

attacks on the Court from sitting Federal judges damage the public's faith and confidence in our judicial system. When judges call the legitimacy of their own branch of government into question, they erode the faith of the institution itself.

My colleague, the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary in the House of Representatives, shares these concerns. Together, we sent a letter of concern to Chief Justice Roberts. We expressed our concern that the conduct of the judges, as reported, may violate the applicable ethical canons. We also asked whether the judicial branch will give guidance to Federal judges or even investigate this matter.

The document called the Code of Conduct for U.S. Judges is very clear that judges have an obligation to uphold public confidence in the judiciary. For example, canon 2 states:

[A judge] . . . should act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

In 2024, Chief Judge Diaz of the Fourth Circuit applied the canon in resolving a judicial complaint against a judge for authoring an opinion piece lambasting a sitting Supreme Court Justice. He concluded that the judge in question violated the canons and "diminish[ed] the public confidence in the integrity and independence of the federal judiciary." Chief Judge Diaz's reasoning appears to apply with similar force to the recent anonymous attacks on the Court.

Anonymous public comments from sitting judges describing the relationship between the Supreme Court and lower courts as a "war zone" and otherwise attacking the legitimacy of the Supreme Court rulings undermine public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. In fact, it may violate the Code of Conduct.

Judges shouldn't mimic the infighting and rhetorical attacks that are so common among us in the political arena. This damages the public's faith in the judiciary.

The Supreme Court is a uniquely American institution that has played an important role since our Republic's founding. In contrast to the other branches—meaning the political branches of the Federal Government—the Supreme Court is meant to stand above the day-to-day squabbles of politics. And that is not just the Supreme Court, as I implied; that is every level of the judicial branch. For the most part, the Court does this remarkably well—speaking of the Supreme Court. We know this because neither Democrats nor Republicans are always happy with the decision of our highest Court. The Court is either too conservative or too liberal, depending on the day and whom you ask. But at the bottom, the job of the Court is not to please us or agree with us but to say what the law is.

In recent years, we have seen vicious attacks against the Court from a vari-

ety of directions, many aimed at weakening public confidence in this important institution. This is bad for all of us. So today, I am here to defend the integrity of the Supreme Court and to urge the judicial branch to address these attacks that are coming from within—mostly by district court judges—and the ones that reply to everything anonymously and really don't have the guts to stand up publicly with their criticism of the Supreme Court.

So here is my bottom line: I call on the Federal judiciary to give clear guidance to Federal judges on acceptable public commentary and to take seriously the public's perception and confidence in the courts.

I yield the floor.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to begin the next vote.

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

VOTE ON ORR NOMINATION

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

Ms. ERNST. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 57, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 607 Ex.]

YEAS—57

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

NAYS—43

Alsobrooks	Kaine	Sanders
Baldwin	Kelly	Schatz
Bennet	Kim	Schiff
Blumenthal	Klobuchar	Schumer
Blunt Rochester	Lujan	Slotkin
Booker	Markey	Smith
Cantwell	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warner
Duckworth	Murray	Warnock
Durbin	Ossoff	Warren
Gallego	Padilla	Welch
Gillibrand	Paul	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Peters	Wyden
Hickenlooper	Reed	
Hirono	Rosen	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Louisiana.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to resume legislative session.

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I am going to be uncharacteristically brief.

Tomorrow, I will be bringing two bills before the Senate. They both have to do with the shutdown and congressional pay.

The first bill is the No Shutdown Paychecks Act. The second bill is the Withhold Member Pay During Shutdowns Act.

The first bill would provide that, as long as we are shut down—and I will explain why in a moment—as long as we are shut down, no Member of Congress can be paid. And the money will not be—will not be—reimbursed at a later date or repaid at a later date.

The second bill, to address any 27th Amendment concerns, will say: During a shutdown, Members of Congress will not receive their pay, but their pay will be escrowed, and they will receive it after the government is opened back up.

Look, we are in day 36. Like the Presiding Officer, I have heard a lot of rumors about "we are that close to reaching an agreement." We have been "that close" for a week.

Frankly, I hope I am wrong in saying this, but I don't think we are really that close. I wish we were, and I hope we are. But I think we are going to be in this shutdown a while longer. That doesn't give me any joy to say that.

In the meantime, none of our staffs are being paid. No Federal employees are being paid. I got some numbers in this morning that Federal workers have had to borrow \$365 million so far during this 36-day shutdown in order just to pay their rent.

Our military is only being paid partially. Our air traffic controllers are not being paid.

People who receive SNAP payments are only being partially paid. I don't think anybody wants to see anybody go hungry in America. And that is not a partisan statement. I think that is a bipartisan statement.

There is precedent for this.

Some may say: Well, this violates the 27th Amendment.

I don't think it does. That is why I am offering two different flavors of bills.

But in 2013, President Obama did the same thing that I am doing now. They were in a shutdown, and President Obama supported legislation that said: If you don't open up government by this certain date, then you are going to lose your paychecks.

And guess what. Members of Congress had an epiphany, and they found religion. They had a Damascene moment, and they opened up the government. And that is all this bill would do.

I am not trying to grandstand. I wasn't going to bring this bill. When I got back here Monday, I heard all the rumors, like everybody else, that we were close. And I hope we are close. But we are not close enough.

And so I am offering these bills tomorrow, and people can vote yea or they can vote nay. But what is good for the goose is good for the gander.

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. BLUMENTHAL. 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 Connecticut.

2025 ELECTIONS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I appreciate the Senator from Louisiana yielding to me, and I am here with Senator PADILLA because we are leading a group of colleagues to talk on the floor of the Senate about a right of the American people that was exercised in overwhelming numbers yesterday: the right to vote. And it was an enormously heartening and encouraging and inspiring example to us of good citizenship and interest in the electoral process.

But we are here because the right to vote is increasingly under assault by this administration—systematic, strategic, relentless assault by an administration that wants to discourage the exercise of that right to vote and to degrade the protections of it that many Americans take for granted because they are so ingrained in our system.

What this administration has done overall in seeking to impound election equipment, collect voter information, intrude on privacy, and discourage election workers by creating fear and intimidation, not to mention dismantling the election protection mechanisms in the CISA and voting rights section of the Department of Justice, the Cybersecurity Infrastructure and Security Program—these kinds of measures create a real and present danger to our election process.

And it began, literally, with President Trump pardoning the January 6 rioters. Remember, they not only assaulted the Capitol, but their purpose was to stop certification of a lawful transition of power that resulted from the vote. It was an effort to undermine the vote.

In the face of many of these actions, we need to rely on the courts. They are the bulwark that, in many instances, will protect us. We are dependent on organizations that are willing to go to court, and we need to support them with resources.

One example, on March 25, 2025, President Trump issued an Executive order, 14248. Among other things, it attempted to impose on the States new documentation requirements for mail-

in voter registration and voting procedures—just one example of this administration's assault on the right to vote—and it probably went under the radar so far as most public attention was concerned. But it was real. It was potentially destructive and damaging to the right to vote.

And, thankfully, Judge Kollar-Kotelly of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia knew our laws well enough that she, rightfully, held that this Executive order was so patently illegal, so flagrantly unlawful and a blatant violation of our Constitution's carefully crafted separation of powers that she struck down that Executive order. And she wrote:

The States have initial authority to regulate elections. Congress has supervisory authority over those regulations. [But] [t]he President does not feature at all.

And that is why Judge Kollar-Kotelly found that Trump's Executive order "violates the Constitution by usurping power over federal election procedure that is vested in Congress and the States—not in the President."

Sounds to me like the President of the United States might need a civics lesson or at least a reread of the Constitution. The Framers regulated elections in this manner on purpose, part of a carefully crafted compromise between State and Federal legislative power. They did it in this manner to serve a specific end, which was a balancing of responsibility that accorded States their proper sovereign control over elections cast in their borders.

They are sovereign. Our States remain sovereign, as they were then, and their electors are entitled to respect in State and Federal elections under rules that are set by sovereign States.

And that compromise is sound public policy, just as it was when our Framers propounded it. It is right that States and communities—not the President—should determine, in the best instance, how best to conduct elections.

And it is right that, in situations when uniform national election standards are necessary, those determinations are made deliberately by a large body of elected officials directly representing their local communities in Congress.

As the judge said, "The President does not feature at all."

More importantly, the Framers' diffusion of power over elections divided both among the States and within the branch of the Federal Government closest to the people—namely, the Congress—is one of our Nation's most powerful safeguards against autocracy. They were wary of an overbearing Executive. They had just fought to be free of a monarchy. They explicitly avoided giving any power to the President in the realm of elections.

The framework they created establishes a decentralized structure where it is difficult for any single individual or entity to unduly influence or wield unchecked power over elections.

"No King." That was their mantra, literally. They had just overthrown a

King. No single authority to control elections and potentially bring to bear another authoritarian ruler.

But, now, this President has moved us toward a totalitarian regime, and there is no more salient or significant aspect of his effort than the destructive assault on our election system.

A system where one person alone can decide how elections are run is the definition of "tyranny." Russia has a Constitution. Other nations like Russia have constitutions, but elections are rigged. And whether it is China, Russia, Hungary—totalitarian regimes have one ruler. It may not be called a King, but it is a ruler who controls the election process. And lo and behold, 90 percent of the voters in the old Soviet Union, now in Russia, all decide that the guy in power is to be retained.

That is no accident. It is the result of totalitarian control over elections, and that is why this judge's ruling is so profoundly momentous.

The voters of California, Virginia, New Jersey, and New York made their voices heard yesterday, and they were saying as well, no Kings. They exercised the right to vote in tremendous numbers.

In our State of Connecticut, towns where Republican first selectpeople or mayors were in power for decades saw a move from red to blue. What is more important than red to blue is overwhelming numbers of people came to the polls because they were angry and anxious about our democracy and about affordability, about paying the rent, affording groceries, paying for electricity, and, yes, health insurance.

They were looking at the open enrollment exchanges for whether they could afford health insurance. They saw premiums doubling and tripling. They were hit by that sticker shock, and it made them fearful and outraged about what was happening to healthcare, as well as everything else they were paying to afford. And they couldn't afford healthcare and everything else that they needed for their families, and that was a factor as well.

So this outpouring of anger and anxiety that we saw on the issue of affordability was an exercise of the franchise that this administration wants to undermine and undercut and, eventually, eviscerate.

So we need to elevate the judges. Let's name this one—Judge Kollar-Kotelly of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Judge Kollar-Kotelly is a hero in sustaining and protecting the rule of law, in preserving free and open elections, by striking down an Executive order that very simply egregiously overrides State sovereign authority.

Now, I will say States' rights used to be the province of Members of this body who sought to protect segregation. Maybe they were endeavoring to stop Federal law enforcement and the use of States' rights as a sword or a shield had limits and the courts limited them.

But in this instance, there is no excuse and no precedent that permits the President of the United States to take over our election system, and I call on my colleagues in this body to stop rubberstamping his usurpation of our authority. We are the ones, along with States, that have that responsibility.

Congress was specifically chosen to protect our election system when it came to Federal supervision because we are closest to the people, and we should zealously guard that authority because it is essential to our constitutional structure.

I know that a lot of this may seem abstract or opaque, but it goes to the core of our constitutional system, and I call on my colleagues to protect our authority and State officials to safeguard theirs because it is a matter of our democracy, our freedom, and our right to vote.

I note that my colleague Senator PADILLA is here. I started this floor bloc, but I am proud that he and I have worked together on enlisting our colleagues. He is a major champion of election rights. He is one of the leaders in our body that has worked zealously to protect that right, and I am proud to be standing here with him in this cause.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, let me begin by thanking my good friend the Senator from Connecticut Senator BLUMENTHAL for his partnership not just on these issues but in a lot of matters before the judiciary, generally.

But we and others have come to the floor today to celebrate yesterday. Yesterday, Americans in States across the country came out to participate in a tradition as old as the Nation itself: casting their ballots in a democratic election.

And while ballots are still being processed and final results will come in the coming days, it is safe to say that, thanks to the hard-working and unsung heroes known as election workers and volunteers across the country, these elections largely went off smoothly and successfully. Because of their work in States like Virginia and New Jersey, we saw a record turnout. Because of their work in cities like New York, we saw the highest turnout there since 1969 in a municipal election.

From a race for State supreme court justices in the State of Pennsylvania to a statewide proposition in my home State of California, Americans showed up in overwhelming numbers to say in one loud and clear voice that they have had enough.

The question after an election is always: So what message did the voters say? What was the mandate when it comes to a high turnout in an election with larger than expected margins?

The takeaway is this: Enough of the Republican chaos, enough of the power grabs, enough of the corruption, and enough of Trump's billionaire assault on working families.

That is the power of democracy, that we are able to send that type of a message. The people sent that type of a message, that loud of a message, by exercising the right to vote.

But even after the success of last night, let's also be clear about this: One free and fair election does not guarantee the next one. We have to fight to ensure future elections. We have to keep asking ourselves, what do we do between now and next November to protect the next election? Because at this very moment, the President and his allies are doing everything they can to rig the rules of the game.

The reality is that at some point in the last couple of months, the President came to a harsh realization. We have known that his policies have been bad ones. We have known they have been harmful. He has figured out his policies are also very unpopular. Prices on everything from groceries, to housing, to energy bills are going up. Healthcare premiums are spiking. SNAP benefits are being cut. But for the billionaire class, things are just fine because Trump gave them the tax cut that they wanted, and somehow there is now funding for a ballroom.

Americans, though, are fired up. They are angry at a President and a party that are looking out for themselves rather than looking out for the country as a whole. But rather than change their policies that are causing such harm, instead of changing their policies before the midterm elections, President Trump and Republicans would rather change the rules.

We have a responsibility to sound the alarm before it is too late.

Let me revisit my home State of California, where voters came out in big numbers to pass Proposition 50 by a wide margin. Why? We are not celebrating a middecade redistricting. Proposition 50 passed because they have been waiting to respond to the madness because Donald Trump is the one who forced California's hand.

In between trying to pile a little gold covering to every square inch of the White House that he can that hasn't been demolished and pardoning billionaire criminals, President Trump has been making some phone calls. So has the Vice President. They called GOP State lawmakers to redraw congressional maps and to silence Democratic opposition.

It began when President Trump called Texas Governor Greg Abbott and told him to find him five more Republican seats.

When I first heard that, it sounded eerily similar to the call we all heard about from 2020 when President Trump called the secretary of state of Georgia and demanded he find him 11,000 more votes.

We knew what Texas was going to do—a midterm partisan redistricting.

Californians knew right away that enough was enough, and that is what yesterday was all about—leveling the playing field.

By the way, at any moment, Republicans can actually end this redistricting arms race altogether, because there is more than just chatter about Ohio, Florida, Indiana, Missouri, and others. To end that arms race, I invite my Republican colleagues to join me—to join us in supporting true nationwide redistricting reform. Yes, we do have a bill to do just that—independent redistricting once every 10 years after the census, which is when it should be properly done. But, no, Republicans would rather try to cling to power by changing the rules of the game.

It is why just yesterday the White House issued yet another threat, this time a threat to issue another illegal Executive order to ban mail-in voting. It is why, as races were being called last night and Trump knew things were not going to go his way, the President took to social media to demand Republicans kill the filibuster and ban mail-in voting and other laws that are designed to keep our elections secure but make it easier for eligible U.S. citizens to exercise their fundamental right to vote, to cast their ballot and have their ballot be counted. That is what we are up against.

But wait, there is more. At the same time, the Trump Department of Justice has its hands full. Boy, do they. The Department of Justice has sent letters to at least 40 different States demanding information about their voter maintenance policies and practices. They filed lawsuits against eight States and probably growing—including California—that have refused to hand over the personal, private information of voters. It kind of reminds me of a game that kids sometimes play: Heads, I win; tails, you lose.

What the administration is saying is, you can give us your voter rolls so we can start systematic purging, or you can choose to protect voter information, but we will see you in court, and we are going to claim voter fraud anyway.

But wait, there is more. Donald Trump is also staffing up the White House with like-minded election deniers and conspiracy theorists, hinting at future actions that would disenfranchise even more voters.

Of course, the President has been slandering places like California and our election practices for years, and he did it once again just yesterday, on election day—his words, not mine. The President lies and shouts “fraud” without a shred of evidence. He didn't wait until election day; he started prior to because he knew he was going to lose.

The White House restated its threat to issue a new, even more illegal Executive order to ban mail-in voting despite the fact that the President himself votes by mail.

On top of all these brazen efforts, they are laying the groundwork for the nuclear option once again.

Think about what we have seen over just the last few months—troops deployed domestically into cities in response to pretend rebellions that exist only in Donald Trump's mind.

Going back to this Proposition 50 in California, I was there with the Governor and other State leaders when we first launched the effort. We held a rally to announce a new, legal, democratic ballot initiative—small “d,” democratic—because ultimately it was going to be up to the voters to decide.

The day of that rally, the day of that kickoff—don't tell me it was a coincidence—who shows up at the doors and the perimeter of this building? Armed Border Patrol agents to try to intimidate people coming in to participate in the kickoff and the announcement.

The election deniers in the administration have been lobbying for the White House to declare a fake national emergency to try to seize unconstitutional powers over our elections.

So I raise all these examples as a shocking reminder of how quickly Donald Trump is moving to upend our free and fair elections, but the reality is, none of this should be surprising. I know it is not to me because he has done it before. It has been 5 years since Donald Trump first tried to steal the 2020 election, and since then, he has only grown more extreme.

We all agree it is important to protect the security and integrity of our elections, but even at a moment in history like this, I remind myself that American democracy was here long before MAGA, and it will be here long after MAGA Republicans are no longer in power. But it will not be by accident.

Members of Congress can and must stand up to every one of Trump's unconstitutional power grabs over State election authority. I am committed to doing my part. If the Trump White House tries to declare some fake national emergency to create a pretense for Federal intervention, I will force a vote here in the Senate to stop it.

But no matter what happens, voters cannot lose hope. That is what is most important. We need Americans to keep showing up each and every election and show up in overwhelming numbers—just as they did yesterday, just as they did for hundreds of years prior—and make clear that it will be the people and only the people who will determine the future of our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I would have hoped that the basic operation of American democracy and particularly the basic integrity of America's elections would not be a topic that we would have to come to the Senate floor to worry about, but the character down the road in the Oval Office is making all sorts of threats to the cornerstone of America's democracy—our elections.

I will mention three. First, he non-stop lies about rigged elections. He

can't bear to face the fact that Joe Biden beat him by millions of votes fair and square, and so he invented a story of rigged elections.

Well, as has repeatedly been shown, if any election has been rigged recently, it was Donald Trump's first election, where study after study, report after report showed that Russia had been messing around in that election, using covert influence operations to influence American voters and steer them towards their favorite—Donald Trump.

But the lying about rigged elections is a bit of a warning sign because the other thing we have learned about Trump is that his accusations tend to be actual confessions. The bad stuff that he intends to do he announces by accusing others of doing the same thing. So when people notice the mischief that he is up to, he says: Well, everybody does it. That doesn't make it anything other than a lie.

Then he has been out, bullying Republican States, to try to get him more seats in Congress by doing a midseason gerrymandering of their States. This succeeded, kind of, in Texas. When I say it succeeded “kind of,” it succeeded in the sense that they got the gerrymandered districts.

But here is the rub: When you gerrymander more Republican districts into a State, you make the freeboard—the win ratio—for each of those districts a little bit less.

And if yesterday was any message, Republicans need to worry about a wave election washing away Trump's poison and nonsense. In a wave election, those gerrymandered districts that you thought you had moved into the Republican column could get sunk in the wave.

In particular, we have already seen from yesterday's results—more analysis will follow—that it looks like Latino voters, important in Texas, are abandoning Trump. So it may be that Texas's gerrymandering blows up in its face, and wouldn't that be a nice turn-about?

Maybe that is what Republicans in Indiana were thinking when they refused to gerrymander their State. They might well be looking at Texas and saying: You know, voters in Texas might actually have cared more about electric bills, about their homeowners' insurance crisis, about their cost of living, and wanted Texan legislators to do something about that, instead of going off on a partisan gallivant to redistrict the State. And those voters might just hold those Republicans accountable for choosing as their priority to use gerrymandering so that politicians can choose their voters instead of paying attention to the voters who want help with costs, who want their homeowners' insurance problems solved, who are concerned about their electric utility bills, and who are sick to death about what is happening with grocery costs.

The third avenue of attack on elections by Trump is that he is modeling

government election interference in front of our faces right now. When you send the National Guard into American cities, when you deploy masked, plain-clothed, presumably ICE agents to yank people off the street and fling them into unmarked vans and disappear them, you are getting people used to images that Americans are not used to. You are inoculating Americans against that kind of abuse of both military and law enforcement capabilities so that, when it is election day and that kind of nonsense takes place around polling places to discourage voters, we have gotten used to it.

So the lying—the constant lying—about rigged elections, the bullying—the constant bullying—to force State legislatures to gerrymander even though that is not what their voters want, and the constant modeling of government interference in elections—all of that is a signal that we have to be on our guard to protect our democracy.

It is not just Trump. In doing this, Trump has allies. He has allies on the packed and captured Supreme Court—a Court that Republicans packed and captured specifically to help their big, creepy billionaire donors acquire more power in American democracy. And, boy, have we seen enough creepy billionaire power in American democracy: dark money—the secret, sneaky dark money floods that are poisoning our elections, that allow billionaires to channel multimillion-dollar contributions into races by hiding behind front groups and screens and super-PACs so that voters can't do their duty as citizens of figuring out who is telling them what because the loudest and noisiest and most prolific messages are coming from behind masked entities.

It was one of the dirtiest deeds ever done to our democracy, and it was done by the Roberts Court: voter suppression, making sure that White legislatures could discourage Black and Latino voters by changing the rules for when you can vote and how you can vote. We passed a Voting Rights Act in the Congress to stop that kind of behavior, and this Supreme Court—the Roberts Court—has been diligently pulling out, piece by piece, those Voting Rights Act protections.

When they do, what happens? Instantly, those southern legislatures go to work to make it harder and harder for minorities to vote. Hundreds of bills get filed.

Third, when they were confronted with partisan gerrymandering—distorting Americans' right to vote by letting politicians pick voters, instead of voters picking politicians—they said: Oh, well, that is all fine. We are not going to look into any of that. Courts are not allowed to look into whether gerrymandering is legal or illegal, constitutional or unconstitutional.

Those three decisions of flooding our elections with corrupting dark money, letting State legislatures make it harder for certain people to vote whom

they don't want voting, and gerrymandering districts against the will of the public—people hate gerrymandering—those three things have collectively done immense damage to our democracy, and those bad decisions are going to play out in this coming election.

I will close with a point about all three of those cases.

The Citizens United case that let filthy, unlimited dark money pollute our elections, the Shelby case that tore down an essential element of the Voting Rights Act, and the Rucho case that allowed uncontrolled, partisan gerrymandering—all three of them share a very important characteristic in common, and that is that they hang on a false fact. To get where the Court wanted to go, those Republican appointees had to make up a false fact that the decision hung on.

In Citizens United, it was that all the unlimited money would be transparent. Well, we know that was false. Every billion dollars in dark money that falls into our elections proves that was false.

In Shelby, it was that things have changed. You didn't need to worry about southern legislatures trying to keep Democratic voters from showing up. But you saw that that was false because all of those laws were immediately passed to suppress voters.

And in the Rucho case, it was that courts can't figure out gerrymandering stuff; it is just too complicated. But, in fact, courts were figuring it out. It is not even that hard to figure out. The Court just made up, falsely, that this was too hard.

When a court is making up false facts to get to an outcome that it wants, that is not a sign of great integrity in those proceedings.

So we have a lot to worry about, and we have more to worry about after yesterday because last night showed that voters do not like what Trump and his Republican cohorts here in the House and the Senate are doing to our country. This was a small wave, and with any luck, it is building to a bigger wave. Instead of adjusting to popular opinion, what we know they are going to do is to try to use even more tools to corrupt democracy, corrupt elections, and defeat our ability to have the American people decide who they want to lead them at the polls. That is the predicament we are in, and it requires us to be on high alert.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to thank my friends Senators PADILLA and BLUMENTHAL for putting together this floor block.

Yesterday was election day for many Americans. They stood at the ballot box and voted their consciences, but they weren't just voting for a candidate; they were voting for a vision of our Nation.

Will we continue to be that Nation that stands for those powerful words

carved over the entrance to the Supreme Court—"Equal Justice Under Law"—or will we allow MAGA politics and President Trump's assault on the rule of law to damage the democratic process that we hold so dear?

Well, the American people certainly answered that question yesterday with resounding votes rejecting the Trump administration's disastrous policies.

We know the right to vote is under attack from those who seek to undermine and, in some cases, deny the very will of the American people—the heart of our democracy. There has been an effort for years to restrict access to the ballot under the false banner of "election integrity." Under the Trump administration, this effort is being led by the very government entities that were created to protect the right to vote. This betrayal is deliberate, and it is eroding the foundation of our democracy.

Let me be clear: There is no longer a functioning Federal entity actively safeguarding each American's right to vote—our most fundamental, constitutional freedom. The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division—once the defender of voting access for communities of color, those serving in the military, rural voters, and people with disabilities—has been devastated by President Trump.

Let me tell you a little anecdote.

Last night, I was in the grocery store on Capitol Hill, buying a few things to eat. A woman came up to me and said she knew who I was, and she wanted to let me know what her situation was. She works in the Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice, and she is furloughed at the present time.

She said: Do you know how many people are left in the Civil Rights Division, which once had almost 200 employees? 63.

It has been devastated by Trump.

Under the Trump administration's reimagined mission, aligned with MAGA politics and driven by the lie of widespread voter fraud, the Civil Rights Division's Voting Section has abdicated its role in confronting the real and rising tide of disenfranchisement.

Attorney General Pam Bondi removed the Voting Section's leadership team and ordered the dismissal of the section's active cases.

The Voting Section is responsible for enforcing Federal laws that were enacted to protect the right to vote, including the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, the National Voter Registration Act, and the Help America Vote Act. The decision to gut this section by Attorney General Bondi and the White House will harm American voters and cause long-lasting damage. It is part of the Trump legacy.

The Trump administration also ordered the Justice Department to monitor polling sites in California and New Jersey before yesterday's election, at

the request of Republican Party officials. While election monitoring is a crucial tool, deploying monitors on a partisan basis is outrageous. We know that voter fraud is extremely rare—extremely—but President Trump and Republicans continue to baselessly claim it is rampant in trying to suppress the vote.

We must fight these dangerous attempts to restrict the right to vote and restore confidence in our democracy by ensuring that every eligible American has access to the ballot. That is why, in honor of my late friend and voting rights pioneer Congressman John Lewis, I have been proud to introduce a bill that bears his name, the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act.

It has been an honor to work with Senator WARNOCK of Georgia—and Senator Leahy before him—to lead this legislation as the former chair and now ranking member of the Judiciary Committee. I remain committed to seeing this bill signed into law.

This legislation should be a no-brainer. The issue of access to the ballot used to enjoy overwhelming bipartisan support. Now it has been gamed and politicized by the MAGA bunch. But since the conservative majority in a divided 5-to-4 Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act of 2013 in its Shelby County decision, this has become an increasingly partisan issue.

Attacks on voting rights aren't happening in a vacuum. Across this country, Republican lawmakers and litigators are using every trick in the book to change the rules of the game in their favor and cling to power—purging voter rolls, closing polling places, making it more difficult by restricting mail-in voting, and undermining the Voting Rights Act—all for one purpose: to limit access to the ballot box.

The Republicans actually believe we are a better nation if fewer people vote. I believe every eligible person should vote if you want a true democracy working.

President Trump is hell-bent on continuing to undermine faith in our elections and attack the rule of law, whether by inciting a violent mob on January 6, which overran the Senate Chamber, to overturn the results of a free and fair election or by demanding that blue States turn over reams of voter data to his administration. President Trump has led a long, coordinated campaign to suppress the vote in America.

We now face a critical question: Will we sit idly by while Trump and MAGA Republicans steamroll the great American experiment, or will we cause some "good" and "necessary" trouble, as John Lewis once said, to save our democracy and our "precious, almost sacred" right to vote?

If yesterday's elections are any indication of how the American people feel about this administration, I would say they better get ready for more "good" trouble.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I appreciate the chance to rise today to talk about a success story in Virginia and the elections last night, but I am going to take a little bit of a different tact than my colleagues, and I am not going to talk about my pride in my friends who won elections; I am instead going to talk about the turnout in the elections.

Virginia has Governor's races every 4 years. We do them in an odd-year cycle, where the Governor's race is the year following the Presidential race. This has been our practice for a very, very long time.

We can look at the turnout—although the State has grown in population, we can look at the total turnout in the Governor's race and get some sense for what is happening and how engaged our electorate is.

Virginia has had a history in the past of significant obstacles to voting.

My father-in-law fought in the submarine corps in the Pacific during World War II. He came back to the State, and the first Governor's race after he got back from World War II was in the late 1940s. He noticed that the total turnout in that race represented almost single digits in terms of the eligible voter population. Virtually nobody voted.

My father-in-law Lin, who later became Governor of Virginia, said: Wait, I was in the Pacific fighting for a democracy, and I come home to my home State, and virtually no one is even voting for Governor?

That led him to start a career in politics that eventually achieved him the distinction of being the first Republican ever popularly elected to be Governor of Virginia in 1969.

What was happening in Virginia in those days was poll taxes and literacy tests and other things that restricted people's ability to vote. We have had a remarkable transformation under both Democratic and Republican leaders that has expanded the franchise and expanded participation.

What I want to stress very clearly is voting turnout, voting participation—making it easier to participate is not a partisan thing; it helps Republicans, and it helps Democrats. You can tell that by looking at the history of gubernatorial elections and seeing what happens when turnout goes up. Sometimes it is great for Democrats; sometimes it is great for Republicans.

I will give you an example. Four years ago, in 2021, we had a race in Virginia, and Republicans swept all three statewide offices. Republicans elected Glenn Youngkin to be our Governor, and he has now served the single 4-year term that Virginia grants to Governors. We are the only State where you can't run for reelection. Virginia elected our first woman Lieutenant Governor, Republican Winsome Earle-Sears. She was also the first woman of

color to hold a statewide office. And Virginia elected 4 years ago Jason Miyares—Mr. President, you and I were chatting about him earlier today—who is a Cuban-American, to be our attorney general.

Why do I bring up that election from 4 years ago? I bring it up because it was notable in that the Republicans swept, but it was notable for another reason: The turnout in that race in 2021 was 25 percent higher than the turnout 4 years previously. It was the second largest jump in turnout between any Governor's races in Virginia.

I will say with a matter of pride that the first biggest jump was between my father-in-law's two Governor's races in 1965 and 1969. He ran for Governor as a Republican in 1965 and lost. He ran for Governor as a Republican in 1969 and won. And the turnout jumped by 68 percent. Why? Because the Supreme Court struck down poll taxes and the Voting Rights Act struck down poll taxes in Federal elections. When poll taxes went away, it brought a huge surge of additional participation.

When Governor Youngkin and Winsome Earle-Sears won and Jason Miyares won in 2021, why were they able to get a 25-percent increase in voting participation in Virginia? They did it because Virginia made reforms to guarantee and expand the right to vote. We embraced mail-in voting. We embraced no-excuse absentee voting. We allowed people to vote for 45 days before election day. By doing those three things—some of which President Trump said should be banned at the national level—it helped a Republican ticket sweep all races in Virginia.

We went, by most estimates, from being one of the States that made it harder to vote—traditionally, in the 51 States plus DC, we were usually ranked about 45th in the ease of access to the ballot. We went from the bottom to the top 10, and it was good for a Republican ticket. Governor Youngkin, Lieutenant Governor Sears, and Attorney Governor Miyares won a big election with increased turnout. Expanding access to the ballot is not a partisan thing.

Last night, Democrats had a sweep. My friend Abigail Spanberger, who served in the House with a number of my Senate colleagues, was elected to be Virginia's first woman Governor. My friend Ghazala Hashmi, a State senator—actually, my State senator. She is the one I write cranky letters to when I have to write a cranky letter to an official. She was elected to be Lieutenant Governor of Virginia. And get this—this is pretty amazing—she is the first Muslim-American woman ever elected to a statewide office anywhere in the United States. My friend Jay Jones, whom I have known since he was 11 years old, was elected to be Virginia's first African-American attorney general.

They also saw a big increase in turnout. The turnout we had last night was about 10 percent higher than the turnout we saw in 2021.

The point I just wanted to make by standing here is that my colleagues have talked about the variety of threats there may be to ballot access, whether it is forced redistrictings or whether it is President Trump saying that we should abandon vote-by-mail or make it harder for people to vote. The history of my State shows that if you make it convenient for people to vote, No. 1, more people will vote, and No. 2, that can be good for Republicans or Democrats, depending upon the political dynamic of the time and the strength of the candidates and their campaigns.

It used to be that voting and voting rights in this Chamber were pretty bipartisan. When the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 nationally, it wouldn't have passed without Republican votes. Yes, it was a Democratic President, L.B.J., who put it on the table, but it was Republican Senators disproportionately who carried the torch to victory on the voting rights bill in 1965, as many southern Democrats opposed that bill.

As the voting rights bill has been reauthorized over time, it was always reauthorized significantly with both Democratic and Republican votes. It has only been in the aftermath of the Shelby decision, which happened right as I came into the Senate, that voting rights have started to seem like a partisan issue, where Democrats have tried to restore some of the voting rights provisions—for example, the preclearance provisions in section 5—but have struggled to find any Republican willing to do it.

So the point that I want to make as I conclude is just that I am happy in Virginia because my friends won last night, but I am happy anytime we have elections where people really participate. Where I get really depressed about elections is when turnout is low.

Last night, we had big participation; that benefited Democrats. Four years ago, we had big participation; that benefited Republicans. The kinds of things we have done in Virginia to make elections more accessible to all are commonsense and convenient rules that I embrace at the national level and that are good for democracy—sometimes benefiting one party, sometimes benefiting another, but ultimately good for democracy and good for voters.

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.

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

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

The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I want to thank Ranking Member PADILLA and Senator BLUMENTHAL, Ranking Member PADILLA of the Rules

Committee, and Senator BLUMENTHAL for organizing a group of my colleagues for coming to the floor today and for their leadership on this issue.

We are focused on, as we saw last night, Americans turned out in droves to vote, to exercise their constitutional right and, really, their duty to vote. And we want to make sure that people can continue to stand up, to show up, whether they are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents, to protect voting rights and ensure that every eligible American can make their voice heard in our democracy.

I also want to thank the State and local election administrators, secretaries of state, poll workers, and everyone else in States like Minnesota, Virginia, California, New Jersey, and more who made sure that yesterday's elections went smoothly.

It takes a lot of people and a lot of planning to do that. Yesterday, millions of people exercised that sacred right. According to preliminary data, Minneapolis saw its second highest turnout for a municipal election with more than 147,000 people casting a ballot in an off year, and in Virginia 3.3 million people voted this year, the State's highest ever turnout in a non-Presidential election year.

As Congressman John Lewis once said, voting is the most powerful tool we have to create a more perfect Union.

In recent years, from the January 6 insurrection to election conspiracies to threats against polling sites in New Jersey, we have seen an alarming rise in dangerous rhetoric and threats against election workers and polling places. Sometimes it is from other countries trying to do harm, regardless of the political outcome, but wanting to mess around in our democracy.

Sometimes it is people trying to influence an election from either side. We have also seen repeated attacks on access to the ballot box from this administration.

The Justice Department has turned away from its mission of enforcing the Voting Rights Act, and the President has issued an unlawful Executive order to overhaul our Nation's elections that would purge American citizens from voter rolls and make it harder for the men and women of our military to vote.

Just as the President overstepped his authority by implementing the across-the-board tariffs, I was at the Supreme Court oral argument today, along with Senator LEE and Senator MARKEY. I will say it was a well-argued case with pointed questions from the Justices. I am very impressed by some of the arguments that were made against these tariffs by both the States and the lawyers for the small businesses, as well as some of the Justices' discussions when it came to the tariffs about Congress's right under the Constitution, under article I, our authority to assess taxes—not an unconstitutional delegation or an overreach by the administration.

And so we have seen this overstep with regard to the tariffs, which is having calamitous effects on my constituents, small businesses, farmers, ranchers. One soybean farmer told me it was the perfect storm of ugly.

But we have also seen this overstep when it comes to the Constitution and people's right to vote. The White House recently confirmed that the President intends to continue his unlawful attacks on voting rights by issuing a new Executive order targeting mail-in voting.

Mail-in voting is nothing new. It dates back to the Civil War, and the President himself has said that voting by mail, voting early, and voting on election day are all good options. I agree. And Americans across the country agree.

In Minnesota, we have made it easier, not harder, for all eligible Americans to vote, including by giving everyone the chance to vote by mail. We have people who vote by mail. Some of these States like Utah and Oregon, they have almost the vast majority of people vote by mail. We are not actually that. We are kind of a mix. We have the highest voter turnout in the country nearly every election in the country.

I go into a hardware store or a cafe, and I know that 70, 80 percent of the people have voted. Sometimes they will come up to me and say: Well, I didn't vote for you, but I did like this one thing you did or I have an idea for you. That means something in a democracy.

But that is because we make it easier to vote, not only with the mail-in voting and the drop-off ballots, but we also have it with same-day registration, which when you look at States that have that, whether they are red or blue or purple, that is probably the most defining thing about if you are going to have high voter turnout. And when you have high voter turnout, believe me, my State has elected everyone from Jesse Ventura to Michele Bachmann to me.

But what all of us have in common is that we had extraordinarily high voter turnout when the people got elected, and that makes people feel like they are part of the franchise. That makes them feel like, wow, we are part of this democracy. We are not left out of it. And that alone is worth something in a democracy, regardless of who gets elected.

In 2024, 36 States allowed voters to cast their votes by mail, and nearly one-third of the voters did, and that is post-pandemic. So instead of creating barriers to the ballot box, we need to expand access to the polls to ensure all eligible Americans can vote in the way that works best for them, regardless of their ZIP Code.

That is why I have led the effort with Ranking Member PADILLA to advance commonsense bills to protect our democracy, including the Freedom to Vote Act. That bill will increase ballot access and reform our campaign fi-

nance system to ensure that our democracy is of, by, and for the American people.

And I would also note, with regard to some of the things that happened coming out of Texas, it also would make sure that we have a fair system when it comes to the House of Representatives and districts and what is going on there.

That is also why I also strongly voted to support the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore and strengthen key portions of the Voting Rights Act. And it is why I worked to give reliable Federal support to State and local governments, so that they can continue to administer safe, secure elections.

This is something we should all be able to agree on. We must support our local election offices and help them maintain their election infrastructure to keep pace with new technology and combat cybersecurity threats.

We should also be able to agree that we should stand by our election workers, including volunteers, who face a barrage of threats and intimidation.

I remember hearing, when I chaired the Rules Committee, from the election officers in places like Pennsylvania, where a Republican election official was threatened simply because he upheld the election results. His entire family was threatened. Or secretaries of State who have the voicemails of the recordings of their families being threatened or their homes being threatened.

And you think about these volunteers, particularly in rural areas, or election officials where they don't have the police there nearby to protect them.

That is why I led the Election Worker Protection Act—legislation to provide States the resources to recruit and train election workers and ensure their safety. Protecting election officials should not be a partisan issue. The security of our elections is directly tied to the security of our election workers.

Nothing is more fundamental to our democracy than our free and fair elections. Voting is how the American people make their voices heard and ensure their elected leaders are held accountable. So while we continue to see attacks on our democracy, it is our duty to never give up hope.

Every election it is inspiring to see Americans, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike exercise their sacred right to vote however they choose.

It was quite a reminder last night how people are going to vote. And they are going to vote for their families and they are going to vote for their own economic security and they are going to vote because they believe in our democracy. Even in an off-year election, when no Senator is on the ballot, when no President is on the ballot, where not even a Member of Congress is on the ballot, but two Governors and some referendums about the judiciary and

some referendums about the elections and some local officials and mayors, people turned out, and they turned out in record number.

So I hope that makes people realize that our democracy is thriving, but our democracy only thrives when we make it so people can vote. And I have been so proud of my State over the years, and, again, we are a purple State. We have elected Republican and Democratic Governors in the last decades. We have elected Republican Senators in the last decades. We have a split legislature. One house is Republican, the State house; the State senate is Democratic.

There was an election last night. On that front, we have an evenly split congressional delegation—four and four—because we don't have gerrymandering, and we have actually competitive elections.

A number of years in these congressional seats, and there we are with the one or two highest voting turnouts in the Nation. Why is that? Because people feel like they are a part of it. That is what we want to have happen in this Nation.

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

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, today is the anniversary of the election of President Trump in 2024, and, today, the shutdown of our Federal Government is officially the longest it has ever been—36 days—because we can't come to agreement between our parties and our Chambers. In fact, the House isn't even at work and hasn't been for weeks because Republicans won't work with us to ensure access to healthcare.

We are in a dangerous and unsettled place here at home, but we are also in a dangerous and unsettled place abroad and around the world. My role in appropriations in this Congress is as the senior Democrat on the subcommittee that funds all of our defense and intelligence. Given that role, wherein I have worked with Senator MCCONNELL, the chairman, to write the bill that we should be moving forward that would fully fund the security apparatus of the United States, I wanted to come to the floor for a few minutes today and talk with my colleagues and our Nation about what it is that actually keeps us safe at home and abroad.

For my entire life, we have relied upon the U.S. military. We will soon celebrate Veterans Day next week, and all of us should thank those who have served or who are serving. We have relied on them to be something that we often take for granted—nonpartisan,

nonpolitical, an all-volunteer, professional, career military. For that to be sustained—for the folks to continue to step forward, to raise their right hand, and to swear to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic—we need a nation that supports our warfighters; for it is our warfighters who answer the call to serve and to defend no matter what party is in charge, to respect and obey the chain of command and to execute all lawful orders.

I think we rely on the best equipped, the best trained, and the most professional military in the world and, in partnership with them, a global network of alliances. We are the envy of the world not only because of our weapons—the most advanced and sophisticated weapons systems—but because we have the best trained, the best respected, and the most supported military in the world. That additional factor is something stronger than envy, which is respect.

I have traveled over my 15 years here on the Foreign Relations Committee to dozens of countries on literally every continent and have seen directly the respect that other armed forces around the world have for our military—for its civilian control, its professionalization, its training, and equipment.

I grew up in the shadow of the Vietnam war. It was raging as I was a young man. I still remember being in elementary school, with classmates who had older brothers in combat. I still remember, as Saigon fell, when I was in middle school, and as the POWs, including our former colleague, John McCain, were released from years of imprisonment, being shocked at the way some returning veterans were treated—disrespected—and at how there had been a real loss of a sense of respect and appreciation for those who served.

Over the years, our Armed Forces have earned their way back to a place of deep and broad respect in the hearts of the American people. Over the years that I served as county executive, I went to ceremony after ceremony as units of the Delaware National Guard deployed over and over, and then, often—9 months or a year later—as we would welcome them home at wonderful homecoming celebrations, I saw deep and broad support and respect for the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States.

Tragically, I have also had the opportunity, along the flight line of Dover Air Force Base, to welcome home America's fallen, to get to know the families grieving over their loss, and, this year, to be joined by Members of the House and Senate as we have welcomed home our fallen heroes who died serving us overseas. The difference in tenor, in respect, in affection for the men and women of our Armed Forces over the arc of my lifetime—from the 1970s during the Vietnam war to today—has been striking.

Today, as I rise to speak on the 1-year anniversary of President Trump's election, I just wanted to look back and reflect on how, in that year, he and Secretary Hegseth have set us on a course that risks losing again all of that accumulated good will, all of that respect. I want to talk about how they have weakened our alliances, politicized our military, dulled down our military readiness, and brought us closer to needless, even dangerous, wars of choice—all of that leaving us weaker and less safe as we confront the most dangerous world since the end of the Cold War.

President Trump is a master of distraction. So you don't ever have time to step back and look at the bigger pattern. It is amazing how many times a day the topics change. Are we talking about the tearing down of the East Wing or the planning of a new ballroom or the renewed threat to invade a country in Africa—apparently, Nigeria, this week? It is a constant, unending smorgasbord of tweets and greatest hits designed to prevent us, with its blizzard, from ever seeing any pattern. One year after his election, I wanted to take a few minutes and show that pattern to you today.

In his first 10 months as President of the United States, President Trump has fired or pushed out more than 15 of our most senior admirals and generals, starting with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Chief of Naval Operations—fired because they were somehow considered DEI hires or too woke, which is something I find to be utterly without foundation in their service or in the opinions of others who served with them in the Armed Forces.

He hijacked the 250th anniversary parade to celebrate the history of the U.S. Army and turned it into a birthday parade for himself.

More recently, President Trump and Secretary Hegseth gathered all of our most senior military leaders from around the world for a speech here near Washington, at Quantico, which was a massive national security risk, just so they could give political speeches about grooming and about using the military against the enemy within—pulling these decorated and seasoned men and women from core jobs, literally around the world, of protecting America against our adversaries on the frontlines, to be props for a highly political speech.

In unprecedented decisions in modern times, the President has federalized the National Guards from California, from Illinois, and from Oregon over the objections of Governors and has deployed them into cities over the objections of mayors who say: We can deal with the challenges of crime. If you want to send us Federal resources, we would welcome your sending us additional Federal law enforcement, like the ATF and the FBI.

This administration also mobilized the Marines to go into Los Angeles. All of this takes away our military from

their central missions and training for partisan political ends.

This brings us to a second key pillar of our national security—the best trained and equipped military in the world.

Secretary Hegseth, at the beginning of this year, supported a full-year continuing resolution for the Department of Defense for the first time ever. Senator MCCONNELL and I, as the chair and ranking member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, were struck at how much harm that does. We are on the verge of doing it again for a terrible second year.

Ask any senior military leader. It makes it impossible to plan, and nothing requires more stable, certain long-term funding than designing and building the next generation of fighter aircraft, building and deploying nuclear-powered submarines, recruiting and training the world's best military and then equipping them with things on land, air, and sea that make them the most lethal Armed Forces on Earth. We can't do that if Secretary Hegseth continues to support full-year continuing resolutions.

It is also important that our warfighters be respected because they know they have the support engagement of the American people on difficult and dangerous missions—something that is lacking when they refuse to fully brief, support, and engage the Senate of the United States—a challenge that is happening right now.

We need a plan, we need preparation, and we need clarity to Congress about what is going on in the Caribbean and what preparations are being made with regard to Venezuela.

I have no objection to the idea that we need to work together to strengthen the interdiction of drugs coming to the United States, but this body, given the Constitution and our role, deserves to be consulted and included so that we can build consensus, common agreement, to support a plan of action so that our warfighters, the men and women of our Armed Forces, know we have their backs. That is the best way to send them into harm's way.

All of this is built on another of President Trump's broken promises. He ran on lowering costs, making America healthy again, and avoiding new foreign wars. On the campaign trail, I often heard that was one of his most popular promises.

Since then, the threats to start new wars with friends and allies and foes alike have been dizzying—Canada, Mexico, Denmark, Panama, Colombia, and Nigeria. Our President tosses these things off casually, but in a meeting I had earlier in his term with leaders from Denmark and Greenland, they were alarmed, frightened, and concerned about how a trusted NATO ally could threaten to seize Greenland—a seemingly casual remark that was then reinforced and repeated over and over.

I am worried that we are now sleepwalking into a war with Venezuela and

an effort to overthrow Maduro, all while leaving the People's Republic of China free rein to run roughshod over the Indo-Pacific, while they massively increase the scope and scale of their aggression.

Let's be clear. There is no love lost between me and Maduro—a brutal dictator—but we should have clarity about how and why we might use our Armed Forces.

Last, a key pillar to our security for the last eight decades, since the end of the Second World War, has been a remarkable global network of powerful alliances. I have long said that one of our key advantages over the People's Republic of China is our network of trusted and deep alliances.

China has nervous neighbors and client states. President Trump is putting all of that at risk. Our adversaries are increasingly aligning. Russians are using Iranian drones, North Korean soldiers, and Chinese technology and funding to help carry out their brutal war of aggression in Ukraine. Meanwhile, our alliances are fraying.

As I mentioned, the President threatened to invade NATO allies like Canada and Denmark and kicked President Volodymyr Zelenskyy out of the Oval Office but rolled out the red carpet for Vladimir Putin; held up crucial arms deliveries and sales to nations that rely on us for their security—from Ukraine to Taiwan; and put at risk our commitment to article 5 and to collective security that have been at the heart of NATO since its founding.

The tariff deals our President has imposed on some of our closest and most trusted allies—allies that have free-trade agreements with us, like South Korea—have put them profoundly on the back foot as they look and wonder whether they can count on our security agreements.

All of this means that over the past year, President Trump has steadily hacked away at the pillars of our military that protect our Nation, making it less stable, making it more likely that the trust and confidence the American people have in our warfighters will crumble.

This is a critical and concerning, even alarming picture from which he is trying to distract us.

The Nation we had a year ago was strong, secure, and moving in a positive direction. Today, I am gravely concerned about the constant distraction and the threats and moves against our allies, our partners, and the ways in which we have undermined our warfighters.

So what should we do from here? Pass our bipartisan appropriations bills. Put on this floor, pass, and get to the President the Defense appropriations bill that I have worked so hard on this year and all the other appropriations bills and move us out of this cycle of rescissions, reconciliation, and continuing resolutions and back to reliable, steady, bipartisan support. Strengthen our alliances. Reassure our

nervous partners. End this recklessness with tariffs that is an on again-off again regime where these taxes, these tariffs, add to Americans' bottom line in a disastrous way and destabilize trust and confidence from our partners and refocus on training and preparing for real wars, not culture wars. This is how we keep our Nation safe.

Just a few days ago, I was up in my father's hometown of Boston and drove through Lexington and Concord, where 250 years ago this year, our forefathers took up arms against the Crown and began what was a long-shot fight, a revolution for liberty and independence for our Nation. We have to remember all who have taken up arms and served our Nation.

I am from a family of veterans. My brother, my sister-in-law, my father, my uncles, my great-great-grandfather, and back to the Revolution, members of my family have stepped forward and served.

For all who have done the same, who have signed on the dotted line, up to and including their lives, committed their willingness to sacrifice, we owe them nothing less than the full measure of devotion that says we will support them. That support requires engagement and trust from this body, engagement and trust with our allies, and the support that our service men and women deserve.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3072

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, President Trump promised Americans during his campaign that, if elected, he would lower costs on day one, and Americans trusted him to do so. Yet all President Trump has done from day one of his Presidency until now has been to raise costs for our families and our businesses.

One of the most outrageous examples of this is with his erratic blanket tariffs that he has imposed on our allies and trade partners, as you have heard from my colleague from Delaware talking about.

But let me be clear. These tariffs for the American public are nothing but taxes. Tariffs are taxes. That is what the American people are seeing every single day, and many of them are seeing it first thing in the morning when they have their cup of coffee.

This is an unacceptable burden to be putting on the American people, and the tools this administration is using to do so are clearly unconstitutional. They are actually being heard in the Supreme Court today.

The good news is, Congress has the authority to do something about it. There is bipartisan, bicameral agreement that not only can we act, but we must. That is why I am here today to pass the bill that I wrote with Senator RAND PAUL of Kentucky. It is called the No Coffee Tax Act. It is a very simple bill. It would roll back President Trump's tax on our coffee.

Let me explain why this is important. The United States is the largest importer of coffee in the world. Why? Because even though we all love our morning coffee, the United States does not have the natural climate or growing conditions needed to produce the amounts of coffee Americans consume every day. Ninety-nine percent of the coffee in this country comes from another country.

Until President Trump took office, Americans had never paid broad tariffs on coffee imports, but now this President has decided to recklessly impose these blanket tariffs on our top sources for coffee—Brazil at 50 percent, and other main coffee producers, like Vietnam, Indonesia, Colombia, and Ethiopia, are being tariffed at outrageous rates.

I don't need to tell you what that has meant for Americans because we have all felt it every single day. I am hearing it from my coffee roasters and wholesalers in Nevada who have been forced to raise their prices to keep up with these tariffs. That is filtering down to local coffee shops—our small businesses—that are in turn having to raise their prices on consumers.

The price of a cup of coffee has skyrocketed nearly 40 percent since last year—40 percent. This is happening all over the country. And it is not just businesses where coffee is their main product; restaurants that serve breakfast are being impacted as well. This is what these irresponsible tariffs have done to America, because, as I have said, tariffs are taxes.

Now, I know that responsible, targeted tariffs on our adversaries can be good for American workers and our national security. There is a smart way to do this, however. Taxing our coffee and raising prices for Americans isn't it.

The bipartisan, bicameral bill Senator PAUL and I introduced would bring coffee tariffs back to the level they were at before President Trump took office—zero percent.

The Senate has already passed legislation supported by both Democrats and Republicans to repeal President Trump's tariffs on Canada and Brazil as well as his global tariffs on the rest of our trading partners. The No Coffee Tax Act is equally important to the American public. Prices are already too high in this country. Getting rid of this unnecessary coffee tax will make Americans' lives and their mornings just a little bit easier.

For that reason, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill, the No Coffee Tax Act, which is at the desk; that the bill be considered read three times and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I rise in opposition to S. 3072, the No Coffee Tax Act.

The bill seeks to exempt from the President's IEEPA tariffs only a single commodity—coffee.

I agree with my colleagues that tariffs generally should be targeted as much as possible to avoid harm to Americans.

We also should consider more exemptions to address the harms arising from potential unintended consequences, including exemptions for unavailable natural resources. The administration agrees.

The very recent trade deals with Cambodia and Malaysia explicitly exempt coffee and some other mostly unavailable natural resources from the reciprocal tariffs. By all accounts, the administration is working to identify similar exemptions in other active trade negotiations. I strongly encourage the President to pursue productive courses of engagement with U.S. stakeholders in doing so.

Voting for one-off exemptions on the Senate floor in isolation of a larger negotiation strategy and broader stakeholder concerns, like S. 3072 asks us to do so now, does not facilitate a predictable process for our negotiators or for any broader segment of the stakeholder engagement.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. CRAPO. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I have a lot of respect for my colleague from Idaho, and I appreciate his comments. I respectfully disagree.

I do think that we have to consider, as the negotiations are taking place, as my colleague talked about the administration is engaging in—how long will that take? I know the USMCA took at least 2 to 3 years. That was just two countries—Mexico and Canada—that we were trying to negotiate with.

While this administration goes through this indiscriminate negotiation without any involvement from Congress, what am I to tell my businesses back home? Those businesses, those coffee shops that closed, those individual breakfast restaurants that are there that are passing off the costs to the consumer—how long do they have to wait until they get an answer from this administration?

That is why this commodity, this particular product—there had never been a tariff on it before because 99 percent of the coffee that we consume comes from out of the country. So it really is having a devastating impact on our small businesses. And they really shouldn't use this leverage in a negotiation tactic for this reason.

I appreciate the comments, however, from my colleague from Idaho.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be

in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

COMMEMORATING THE VISIT OF ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, today I would like to commemorate the visit to the United States of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual head of the second-largest Christian Church in the world which boasts 300 million faithful. The Ecumenical Patriarch is also the spiritual leader of more than 4,000 Delawareans who are Greek Orthodox Christians. Delaware's Greek community has a long and vibrant history, and it is an honor to mark the Ecumenical Patriarch's visit.

During his visit to the United States, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew received the Templeton Prize: a recognition of someone who has dedicated themselves to affirming the spiritual dimension of life. The Ecumenical Patriarch received this award for his remarkable leadership working to foster an "ecumenical imperative" to care for creation, in which he has brought together religious, scientific, and world leaders to advocate for greater care for our planet. The Ecumenical Patriarch joins a long list of powerful advocates for change who have received this award, including my good friend Jane Goodall. The Ecumenical Patriarch's receipt of the Templeton Award builds on his previous accolades, including his receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal: the highest award that Congress has to offer.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's commitment to fostering dialogue for the betterment of the world is admirable and an example that we should all seek to follow. His All-Holiness is a tremendous leader in the world and for many in our country, and I look forward to continuing to support his efforts to strive for peace on earth over the years to come.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Kelly, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted: