

worked with that he didn't like, but he was looking for that badge of authenticity. And when he finally saw it and contextualized it, he realized, yes, that is worn only by Senators. He can be here.

My point is this: In order for us to be here to make these decisions in this building, in this Capitol, affecting 350, 360 million Americans, we first have to prove that we are who we say we are and that we have a right to be here to make those decisions. So, too, with our elections.

We don't want people choosing those who will make laws on their behalf unless they themselves are the people who are the people referred to in the Constitution who get to make those decisions. So let's get this right.

Let's not get it wrong. Let's not pretend that this is something that it is not. It is fundamentally unfair and dishonest in every way, shape, and form to refer to this as racist, misogynist, as voter suppression. It is none of those things.

This is entirely about one thing, which is making sure that our elections are secure, that they are legitimate, that they are fair. We want to make it easy to vote and hard to cheat.

Yes, we can have both of those things, and we must pursue both of them or in the long run, we will have neither. We will have none of them, and it will become a problem. So let's nip this thing in the bud, and let's get this right.

Let's make it easy to vote, and let's make it hard to cheat.

Nothing short of chaos ensues if we don't have that, especially whereas here we have an existing system of laws that make it so unbelievably, undeniably easy for someone to lie with no further proof, no proof of who they are, no proof of why it is that they have the right to vote.

So how does that happen, and how do they justify it? One of the most amusing, if bewildering, arguments that I hear—and I hear it all the time and have since the day we first introduced the original SAVE Act about 2 years ago—is that we don't need it. We don't need it. Why? Why don't we need it? Because it is already illegal for non-citizens to vote.

In fact, it is a felony offense. So we know it doesn't happen because it is already against law.

Well, let's think about how that would work elsewhere. Let's take a really familiar example. If you want to buy alcohol, you want to go into a bar or convenience store, liquor store, you want to buy alcohol, what can and should and must every American expect? To get carded.

Now, this is as a teetotaler something that I see mostly on TV and in the movies, but I also see it in real life when I see somebody buying something, something that I as a teetotaler don't drink, but you get carded when you buy alcohol.

It doesn't matter where, you are going to get carded. It doesn't matter

how old you are, you are going to get carded.

Now, if it were acceptable there to say it is illegal for a minor to buy alcohol or it is illegal for anyone to sell or otherwise give alcohol to a minor, somebody who is too young to buy alcohol, somebody who is not yet past the age of 21, so they don't do it, so we don't need it because it is already unlawful—well, guess what would happen? There would be a whole lot more procuring of alcoholic beverages in retail establishments by people who are too young to drink. It would happen left and right.

It would be folly to assume: Well, it is already illegal, so it doesn't happen, so we don't need to do anything about it.

So what did we do? Well, we instituted a series of laws to make it so that you have to show ID when you buy alcohol. It doesn't mean that nobody can ever cheat to break their way through it. It doesn't mean that some people don't figure out clever ways of getting a fake ID or going through an intermediary, but there are more steps.

But to assume at the outset that it doesn't happen because it is already illegal, regardless of whether you are taking any steps at all to verify that somebody is who they claim to be and that they are eligible to do the thing that they are trying to do is absolutely ridiculous, and we cannot assume that our laws can be enforced, especially against the backdrop of the vulnerabilities that I have described.

The National Voter Registration Act, coupled with the 2015 interpretation by the Supreme Court in *Arizona v. Inter Tribal Council of Arizona*, coupled with the trend among States to issue driver's licenses to noncitizens, with 19 of those States and the District of Columbia issuing them openly, even to known illegal immigrants, and then with an estimated 10 to 15 million Americans—some people think more—coming into this country unlawfully just in the 4-year period from 2021 to 2025, to say that we would be acting recklessly is a gross understatement.

So, no, this is not some sort of subterfuge to engage in Jim Crow 2.0 any more than the Democratic National Convention or a JON OSSOFF campaign rally is about Jim Crow 2.0—and shame on anyone who stoops to that level of stupidity and dishonesty as to make that argument—nor is this about voter suppression.

If this is about voter suppression, then literally any law that is designed to make sure that there is no fraud, that there is no cheating in elections, would also be voter suppression.

Now does it add a step? Yes, of course, but we add steps all the time to make sure that we don't make it too easy, especially when it matters for somebody to just go in and take something that doesn't belong to them. And by taking something that belongs to others, cheapening it for them, diminishing substantially the value of what

those who actually have that right, who own that thing—namely, U.S. citizenship—would otherwise have access to, you are taking it from them. We can't allow that to happen.

This is why I am proud to be the original author and sponsor in the Senate of this bill, proud to have worked with my House counterpart Congressman CHIP ROY from the great State of Texas on this legislation.

We can get this done. And now that we are on the bill, we are going to debate it. I look forward to hearing the debates. I look forward in each and every instance to being able to refute the absurd arguments against it because, let's face it, there is no legitimate reason to oppose this bill. I stand by that, and I will continue to stand by that in the coming days and weeks. And I am ready for many, many weeks.

We are going to stay on this bill until it damn well passes because the American people demand and deserve nothing less than that. Our Republic will not function, our country will not thrive unless we can protect the sanctity of the elections that determine who makes the laws, who sets the policy in this country.

We can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can make it easy to vote and hard to cheat at the same time. We can, we must, and together we will.

We must pass the SAVE America Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### SAVE AMERICA ACT

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, the hour is late and many people have spoken tonight on this proposal by my colleague from Utah and others. But I just want to add my voice to the many who are very concerned about this legislation.

I listened with great interest to what my colleague had to say about the fact that this was somehow necessary, that somehow things were trending in the wrong direction, and that he did want to make it easy to vote.

I think the fact that he wants to make it easy to vote is the essence of what this debate is about because the U.S. citizen is given a constitutional right to vote in our elections and the States to control the running of our elections. It is hard to imagine how the passing of the SAVE Act would help you on those constitutional rights.

I am here tonight to add my voice. Happy Saint Patrick's Day for those who are here wearing the green, and I am pretty sure you wish you were out of here by now and at some Irish festivities celebrating the day.

But trust me, the Irish in the United States of America appreciate voting rights and appreciate the right to vote, and so do many other segments of American society who have had challenges in the past to get their votes counted.

So I do want to say to my colleagues in the Senate that the Federal law does prohibit non-U.S. citizens from voting. That is a cornerstone to our law.

Now, my colleague thinks that we don't do anything to prove or to require that these people have to say who they are, which is not true. When you basically are part of a registration process, you have to fill out or comply with an attestation and identification of who you are. That is how the system works.

It worked when you were a registrant and knocking on someone's door. It works that way on motor voter. It works that way everywhere, and you have to say who you are.

Your signature becomes the identifiable piece of information that has been used for a long time now, decades and decades and decades, as the proof of who you say you are. Why? Because your signature can be traced.

I always find it very interesting in our State because it is not that fraud hasn't been committed; the question is whether you are going to catch fraud. In an incident in our State where we had a very close election and it got down to several votes, people started admitting that they had voted for somebody who was dead or deceased. Why? Because they knew we were going to catch them because it was based on your signature.

So a man who votes for his wife after she has died to say she was really enthusiastic about that Governor's candidate and really would have wanted to vote for him but died before the election and didn't cast her own ballot, yes, that does not count. And we have caught voter fraud.

The point is, is that States already verify that identity. They do it, as I said, when you register or are a registrant, it says right on the registrant card: If you are not a U.S. citizen, stop right now. Stop right now.

It also, at the motor voter place where it is checking your identification, also you have to say that you are a U.S. citizen. Now, you can say many things about what kind of identification is used, but I like this best because we are a vote-by-mail State, as my colleague from Utah is. And we have very high turnouts, as does Utah.

And what does it take to make sure that you are a U.S. citizen in the State of Washington? So every ballot just like mine that is from a few years ago says: Read the declaration.

It says right here, I can hardly miss this. This is the outside envelope: Read the declaration, sign and date below.

So I have to sign this again, which is matched with my signature at the voters' office. It is on a computer with voters' basically witnesses, looking at my signature; and in my State, they are trained by the State patrol to make sure that signature matches the original signature that you signed up with.

Now, what I like most about this is right above where I have to sign is this

little attestation with these words on it. I know you can't hardly read them, so I am going to make it a little larger for you to understand the whole thing.

It says:

I do solemnly swear under penalty of perjury, I am a United States citizen.

It says it right there. Every time you vote in the State of Washington, you are attesting to that. But the bottom part is what I think is most amazing, "punishable by a maximum imprisonment of five years or \$10,000 in fine." And somehow people on this side of the aisle think that immigrants who won't even go to the healthcare system, won't even go to the grocery store, are afraid to take their kids to school, and somehow you think they are signing up for a felony or \$10,000 or imprisonment of 5 years? No. They are not doing that. Because this system is checked. It is validated. It is verified. You have to attest to it. And so we have very, very, very, very little fraud, and when we do, we catch it.

The point is: Why are we doing this today? Why are we changing a system that has been in place for decades and replacing it because my colleagues say the trend is going in the wrong direction? Which is simply not true.

When you look at this, the SAVE Act, instead of basically protecting our system for decades could disenfranchise over 21 million people. That is why you have seen this out here, because it has been estimated by many people. Think about this, when this goes to the President's desk, it is implemented immediately this year.

It means that you have to start producing additional paperwork. What my colleagues failed to tell you is that the system is based on all the verification up front when you are registered and when you give your signature and identification; and election day is about having the ease of going to vote based on the fact you have already been identified.

But my colleagues would like to throw a big wrench in that and make you find all sorts of documentation in the most unworkable chaos I have ever seen in a system put in a bill.

It is simply not true that this is about ease of voting by them. It is about disenfranchising millions of people and making it very hard for them to vote.

Why do they want to do that? I don't know. Frankly, I don't really—I don't really know why they think that is a good idea. I will tell you what my former Republican secretary of state, who served more than a decade, said to me in a statement.

Neither the President nor Congress should be in the business of micromanaging elections. As a longtime Republican election administrator official, I adamantly support our nation's constitutional framers' decision that the election process be decentralized to states.

Following he says:

I oppose the SAVE [America] Act. It gives the federal government new powers of discre-

tionary regulation. It empowers ideologues to sue election administrators. It forces states to turn over voter rolls to federal overseers. It abolishes vote-by-mail—the preferred system in Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Utah, Hawaii, Nevada, and Vermont.

In my experience, vote-by-mail best fits the modern lifestyles. More importantly, it provides the opportunity for voters to become better informed before casting [their] ballots.

He continues by saying:

I subscribe to my party's fundamental and historic commitment to local control. It is a time-honored Republican principle that "government closest to the people is best."

This, importantly, includes the conduct of elections.

Now maybe that is why the senior Senator from Kentucky is voting with us on this side of the issue, because he understands what States' rights are about. States' rights are about running elections so a demagogue or somebody in the level of government cannot force the Federal Government to say who is eligible to vote and who is not eligible to vote.

The notion that we would turn this over to DHS is preposterous. And the notion that I had a constituent who basically got denied a Social Security check because someone said he was dead, even though he went to the Federal building, to the Social Security Administration and said: I am not dead.

They had already ripped the check out of his, basically, bank account. He basically then proceeded for 3 weeks to continue to tell them he was not dead. He showed up in other places in person. He was on national TV. And did they give him his check back? No. It took him months.

Now, let's say that the Federal Government says the same thing about you and the voter rolls on election day. What are you going to do then? What are you going to do on election day? Not have a vote. What are you going to do, say: No, it is me. I am right here.

But they are going to say: No, you are dead. You are not on my rolls. You can't vote. I don't care how long you have lived at that address. I don't care. You are gone.

I am not turning that over to the Federal Government, and our constitutional Founders did not want that turned over to the Federal Government. They saw mischief then, and believe me, the SAVE Act is mischief now.

The League of Women Voters, the ultimate organization for finding and pursuing policy to get people in America to vote basically said this about the SAVE Act:

[This] is a coordinated effort to make voting harder for eligible Americans.

Now, if you can't trust the League of Women Voters here, I don't know who you can trust because they are the ones who have had an organization that is about nothing but getting people to participate in elections.

They are not Democrat; they are not Republican. They basically are a great

organization that holds all of us accountable, and they basically do not like the SAVE Act.

This is why part of this effort is about protecting States and protecting our rights. As I said, our constitutional Fathers have basically said: This is what we should be doing, and this is why, here now, turning this over, I object to the fact that the Homeland Security is going to collect personal information demanding that a secretary of state turn that personal information over to them for a massive database by the Federal Government. I object to that.

I am not turning personal information over to people who just have other things to pursue. Or maybe it is going to be like DOGE, and they are going to sell it to other organizations and make money off of our personal information. I object to that.

But now, if basically a secretary of state or an auditor basically doesn't agree with Homeland Security, what are they going to do? This bill also has a private right of action to say that you can sue them on a private right of action. So now, we are going to create all of this chaos and mischief at a level when somehow Homeland Security, which they have gotten it wrong before on the vote, on information about who and what information—the Federal Government has got it wrong before—now all of a sudden, you are going to get it wrong again and what are you going to do?

So as I mentioned, Sam Reed, he is not the only Republican I have talked to. We had a Republican on a press conference today who was an auditor. There are Republicans standing up.

I don't see any Democrats agreeing with you on the SAVE Act, but I see lots of Republicans across America agreeing with us that it is a bad bill.

But as Sam Reed said, former Republican secretary of state:

Neither the President nor Congress should be in the business of micromanaging elections.

Why? Why? It has never been given to us.

But let's talk about this. My colleague seems to think that there is a trend going in some direction. OK. What is the trend? Because the Heritage Foundation, a group I am pretty sure you believe in, pretty sure you quote them a lot, basically said in my State since 1982—since 1982 till now—there have been 15 cases of voter fraud.

OK. In our State, in the State of Washington, 15 cases. OK. So hardly—hardly, a big trend moving in the other direction. Hardly a big trend.

Similarly, the Heritage Foundation found that in the United States of America, that noncitizen voter fraud is basically .00007, so that turns out to be seven-millionths of a percent. It is not 1 percent. It is not .1 percent. It is basically .00007. So seven-millionths of 1 percent voter fraud in the United States of America based on the system that we have today.

And you want to propose a system that would disenfranchise millions of Americans by making it more complicated. And, yes, I don't know why you don't want to stand up for vote-by-mail, but trust me, I am standing up for vote-by-mail. Your last election had 84 percent turnout in the State of Utah. You had 90 percent in 2020. I think that is a prideful thing for a State.

I am prideful that our State has one of the highest turnouts too. It is not probably 83 percent in a Presidential election. I don't remember exactly what it was in the year 2000, but that is what we strive for in the United States of America, a voting system where everybody participates so when the outcome is something that other people don't like, you can at least say the American people decided.

But if all of a sudden you start sowing doubt into the system, then you have a problem; and that is where President Trump is. He is saying he wants to eliminate mail-in voting, but one in three voters in this country use it.

He is the one who is inspiring my colleagues to write this legislation. He is the one who is inspiring the details. He would go much further, I agree, than what the SAVE Act is.

But let's hear what third parties are saying around the United States of America.

Let's hear what editorial boards who read the same judgment, the same discussions that we have had here, and what have they said?

In my home State, where we have had one of the closest elections in a congressional district, they basically said the SAVE Act is a threat to our democracy.

What did the Seattle Times say? It said, "Congress should reject SAVE Act as unconstitutional voter suppression."

That is not Democrats saying that; that is a newspaper saying that.

What did they say in the Maine Herald?

Maine Voters do not wish to be "saved" by the SAVE Act.

So now we know that third-party validators—who are pretty expert in voting. Women Voters don't want this. Newspapers that basically have looked at this issue are also calling this for what it is: suppression. And I ask my colleagues to turn this down.

Now, if my colleague wants to continue to debate, I will stand here as long as he wants to stand here to debate this issue. I will stand here and get more facts and figures to show him that this voting system today has empowered Americans, it has increased opportunities for Americans to have their votes cast, and it has gotten rid of generations of suppression that existed before. But if he wants me to talk about all of the voter suppression that has existed in the United States, starting with laws that basically disenfranchise various segments of our popu-

lation, I am happy to talk about them because every generation should be about fighting to get the voters to cast a vote, have a robust democracy, and distinguish the United States of America from other countries as a beacon of democracy where free and fair elections stand and where we are confident about the results.

We don't need the SAVE Act. It will cause chaos. What we need to do is to continue to fight for democracy and continue the path forward for a vote-by-mail system.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

#### SAVE AMERICA ACT

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I appreciate the skill and the passion that my friend and colleague the distinguished Senator from the State of Washington brings to the table on this. I appreciate her thoroughness in making the case that she has made to the Senate. I would like to address a few of those items which I think call for a response.

One of the arguments that she points to—all of the arguments that she points to in one way or another—reminds me of how important it is to turn back to the central objective of what we are trying to achieve here: Let's make it easy to vote but hard to cheat.

Again and again, she refers to the desire to make it easy to vote, but as to the "hard to cheat" point, she goes off on a number of tangents, and I would like to address a number of those right now to make sure we set the record clear.

One of the arguments she makes right out of the gate has to do with the fact that this is a constitutionally protected right, and she is right there. We have a number of freestanding constitutional protections in various parts of the Constitution that protect your right to vote.

The fact that it is a constitutionally protected right doesn't mean that it doesn't matter that we make it easy to vote and hard to cheat. In fact, it makes it that much more important to do it.

The fact that something is a constitutionally protected right doesn't mean that it has to be uninhibited. In fact, very often, as is the case with voting, if we make it easy to cheat, then your constitutionally protected right to vote will mean less and less with each passing election, and our failure to take these risks seriously further undermines the public's perception of the legitimacy of the rights in question.

Now, the mere fact that something is a constitutionally protected right doesn't mean you can't make it harder for people to break the law in gaining access to it. Otherwise, there would be all sorts of things that would be off in our society.

Take for example the Second Amendment, the right to bear arms. Yes, we