloyd Pike from obscurity," Jay said.

But this wasn't the only historical figure that Jay has connected himself

and the community of Fairbanks to. As Jay was in the process of building an aviation-themed extension of his hotel, he felt it needed a real airplane mounted in front to honor the lodge's proximity to the Fairbanks International Airport. While searching, he stumbled on a refurbished Cessna 140 on Craigslist. After purchasing this plane, Jay discovered it had been owned by none other than Noel Wien.

The Presiding Officer is a pilot. Maybe he knows who Noel Wien is. For those who don't, Noel Wien is considered the father of Alaska aviation—the first pilot to successfully fly from Anchorage to Fairbanks in 1924. Wien went on to found Wien Airlines, a commercial airline that operated in Alaska for nearly 60 years.

As the Presiding Officer knows, these were some intrepid pilots. That was 100 years ago he did that first flight—open-air cockpit, really cold.

Jay's interest in history, once again, piqued, and he dug into that period and discovered some great photographs of Noel Wien, Wien Airlines, and had a great celebration last year in July of 2024, celebrating the 100th anniversary of that historic flight in Alaska. Really, that was a historic flight for America. My wife Julie and I were there. Senator MURKOWSKI was there. Our Governor was there. By the way, the Wien family was there, including Leslie Wien Hajdukovich, my former regional director. It was a great classic Jay Ramras event. Hundreds of people came out to celebrate a huge moment in Alaska history, Alaska aviation history—I would say, American aviation history.

In addition to preserving this incredible chapter in Fairbanks' history, Jay has invested in Fairbanks' future. Let me tell you about a few of his other endeavors. Each summer, Jay hosts the Yukon 800 boat race, the longest, toughest, roughest speedboat race in the world. It starts at Pike's, up to the Chena, gets out on the mighty Yukon—huge race.

Just as I mentioned, he just recently hosted the fourth Iditarod start at Pike's. Normally, the Iditarod starts down in Anchorage. That is the toughest, longest, greatest race in the world, the Iditarod. It occasionally starts in Fairbanks, but it did this year at Pike's. And as I mentioned, he regularly sponsors the Iron Dog snow machine race that, yes, is the toughest, longest, roughest snow machine race in the world.

Jay also had a successful political career, serving three terms in the Alaska House of Representatives. And he is a great philanthropist in Fairbanks—a key player in Fairbanks Food Bank and doing so many other things in terms of philanthropy.

On top of all this, Jay says his greatest legacy, he believes, will be something he recently did—which I think is just fantastic—the creation of a new synagogue in Fairbanks, the northernmost Chabad in the United States.

It began with a call from Rabbi Greenberg in Anchorage. He is a great friend of mine, one of the leaders of our Jewish community throughout the State. He asked Jay if he could host a young orthodox rabbi and his wife for a short visit. Of course, Jay, a very generous man, agreed. "I think it would be around a two-week summer stay." Then they came again for a second visit, this time in January when it is 45 below zero in Fairbanks. It gets really cold in Fairbanks. And they still returned.

The young couple, Rabbi Heshy Wolf and his wife Chani have now chosen to make Fairbanks their permanent home.

Jay, generous as ever, purchased a small church with his own money. The previous congregation at the church had outgrown the place. They refurbished it, transforming it into the Fairbanks Jewish Center. The original congregation stayed on rent-free until they found a new home, a new church. Just a few weeks ago, five rabbis gathered in Fairbanks for the first time in over 120 years and hosted this new synagogue, the northernmost synagogue, I believe, in America, in Fairbanks.

Jay, thank you. What a life of accomplishment. What a legacy, not just for Fairbanks, but for all of Alaska. For every different community—sports community, Jewish community, historical community—you have done it all. And now, Jay, you have been awarded one of the most prestigious awards anyone can achieve in their life, Alaskan of the Week.

CHINA

Mr. President, I wanted to come to the floor to discuss a recent op-ed in the New York Times just a few days ago. It kind of made a stir. A lot of people thought it was a really good op-ed. I didn't.

I wanted to come to the floor and talk about this op-ed because it is making the rounds. It is by the columnist Thomas Freidman, and it is on national security, economic security, and trade issues relating to China.

Now, I normally enjoy, respect—don't always agree with—the seriousness of Mr. Freidman's writings. He has written a lot of books, a lot of columns, especially on the Middle East, where he has a lot of insights, no doubt about it.

But when I read this latest column called "I Just Saw the Future. It Was Not in America," I couldn't believe how shockingly naive Mr. Freidman was in writing this. So I just wrote a response. I just started writing after reading this thing. My goodness, this is very naive. Then I submitted that to the New York Times. They said: Hey, sorry, it is too long.

Maybe they didn't like it. Maybe they didn't think it was that good. I said: I can just read it on the Senate floor because I think this is a big debate, our relationship with China, how we view it, how he views it, how others view it, how President Trump views it, and it needs to be debated.

That is what I want to do the next couple of minutes, talk about the Freidman piece and, in my view, why it is so naive and misses so many things and, particularly, gives Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party a giant pass in terms of their history and what they have done to the international trading system.

First, the Freidman article kind of condescendingly mocks, to be honest, a lot of us. He quotes some Senators, U.S. Senators, and says, you know, these Senators "need to get out more" when it comes to China. That is a quote in the article.

Well, in my career, I have actually gotten out to China a lot, I mean in terms of working on the Chinese issues. I served on the National Supreme Court Council Staff under Condoleezza Rice and served as her Assistant Secretary of State in charge of economics, trade, energy, and finance. Again, under Secretary Rice, I was the Commissioner in charge of natural resources and energy in Alaska. I went to China then.

In all these positions, I met with Chinese leaders, traveled to China a fair amount. And, of course, China national security issues really bookended my entire 30-year Marine Corps career. My first deployment in the Marines was to the Taiwan Strait during what is now referred to as the "Third Taiwan Strait Crisis," in 1995 and 1996. My last billet in the Marine Corps was chief of staff to the Marine Forces Pacific Commander at Indo-Pacific PACOM. It was all about China and Taiwan. As a Senator, I continued to focus on these issues, traveling to Asia frequently.

The lessons I learned when it comes to China are very different from those in the Thomas Freidman piece. As someone who has actually gotten out a fair amount to China, as Mr. Friedman tells us Senators we need to do, let's go into some of these lessons. For a smart guy, they sure were kind of naive to me.

First, Thomas Freidman talks about the need for an agreement between the United States and China. But the big worry is that President Trump would not "stick by" any agreement with China. That is what he says.

Now, he says this without even hinting at one of the Chinese Communist leadership's most consistent, salient, and frustrating traits, and this is it. They, the Chinese Communist leadership, almost never abides by their agreements with the United States—and I mean never. Big agreements, small agreements, it doesn't matter. They never abide by their agreements. I have seen this throughout my career.

In 2003, I was actually in this meeting right there. That is President George W. Bush and the Vice Premier of China, Madame Wu Yi in the Oval Office. I was a young staffer right there next to the President. And President Bush pressed her, Madame Wu Yi, on this theft of intellectual property that China does. He pressed her hard.

“Madam Wu Yi, you have to stop stealing our IPR.” That senior Chinese official, 2003, looked at the President of the United States and solemnly and sincerely said: Mr. President, we will stop this. You have my word.

Well, we all know what happened. For decades, they lied about that. The last report USTR did on China’s theft of intellectual property rights from the United States was \$600 billion a year. Madam Wu Yi lied to President Bush in the Oval Office, no doubt about that.

I was also part of Secretary Rice’s senior leadership at the State Department, taking part in the twice-yearly Cabinet-level meetings launched by President Bush and China’s President Hu Jintao, called the Strategic Economic Dialogue. SED, it was called. That is more Bush-China. They never kept any of their SED commitments ever. I saw this.

This is what I refer to as “promise fatigue”—promise fatigue. The United States makes an agreement with China, and they never keep it—never keep it. You know who has made an art form out of promise fatigue and not keeping their promise? This guy, Xi Jinping. You remember this in the Rose Garden with President Obama—in the Rose Garden 2015. President Xi Jinping looked at Barack Obama, looked at the American people and said: We are not going to do any more cyber theft, and we are not going to militarize the islands of the South China Sea. That is what Xi Jinping told President Obama.

Guess what. That was a huge lie. They were already doing it.

Remember these? President Trump and then President Biden—Xi Jinping made commitments to both President Trump and President Biden: We are going to stop the importation of fentanyl into Mexico and the United States. Xi Jinping said that to President Trump and to President Biden. Guess what. He never kept that agreement—ever.

Of course, during the Trump administration—in the first term—the phase one China deal was signed with all this fanfare in the East Room of the White House—I was actually there when that happened—and they never kept any of those commitments.

So no matter what, when it comes to China, they just don’t keep their word. They don’t keep their word. And yet Tom Friedman’s article focuses on President Trump’s reliability?

As Joe Biden would say, “Come on, man.”

These are the guys who cheat and aren’t reliable at all, and we all know it.

Second, Friedman highlights what he sees as a great opportunity with China as it relates to our economic relations. Yet he never mentions the overriding goal of this guy, Xi Jinping. What is that overriding goal? He never mentions it once. That is to make sure the Chinese Communist Party stays in power and expands its power base at

home and abroad through any means necessary, including coercion and violence. This is the goal that we all know drives his decision making.

Like many in the Senate, I frequently attend classified briefings on China. We just had the INDOPACOM Commander testify today, Admiral Paparo, who, by the way, is doing a great job. Make no mistake—it is in all the Intel briefings—this guy, Xi Jinping, is preparing for war in the Taiwan Strait. Look at him there; he is in his fatigues. His aggressive efforts might extend beyond that.

What am I talking about?

The Chinese military just completed another massive military exercise to not only blockade Taiwan but to stop any reinforcements from coming into Taiwan. Then they conducted offensive military exercises off the shores of our allies the Philippines and Australia. Their navy went all the way around Australia just a couple of weeks ago.

Friedman naively references Chinese Communist Party talking points: “healthy interdependencies” and “win-win.” These guys always use that “win-win” and “We will rise together.” Yet he ignores the military menace of the CCP abroad and its genocidal tendencies at home.

But, hey, that is OK.

Mr. Friedman says: Hey, there are a lot of smart people in China who can help us with AI.

Sorry. I am a little more worried about that.

Then he notes:

[Beijing] does not want a trade war.

No, in fact, they are actually preparing for a real war, and that is a fact for anyone who knows about China.

Finally, the entire thrust of Friedman’s piece builds on and reinforces one of the biggest strategic blunders that the United States has made with regard to China and our China strategy, over the past four decades, and that is outsourcing much of our national security to corporate America.

Friedman argues that we should concentrate on letting both of our private sectors, in China and the United States, work together, and if we do that, “Americans, working in partnership with benevolent Chinese capital and technology, will prosper just like the Chinese benefited from American capital and technology in the last four decades.”

And Tom Friedman has the nerve to call President Trump’s thinking “magical.”

Well, this is really magical from Tom Friedman. First off, the Chinese communist system doesn’t really have a private sector. Again, anyone who gets out to China knows this. Everybody in China, ultimately, works for the CCP, for Xi Jinping, for the Chinese Communist Party.

Just as importantly, as we have so painfully learned over the past four decades, the U.S. private sector, especially Wall Street and some of the big corporate CEOs, are very poor guard-

ians of America’s national security and economic interests when it comes to China. The U.S. Government finally, during President Trump’s first term, started to say: Whoa. Wait. Stop. We can’t outsource our national security to corporate America. We, the U.S. Government, need to safeguard our own interests, and that is what we are trying to do.

I will say—and we just saw it a couple of years ago—the annual American CEO confab in Beijing with Xi Jinping, in the People’s Hall, which, in my view, has become a national embarrassment, with Xi triumphantly leading the sycophantic-looking American CEOs behind him, does nothing to dispel the concern that this remains a strategic weakness in our national security relative to China.

As we speak, CCP—the Chinese Communist Party—propaganda is flooding the world to fan the flames of a narrative that Friedman seems to embrace, and it is this: Their narrative is that President Trump has broken the World War II liberal international trading system.

This charge is ridiculous, and it gives a pass to the real culprit. The Chinese Communist Party broke the system a long time ago, and that has been their intention all along.

In 2005, then-Deputy Secretary of State and future World Bank president Bob Zoellick delivered his well-received speech, called the “Responsible Stakeholder” speech. It noted that, more than any other country, China has benefited from the international economic order set up by the United States after World War II, and it was now time for China to safeguard and embrace and become a responsible stakeholder in this system to help it endure.

I was in meetings with senior Chinese officials, not long after this speech, and they deceptively used the term “responsible stakeholder” much to the American policymakers’ delight. But the CCP leaders clearly had other plans: to unleash policies that continued their rampant intellectual property theft of American businesses; to never keep their promises and commitments that they make to Americans; forcing U.S. companies to hand over proprietary technology in order to gain access to China’s market; aggressively subsidizing important industries, like steel, where they flooded global markets and destroyed the American heartland; blocking U.S. exports from having fair and reciprocal access to China’s market; and unleashing economic coercion on our allies, like Australia, Korea, and Japan, when they dared to question CCP orthodoxy.

The Trump administration’s policies are a course correction to all of this. But make no mistake, it was the Chinese Communist Party and its policies that took a wrecking ball to the international trading system. Yet, like so many other aspects of Friedman’s piece, he gives the CCP and Xi a pass on this most consequential point.

U.S. Senators on both sides of the aisle, including those who don't even get out much, according to Mr. Friedman, have recognized this truth. It would be good progress if an insightful observer of the international system, like Thomas Friedman is, would do so as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I was sitting with the CEO of one of America's biggest and most influential companies last month, and I asked him a simple question: What could President Trump do that would be a bridge too far for you? What attack on democracy or the rule of law could Trump make that would cause you to speak up?

His answer was pretty simple, and it was pretty confident. He said: If Trump were to ignore a Supreme Court ruling, that would cross the line.

He was reflecting a familiar theme: that until President Trump thumbs his nose definitively at a Court ruling, then his attacks on democracy are troubling but not lethal. It is normal politics up until that dramatic confrontation between the executive branch and the judicial branch, for which the Constitution, as we know, really has no prescribed remedy.

For many Americans, they may breathe a sigh of relief that America's most influential private sector leaders would rise up to defend democracy; that if this confrontation that we worry about would come to pass, combined with a massive public mobilization, we could be saved.

But I didn't breathe a sigh of relief. It was the opposite.

I am deeply worried that we have really spent little time studying the paths that democracies take when they collapse. Most of the time, there is not a singular moment when the Executive dramatically seizes power. There is not normally a brazen attempt to burn down the Parliament building. No, instead, democracies die when gradually, often quietly and methodically, over time, the structures that hold the Executive accountable for corruption, for thievery, for wrongdoing are dismantled—dismantled so that citizens can no longer hold the Executive accountable; dismantled so that the political opposition never has enough room to maneuver meaningfully.

There are still elections. The Executive doesn't try to stuff the ballot box. Occasionally, at lower levels, the opposition still wins. But what happens is that those structures of accountability are either so degraded or so completely co-opted by the regime that the truth is just buried, and the political opposition loses the basic tools that it needs to win.

In every democracy that stops being a democracy, then, there is a familiar story. There are four institutions that the regime attacks and that it attacks relentlessly until those structures of

accountability are so disintegrated that, even though elections continue to happen, the same party or the same person wins power election after election. Those four institutions are the press, the legal profession, universities, and the business community. If you degrade or co-opt these four institutions, you never need to have a high-stakes fight with the top court in your country. You don't need to burn the Reichstag down. You can still have elections, but only one party will win.

So that is why this CEO's assurance, frankly, sent a chill down my spine—because our democracy isn't at risk of dying; it is dying. As we speak, we are watching it die. It is not too late to save it.

Let me say that again. It is not too late to save our democracy. But we can't continue to close our eyes and think that our democracy can survive a coordinated assault on those four key institutions of accountability. Democrats and Republicans need to see what is happening before our eyes, rise up, and defend the independence of journalists, of lawyers, of universities, and of the private sector.

So I want to spend a minute or two to walk you through what President Trump is doing and how it, frankly, chillingly, mirrors the tactics that other leaders have used to transition real democracy into pretend, fake democracy.

It always starts with journalists, from Hungary to Belarus, to Venezuela—countries that have elections but elections where one party just keeps on winning. These are places where journalists are subject to a non-stop harassment campaign from the regime, such that people just stop doing journalism or journalists stop telling the full truth.

Last month, for instance, Turkish President Erdogan locked up 11 journalists simply because they were covering protests against Erdogan's jailing of the top opposition leaders.

Now, Trump has not started jailing journalists, but the pace of harassment in the first 60 days of his second term is alarming.

He has denied access to government buildings, including the White House, to journalists who don't use preapproved language from the White House. He is preferencing credentials to partisan journalists who simply parrot his party line. His FCC has begun to deliberately harass media companies that are owned by political opponents of the President.

But Trump's campaign to destroy independent journalism has a darker and more menacing side because Trump isn't just trying to intimidate journalists so that they will be afraid to tell the truth; he is also trying to destroy the concept of truth itself. Again, this is a key facet of leaders who are elected who are trying to transition democracies away and into something very different.

How do you destroy truth? Well, that is why the Secretary of Defense looks

into the camera and tells the American public that the text messages that everybody read, filled with classified information and war plans, did not include classified information and war plans.

The White House wants you to believe that one plus one does not equal two any longer; that you should doubt even the clear things that you see with your eyes; that nothing is real; that nothing is true; that if you are a supporter of the regime and I tell you once plus one equals three, then one plus one equals three. Those weren't war plans. Those weren't classified items.

That is also why the official position of the White House on key issues like tariffs changes every hour, because if the ground truth just changes constantly, then there is no truth at all.

Journalists are made to look foolish by reporting a true thing at 9 a.m. that becomes untrue at 10 a.m. Journalism loses its credibility when the facts being distributed by the White House change all the time.

Trump says the tariffs are permanent.

Journalists report that the President says the tariffs are permanent.

An hour later, Trump says: I never said they are permanent. They are not permanent. I am cutting deals.

They write that he is cutting deals.

An hour later, they are suspended—no more tariffs.

When the truth changes constantly, it is hard to believe that there is anything true any longer.

Second, universities are always—a target of would-be autocrats. Again, in Türkiye, the government has terminated thousands of professors just because they criticized the government. In Hungary, one of the nation's most prestigious universities was forced to move out of the country because President Orban attacked it so ceaselessly for fomenting protests against his government.

Universities, over the long history of democracy, have been the place where protests—especially youth protests—begin. They are a thorn in the side of leadership. The famous Tiananmen Square protests in China were, of course, started by university students.

So it is no surprise that if you want to crush democracy, you need to crush the independence of universities. That is why Trump's decision to target universities that permit criticism of President Trump is so bone-chilling. He pretends like he is standing up to anti-Semitism on campuses, but what he is really trying to do is make clear that protests against his policies on campuses will result in Federal funding being cut off.

Columbia University was forced to agree to a stunning list of free speech concessions in order to gain assurances from President Trump that their Federal funding would continue. They had to agree to allow campus police to arrest protesters. They had to essentially agree to receivership, Federal receivership, over an academic department

that houses professors who are critical of Trump and his policies. Effectively, the President of the United States got to pick the person who will oversee the Columbia Department of Middle East, South Asian and African Studies as well as the Center for Palestine Studies. That is extraordinary. That is not what happens in a healthy democracy—the leader of the country micromanaging academic departments at major universities to ensure that academic work aligns with the regime.

Now, having successfully forced Columbia to bend the knee and quell dissent on their campus, Trump is targeting other universities. Some of them will sign similar agreements giving President Trump power over those campuses. But, frankly, all Trump has to do is make an example of a handful of universities, and others will simply comply and obey in advance.

Why? As an academic president, when you have Federal dollars that employ people at your university, would you permit a major protest against a Trump policy if you know that is going to jeopardize Federal funds? Maybe you allow it because you don't want to brazenly stand in the way of free speech, but you just make sure that it is not too big a protest or it is not too critical. You police speech to be on the right side of the regime. That is what happens in all of these fake democracies, and that is what is happening here.

But controlling speech on campuses is not enough. Controlling and intimidating journalists is not enough. You have to go after the lawyers too.

Now, maybe there is not a lot of love for lawyers in this country, but lawyers are the ones who bring the lawsuits to stop the thievery and the illegality. Lawyers are compelled by their oath to stand up for the Constitution.

Putin arrested Navalny's lawyers right on the eve of Navalny's trial.

In Venezuela, Maduro routinely harasses and detains lawyers—human rights lawyers—because he knows those are the ones who will hold him accountable.

In Tunisia, the regime stormed the offices of the bar administration to intimidate the legal profession into silence.

Here in America, Trump is engaged in a shameless campaign of extortion against any major law firm that has taken a position against Trump or Trump's interests. What he is doing is extraordinary, and it is mind-blowing to me that it is just being ignored by my Republican colleagues. He is going firm by firm—and not to every firm, just to the firms that have represented Democrats or brought cases against him—and he is telling them that if they don't fall in line and stop doing work to oppose him, their clients will lose access to Federal work.

That is extortion. This body, Republicans and Democrats, should stand up against it. But it is working. Several law firms have signed deals with

Trump that obligate them to support—guess what—causes aligned with Donald Trump.

Paul Weiss was targeted by an Executive order and struck a deal. But so did Skadden. They struck a deal with Trump before they had even been targeted. Already, collectively, these firms have pledged—think about this—about a quarter of a billion dollars of pro bono work to file cases in coordination with the President of the United States' political interests.

Just like what happened with the universities, there is a lot of extra compliance that is happening. I know for a fact that firms that have already signed these agreements with Trump have gone above and beyond the terms of the agreements to quiet their criticism of the government. No doubt, every single major law firm will think twice before bringing an action against an illegal or corrupt action of the President in fear of Trump retaliating against their business.

That is the point. The point is to try to crush dissent. The point is to try to stand in the way of anybody who is going to hold Trump accountable by using the power—the official power granted to him by the people of the United States—to try to signal retaliation against anyone who dares oppose him.

But collective action can be a powerful tool. Together, the collective might of our universities and our law firms is significant. So they could choose to band together and decide to sign no agreements with Trump, to refuse to let the President of the United States dictate the terms of their speech, their business, their defense of the rule of law.

I don't want to make the victim the perpetrator. This is all Trump's fault, what he is doing to extort political loyalty from universities and law firms. But instead of there being collective action on behalf of these industries, the opposite is happening.

In the legal profession, when Paul Weiss was being targeted, the other big firms didn't rise to their defense; they started making calls to Paul Weiss clients and lawyers, using Trump's assault as a means to poach business or partners. That is shameful, acting like ravenous vultures, putting your profits first instead of your country's interests or the interests of the legal profession, which pledges before a court to stand up for the rule of law. Instead, these big firms are aiding and abetting the destruction of the rule of law by doing Trump's work for him, making targeted firms even more vulnerable by working behind the scenes to strip them bare for parts.

There are good, patriotic lawyers at many of these high-priced firms who know that this is wrong and they should speak up. Some of them already have.

Now, finally, Trump is coming for the rest of the private sector. Listen, I have no idea what the Trump tariff pol-

icy is. The constantly shifting positions of the last week are an embarrassment. It is complete incompetent malpractice. It has jeopardized jobs and retirement savings and college funds all across this country.

But the tariffs are complicated and convoluted and hard to understand, likely because they aren't actually economic or trade policy; they are a political tool—this one designed to force every major company to come before Trump to plead for tariff relief in exchange for giving Trump the company's political loyalty—no different than what is happening in the legal profession or in America's universities.

A tariff can be written very easily to favor one industry over another or one company over another, and the confusing nature of the tariff regime is a means for Trump to require every major company in the country to come on bended knee to him to get the relief they need. And that loyalty pledge could be anything—the purchase of some Trump crypto coin, public support for Trump's economic policies, donations to his political campaign. But having watched what Trump has done one by one to universities and law firms, why would we assume the tariffs aren't just simply a tool to do the same thing to big companies?

What I am trying to say here is that you don't need a battle royal between the President and the Supreme Court for democracy to die. If journalists are constantly looking over their shoulders and unable to report on the truth; if protest is suppressed, even moderately, at universities; if lawyers start giving cover instead of uncovering corruption and illegality in the regime; if companies start being mouthpieces for the regime as a price of doing business—if all that happens, then we are not a real democracy anymore; we are a fake democracy. Elections still happen, like in Türkiye, like in Hungary, like in Venezuela, but the rules are going to be tilted, and dissent will be suppressed so much that the same side—Trump's side—wins over and over and over.

This should matter not just to Democrats, not just to members of the minority party; this should matter to Republicans as well. We swear an oath to uphold the Constitution, and it is time for us to see the game that is being played.

The good news is that the rules have not been fully rigged yet. There is still time—not loads of it, but there is still time for this body to set a tone that causes the kind of massive public outrage necessary to stop this campaign of destruction in its tracks. But that requires those of us who believe that the threat to democracy is urgent to act like it. That means saying to our Republican colleagues that we are not going to act like business as usual, that we are not going to proceed to legislation unless we have agreement, Republicans and Democrats, to stop this assault on free speech and dissent. It requires the minority party to say that right now.

Only if we come together are we going to have a chance to save ourselves from the fate that has befallen so many other countries that have slowly, too quietly, seen their countries transition from real democracy to fake democracy.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, with respect to the cloture motions on Executive Calendar Nos. 74 and 75, the mandatory quorum calls be waived and they ripen at 1 a.m., Friday, April 11; further if cloture is invoked on Calendar No. 74, all post-cloture time be expired and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; further, if cloture is invoked on Calendar No. 75, all postcloture time be expired and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; finally, if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

BUILDING RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, what you see depends on where you sit. Last Friday, it was announced that the BRIC Program, or the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program, run by FEMA would end, and money which had been allocated would be pulled back from the States which were receiving it.

Now, most families across the country have not heard of the BRIC Program, but if you were to explain what it does, they would say, oftentimes, that they need it. I can tell you folks in Louisiana do.

Louisiana has benefited the most per capita in the BRIC's latest round of funding, and I would argue that this actually saves tax dollars for the rest of the country because the BRIC Program helps prevent against flooding, flooding that may occur after a big rain event or after a hurricane. And in Louisiana and in many parts of our country, this is an inevitable part of life.

But the best way to recover from a flood is to never flood at all. The old saying:

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Another:

A stitch in time saves nine.

The same principle applies to flood resilience and mitigation infrastructure. When we invest in levies and floodwalls, communities are protected when the storm hits, and the Federal Government saves billions in a recovery effort that never has to be done.

If you go down to South Louisiana, for example, you will see homes elevated by the BRIC Program that were not previously elevated. Now that they are elevated, that family is secure should the floodwaters come.

Now, you can say: Wait a second. That is just Louisiana. There is a parish in Louisiana in which the flood control structures prevented 10,000 homes from being flooded in the last hurricane—talk about an ounce of prevention because those programs, those families, they would have received Federal help. Turns out no Federal help was needed because we were able to build resilience. We were able to keep those homes from flooding in the first place. This is the type of work that we need to do. And if we do it, then never is a National Flood Insurance Program claim filed.

The family saves; the taxpayer saves. Investing now saves money down the line.

That is why back in 2018, during President Trump's first term, Congress established the BRIC Program to invest in those flood protections needed to prevent future flooding. And through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, another billion dollars was added to that program. This is because the BRIC Program is an effective tool, the type of tool that my communities in my State and communities elsewhere in the country depend upon.

Now, apparently, though, the BRIC Program is in danger. And it is being endangered, I gather, because of the effort to eliminate government waste. Now, there is a lot of government waste, and I am all for eliminating that waste. If there is fraud, we should eliminate it. If there is waste, we should eliminate it.

But preventing homes from flooding, that if they do flood will cost the Federal taxpayer billions of dollars, that is not waste; that is good planning. That is what we should all be doing in every aspect of our life: planning ahead, planning proactively. The waste is that, if we don't do this program and the inevitable flood occurs, then we have to go in and rescue communities. That is waste because we could have prevented that from happening in the first place by implementing programs such as the BRIC Program.

I would ask FEMA to reconsider the impact of cuts to the BRIC Program and to reconsider canceling the BRIC applications that are already placed.

They should. This is a congressionally authorized piece of legislation—authorized and congressionally appropriated. Congress has said that this program will exist. We passed BRIC into law. We provided funds for it. To do anything other than to use that

money to protect families from flooding, to protect the Federal taxpayer from having to put out billions to rescue communities which have flooded, is to thwart the will of Congress. And that is why Congress passed it in the first Trump term, and that is why President Trump supported it. It improves efficiency, not decreases it.

I can tell you, people in South Louisiana—whether it is Terrebonne, Lafourche, Ascension Parishes, and places you wouldn't expect to flood like Livingston Parish—that overwhelmingly—that supported President Trump 95 percent of the time, they would overwhelmingly support this sort of flood mitigation.

Here are some examples of the money that is already going out: Roughly, \$40 million to the city of Central; \$36 million to Ascension Parish. In Central, they were trying to reduce flooding after the great floods of 2016 in Louisiana, trying to keep that from happening again.

The \$36 million to Ascension Parish is to fortify electrical infrastructure. Hurricane comes along; electricity goes out. Of course, no electricity, the whole community is incapacitated.

Twenty million dollars to Lafourche Parish to strengthen 16 miles of power lines; \$10 million to the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana to provide evacuation routes during flooding. Evacuation routes during flooding, that is something that we should make sure we are building so that you don't have to helicopter people out or you don't have to get them out by boat.

So these are examples of BRIC Programs that are a stitch in time that will save nine.

Now, of course, it is important to my State. I will point out that Louisiana was the third largest recipient of BRIC Program funding recently and the largest on a per capita base. And without BRIC funding, none of these projects would happen—whether it is East Baton Rouge Parish, Ascension Parish, Lafourche, or the Coushatta Tribe.

Lafourche Parish President Archie Chaisson had a \$25 million application for grid-hardening so that the people of Lafourche would be able to get back on their feet quicker after a hurricane. I can tell you, I went down to Lafourche Parish after the last hurricane, and all the power poles had just toppled over. It is almost as if you were playing dominoes. They weren't touching, but they all toppled just like that. And there were crews from around the country that had been—electrical crews that had been mobilized to come and reinstall those.

If you hardened the grid, that doesn't happen. If you harden the grid, those tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars spent to get those electricity poles back up does not have to be spent. This money is an investment in a more resilient future that doesn't require the investment of private and public capital to restart communities. This is not waste.

In fact, if you went to Archie Chaisson's parish, I can tell you, those folks would tell you they are against government waste. They would also tell you that this is not waste. This is something which will save their homes, save lives, and save communities.

Now, we can ask ourselves if FEMA were to move forward with the plan to cut BRIC, what would be the alternative? Flooding costs up to almost \$500 billion in damage every year throughout the United States, not just Louisiana. Again, \$500 billion in damage that we have to pay after the fact versus investing a few million now to prevent.

Now, the darker the color, the more the recent flooding. So you can say, although I have been speaking about Louisiana, you can see that, across our Nation, floods have been destroying homes and neighborhoods; downing power lines; harming businesses; in some cases, taking lives.

Just since the start of 2025, at least eight Americans in these four States in dark red have died as a result of storms hitting their communities. In the last 3 months, 37 States have experienced flooding.

These are the States that are in red. It goes all the way from Maine to Minnesota, to Michigan, to Montana—you don't think of Montana being a flood State—Idaho. All of these States in red have had flooding in the last 3 months.

And you see, it is not just the coastline in which there is a coastal surge like Louisiana or Florida. It is also what is called riverine. "Riverine" meaning you have a valley, a river down the middle, the river rises, and people on the lower part of that valley—I think that would be the situation in Kentucky—are going to flood.

These are all places that could benefit from a resiliency program, from a BRIC Program. We know it works. We know it saves money.

And just to bring this home to my State, this is Livingston Parish, LA, just after the great flood of 2016. Look at that. These are homes in areas that had never flooded before. And in some incredible, once-in-500-years flood event, they were all flooded. Livingston Parish, 2016—we call it the Great Flood. It affected not just this parish but all those in what we call the capital region—Tangipahoa Parish, going up to Monroe, LA—it was almost a statewide event.

Now, if we built resiliency, this doesn't happen. If you look at this, can you image the Federal response?

They were so honored then—Presidential candidate Donald Trump came down and spent time in Livingston Parish after this flood to call attention to it because he felt as if President Obama was not paying attention. President Trump came with Vice President nominee Pence, spent time there, brought hope to the people, and that is when, in 2018—I am sure part of his motivation was to sign into law what has ultimately become the BRIC Program.

These people testify with their flooding how lives are changed when you don't have resiliency.

I just want to say one more thing because I would talk to these people. I am privileged to represent them. Each of these homes has a story. There was a wedding dress that a mother had, saving for her daughter, that was ruined in a flood. There were wedding pictures from a grandparent, parents, and daughters—multigeneration—and an album to save for generations totally lost in a flood. There were, in this flood, neighbors who went out and died, not recognizing the place they were stepping wasn't the side of a road but rather a ditch, and they went down, got swept away in this flood. I can go through each house and imagine a story that could have been prevented if there had been resiliency built into this community before this flood.

The purpose of the BRIC grants is to build that resiliency so that we don't have stories to tell which are tragic or sad but rather stories where people continue on with their life as if—well, as if the flood never occurred.

Local leaders advocating implementing using these dollars are advocating for the people they represent. So am I. Right now, representing those people calls for me to ask that any effort to stop BRIC grant funding is halted, that the will of Congress, that the law that Congress passed, that the funding Congress put into the program, that be honored—by law, it should be honored—and that the money which is out there stays there and the applications which have been placed be accepted, processed, and fulfilled.

If rules need to be changed because the Biden administration did things which are silly to have done, then change those rules. But to end a program—to end a program—which has the ability to prevent this sort of disaster, not just in my State but across the Nation, we should not end that program. To do so is to inflict harm both upon the rule of law and upon these communities.

Let's keep BRIC in place.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

COMMEMORATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATTACK ON THE ALFRED P. MURRAH FEDERAL BUILDING

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 174, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 174) commemorating the 30th anniversary of the attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 174) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, April 19 is coming very soon, and the country will pause. I am grateful that the Senate has passed now a resolution from this body that all 100 Members have stated together that we as a nation will pause and remember April 19, 1995, and as a nation this April 19, we will remind the Nation again, we have not forgotten the loss that was there in that Federal building in Oklahoma City.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 80.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of David Perdue, of Georgia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented