

So President Tim Cook is running not for office, but he is running for his students. He is pounding the pavement in the summer heat to highlight that when students' basic needs are met, they can focus on their education and create a brighter future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

That is why I am here on the floor today. I want to be part of sending Tim a powerful message that Congress agrees with him and must not leave students behind. The world's next Einstein—and I say this to all my colleagues—may be in your town, scraping together a way to earn an education and make a positive impact on the community and the world.

Let's help light the beacon of opportunity for those students. For America to be great, we have got to make sure that everybody in our country gets a fair shot. So I will close by saying I am gratified by the passion and insight that Tim Cook and other Oregonians are bringing to this cause.

They understand the importance of investing in our kids because that draws a map to a brighter future for all of us. It may not be possible for everybody to run 32 miles a day for nearly 2 months, but as Senators, we can certainly make a difference.

This country needs more common-sense policies that put students first and prepare us all for a brighter tomorrow. That is what Tim Cook is bringing us.

Mr. President, I urge all of my colleagues to support these educators and others for helping students.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

CRIME VICTIMS FUND STABILIZATION ACT OF 2025

Mr. OSSOFF. Mr. President, I want to urge my colleagues—and I know there is this temptation of the upcoming summer break, and folks want to get home to their families, but we have the opportunity and the obligation right now to pass this legislation for the Crime Victims Fund. Are we really going to miss this opportunity and this obligation when, in my State, a quarter of the victims of domestic violence were turned away from services last year?

These are the organizations—the child advocacy centers, the domestic violence agencies, the rape crisis centers—that respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, neglected, and abused people in our States.

We just spent last week defunding Big Bird. We spent an entire week defunding public television and public radio. And you mean to tell me that before we leave for the recess, we can't fund child advocacy centers, domestic violence agencies, and rape crisis centers? It is unacceptable. This has bipartisan support, and we should pass this legislation right now.

Here is what one organization in Georgia said if we fail to pass this bill. They said:

Our organization would have to lay off approximately 50% of essential staff. We would

not be able to support or meet the critical needs of victims in the community. The lack of support and services over time will negatively impact the community with an increase in crime and victimization.

Mr. President, another organization in Georgia said:

Without our centers, states will see an increase in domestic injuries, child abuse, sexual assault, and even death in many cases.

Child abuse. Sexual assault. Death.

In the State of Georgia, where hundreds of foster children have been trafficked by sexual predators, these are the organizations that support them and women facing domestic violence.

This is a bipartisan bill led by Senators DURBIN and MURKOWSKI. It should have bipartisan support on the Senate floor right now. We should pass it before we leave for the summer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

MAIDEN SPEECH

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. President, I rise today to deliver my maiden speech. This is a proud and personal moment for me to represent my home State of Michigan as a junior Senator, alongside GARY PETERS, and to follow in the footsteps of legendary Senators like Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin.

This maiden speech has been a long-standing tradition in the Senate. Every junior Member gets to deliver in their freshman year their vision for their States and what they plan to do in their time in office.

Thank you to my colleagues from both sides of the aisle who have joined me and to my great staff and my interns, even my niece who came in. If you remember nothing else, I want you to remember two things: First, nothing is more important to me than the State of Michigan. I am a third generation Michigander. For me, Michigan is where it all started. Everything I have done in my life, everywhere I have gone, everything I have done, everyone I have met, it all started in Michigan.

It is where I learned the values that still shape me today: community, putting your head down and working hard, taking care of your neighbors when they are in need.

Nothing matters more than my home State, so this speech is my love letter to the State of Michigan. To stand here and represent the State that I love on the floor of the U.S. Senate is the greatest privilege of my life.

Second, my goal for my time in office is to address what I believe to be the existential threat of our time to my State and to all Americans: the threat of a shrinking middle class.

Now, I am a national security person by training. I am what is called a 9/11 baby. I happened to be in New York City on my second day of graduate school when 9/11 happened.

I was recruited into the CIA right out of grad school, and I served three tours in Iraq, alongside our military, before serving at the Pentagon.

I served proudly under Presidents both Democrat and Republican. I have

come face-to-face with some of the greatest threats facing our country, but I believe, in my bones, that the single greatest threat today to our national security is not coming from abroad but coming from the very real threats that come from that shrinking middle class.

So my goal as a Senator is to deliver for Michigan's middle class, to expand it, to secure it. That mission is personal. Michigan is where my family achieved that very American dream. My great-grandfather, at 13 years old, came through Ellis Island not speaking English. He ended up starting a meat company, moved to Michigan, and built an iconic hot dog that Michiganders have enjoyed for 60 years.

Michigan has been the place where hard work means something. It was where the middle class was literally invented, it was where you could work at an auto plant and afford the car that you were building. That was a revolutionary idea at the time; it shouldn't be revolutionary now.

So as a U.S. Senator, my highest priority is to help make Michigan a place where that American dream is achievable again. Today, too many Michiganders are falling out of that middle class; too many families can't get in at all. I lived on my family farm in Holly, MI. Growing up, I was surrounded by families whose path to the middle class ran through Michigan's factories, our farms, our small businesses.

We are people who build things and grow things; people proud of their role in manufacturing America's future, our cars, our tanks, our food; people who, like my great-grandfather, were prepared to work hard for success and often achieved it.

But over the years, I have watched younger generations of those same families live a very different story. Parents can't provide for their kids what was provided to them. That fishing cabin up north that dad had, the son can't have. A trip to Disneyland, can't do it.

Across Michigan, there are so many families who feel like hard work doesn't seem to be enough anymore. No matter what your political views are, it is just a fact that the middle class has shrunk over the last 40 years. And I have seen firsthand what happens next.

When people feel like they can't get ahead, when they can't provide for their kids what was provided for them, they feel anger, they feel shame. They lose their dignity, and they look for something or someone to blame.

In a multiracial, multi-ethnic experiment in democracy, people end up blaming people who don't look like them or speak like them or pray like them. I have seen this up close and personal how that kind of anger and suspicion can tear communities apart.

If you want to understand how we got to this moment in our politics—this angry, vitriolic, polarized moment in

American history—all you have to do is understand that shrinking middle class. So even among today's chaos, especially now, there are things we have to do, simple things, to bring back that middle class and make it thrive.

This is my North Star. It will guide my work in the Senate. OK, so how do we do that? Our government certainly needs to change. I don't think it is hard to understand that our government is not working for a majority of Americans—not just Republicans, Democrats as well. We have to hear that loud and clear.

Fundamentally, I believe that government needs to get back to the basics. No one cares about your trick plays if you don't have your fundamentals right. Government needs to set the conditions for success, and Michiganders and Americans need to work hard to achieve that success.

These basics are jobs that pay you enough to save every month, healthcare you can actually afford, a home you can call your own, schools that prepare our kids for the workforce, energy to power our lives, an environment we can pass on to our kids, and safety and security from fear. That is it.

First, on jobs, we need job creation for Michigan's middle class to create the jobs of the future. Imagine that the middle class is basically a ship at sea. For the better part of 40 years, it has been taking on water, and now we are about to hit a category 5 hurricane in the form of artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence has the potential to change our economy more than the internet did. Think about that.

Productivity will go up, jobs will be gained, but jobs will also be lost. Maybe not Michigan jobs at first. Entry-level college jobs like paralegals or accountants are probably first on the list, but change is coming, and we need to be ready.

Job creation in the era of artificial intelligence means supporting our small businesses. Small businesses employ half of all Americans. They are intrinsic to the American dream. It is about betting on yourself. And we need to own the fact that it is hard to start and succeed as a small business. We need to make life easier for Michigan's small businesses.

Second, we need to bring critical industries and critical supply chains back home to the United States. Michiganders understand this better than most because of what we do, our manufacturing, no foreign country should ever have a veto on our economic security. We should always make critical items here in the United States, and I want to bring as many of those jobs and industries back to Michigan.

And, finally, let us say it very clearly: We need an immigration system that actually works and is key to our economy. Immigrants are critical for our labor shortages in our factories, in our hospitals, in our firms. More than

that, we are a nation of immigrants. I am standing here today because my great-grandfather left fear, persecution, and death at 13 years old and found a place in America.

So we need an immigration plan that brings legal, vetted immigrants into our countries, key to our economy, sometimes more, sometimes less; and we need to have border security that literally makes sense. Without immigrants, there is no America, and without immigrants, our economy will not thrive.

Second, on healthcare, is there anyone in America who thinks healthcare is working? Is there anyone in America who thinks we are paying too little for healthcare? Is there anyone in America who is missing the ground swell of anger because we cannot provide the healthcare we need to our parents and to our children?

Few things are as fundamental. There are just, in my mind, few systems as broken as healthcare in America in 2025. And we all know it.

This is, again, extremely personal to me. It is why I ran for office in the first place. Of all my time spent in war zones, in dangerous places, nothing was harder than my mom being diagnosed with stage IV ovarian cancer when she did not have insurance.

There is nothing worse than that desperate feeling when your parent, that first parent to get sick, needs emergency tests and emergency surgery, and the same moment that you are fighting to get those things, you are struggling just to fill out the paperwork so she won't go bankrupt.

We are at a breaking point. We must change our healthcare, and this is as good a time as any. Every American deserves access to healthcare they can afford, regardless of your job, regardless of your income or your age. So I support a nationwide public insurance plan at a reasonable price for every American.

Second, we have got to be able to afford the medicines that we are prescribed. Is there anyone who thinks that we are paying too little for our drug prices? We need, in every part of our healthcare system, to be able to negotiate the price of our drugs. It is like Costco; you buy in bulk, you get a lower per unit price, and we are prohibited from doing that across the country.

Why? Because I have never seen an issue in Washington more polluted by lobbyists and corporate PAC donations than this issue. I have never seen an industry with more control over elected leaders than on the issue of healthcare.

Right now, I am one of six Senators who doesn't take corporate PAC money, 6 out of 100. It should be 100 out of 100. The middle class does not have a lobbyist, but they sure have the leaders that they elected.

On housing, there is nothing more foundational to the American dream than having a home of your own. It is as fundamental to us as Americans as apple pie.

Right now, the average age of a first-time homeowner in America is 40 years old, completely different than in generations before us. This is not a good story. Today we could declare, in this body, a housing state of emergency. We need 4 million units of housing built in our country. That is a national strategy, yes, but I want Michigan to be ground zero for responding to the urgency of that need.

On education, we need schools that actually prepare our kids for the future. So much of what we were able to do as a middle class was because people could afford the education in front of them. If you wanted to go to college, you could, but in Michigan, if you wanted to work with your hands, succeed, go on, become rich, only if you had a high school diploma, you could do that. There were job options for you.

We need an obsessive focus and reorganization of our job training Federal programs. We have 17 different organizations doing job training. It is broken. We need to focus on trade schools and apprenticeships and an education system that prepares us for what is coming.

On energy, we all know we are using more energy. Every single one of us in this room right now are using more energy than we did 10 years ago. Modern life is demanding it, but supply isn't meeting demand. And Michiganders are seeing that hitting their wallets every single day. If you don't plan now, it is going to get worse, rolling blackouts and brownouts in a decade.

And what I am asking for is not a renewable energy plan or a fossil fuel plan, it is an "all of the above" energy plan. Natural gas, you can't do it without it. Nuclear, batteries, renewables, solar, hydropower, new stuff that is in creation right now, we need all of it. And we can't be willing to scrap certain energy because it is woke. Anyone who disagrees with that is just scoring political points and doesn't give a damn about people's electricity bills.

On the environment, I am committed to protecting the environment, especially our water. In Michigan, clean water and the Great Lakes are not partisan, it is our heritage. It is in our blood. No single Michigander lives more than 6 miles away from a lake or 82 miles from a Great Lake.

We all know the sound of water hitting the beach or how the light looks up north. Our water is why people raise their kids in Michigan. And sharing that legacy with our kids is the dream that every Michigander has. We have the responsibility of being the stewards of the Great Lakes.

So when our water is threatened, when our kids are poisoned, when they can't swim in contaminated lakes, it is not just a health issue, it is a security issue: Lead, PFAS, invasive species in our Great Lakes, these are threats to us as Michiganders, and it is my job to fight these threats.

And last, can we just say climate change is upon us? Twenty years ago it

was theoretical; now Michiganders understand that extreme weather is real, it is here, they feel it in their pocketbooks. We have to mitigate it. We have to accept it, and we have to be ready to prepare ourselves when we have these crazy ice storms, these crazy once-in-a-generation tornadoes and move on and not exclude people because they don't want to talk about woke policies.

Safety and security, finally. Every Michigander has the right to live free from fear, to feel safe in their own home, and in the country they love. That is what got me into public service in the very beginning right after 9/11. Shootings in our schools and our businesses are a threat to our lives. Our government and our computers, our personal data shouldn't be hacked—neither should our cars or our homes.

And we should get to know and understand always who is coming across our border. We are a border State in Michigan. Every country in the world has a right to know who is coming inside its borders.

So in the Senate, I am going to spend my time protecting American citizens, as I have always done. For that, we need the best military in the world, one that understands the threats that are coming around the corner, not just the threats of the past.

We need to be able to control our own fate. That means not letting our national debt be controlled by countries like China.

And we need to understand that, to make people safe in America, we need a strong leadership role in the world, because the next 100 years are either going to be dominated by the United States of America or by China.

And while we make mistakes every single day, and I will own that—I served in Iraq, and I saw it close up—I will take American leadership over Chinese leadership any day of the week.

So, in conclusion, let me just say that we all know—everyone here knows—that we are going through an extremely tough time in American politics. We know that, when people look back on this period in history, they are going to say: That was the moment that Americans were turned against each other, when neighbors turned against each other.

But it is not the end, and it is not always going to be this way. As Michiganders, we understand how to survive bad times by rallying together, by helping one another, by living up to our Midwestern values, and getting back into the fight.

As elected leaders, and certainly as a Senator, I have a responsibility to chart the path through the dark tunnel and into the light, not by just complaining and whinging that it is all bad but by charting a strategy from beginning to end on how we get through this moment.

And we will. For God's sake, people, the Detroit Lions are going to win the National Championship and the Super-

bowl, and they were in the toilet for years.

So it is my privilege to stand on behalf of my State here. It is the most important thing I have ever done. It is the most impactful thing I will ever do. It is my job, as that next generation of leader, to change the course of this place and this country, and I commit to you I will not let you down.

Thank you very much.

I yield the floor.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). The Senator from Hawaii.

HOUSING

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, when it comes to one of the most basic necessities in life for people—housing—both political parties have failed. Both political parties have failed.

Housing costs more than ever today, with the median home costing five times as much as the median income for your average American. First-time home buyers are fewer and older than ever. One in four renters is being forced to spend more than half of their income on rent, and homelessness is plaguing more people than ever before.

This crisis was not inevitable; it is a problem that the government has created. There is not enough housing in this country because we have made it virtually impossible to build housing. Ask anyone who has tried to build anything—a shed, a patio, an accessory dwelling unit for their in-laws. They will tell you that the moment you try to do something, there are endless procedural hurdles and regulatory barriers that immediately get in the way—exclusionary zoning; minimum lot sizes; height restrictions; requirements for multiple staircases; environmental reviews; dozens of public meetings, where the grouchiest people in your neighborhood can stop the most virtuous project in your neighborhood; extensive permitting paperwork; years-long battles with community organizations and boards. And if you want to expedite your permit, you can pay a permit expeditor. If you have 10 grand, they will put your thing on the top of the pile.

Nobody should like this system.

I cannot think of something so essential to American life—housing, whether you rent or you want to own—so essential to American life where the government has created the shortage on purpose, and then it strokes its chin, confused as to why there is a shortage. There is a shortage because of us. There is a shortage because of the government itself making it hard to construct the thing we all say we want.

But the good news is this: If the government got us into this mess in the first place, it can help to get us out. Mainly, that means getting out of our own way and not preventing the very things we say we like.

A lot of progressives in my own party like to say “We are for housing. We are for clean energy. We are for transit and infrastructure,” but you can't be for

something if you don't want it near you. If you are for housing, you have to see the housing. If you are for clean energy, you are going to see a windmill or wind farm or a nuclear powerplant somewhere.

As we envision a just and sustainable and wealthy country, we have to actually make the things that make us more sustainable and wealthy. There is nothing progressive about preventing a nurse or a firefighter or a teacher or a small business owner from actually living in the community in which they work. There is nothing progressive about making people drive an hour to work or, in Hawaii, forcing people to leave the State.

Lawn sizes and building heights don't make neighborhoods; people do. Yet you will often hear people who oppose new housing say things like: We want to preserve the unique character of the neighborhood.

And this is something that I am embarrassed to say I didn't know until I came to the U.S. Senate. I didn't understand what those words mean and where they came from. They are echoing a dark time in American history of the Jim Crow era. It was a time when communities specifically codified into law language that prohibited Black people and other racial minorities from moving into certain neighborhoods. The racial covenants would literally say:

No lot covered by this indenture, or any part thereof, shall ever be sold, resold, conveyed, granted, devised, leased or rented to or occupied by, or in any other way used by, any person or persons not of the Caucasian Race.

That is from a covenant in St. Louis from 1949. And there were contracts just like that one in neighborhoods all across the country. Then, racial covenants were outlawed, but their legacy continues today because what happened was the racists, after this was outlawed, figured out a proxy for race. They figured out a way to keep people separated, figured out a way to keep people out of their neighborhoods, figured out a way to make housing more constrained. And that is exclusionary zoning. That is minimum lot sizes. That means you need interior staircases. All of these things that sound virtuous—safety, sanitation, environmental review, historic preservation—all of those things actually matter, but understand that they are being weaponized against the working class. They are being weaponized against the working class.

I am not sure if this is permissible under the rules, but I am looking at a bunch of Senate pages, all 16 years old, trying to figure out: Where am I going to live when I get a job? Do I have to live with my folks and for how long? Am I going to be able to move to a suburb or a city or stay in my hometown? Where am I going to live?

So how do we fix it? First of all, government has a role that is not just getting out of the way. On the financing