

a few years to catch me, and I am sure he will. But of the 9,000 votes in that period of time, how many do you actually remember? A handful. This vote last week was one of those votes.

Why will I remember this? Because nongovernmental organizations, charities, and humanitarian aid groups around the world have told us that taking \$8 billion out of foreign aid and humanitarian assistance is going to cost us in terms of lives. It will deny people food, clean water to drink, medicine, and the basics of life. In the poorest places on Earth, it will cost us lives.

The original bill eliminated a program called PEPFAR. PEPFAR was created by Republican President George W. Bush. He rallied our government—Democrats and Republicans—to lead a national and international effort to stop HIV/AIDS. For example, if a mother is pregnant again and had HIV, the transmission of that disease to the baby was, unfortunately, very common. We started finding ways to stop it from happening. It has been many years since George W. Bush was President, but we estimate that we have saved 25 million lives with this PEPFAR Program. I am a loyal Democrat and proud of it but was happy to vote with the Republicans and George W. Bush on that program. That program was going to be eliminated by this bill that was considered. It was taken out at the last minute. That is the type of thing that was at stake in that vote.

That decision by the Senate and the House, signed by President Trump over the weekend, is going to cost human lives in the poorest places on Earth. I think that is a tragedy. I have been to some of those places. I have made a point of going to see it and to see our programs.

I remember a dusty village in India where the children were gathered around for what they called lunch. American kids would not have touched what they were being given to eat. They were basically dough bowls. They were grains from the United States that were blended together. They ate these dough bowls gleefully, happily, anxiously. But before they took the first bite, they stopped and said a prayer, and I asked the local people who were leading this effort: What did they say in prayer? They said that they said thank to you the United States of America for the food that they were going to eat that day. They knew that was the case because it was printed on the bags as a gift to their people from America. Those programs are going to be eliminated now because of the vote last week.

But there was another part of it, too, that struck me as really painful. That was the decision to eliminate the Federal support for public broadcasting—National Public Radio and public television. I am a fan. I have been a fan for a long time so I will confess my prejudice.

But I am also from Downstate Illinois. That is the part of the State out-

side Chicago where the small towns and the rural areas are located. I know what public broadcasting means to those areas. I heard firsthand an example of what it means.

A lady named Heather Norman, who is with the public broadcasting coalition in Illinois, joined me at a press conference, on Friday, in front of the public radio station in the city of Chicago. I asked her to tell me and the press who had gathered an example of why public radio was different than the other radio stations and why it was important. She gave me a very classic example.

She works at the public radio station in Macomb, IL. Macomb is a Downstate community on the western side of our State—a more sparsely populated area than people visualize when they say Chicago, IL. Western Macomb, IL, has Western Illinois University. Thousands of students from all around the State and the area attend college there. A year ago, there was an active shooter in the community. They learned about it through the police notifying the radio station, and they started broadcasting to the people of Macomb to stay in their homes, to shelter in place. Don't go outside until we control the situation. Wait for the police's signal.

Well, there was a lot at stake. We have seen on a lot of our campuses and universities where deranged people take a gun and kill innocent students right and left, and we didn't want that to happen again. So the public broadcasting station, the NPR station, kept the broadcast going all day long to notify the people of Macomb and the McDonough County area of the danger, and they warned them to stay home.

You say: I will bet the other radio station did too. They didn't. Why didn't they do it? Because the four other radio stations are recordings. There is no live person at those radio stations—just equipment. So they are playing their music and whatever programs they wish, but they couldn't send out local news because there was no one there to send it. It was the public broadcasting station—the public radio station—that kept the people of Macomb and McDonough County safe. So, to say that you can eliminate that station, and it won't make any difference whether the warning is about an active shooter or about a tornado or a flood or a flash fire, public broadcasting is there on the scene, doing their job, day in and day out.

Now, what is going to happen with this decision by the Trump administration to eliminate Federal support for these stations? I don't know. I asked Heather. She said there are probably two stations in our State—at least two—that will go out of business. They depend so much on the help from Washington. That is a loss.

Whether you are conservative or liberal, MAGA or progressive—whatever you want to call yourself—how could you want an America with less information and with fewer choices as the sources of that information?

The strength of our democracy is the fact that the American people have access to good, credible information and can make up their own minds. They don't want to be told. They make up their own minds. That is the key to the core of democracy, and we attacked it last week when we eliminated support for public broadcasting.

I don't know what is going to happen next. A lot of people have to think about this. I said to the people who govern public broadcasting and public television and public radio: You will have to think of a plan B because this President wants to put you out of business. You can't do what some law firms have done that he got mad at. He got mad at the law firms and threatened to cut off their Federal business. What did they do? They sued for peace immediately. They said: What can we do? Can we give you thousands and, maybe, hundreds of thousands of free legal services?

When that intimidation is in place, some of them turn to that as an alternative, but a public broadcasting station cannot do that and maintain its credibility. It can't go hat in hand and bent knee to this administration or to any administration and maintain its credibility when it comes to news.

So they have a terrible challenge that they face. I want to help them find a solution. I think America would be poorer and less free, and there would be less information available to people in our country if we allowed this to go forward.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on a separate issue, I want to say a word about some nominations that are pending before the Senate this week.

As the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, I pay closer attention than some when it comes to the nominees who are suggested for Federal positions on the courts. These are positions that are lifetime positions. You take a person and state: We trust you with this responsibility and authority for as long as you live—for as long as you live. So it isn't a question of 2 years or 4 years and replacing someone if they aren't up to the job. We have got to look for people whom we can trust for the long haul.

The Senate will soon vote on the confirmations of Joshua Divine to serve as a judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Missouri and Judge Cristian Stevens to serve for the Eastern District. I am concerned about these two nominees.

Mr. Divine is 34 years old. He received his law degree only 9 years ago. In addition to a lack of experience, Mr. Divine has taken some extreme positions on issues that are important to people across the United States, such as reproductive rights and ballot access.

Mr. Divine—if you can believe this, in this day and age, 2025—has argued in

favor of literacy tests at the ballot box. Let me say that again. He has argued in favor of literacy tests at the ballot box.

He states:

Individuals who aren't informed about issues and platforms . . . have no business voting.

The fact that we are even considering his nomination under the circumstances is shocking.

Literacy tests have been tried in America. They are a racist relic from the Jim Crow era that we used to prevent immigrants and minorities from voting. It should not be controversial to say that no one who has argued for reviving racist Jim Crow laws belongs on the Federal bench, let alone for a lifetime.

Mr. Divine also referred to himself as a "zealot" for the anti-choice movement. Now, whether you are pro-choice or pro-life, you would think that someone who is that blatant and open in declaring himself a zealot on the issue would trouble you. This has been on full display in his role as Missouri solicitor general.

Mr. Divine has challenged women's ability to access the abortion drug mifepristone and has undermined the decision of Missouri voters to codify abortion access in their State constitution.

Previously, Mr. Divine wrote:

Because we know a genetically unique human comes into existence at fertilization, abortion should not be ethically permitted.

I know that is the position of some voters whom I represent and even of some members of my family. I disagree.

Taken at face value, this statement suggests that Mr. Divine opposes access to in vitro fertilization, IVF. Well, I have some beautiful grandkids who were the product of these IVF procedures. It was the only way that they could come to this Earth, and thank God they did. To think that this man who is seeking this lifetime appointment to the bench would not even answer the question on IVF is troubling.

Joshua Divine is too inexperienced to serve as a district court judge, and his radical views, I think, disqualify him.

I am also troubled by the nomination of Cristian Stevens. Following his confirmation hearing, I asked Judge Stevens whether he denounced the January 6 insurrection on the Capitol.

For those who don't remember, that was a time when a mob forced Congress to shut down the procedure of counting the electoral votes in the 2020 election. As a result of that decision, they stormed the Capitol; came into this Chamber; videotaped themselves vaping while sitting in the chair of the Presiding Officer, going through the desks of Senators, tearing up the place, and, unfortunately, attacking a lot of innocent people.

I asked Cristian Stevens about the January 6 insurrection. He said the use of the word "insurrection" was a legal conclusion—a legal conclusion—and

that it would be inappropriate for him to comment on it because it was a highly contested political issue.

Here is the cold, hard truth: The violent mob that ransacked the Capitol Complex in an attempted insurrection to stop the counting of the votes of that election led to the deaths of 5 police officers and injuries to more than 140 others. It triggered the largest prosecution in the history of the Department of Justice. Over 1,000 individuals were convicted and prosecuted for their activity that day.

The fact that this nominee couldn't acknowledge what happened that day and denounce the violence perpetrated against law enforcement is troubling. If you can't stand up for the men and women who keep us safe at this very moment in this building—who risk their lives for the Members, their staffs, and the visitors in the Capitol—you have no place in a lifetime position as a Federal judge.

I am also concerned about a law review article Judge Cristian Stevens wrote in defending the infamous 100-to-1 sentencing disparity between crack cocaine and powder cocaine.

I voted for it in the House of Representatives. Why? The idea was that crack cocaine was such a deadly and threatening narcotic that we were going to pass a sentencing provision that was really tough. Well, this was tough. It said, if you were convicted of possessing powder cocaine or an exact same amount of cocaine in crack form—in crystal form—you would be receiving a sentence for the crack cocaine that would be 100 times that of powder cocaine.

What happened as a result of it?

The result, I am sorry to say, didn't work. You would think, with that kind of sentencing hanging over you, people would think twice. It didn't work. As a result, more people were using crack cocaine after we passed the law, and the price on the street was going down instead of up. We filled the Federal prisons primarily with African Americans who had lengthy sentences—some of them over 20 years—for the simple sale of crack cocaine.

We decided that was wrong. I led the effort here on the Senate side. I am proud that I did. I was joined by CHUCK GRASSLEY, a Republican of Iowa, and MIKE LEE, a Republican of Utah. We passed a bill called the FIRST STEP Act, and it was sent to President Trump, who signed it into law in his first term.

Now comes Cristian Stevens, Judge Stevens, wanting a seat on the Federal bench. I am concerned about a law review article he wrote that defended the 100-to-1 disparity between crack cocaine and powder cocaine.

He wrote:

There may be evidence to suggest that these kinds of sentencing provisions are beneficial to black communities hardest hit by the crack epidemic.

I am disappointed that Judge Stevens continues to stand by an article that

defends crack-powder cocaine sentencing disparity—it was wrong then; it is wrong now—and he is certainly doing no one a favor by supporting that kind of penalty.

My Republican colleagues will likely vote for both of these nominees I have described—Mr. Divine and Judge Stevens on the Federal bench—without hesitation, but the American people deserve judges who will protect their basic fundamental rights, demonstrate independence and integrity, and remain faithful to the Constitution and the rule of law. Neither of these nominees has proven that they embody these attributes.

I will vote against both of these nominees. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know I am not the only one who feels like time flies, but it is hard for me to imagine that it has only been 6 months since President Trump was sworn into office—6 months.

When you look at what we have been able to accomplish together—the Republican majority in the House and the Senate and President Trump—it has been nothing short of amazing.

We passed President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill and avoided a multitrillion-dollar tax increase on the American people, we codified DOGE cuts through the rescissions package just last week, and we have continued to confirm President Trump's qualified nominees to the executive branch.

These confirmation votes, of course, will continue apace, but as we are turning to the latter half of this first year in his second term of office, it is also time to focus on other work we need to do, like paying the bills, which is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of the Congress, and authorizing legislation to keep our country strong—passing legislation like the National Defense Authorization Act.

I have talked many times about my dad, who was a B-17 pilot in the Army Air Corps, World War II. He was a very young man when he flew 26 bombing missions over Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, he flew one too many because he was shot down and captured as a POW on his 26th. He was a POW—a prisoner of war—for about the last 4 months of World War II.

But I know my dad, whom Tom Brokaw called part of the "greatest generation"—the people who fought and won a world war in World War II—they believed and they hoped and they prayed that would be one of the last real threats of world war ever in our lifetime, but we are now living in what I consider to be the most dangerous time since World War II.

In many ways, Vladimir Putin and his Russia have already declared war