

You knew it worked because one of our storms—I happened to be out there looking, and there was a wave that crashed off Lake Pontchartrain. It hit the batture, it began to crest, and it fell. As it fell, it almost hit to the top of the levee, and a few drops went over. That batture being built out kept the wave from cresting right next to the levee and that water going over and flooding everybody on the other side.

Building resiliency works. It works for the Federal taxpayer, it works for the Louisiana taxpayer, and it works for the families whose lives are secure.

Improving highway evacuation routes, hardening the electrical grid, and investing in flood mitigation are all things I worked for in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The reason I did it is that we can't prevent another hurricane, but we can prevent the bad things that happen afterwards.

As the 20th anniversary approaches, we are reminded of those losses but also the gallantry, the true gallantry of the American people, because in the worst times, we come together. We are seeing the same reaction following the terrible flooding in Texas.

In the weeks following Katrina, people from all over the world and all over the country stepped up with disaster relief. Now we see that in Texas. I am told that Florida, Kansas, Pennsylvania, California, Nebraska, Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio—I could list the States, all sent National Guard. I am sorry, that was in Louisiana.

But, similarly, people from different States all went to Texas to help—Indiana, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Missouri, and it continues. When tragedy hits, Americans respond.

We may not be able to take away the pain of loss—I wish we could—but Congress can help ease the financial burden of recovery, and an essential way to do that is by making flood insurance affordable.

TRIBUTE TO TY BOFFERDING

Mr. President, I rise to honor an exceptional member of my team, HELP Committee senior adviser and communications director Ty Bofferding. Next month, Ty will be leaving my office after 9 years of service to Louisiana and the Nation. He is starting a new chapter in his life as he and his wife Kenna move to my home city of Baton Rouge.

Ty joined my office as a press intern in 2016 when he was a junior in college. He was talented, creating and seizing every opportunity—all before, I think, he could legally drink alcohol. But by the time he graduated from college, he was a deputy press secretary.

One story. During the Graham-Cassidy effort to replace ObamaCare, my previous communications director had just left, and Ty took over as temporary communications director. I don't think he was 21. And speak about a baptism by fire, because nobody in the Republican conference was ready

for this. So whenever anybody got a call, whether in the majority leader's office or in the conference itself or anything, they would say "Call the Cassidy office," and there was Ty fielding all the calls. We did not pass our legislation, but we got further than anyone expected because of the efforts of Ty and of others.

At 23, Ty became the youngest Senate communications director of all time, a testament to his work ethic and his ability to think strategically. He is a model for all these young people who are starting in our offices who want to advance. They can look and see how Ty became the communications director at 23 and take that as an example.

He has been a trusted adviser, a steady voice, a constant source of clarity in challenging moments, and a crucial part of my efforts to strengthen Louisiana's energy sector, reform America's healthcare system to make it more affordable, bring historic infrastructure investments to Louisiana, and improve mental health resources for all Americans.

Particularly, Ty was very helpful in getting President Trump's nominees, including two Cabinet Secretaries, through the Senate confirmation process.

Now, perhaps his greatest accomplishment is meeting his wife Kenna. Kenna is a Baton Rouge native, and they met at Washington Mardi Gras. And while I didn't introduce them, I am more than happy to claim credit for putting them together.

Kenna, it is your influence that brings him back to Louisiana. Thank you very much.

This is bittersweet, but as I say about those who eventually depart from my office, my loss is someone else's incredible gain. I am proud that he will continue to serve Louisiana both as a professional and a productive member of the community. And while Ty will no longer be in my office, I will always consider him part of Team Cassidy.

It has been a privilege watching Ty's personal and professional growth. He will be missed not only by my office but by the entire Capitol Hill community. I appreciate his service to Louisiana and, most of all, his friendship.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

GAZA

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, the Israeli-inflicted starvation of Palestinians in Gaza must end. It must end.

I have come to the floor time and again to urge the Senate to take action, to demand a cease-fire, to stop the bombing, to demand a surge of humanitarian aid in Gaza, and to bring home the hostages.

Two months ago, I spoke about a young girl who starved to death in Gaza—Jinan Iskafi, seen here—who died in the arms of her father. All those speeches have been to no avail.

Tragically, Jinan—and by the way, that name means "paradise," the hope of that family for what they hoped would be a future for this beautiful, young girl—died of starvation, government-inflicted starvation, in Gaza.

Tragically, many more young children have followed. Jinan's death and the deaths of so many—tens of thousands of innocent people—in Gaza will become part of our history because the U.S.A. shares responsibility for this catastrophe, and we and future generations of Americans will have to live with that forever.

The children who survive this war will be remembered as victims of a unique class of warfare. This is a man-made famine caused by weapons provided by the United States—and paid for, by the way, by U.S. taxpayers.

The starvation we are seeing today is not the unforeseen or unintended consequence of war. Let me be direct. The starvation we are witnessing today is the result of a military policy to concentrate the Palestinian population into an ever-smaller slice of land.

The starvation we are witnessing today is an advanced and accelerating stage of the Netanyahu government's military strategy, devised and executed immediately following the terrible attacks by Hamas on October 7, and that was to force the Palestinians out of northern Gaza and to induce them to leave the territory forever.

Compelled by hunger and thirst, the people, the Palestinians in Gaza, are being forced to make their way to a handful of sites that our closest allies have uniformly condemned as the drip feeding of aid. This so-called humanitarian pause is a mirage. It is false. It is a trickle of aid to the mere 12 percent of Gaza that is not a military zone that is being razed and flattened as we speak—razed and flattened as we speak—razed to ensure that it cannot be returned to.

From the earliest days after October 7, we witnessed this plan that can only be seen for what it is—a systematic and wanton destruction of homes, of mosques, of hospitals, and of schools. That is what is happening.

With bombs provided by American taxpayers, the Netanyahu government has unleashed the most deadly and destructive aerial bombardment campaign since Vietnam. More than 200,000 buildings were destroyed. Thousands of children were killed and injured, thousands of amputees, and it goes on and on.

In the last 3 months, that campaign has continued. Thousands more homes have been flattened by controlled demolitions—self-conscious application of military explosives to destroy a home or a school. Thousands more have been demolished by bulldozers before the very eyes of people whose homes they are seeing totally flattened.

It is too late for the 60,000 people that have been killed in Gaza, but it is not too late for the Senate to act. We are

at an absolutely catastrophic inflection point, and I believe that the U.S. Senate has an obligation, as our country does, under international humanitarian law to act.

We can act and help to save thousands of Palestinians who as I speak are starving to death—as I speak, are starving to death.

Two months ago, I led a resolution. It was sponsored by 46 Democrats. It had a simple demand: Our country must work to end the siege on food aid. It was blocked.

You know, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, I am sure every bit as much as I am, are horrified at the suffering in Gaza.

But it is not enough for us to be horrified. We have to act. We all condemn Hamas. We all want the release of the remaining hostages. But we have to ask ourselves the question: Is it at all justifiable that there is a policy that has to be recognized that starvation is being used as a tool of warfare?

I reject the legitimacy of that act. It is a war crime. It is a war crime to starve a population to get what you want from your enemy. As righteous as your defense against an enemy may be, it is illegal to starve children to obtain a battlefield advantage. Yet the Netanyahu government has actually said it is doing that.

In my view, Mr. President, it is long, long past the time to say: Enough, enough, no. The United States will not stand by while hunger is used as a weapon. We don't do that, and we cannot separate the current starvation in Gaza from the Netanyahu government's strategy of forcibly displacing Palestinians from their land.

A short-term surge of aid to keep Palestinians alive is not what we need. We need full, uninhibited, generous, accessible aid, medical and food. But that is not the Netanyahu government policy.

And we can sometimes act as though we are not an agent here or we don't quite see or we want to give them the benefit of the doubt because Israel has been our ally. But take the words—can we be numb to the words of the Netanyahu government officials? The Prime Minister himself said “I don't care about targets” and ordered military officials to “destroy [the] homes, bomb [everything in Gaza].”

He said that.

Finance Minister Smotrich said Gaza will be totally destroyed. Civilians will be sent to the south to a so-called humanitarian zone. And from there, they will start to leave in great numbers to third countries.

He said that, a high official in the Israeli Government.

Heritage Minister Eliyahu said last week—last week—that the Israeli Government was rushing toward Gaza being wiped out.

There is no mystery here. These are the statements of high government officials.

Defense Minister Katz said:

Gaza residents, this is a final warning . . . you will pay the full price . . . return the hostages and remove Hamas, and other options will [be] open [to] you, including leaving for other places in the world for those who want to.

The Palestinians who live in Gaza, hard as it may be for us to appreciate it, that is what they call home and they want to stay there.

Mr. President, the tragedy and suffering in Gaza today demands our full attention and our full engagement because this is a war that we are contributing to sustain. I am here today to debate Gaza's famine conditions because the United States has been paying for weapons that Israel is using to flatten Gaza but not to feed Palestinians in Gaza. It was American taxpayers who paid for the bombs and bulldozers that are continuing to flatten homes to ensure they are never returned to and that are creating the misery that all of us are shocked to see today.

America, first under President Biden and now under President Trump, provides cover for extremists in the Netanyahu government to continue these actions. America's closest allies have called for an end to the war and cut off the shipment of weapons that send a green light to the extremist government of Binyamin Netanyahu.

And yet just 2 weeks ago, President Trump notified the Senate that he intends to ship another half billion dollars' worth of 2,000-pound bombs and 1,000-pound bombs to Israel. While President Trump speaks of trimming budgets and spending more money here at home, he is shipping billions of dollars of bombs and shells and bullets that are being used not just to starve the Palestinian people but to flatten their homes and drive them off of their land.

Mr. President, I oppose this. I believe the American people have had enough. The American people are demanding leadership and clarity from us—from the White House—that can put an end to this terrible bloodshed and put an end to the misery of generations of Palestinians in Gaza. And the American people are demanding leadership from us today to help secure a real justice and peace for the people of the Middle East.

Mr. President, whatever differences we may have, none of us can—none of us should; none of us can—condone the excruciating starvation and misery that can be abated immediately with the full access to the food and medicine that the people of Gaza need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 5 minutes.

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

NOMINATION OF SAMUEL BROWN

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, today I want to speak on the nomination that we are considering now. That nomina-

tion is of retired Army CPT Sam Brown to be the Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs.

The Under Secretary of Memorial Affairs is responsible for making certain the National Cemetery Administration honors the memory of our Nation's veterans by caring for their final resting places and providing services to their surviving loved ones.

More than 4 million Americans are laid to rest in NCA's 156 national cemeteries. Kansas, my home State, is home to three of those NCA cemeteries where more than 62,000 Kansas veterans and their family members are now buried. We must have an Under Secretary who treats this position with the utmost respect and understands the importance in honoring and remembering those who pay an ultimate sacrifice.

We also need confirmed permanent leadership at the VA filling roles that are critical to serving veterans and their families.

Today, we are voting on a leadership role that has a no-fail mission to make certain veterans' families have a dignified place to grieve and to remember their loved ones.

Our nominee is a West Point graduate, combat veteran, a husband and father of three. CPT Sam Brown understands sacrifices made every day by men and women of the U.S. military and their families as well, and he is well-equipped to undertake this significant responsibility. In his testimony before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Captain Brown shared how he suffered painful burns in the line of duty in Afghanistan. His testimony included how he heard his gunner, who ultimately saved his life. That gunner shouted: Sir, I've got you, in the midst of the flames. That is the same message of hope that I know Captain Brown will take with him to the National Cemetery Administration. That is the same attitude of service that I expect he will instill in an entire NCA workforce as they fulfill our solemn obligation to the families of our Nation's veterans.

I am grateful to Captain Brown for his service to our country, for his sacrifice, and now for his willingness to continue serving his country in this new capacity. I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting his confirmation today.

I thank my colleagues for listening.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Brown nomination.

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

VOTE ON MONAREZ NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Monarez nomination?

Mr. TUBERVILLE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?