

The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, food should never be a bargaining chip. People's kitchen tables, their refrigerators should never be a bargaining chip. This is not a partisan issue, feeding people in the United States. We should not be mixing natural resources with the essential things that we need like food.

Are my Republican colleagues—if they want to lower prices, they can start—they can start—by this one small act of letting this bill go through. They can help me lower prices right here, right now. I am very disappointed. This bill would lower prices at the grocery store for hard-working families all across America. And by stopping it from passing, you and your Republican colleagues—well, I am afraid you are telling the American people that their kitchen table isn't your priority and that Washington Republicans would rather bow to Trump than pass legislation to lower at least one section of grocery prices and make food more affordable for their constituents.

Again, this isn't partisan. People in my State and yours are being crushed by rising costs. Washington Republicans have the power to do a little something about it, but they choose not to. So if you really want to do what is right by your constituents, if you want to do right by kitchen tables across this country, Republicans would stand up to Trump, stand up against these reckless tariffs on food, and support my legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

MINNESOTA ICE SHOOTING

Mrs. MOODY. Mr. President, tomorrow is Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, and it was my intention to come to the floor today and talk about some great officers and celebrate the men and women that put their lives on the line to protect us every day. Indeed, I encourage every American across this great Nation to do just that, say thank you for signing up courageously for an often thankless job. But in light of recent events, I feel I must address a more pressing issue.

The horrific situation that occurred yesterday morning in Minnesota is tragic. Radical protestors intending to run over Federal immigration officers with cars, that cannot happen. In fact, protestors that show up with intent to harass or obstruct or impede or aggressively approach or violently assault officers, it cannot happen.

When they are doing their jobs, it is a precarious, often dangerous, situation. I can tell you that firsthand as the wife of a law enforcement officer. I beg anyone thinking about participating in this kind of behavior to think twice for all involved.

They must be given space to focus. It is a very dangerous situation in some of these missions and law enforcement activities. That is why I introduced the Halo Act back in November because, as

I saw the threats of political violence, of threats against our law enforcement officers were rapidly increasing, I knew that we had to do something. And so I introduced the Halo Act so that one of these events wouldn't occur.

I don't know how officers are able to do their jobs with people impeding them and getting in their faces as they are trying to focus on executing their duties.

It is deeply troubling to hear the anti-law enforcement rhetoric being used by so many when it comes to Federal officers simply trying to show up and do the jobs that we, as a nation, hired them to do.

And what happened yesterday in terms of folks showing up with the intent to obstruct officers, that is not an isolated incident. It is part of this broader pattern of coordinated efforts, encouraged by elected politicians who keep increasing their rhetoric and almost encouraging—let me just take the “almost” out, encouraging people to get in the way of law enforcement officers trying to do their job, knowing how dangerous that is, not only dangerous for law enforcement officers but for those who show up and try to impede their efforts.

Elected Democrat officials right now are using radical rhetoric and encouraging people in their cities and their States to harass and obstruct officers. Many of them are even using taxpayer funds to help speak out and coordinate. According to the Department of Homeland Security, assaults on police are up 1,300 percent, death threats on police up 8,000 percent.

This alarming trend threatens public safety and the rule of law—the rule of law—and the expectation that we would support the men and women who uphold it. That is what is attracting people from around the United States of America to my home State, the great free State of Florida, because we support them. We protect our officers. In fact, we introduced legislation and passed legislation to give them a safety zone, a buffer zone to do their jobs and do them safely.

The Halo Act, which I introduced 2 months ago, will ensure that Federal officers can perform their duties without fear of intimidation, interference, or violence. The legislation would make it illegal for anyone, after being asked, told to stand back, to knowingly come within 25 feet of an officer who is doing their job if their intent is to interfere with the officer's work or threaten them with physical harm.

It is modeled after a law in Florida, and we know it will work. It will provide the necessary buffer zone to allow officers to focus on the execution of their duties, and that is what is safe for everyone.

Essentially, the bill would institute the zones and keep the officers safe. It would also make sure that this buffer zone or safety zone is there to protect others.

I implore my colleagues to join in this mission, in this proposed legisla-

tion, and cosponsor the Halo Act. It is obvious we must act now to protect these officers that protect us. And we must send a message that targeted attacks, interference with the duties of officers, threat, harm, violence against law enforcement must end. We owe it to our communities. We owe it to the brave people that sign up for these jobs to strengthen the protections around them.

Ahead of Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, we have to acknowledge that without the men and women that put on that badge every day, this would not be the country that we know. It is a fragile line between order and chaos, and the people that sign up to stand on that line, come what may, need to be protected, and this act would do just that.

I urge my colleagues to join me and support the Halo Act to have our officers' back, to ensure our communities are safe and that they can do their jobs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I believe whistleblowing in the Federal Government should be protected and encouraged. People in the executive branch of government that work in there every day want the Federal Government to enforce the laws the way they are written and spend money according to that law.

And when they see something that is not right in government, they have a responsibility to blow the whistle and tell somebody and, hopefully, they work with the immediate superiors, but a lot of times they don't get any respect for the shortcomings of government that they expose.

Eventually, they come to Congress and at that point are covered by whistleblower protection legislation, and if we want to continue the good work that whistleblowers do to expose wrongdoing in government, particularly fraud, waste, and abuse, we should make sure that the whistleblower laws are faithfully followed.

One aspect of whistleblower protection is to make sure that everybody in government knows about whistleblowers and the protection that they can receive.

One aspect of that is what we call anti-gag rules that need to be followed. So I am here to speak about my efforts to ensure that the Federal Government complies with all whistleblower laws. Unfortunately, the government has made efforts to gag whistleblowers before they can make legally protected disclosures, including to Congress.

The illegal conduct has happened no matter which political party controls the executive branch of government. That is why I spearheaded successful efforts to get what is called anti-gag provisions enacted.

I worked for decades to make it the law. And I have worked to ensure that

both Republican and Democratic administrations comply with that law.

Congress has a constitutional responsibility to ensure the laws it passes are followed. In eighth grade civics or high school government classes, our students study about the checks and balances of government. Congress not only has a responsibility to pass the laws, they have a responsibility to make sure that the executive branch executes those laws as well.

We have not found that followed in practice for these anti-gag provisions. The anti-gag provision requires all Federal Agency nondisclosure policies, forms, or agreements to notify employees of their right to blow the whistle to Congress, to an inspector general, or to the Office of Special Counsel. Appropriations laws also prohibit Federal funds from being used to enforce non-compliant agreements.

Nevertheless, Federal Agencies, amazingly, still violate the anti-gag provisions. That failure not only has a chilling effect that discourages whistleblowers, it also happens to be illegal. I have conducted longstanding oversight to ensure that Federal Agencies comply with this law, and I have held them accountable when they failed to do so.

For example, 2013, I asked 15 executive branch departments about the inclusion of the anti-gag provision in their nondisclosure agreements.

At the time, only the Department of Treasury, out of those 15 executive branch Departments, was in full compliance. I forwarded my findings to the Office of Special Counsel, and in 2018, they issued updated guidance to all executive branch Departments about including anti-gag provisions in their nondisclosure policies and agreements.

In March of 2024, I wrote to 74 inspectors general requesting they check on their parent Agencies' compliance with the anti-gag provisions. To date, here are my findings from what I wrote to those 74 inspectors general: 45 inspectors general reported they completed their review. Of those 45, 6 inspectors general reported their parent Agency was in full compliance. Of that 45, 22 inspectors general said their parent Agency made updates to comply with the law, and 6 said that those corrective actions are ongoing.

So positive changes have been made. Whistleblowers are better off because these Agencies are doing what they can to comply with the nondisclosure gag rules.

But there are outstanding responses, and therefore more work must be done. This Senator intends to ride herd on the government about making sure that whistleblowers are protected and get rid of gag policies.

One example from my investigation, 10 inspectors general reported their parent Agency agreed to make changes but had yet to implement them. Another seven of the inspectors general who conducted a review responded that their parent Agency was noncompliant, but they didn't say if their Agency agreed to update their policies. Another seven inspectors generals re-

sponded that they were taking the requests under consideration or planning to conduct a future review.

It is a no-brainer that they ought to take that review, and I am asking them: What is the hesitation? So I have a responsibility to follow up with them.

Another eight inspectors general responded that the anti-gag law didn't apply to their Agency. So I am looking into their position that they took in response to my letter and ensure that their point that they aren't covered by the anti-gag law is correct.

Fourteen inspectors general gave the stiff arm to those of us in Congress, ignoring what we asked for them to do, and, as a result, they failed to provide a substantive response, which included inspectors general for the Central Intelligence Agency and the Export-Import Bank.

That failure to respond is a disgrace. Inspectors general ought to be the tip of the spear when it comes to transparency in government. Transparency and accountability are not a partisan issue. Federal Agencies can't conceal their wrongdoing behind illegal nondisclosure policies and related actions.

Whistleblowers are critical to exposing waste, fraud, and abuse within government. Government officials at the top don't know everything that is going on below them. That is why whistleblowers ought to be listened to. They benefit the government carrying out its constitutional responsibilities, and it surely benefits the taxpayers.

I encourage my Republican and Democrat colleagues to join in my efforts to ensure all administrations, whether Republican or Democrat, comply with whistleblower laws.

Rest assured, my oversight will continue and so will my fight for whistleblowers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

VENEZUELA

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I am beyond outraged that President Trump would commit such a brazen act of war as he has done in Venezuela with absolutely no notice, except to the oil companies and newspapers they leaked it to. No consultation with Congress, no legitimate justification for these unauthorized strikes, nor any kind of serious long-term strategy.

It is unquestionably an act of war to invade a foreign nation, kidnap a foreign leader—even a dictator—and leave dozens of bodies, including civilians, behind.

Would my colleagues still nod their heads and go along with it if a country tried to do this to American leaders? Of course not. So we should stop playing dumb. Trump can't just say magic words and pretend this wasn't a major military operation.

This is the U.S. Congress, and we have a constitutional role to be a check on the President. Only Congress can declare war, and Congress did not authorize the use of force against Venezuela.

Now, I opposed the war in Iraq from the outset. And the parallels to what President Trump has kicked off in Venezuela are glaring. And I absolutely will not support any large-scale mili-

tary conflict in Venezuela or a dangerous and expansive occupation.

We have a President ignoring the problems that he has caused in our own country, all to start a war no one asked for, with no legitimate justification, no concern for the servicemembers who are being put in harm's way, and absolutely no long-term strategy.

Seriously, the only thing that was clear after the briefing yesterday is that Trump has no serious plan. First, Trump was just bombing alleged drug boats. Then Trump was just seizing oil shipments. And the next thing you know, this administration is sending the military to abduct a foreign leader.

So I have to ask: What is next and where is next? How far is this going to go? Because it is clear that this is not over, not when Trump keeps saying he will run the country.

What is Trump's plan to run Venezuela exactly? How long are we going to be there? How many of our people is he going to send? Who is even in charge? And how are we paying for this?

There are no serious answers. The only thing we do know is why Trump is doing this—for oil—because this clearly is not about ending tyranny and establishing a democracy since Trump outright dismissed any possibility of helping the opposition party to build a true democracy. And it is clearly not about drug trafficking. After all, not even a month before this, President Trump pardoned the former President of Honduras who was convicted of the same crime. But the real reason—it is so painfully obvious—this was always about the oil.

Why? Well, it is pretty simple. Trump keeps saying it. He literally said:

The difference between Iraq and this is that Bush didn't keep the oil. We're going to keep the oil.

That was the President. Is this "America First"? Of course not. It is "Big Oil Barons First." It is "Billionaires First." It is "Trump First." First to rake in profits, mind you, not first to put themselves in harm's way.

And you can bet when Trump says he is not worried about boots on the ground, it is because he is not talking about his boots. He is not talking about his kids. He is talking about yours.

Congress cannot stand by and shrug our shoulders. We have a constitutional responsibility here. It is important that a majority of Senators voted to rein in this President's reckless actions. But if we want to put an end to this warmongering, we need to keep pressing until we have a veto-proof majority. Today's vote is not the end of the line. So I urge all my colleagues to join us in asserting our authority and continuing to send President Trump a simple message: No American boots on the ground. No trading blood for oil. No war.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.