

So Senator PADILLA had a question. He didn't get a chance to ask it.

I want to build on another point my colleagues have made, and that is a real appeal to our Senate Republican colleagues, because in these first months—4 or 5 months—of the Trump administration, we have seen the actions of a lawless President.

You know, it is unprecedented in the United States to have over 260 lawsuits filed in Federal courts. Right? This doesn't happen normally. It is because of the massive lawbreaking that we have seen going on—attacks on civil liberties, attacks on due process is part of that, attacks on the First Amendment, the illegal withholding of funds that have been appropriated by the Congress.

The courts didn't do it alone, colleagues. Every Member of this body is sworn to uphold the Constitution—the Constitution the President of the United States now says he is not sure if he has to comply with.

I believe Senators here want to take those constitutional responsibilities seriously. But if we are going to do that, we have to stand up at moments like this—not Democratic Senators alone but Republican Senators too—because if you let the executive do this to ALEX PADILLA today, some other executive, some other President can do it to somebody else tomorrow. If you can do this to ALEX PADILLA, imagine how vulnerable other citizens and others in this country are to this kind of tyranny and abuse.

So I hope this will be a moment where people come together and stand up and say: Regardless of policy differences on different issues, we are all here to debate those issues and disagree, but there are some things we should consider fundamental and sacrosanct, and that is the idea of rule of law and due process.

What we witnessed here was the outrage that we have come to see in countries with authoritarian leaders. That is what we witnessed, and it is a pattern. But today was the most graphic example to date where a U.S. Senator was, essentially, taken down as he introduced himself and said "I have a question."

So I have a question for all of our colleagues: What are we going to do about it? Who are we? What do we stand for? Are we going to uphold the Constitution?

I am looking forward to hearing the question Senator PADILLA wanted to ask, but I also ask all of us a question, and that is, Are we going to use this moment to stand up for decency and to stand up for the fair treatment of every American?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

ALEX PADILLA

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I agree with my friend from Maryland. This

has to be a moment where we just drop our political affiliations, where we decide that we are Americans; that the Constitution matters; that dissent defines America; and we say and do the right thing.

I think there is still time for our Republican colleagues here to speak out. I understand they may still want to collect more facts, but as each minute and each hour passes, it is becoming clear that the main justification seems to be simply that Senator PADILLA was showing some level of disrespect.

The first comments from our Republican colleagues, I think if you are an American who cares about free speech, are really concerning. One of our colleagues in the Senate said this:

[Senator PADILLA] has a responsibility to his constituents to show up at work, not to try to make a spectacle of himself.

Well, that is certainly a legitimate opinion. You can criticize any of us for engaging in a spectacle. But spectacle is not illegal. Raising your voice is not a crime in this country. Protesting your government does not, cannot, and should not result in you being delivered to the ground by law enforcement and handcuffed.

Another of our colleagues says:

Was he disruptive? [Well.] he got what he wanted.

Once again, the standard here seems to be disruption; that if you are speaking truth to power, then you are going to be met by violence.

The definition of this country, the fundamental nature of America, is that protest is not met by violence. Protest is celebrated in this Nation; that what defines America against the rest of the world, against the totality of previous human history is that we protect the right of human beings living in the United States of America to raise protest—loud protest, sometimes disruptive protest—against their government. And, frankly, we protect that right equally, whether it is a U.S. Senator or an ordinary citizen with no formal power.

So we can say today, well, this is really dangerous that a U.S. Senator got thrown to the ground and handcuffed simply because they spoke up at a press conference. But it is no more concerning that it is happening to a U.S. Senator than what is happening to many other citizens and residents of this country who, right now, are being met with equal physical force.

We don't expect any different treatment of U.S. Senators than of ordinary citizens. But many ordinary citizens in Los Angeles, right now, are being treated with the same kind of force that ALEX PADILLA was met with today.

So there is still time for us to come together and say: In this country, speaking truth to power, even in a disruptive way, is never rationalization for violence.

But I will tell you, the first couple of statements from my Republican colleagues are deeply worrying. They mis-

read the fundamental nature of this country.

If we now live in a world where simple disagreements—vocal disagreements—where protest with this administration becomes justification for violence, I don't know how you can define that as America any longer.

As someone who was sitting in this Chamber—I think at this very same desk—on January 6, it shouldn't be lost on us that there are forms of political protests that are protected by this administration—celebrated, even. And then there are forms of political protests, as you saw today, that are met with violence.

There are individuals out on the street today in America who, just a few years ago, were in this building or on the outskirts of this building beating the hell out of police officers—violently, savagely attacking police officers; tasers to the throat; rendering those police officers unconscious; metal poles being hammered onto the heads of police officers. And in an exceptional moment, the President of the United States, in celebration of their violence, pardoned them and put them back out on the street, sending the unequivocal message that if you engage in violent protest on behalf of the White House, you get out of jail free.

Pair that together with the message that is being received by the American public now on a daily basis, most prominently and visibly today, that if you engage in peaceful protests—Senator PADILLA was asking a question; he identified himself as a U.S. Senator—of the administration, you will be met by violence. You carry out violence on behalf of the White House, you are excused. You lodge normal, protected protest against this White House, you are thrown to the ground and handcuffed, even if you are a U.S. Senator, though it should not matter.

The early reaction here, it should be chilling because once this becomes normalized, I don't know how you put it back in the bottle.

We shouldn't assume that this democracy survives forever. This is a revolutionary experiment, 250 years in. It is fragile. This idea that we govern ourselves, this idea that we respect through rule and force of law people who disagree with us—0.0001 percent of humans have ever lived under a system like that in which they decide for themselves the law, their protests, even against the most powerful people in the country, is protected by law. That idea is unnatural. It is, in some ways, almost destined to fall apart.

Yet for 250 years, we have not let it fall apart. We have decided that our fealty to the idea of free speech, of protected free speech, even if it rubs up against the ruling elites, the ruling class of the White House, the most powerful people in the country in an uncomfortable way, will be protected.

For 250 years, we have together—Republicans and Democrats—decided that that principle of free speech was more

important than our political stripes, than loyalty to our party's leader or our party's ideas.

At some point tonight, a Republican has to come down to this floor. At some point this weekend, some of our Republican colleagues have to speak out on behalf of this fundamental American idea, on behalf of the U.S. Senate, on behalf of our colleague.

We can still fight on tax policy and immigration policy. We can have big disagreements about the reconciliation bill. It will not harm my Republican colleagues' ability to render argument on the things that matter to them.

It is OK for us to agree that what happened to ALEX PADILLA 2 hours ago crosses a line. It doesn't compromise my Republican colleagues' integrity as Republicans to decide that there is still right or wrong; that not everything is black or white; that two plus two sometimes has to still equal four.

What happened to Senator PADILLA should not have happened. He identified himself. It is not true that he didn't identify himself. What happened to him in the room is not justifiable; but, certainly, what happened to him outside of the room isn't justifiable. Once he was removed from the room, being thrown to the ground as he is identifying himself as a Senator, being handcuffed can't be justified.

So we are going to hang around on this floor in hopes that, at some point, somehow—and I know not all of our Republican colleagues are still in town—they speak up on behalf of this basic premise, this basic foundational idea of America: that even when protest rubs you the wrong way, even when you don't like the form or substance of it, that we are no longer the country that we love, the country that we teach our kids about, if we don't find a way to come together to object to protest being met with this kind of violence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

ALEX PADILLA

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, a little more than a couple of hours ago, my friend and colleague Senator ALEX PADILLA attended a press conference in the Federal building in Los Angeles being held by the Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem. Instead of treating him with respect, instead of answering his questions, he was grabbed by her security detail, he was physically forced from the room, forced to the ground, his arms pinned behind his back.

This assault on a Member of the U.S. Senate is unlike anything I have ever seen, perhaps unlike anything anyone in this Chamber has ever seen, and it crystallizes the threat posed to our country and its democracy. If the administration can so mistreat a Member of this body, what can it do to every other American? What can it do to

every other resident of the United States of America? What can it do to you? What can it do to your neighbor and to your community?

The abusive treatment of Senator ALEX PADILLA, however, did not take place in isolation. It took place at a time of heightened tension in Los Angeles and around the Nation.

Earlier this week, I returned from my home in Los Angeles, a city in which thousands have peacefully protested the administration's harsh immigration policies and in which the President has ordered the mobilization of thousands of National Guardsmen and hundreds of marines in order to deal with a few hundred vandals and miscreants that local law enforcement was more than capable of subduing.

And the question is, Why? Why order in the military if they are not necessary? Why order in the military over the objection of local and State officials? Why go to the expense? Why go to the trouble? Why undertake such an obvious provocation? Why, in a city of over 500 square miles, did Donald Trump believe it was necessary to escalate so dramatically over the vile acts of a small number of people in the space of a few blocks?

These are some of the questions I imagine that ALEX PADILLA wanted to ask the Secretary of Homeland Security.

But now, today, we must add one more question: Why would they treat Senator ALEX PADILLA with such forceful and disgraceful disregard, forcing him to the ground? Why?

And the answer involves failure and distraction and disrespect and disregard—failure of the President's immigration protocol, failure of his economic policy, a desire to distract from these failures, disrespect of our military and its role in civil society, and disregard of our democracy and the principles upon which our Nation was founded.

Let's start with failure: the failure of Donald Trump's immigration policy; the failure, in particular, of his promise to deport massive numbers of violent criminals, a failure that was inevitable because it was based on a lie, a foundational lie—foundational to his campaign and to his Presidency—the original lie of the Trump campaign, the one he spoke as he descended the golden escalator in 2015 and suggested to the American people that most of the folks coming to this country as immigrants and migrants were murderers and rapists and violent criminals bent on doing harm to the American people, that foreign nations had opened their prisons and let out their worst offenders so that they could come to the United States and destroy our way of life.

It was a big lie. It was an audacious lie but a lie that the President hoped he could ride, a wave of fear that he could in turn ride into office.

The truth, of course, is the vast number of people coming to this country

are peaceful, hard-working people who want nothing more than an opportunity to get ahead, to enjoy a good life, and to provide for themselves and for their family.

The American people understood this, but they also understood that our border was broken, that our system was chaotic, that the immigration system was itself broken, that asylum cases took too long to adjudicate, and people waiting lawfully to immigrate should be given priority over those who do not.

As President, Donald Trump promised his focus would be on the deportation of violent criminals, but he also promised mass deportations. And the only way to square that conflict between the very specific and the very broad was to go back to that original lie that all immigrants are violent criminals who mean us harm.

If you can make the country believe that, you don't have to be targeted in your immigration raids, you don't have to go through the painstaking work of tracking down people with criminal records who don't want to be found. If you believe the lie that all immigrants are violent criminals, then you can do broad immigration sweeps at restaurants or on farms, in garment factories or high school graduations, in random neighborhoods and homes, or at the Home Depot.

"Just go out there and arrest illegal aliens," the President's Deputy Chief of Staff, a frustrated Stephen Miller, demanded after berating Department officials for the slow pace of their operations. Three thousand arrests a day the administration insisted on as a new quota, and gone was any pretense of looking for violent offenders.

And so the indiscriminate raids and the indiscriminate cruelty began to multiply, picking up people who show up for immigration appointments or to take the oath of citizenship, only to deport them; separating fathers from their sons and daughters, mothers from their children, husbands from their wives; a farmworker who worked in the fields for decades—hard work, back-breaking work, work in the heat and the cold, work during a deadly pandemic when others stayed home, work that most U.S. citizens do not want to do and will not do—chased through the fields that they harvested to be taken away from their families; a mother chased down the street by hooded ICE agents, away from her terrified and screaming teenage daughter.

Americans did not vote for this, do not want this. And in the midst of this, the American people started to speak out—at first, in small ways, in private conversations, after the deportation of their neighbors; and then in more public ways, at townhalls and in letters to the editor, on social media, and in gatherings at their schools; and then, as the raids increased in their scope and the scope of their cruelty, by taking to the streets, as is our God-given right and also a right given by our Constitution.