

sounds like Trump is getting closer and closer to putting boots on the ground. It sounds like Donald Trump is thinking of expanding this war—mission creep on a massive scale.

It seems like an oxymoron, “mission creep on a massive scale.” But they are creeping and creeping and creeping every day and bungling us into war. Boots on the ground, of course, will inevitably mean a surge in casualties, a surge in costs, a surge in chaos.

It is not what the American people want, and Republicans know it. They know this war goes against the wishes of the American people, and they refuse—Republicans here in the Senate—refuse to stand up to Trump, even though they know the war is wrong, wasteful, and putting lives at risk.

Last night, we gave Republicans another chance to assert Congress’ constitutional authority to tell Donald Trump he cannot drag this country into war without authorization. Once again, Republicans opposed it when they opposed Senator BOOKER’s motion.

Where is their courage? Where is their loyalty to the Constitution? Where are the public hearings with Secretaries Rubio and Hegseth under oath? You want to spend \$200 billion and you don’t want to even let their Cabinet people show up at hearings to answer questions?

What an outrage:

Americans’ pain is the least of our concerns.

Do you hear that, America, that \$4 gas?

Americans’ pain is the least of our concerns.

This is not the end of the matter in the Senate. This issue ain’t going away. Republicans can try to wash their hands of Donald Trump’s war with Iran, but they will not escape responsibility. The American people and Democrats will hold Republicans accountable for willingly supporting Donald Trump’s reckless, aimless, chaotic war in Iran.

#### SAVE AMERICA ACT

Mr. President, on the SAVE Act, Republicans want to waste yet another day on a radical piece of legislation that hardly anyone outside the MAGA fringe even cares about, the SAVE Act.

Democrats’ position has not changed. If Republicans want to waste the Senate’s time debating this bill, so be it. We will continue to debate it. That is what the rules allow the Senators and Senator THUNE to do.

But we will continue to expose just how radical and ugly it is. That is what Democrats will do over and over again. The longer the SAVE Act stays before the Senate, the more obvious it becomes it is not a voter ID bill. It is a voter suppression bill. It is a voter purge bill.

The SAVE Act says no more vote-by-mail, no more driver’s licenses to register, no registering online or on campus or at church.

Republicans want to make Americans pass through the eye of the needle

just to exercise their fundamental right to vote. The SAVE Act would force every State in America to send its voter rolls to the Department of Homeland Security, an Agency that has nothing to do with administering elections and everything to do with Musk and DOGE and incompetence at the top.

Those voter rolls would then be screened by an algorithm designed by Musk and DOGE to supposedly root out noncitizens from the rolls.

But in reality, it could kick millions of American citizens off the voter rolls just like it kicked off many American citizens when a screening was tested in Missouri.

Now, MAGA Republicans keep talking about the SAVE Act in terms of protecting elections. This is a load of nonsense.

Kristi Noem was more honest. She said it was about—Kristi Noem said—the SAVE Act is about making sure only the right people get to vote—the right people get to vote.

So anyone who thinks this is just some benign effort to tell the small number of illegal immigrants—make sure they are not on the rolls. No one disagrees with that. Oh, no. It is an effort to make sure the right people get to vote.

Who are the right people according to Republicans and Donald Trump? Well, the SAVE Act gives us some clues. Deep in the SAVE Act, there is one blanket exception for the SAVE Act’s draconian restrictions, only one—one exception. Guess what it is.

It is for the State of North Dakota. North Dakota is ruby red. It is overwhelmingly Republican, and it is the only State that right now does not require any form of voter registration. So it gets a free pass from all the rules every other State would have to follow.

How convenient.

Look, MAGA claims of voter fraud are utter garbage, but according to the ultraright Heritage Foundation, North Dakota had 12 instances of improper voting. Twelve is not a lot. It is tiny. But it was still more than other States that would be forced to impose draconian barriers to vote. North Dakota gets a pass again.

How convenient.

It is almost as if the goal of the SAVE Act has nothing to do with securing elections. This is how you write a bill designed to give Republicans a naked, partisan advantage, and it is what the SAVE Act does.

It is not a voter ID bill. It is a voter suppression bill.

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. President, finally, on TSA and ICE, today, this afternoon, Democrats will be giving Republicans another chance to do the right thing by TSA workers and pay them for the important work they do while we continue to debate how to address issues at ICE. The Democrats have maintained the same position for weeks. We need to rein in ICE and stop the violence, and the American people are on our side.

But rather than negotiate common-sense reforms, Republicans have stonewalled funding and held critical Agencies—like TSA—hostage. We Democrats don’t want to do that.

Republicans, we are willing to fund TSA now. Just don’t stand in the way. Support us, just don’t stand in the way. Support us. TSA agents will be funded. We are willing to fund TSA now. Now. No ands, ifs, or buts.

Last night, Warnock went to the floor to offer a UC to pay our TSA workers. For the fourth time, Republicans blocked the bill. Today, Senator SLOTKIN will try it again and give Republicans another chance to fund TSA right away, shorten the lines at the airport, and bring the chaos to an end.

The only question Republicans must answer today is this: Has enough been enough? Will they finally fund TSA or keep holding those workers and our travelers hostage?

I yield the floor.

#### SAFEGUARD AMERICAN VOTER ELIGIBILITY ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message with respect to S. 1383, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany S. 1383, a bill to establish the Veterans Advisory Committee on Equal Access, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill.

Thune motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill, with Thune (for Schmitt) amendment No. 4420 (to the House amendment to the bill), in the nature of a substitute.

Thune (for Tuberville/Blackburn) amendment No. 4421 (to amendment No. 4420), to protect women and girls in athletics.

Thune motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Rules and Administration, with instructions, Thune amendment No. 4422, to change the enactment date.

Thune amendment No. 4423 (to the instructions (amendment No. 4422), of a perfecting nature.

Thune amendment No. 4424 (to amendment No. 4423), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

S. 1383

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this past weekend marked 61 years since President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his “We Shall Overcome” speech to a joint session of Congress. Speaking from the House rostrum in the wake of Bloody Sunday in Selma, AL, President Johnson urged Congress to pass legislation that would secure “the full blessings of American life” to all, regardless of color or creed. That Congress would heed his call.

On August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. That bill, nearly a century after the

ratification of the 15th Amendment, would finally, finally outlaw discriminatory practices that erected unjust barriers to voting for African Americans, like literacy tests and poll taxes. It would open the ballot box in America to everyone.

Six decades later, another President would speak from that same rostrum—this time at his State of the Union Address—and that President insisted Congress pass a bill that would make it more difficult, would make it harder for eligible citizens to vote. How far we have fallen from Lyndon B. Johnson's noble goal. We have not overcome. With the SAVE Act, we are still trapped in bigotry.

Earlier this week, at President Trump's request, the Senate began consideration of the SAVE America Act in a marathon debate session. Why? Because President Trump is throwing a temper tantrum, demanding that Congress pass his legislation and nothing else.

I have long said that in politics, there is always a good reason and a real reason. The good reason the President touts when arguing in favor of this bill? That it supposedly would put safeguards to prevent voter fraud.

Nobody wants to see voter fraud. That is a good reason, isn't it? But here is the truth: Federal law already prohibits noncitizens from voting in Federal elections, and cases of noncitizens voting are extremely rare.

In 2024, the Bipartisan Policy Center decided to figure out how frequently we encounter voter fraud in American elections. The conservative Heritage Foundation's Election Fraud Database found that in the period of 1999 to 2023—24 years—how many cases do you think they found of voter fraud, incidents where noncitizens successfully cast ballots? Out of the millions and millions of votes that were cast, they found exactly 77 in a 24-year period—77. That is barely more than three per election cycle.

You say to yourself, where is the voter fraud that is leading the Republicans now to create new obstacles for voters to face if they want to register to vote? What is the real reason if there are only 77 cases of voter fraud in 24 years? I will tell you. It is for MAGA Republicans to cling to power by rigging the elections in November. It was the same motive when it came to creating new congressional districts for Republicans.

This President is scared to death of what is going to happen when the American people finally get to say the last word on his policies, and so he wants to change the election rules. Hard to imagine. He is very blatant about it. They are not hiding it.

The lead sponsor of the bill, the senior Senator from Utah, said this weekend:

Republicans will lose power—likely for a long time—if we don't get SAVE America passed.

Unless we change the rules on registering and voting, even though there

is little or no evidence of fraud and abuse, this Republican Senator who is leading the charge concedes the obvious: It will hurt them in the next election if they fail to pass this bill. They don't think they can win the election fair and square, so they need to change the rules and make it harder for eligible voters.

So what is in this Republican political liferaft that is on the floor? Among the provisions is one that requires all States to obtain proof of citizenship in person—two critical words—in person for people looking to register to vote.

In their bill, a driver's license—the most common form of identification in America—and most REAL IDs would not be enough to register to vote. You need more. You have to prove your citizenship before you can register under the Republican plan. Only birth certificates, passports, or similar documentation would count. Well, let's go through those.

How many Americans actually know where their original birth certificate can be found? And how about those who have a birth certificate with a maiden name—a woman who is married—or are in a hyphenated relationship? What do you do with those documents?

Do you know how many Americans don't have a passport? Almost half of the people living in America have no passport, half of the population. You say to yourself, well, go get a passport; there can't be much to it. Have you tried lately? Do you know what it costs? A hundred and sixty-five dollars. So before you get to vote, you have to write a check for a passport for \$165. That applies to 146 million Americans. And how long does it take? Well, I can tell you, people work hard to get out the millions of passports each year, but we are talking about 3 to 4 weeks, in some cases months. If you put an extra 60 bucks on it and make it \$225, they will expedite it. That is your poll tax.

Do you want to vote? Do you want to register? Do you have a passport? If you don't, get ready to fork over \$165 to over \$200 for a passport.

When you consider how long you have to wait, how long you have to wait for the opportunity to have this passport, maybe you are not doing it in time for this election.

That is the Republican plan—make it more bureaucratic and more cumbersome and more confusing despite the fact there is little or no evidence of voter fraud in the United States.

What this amounts to is a modern-day poll tax for a passport.

This bill would also unfairly impact married women who have taken their spouses' names. They would either have to amend their original proof-of-citizenship documents or go through paperwork and bureaucracy to register to vote.

You are going to hear from my Republican colleagues about how this bill has been updated to accommodate people who don't have the required documentation, but the fact remains that

unnecessary barriers have been put in place to block access to the ballot for no apparent reason.

Mr. President, 77 cases of voter fraud in 24 years—is that a national scandal? Is that a national crisis? Of course not.

Here is the good news: At this moment, my Republican colleagues in the Senate don't have the votes to pass the bill, so now the question is, Will the majority leader throw out the Senate rules and bend to the President's pressure? I certainly hope not.

If we truly believe, as President Johnson said, that we must not refuse to protect the right of every American to vote in every election that we participate in, then we must reject this terrible legislation which will deny the right to vote to eligible voters across the United States.

The SAVE America Act is an affront to the fundamental right to vote, and I will be voting no.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Kentucky.

TRIBUTE TO PAUL GROVE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as Republican leader, I always enjoyed calling our colleagues' attention to longtime Senate staff as they notched milestones of service in our institution, but today, I would like to reflect for a few moments on a longtime advisor who is an institution in his own right.

There have been any number of occasions over the past several decades when it would have been right and fitting to praise the talents and service of Paul Grove. There has certainly been no shortage of situations where, except for the efforts of this one man, the Senate might have missed opportunities to advance America's influence on the world stage.

The longtime Republican clerk at the Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations is quite literally that good, but Paul, like so many of the brightest unelected members of the Senate family, is also good at dodging credit for his extraordinary service to the Senate and to our country.

Well, not this time. Tomorrow will mark a cumulative 30 years of Senate service for Paul—25 of them consecutively. He has more Senate experience than 96 of our elected colleagues, and as his first Senate boss, I am invoking my right to say a few words about it.

Long before Paul Grove was the Senate's resident expert on the levers of American soft power and our trusted emissary to the furthest corners of Southeast Asia and even beyond, he was a junior legislative aide to a freshman Senator. And if memory serves, I initially paid him to advise me on, believe it or not, healthcare policy.

In that sense, Paul's career resembles many Capitol Hill success stories: Show up with intelligence, a good work ethic, and let the rest of it sort itself out. But with due respect to the many thousands of smart and hard-working

staff who walked these halls, Paul Grove's engine runs on even rarer fuel—a deep, sincere, and abiding belief that the task before him was good and worthy of his best.

My fellow appropriators understand that when folks complain about “how the sausage is made” here in Washington, they are referring to us and the complex ways that we try to keep the lights on around here. But if you are ever tempted to think it is all a bunch of grizzled paper-pushers and number-crunchers, untethered to the real world, I would encourage you to spend some time with Paul Grove.

My good friend Robin Cleveland, who preceded Paul at the subcommittee, described him as a “true believer.” That is dead right. He is a true believer in the dividends of American leadership, the power of our influence, and the prospects of democracy—even in places where it seems to be on the ropes. Perhaps that is why the only thing that ever pulled Paul away from the Senate and our important role in shaping American foreign policy was a chance to go even closer to the frontlines.

By the time Paul returned from several years in Cambodia, where he supported fledgling democracy movements across Southeast Asia, he was the obvious choice to help me lead the subcommittee. And while no one could fill Robin's shoes, Paul brought his own, and they fit perfectly. His approach is certainly less profane but no less fortunate and formidable. Ask anyone in the State Department who has dealt with Paul whether it is worth trying to dodge his pointed inquiries.

During my time as chairman, Paul and I crisscrossed the world together, and I learned the hard way that Paul's approach to trip planning could have made even our late friend the intrepid John McCain think twice.

On my first codel to Iraq and Afghanistan with Paul, he had us wake up in Pakistan, attend briefings and lunch in Afghanistan, refuel in Oman, and have dinner in Türkiye. Paul may have been the only one still awake during that dinner, and I tried to institute a maximum “two countries per day” rule after that.

In capitals and far-flung outposts alike, Paul's devotion to our mission made me smarter and more effective, and I am sure my successors as SFOPS chair, Judd Gregg and now-Chairman LINDSEY GRAHAM, know the feeling—no doubt, so did full committee leaders like Ted Stevens, Thad Cochran, Richard Shelby, and now SUSAN COLLINS.

When I look back on this chapter of our work together, I am particularly grateful for Paul's focus on a cause that has come to mean a great deal to both of us: the pro-democracy movement in Burma. As the old saying goes, success has 1,000 fathers. Needless to say, Washington hasn't exactly jumped to claim credit for the modest progress of Burma's brave champions of democracy like our dear friend Aung San Suu Kyi, who sits today in house arrest

under the thumb of a military junta. And yet, for friends of the people of Burma, Paul Grove has been a constant presence—scrutinizing every development, pressing successive administrations toward sensible United States policy that counters PRC influence and holds a military junta to account—and tending the embers of hope for a people who has faced far more than their fair share of hardship.

Paul has been to the bottom of seemingly intractable challenges across the globe but has never lost sight of America's interest in resolving them.

He became a master of using the power of the purse to compel transparency, extract justice for Americans, reward dedicated partners, and oil—or sometimes replace—the squeaky gears in the machine of soft power.

Frankly, to the extent that America has had more responsible friends and capable allies in the fight against terrorism or communism or authoritarianism, it has been in no small part due to Paul's dogged efforts.

I have been fortunate to get to hire and to have had the opportunity to hire a lot of very smart and dedicated young patriots during my time here in the Senate. Very rarely have I managed to draw on their talents for as long as I have been able to lean on Paul Grove.

So, today, with 30 years under his belt, it is a good time to say thank you, Paul.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

S. 1383

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, at a time when our country faces unprecedented crises, the U.S. Senate has spent an entire week debating a problem that essentially does not exist.

The goal of the SAVE Act, which is on the floor right now, is to make certain that noncitizens do not vote in American elections. I don't know that anyone disagrees with that. The good news is that noncitizens do not vote in American elections. Study after study has shown that the number of undocumented immigrants voting in American elections is virtually nonexistent. We are debating a problem that does not exist.

The conservative Heritage Foundation found that over a recent 24-year period—24 years—there have been a grand total of 77 confirmed instances of undocumented immigrants voting in the United States—24 years with 77 undocumented immigrants voting. Hundreds of millions of people voted in a 24-year period, and there were 77 instances of noncitizens voting. That is according to the conservative Heritage Foundation.

What about individual States that have looked at this issue? What have they found?

Well, the State of Utah found that, of the State's 2.1 million registered voters, in 2025 and in 2026, a grand total—all right, here we go—a grand total of 1 noncitizen registered to vote in that

State, and that individual never cast a ballot—2.1 million registered voters in Utah and 1 noncitizen registered to vote.

In 2024, Idaho reviewed its 1 million registered voters and found 36 possible noncitizens registered to vote.

In 2024, Georgia—the State of Georgia—audited its 8.2 million registered voters and found 20 noncitizens registered to vote.

Overall, not only are there a tiny number of people undocumented who are registered to vote, but most of those citizens have never even voted. They just registered to vote for whatever reason and were properly removed from the voter rolls.

Let us be clear: Federal law already prohibits noncitizens from voting in Federal elections, and no State—not one of our 50 States—allows noncitizens to vote in State elections; but if this legislation were to be passed, it would create a whole lot more problems than it would solve.

Under this bill, every American would be required to have a passport or a birth certificate in order to register to vote. Now, what is wrong with that? Well, as many as 69 million married women have last names that do not match their birth certificates and would need to provide additional documentation proving their name changes in order to register to vote. Further, an estimated 4 million Americans have had their birth certificates or other necessary documents stolen or destroyed.

If you are watching this out there, just think: Do you have a birth certificate? How are you going to get a birth certificate? How many weeks or months will it take? How much does it cost? You will have to go through all of the bureaucracy to get your birth certificate.

Even worse, do you have a passport? Well, half of Americans—146 million people—don't have a valid passport. Those who would need a passport to vote under this bill would have to spend \$130 to renew a passport or \$165 for a new one. By the way, you are going to have to wait up to 6 weeks to get it.

So make no mistake about it, this legislation is nothing more than a modern-day poll tax that would deprive millions of low-income and working-class Americans from being able to vote.

So what is this bill really about? Well, the good news is President Trump has told us what it is about. Trump has said that, if this legislation were signed into law, Republicans would “never lose a race . . . For 50 years, we won't lose a race.”

Well, my understanding of election reform would be to make sure that the United States makes it possible for more people to participate in the political process and makes sure that we have one of the highest levels of voter participation rather than one of the lower rates of voter turnout in the

world. In other words, we want to strengthen our democracy, not throw millions of people off the voting rolls so, to quote President Trump, Republicans would never lose a race.

Instead of spending a week on a non-existent problem, maybe it is time we started to focus on some of the enormous crises facing our country, and let me just take a moment to mention a few.

#### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, never before in American history have so few individuals had so much wealth and so much power. During the Gilded Age in this country, with Rockefeller and Carnegie, you had a handful of people who had enormous wealth and enormous power—nothing—nothing—compared to what exists today. Today, we have more income and wealth inequality than we have ever had in the history of this country.

Do you think that might be an issue that we should be talking about? Do you think we might be suggesting that there is something wrong when the top 1 percent in America now owns more wealth than the bottom 93 percent? Do you think we might be talking about making some changes in an economic system in which 60 percent of our people today are living paycheck to paycheck and families are struggling to feed their kids? to pay for healthcare? to pay for rent? to pay for childcare? to pay for the basic necessities of life?

There are 60 percent of our people who are living paycheck to paycheck, and one guy—Elon Musk—owns more wealth than the bottom 53 percent of American households. Do you think maybe that might be an issue that we should be talking about?

But one of the reasons we don't talk about that issue and many other vital issues that impact working families is the reality that Congress today is much more concerned about protecting the needs of its campaign contributors—the billionaires who are putting an unprecedented amount of money into the political process—rather than representing the needs of working families throughout America. It is no great secret. As a result of this disastrous Citizens United Supreme Court decision, the billionaires in this country—Democrats but more Republicans—are putting huge amounts of money into the political process, and Congress is quickly becoming a corporately owned entity.

Maybe we might want to talk about how we get rid of Big Money in politics and create a democracy in which every person has one vote, not where billionaires can spend unlimited amounts of money to elect candidates who represent their interests.

I should tell you that one way I believe that we begin to tackle the massive level of income and wealth inequality that exists is by imposing a wealth tax on the 938 billionaires in America who are worth some \$8.2 trillion. Legislation that I have proposed—

the wealth tax on billionaires—would not impact anybody in America who is not a billionaire, but over a 10-year period, this legislation would raise \$4.4 trillion strictly from the people on top—the one-tenth of 1 percent minuscule number of people who are doing unbelievably well.

And what would we use that \$4.4 trillion for? Well, let me just briefly tell you.

For a start, in the first year, at a time when working-class families are struggling to put food on the table and pay their rent, this legislation would provide every man, woman, and child in the country in a household making \$150,000 or less a \$3,000 direct payment, \$12,000 for a family of four.

So at a time when the billionaires have never had it so good, when many of them are paying virtually nothing in taxes, we are going to demand that they start paying their fair share so that working-class, low-income families can get some help—\$3,000 for every man, woman, and child in families of less than \$150,000.

This legislation would end homelessness in America and address the affordable housing crisis by building 7 million units of low-income and affordable homes and apartments. Twenty million households in America should not be forced to spend half of their limited incomes on housing. We should not have 800,000 people sleeping out on the streets. Instead of giving tax breaks to billionaires, we should be building low-income and affordable housing.

This bill would expand Medicare. In Vermont and all over this country, you have got elderly people who can't afford dental care, can't afford hearing aids, can't afford vision care. This legislation would expand Medicare to cover dental, vision, and hearing.

In the last poll that I saw on that, only 90 percent of the American people supported it. Maybe, we may want to pass it.

This legislation would provide universal childcare in America and make sure that no one in our country pays more than 7 percent of their limited income on childcare.

At a time when school districts in Vermont and around the country are having a hard time attracting good teachers because the pay scale is much too low, we would make sure that no teacher in America earns less than \$60,000 a year.

This legislation would also make sure that seniors and people with disabilities receive the home healthcare they need through Medicaid.

And, by the way, this legislation would prevent 15 million Americans from losing healthcare by repealing Trump's \$1.1 trillion cut to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act.

And we do all of that just by asking the very wealthiest people in this country, the fewer than 1,000 billionaires, to pay 5 percent of their wealth in taxes.

And you know, after that, I know people—editorial writers—all over

America are very worried about what happens to poor Mr. Musk and Mr. Bezos and Mr. Zuckerberg. The good news is they will still have enough money with their hundreds of billions of dollars left to feed their families. I don't want anybody to think that the Musk family or the Bezos family will go hungry. We leave them with hundreds of billions of dollars.

#### AI

Mr. President, the other thing that we have got to do, instead of dealing with nonexistent problems like the SAVE Act, we have got to address the threat of artificial intelligence and robotics. And surprise, surprise, our very same friends—Mr. Musk, Mr. Bezos, Mr. Zuckerberg, Mr. Ellison, Mr. Thiel, and others—are pouring huge amounts of money into AI and robotics.

Left unchecked, these technologies will bring about a massive transformation of American economic, political, and social life. That is what we are talking about. And that transformation of American life—economic, political, social—is being pushed by a handful of multi-multibillionaires, and it is time for the U.S. Congress to say: Slow it down.

And it is not only what it will do to throwing millions of workers off of their jobs, hooking children to artificial intelligence. I have talked to a number of scientists who believe that we are not talking about science fiction anymore in the sense that if AI continues to develop and become smarter than humans, the truth is AI may become independent of human control and threaten the very existence of humanity.

Now, I know that the future of humanity and the existence of whether or not we survive is not quite as important as legislation dealing with a non-existent problem like undocumented people voting. But maybe, just maybe, we might want to spend a few minutes determining whether or not we should slow down AI so that humanity survives, so that tens of millions of people do not lose their jobs, so that kids do not lose their mental health by becoming addicted to AI, et cetera.

So the bottom line is, there are enormous issues facing this country. It is no great secret that the American people increasingly understand that the work of this Congress, right now, is to protect the 1 percent and wealthy campaign contributors, and maybe it is time we started worrying about working families and ordinary families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Mr. MORENO. Mr. President, I would like to continue exactly the themes my colleague from Vermont brought up, except I think, before we talk about artificial intelligence, we should talk about natural intelligence. It absolutely goes against natural intelligence for us to sit here in this Chamber knowing that we have 260,000 working

American families, who work for our government, who are doing their job and not getting paid. That, to me, is the crisis we should be talking about.

And, yes, I agree with my colleague from Vermont. We should not be worried about Mr. Musk or any of the other billionaires going hungry. I worry about our TSA agents going hungry. I worry about our Coast Guard people going hungry. I worry about the people at FEMA going hungry.

And yet, with total disregard for over a quarter of a million families, we sit in this Chamber, and we are getting paid. Everybody here is getting paid, and yet they are not.

And I applaud my colleague from Vermont, who is walking out of the floor, for caring about working Americans.

Why don't we care about them? Why don't we fund DHS now? Why don't we worry about those families who, by the way, according to the last Secretary of Homeland Security—the last one said—and I am going to quote here:

The average [TSA agent] lives paycheck-to-paycheck.

We have taken away three paychecks. Three paychecks we have taken away from them.

If there was ever a time we needed to fund [DHS], it's . . . now.

This is not a Republican Secretary saying that. It is a Democrat Secretary of Homeland Security saying that.

I don't understand how, in a leadership role—which is what we are here in the U.S. Senate—we would allow the suffering of 260,000 families to go with this much contempt and, instead, fund DHS in its entirety. Allow those families to get paid.

Mr. President, you were a business guy like I was. Could you ever look at yourself in the mirror when you owned your businesses and know, because of your actions, the people who worked for you weren't getting paid and were suffering? It is impossible.

I remember when I started my first business. I felt the weight of success because I had to take care of my family. But for those early families, for that first business that I bought, every day I walked in, I felt this incredible responsibility. Man, if I made bad decisions, if I make a bad decision today, people will go hungry who work for me. And that drove me to succeed.

We are totally disconnected. We sit here in this Chamber. It doesn't even touch any of us, and I think that is a disgrace. I think we should, very simply, do what has always been done before we became this hyperpartisan Chamber: We fund the government responsibly. And then, if we have policy disagreements, we can sit down.

By the way, right now, just down this hallway—just down this hallway—there are Democrat colleagues and Republican colleagues of good faith sitting down to negotiate differences to get the Department of Homeland Security funded.

We have American citizens that are paying taxes to fund the government to work that is not working.

I know that sometimes pleading with my colleagues to have some level of humanity is ineffective because, quite frankly, maybe this place takes a little humanity away from you. Maybe you don't see how these decisions affect many, many people.

So with that, Mr. President, I am going to ask a very, very, very simple request—very simple.

I am going to ask unanimous consent that this body, the U.S. Senate, proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 156, H.R. 4553; I further ask that the substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

What this means in English, to the person who may be watching, is this funds the entire Department of Homeland Security for 2 weeks. Everybody gets paid up to date. We get the Department open, and then let the work that is being done now proceed. I ask that that happen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. President, I object, and I think—look, all of us here understand, because we travel twice a week, what TSA is going through. That is why we should immediately, today, fully fund TSA. If you care about paying TSA, let's pay TSA today.

So I object. If we want to actually pay TSA, let's do it right now. My colleague from Ohio, we both know what it is like to go back and forth to the Midwest every single week. Want to fund TSA? Want to have humanity for the people who are securing us? Let's fully fund them today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. MORENO. Mr. President, I am not sure what I just heard because I just offered to fund TSA. I just offered to fund the Coast Guard, FEMA, Customs and Border Patrol, Secret Service, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers, USCIS, Homeland Security Investigations. Let's do it for 2 weeks. Let's do that for 2 weeks.

Down the hall—down the hall—there are Senators of good faith that are getting together to end this political charade.

So, to my colleague, I will yield the floor for a simple question: Why would you want to fund just TSA and not the Coast Guard? Not, for example, in your State, the American Immigration Council, which deals with 102,700 undocumented immigrants in Michigan—why wouldn't you want enforcement around that? Why wouldn't you want to fund the Department that allows people like me, who, when I was 18 years old, applied for citizenship? Why wouldn't we want to fund 3,300 employees—some of them in your State—that

actually process legal immigrants? Why wouldn't we fund that? Why wouldn't we fund 7,000 special agents that are there to stop transnational criminals? Why wouldn't we fund 200 employees that fund—and you were a CIA agent—that fund biological and nuclear threat prevention? Why wouldn't we do that? Why wouldn't we fund 60,000 employees at Customs?

You care a lot about the bridge that was hopefully due to be opened from Canada. You need Border Patrol agents there. You need Customs there. Why wouldn't we fund that?

Why wouldn't we do that for 2 weeks—2 weeks—and then we can get together. Why wouldn't we do that?

Why just fund one narrow slice of the Department of Homeland Security? I am just curious why you would do that.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Will the Senator yield?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. SLOTKIN. It is not hard to notice that, right now, our country is going through a pretty fundamental conversation about the role of ICE and law enforcement in our city streets. We know that it is a cultural conversation in the United States of America because the previous head—the previous Secretary of Homeland Security got fired because of the disaster that went on in Minneapolis.

I sat, as you did, in the hearing with MARKWAYNE MULLIN yesterday because we need a new Secretary of Homeland Security. Every American in the world, Democrat and Republican, understands that is because ICE so deeply contradicted American values in our American cities.

So we are having a full-on cultural conversation about the role of law enforcement in our streets.

In the meantime, you and I can agree every day of the week on the role of Border Patrol; CBP; FEMA, which we desperately need; the Coast Guard, which no one has more Coast Guard, pretty much, than Michigan. So I am ready to fund those things now, but I don't think we can ignore the fact that ICE is, right now, an unsettled issue in the United States of America.

We are not settled. People are negotiating because we are not settled. And even this week, the President of the United States sent a letter down here to talk about the reforms he acknowledges we need in some form or fashion.

Now, some of those reforms, to me, are basic and don't go far enough—like we won't deport American citizens. But even the President acknowledges we have a problem with ICE. So let's excise that one part that we are having an American conversation on and then fully fund the other stuff here and now today. That is what I am proposing.

Mr. MORENO. Will you yield for a question?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Of course.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. MORENO. Look, I appreciate—and I know you are a person of good

character, by the way. I genuinely believe that. But that is not what you are asking for. You are asking to fund just TSA, meaning the question is this: Why would we use 260,000 people and their families as pawns in a negotiation? Why wouldn't we pay all those people?

So will you consider adding a bill that I have put together that says that as long as we haven't fully funded the government, we get money taken out of our paychecks—not held in suspension, but we actually would lose compensation, about \$500 a day, every day that goes by where we haven't fully funded the government. Would you consider adding that to your resolution?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Will you yield?

Mr. MORENO. You have the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I am proposing today just the UC on TSA, but my colleagues, one after another, have proposed funding the Coast Guard, Border Patrol, FEMA. So whichever way we want to do the package—individually or all but ICE—I am here for it.

I will do you one better on your proposal. I 100 percent agree.

When I first came to the Congress in 2019, we were in a government shutdown, in the first Trump administration, right? President Trump had a shutdown. That is how I came to the Congress. My very first bill as a Congressperson—bipartisan, by the way; the Problem Solvers Caucus; a bunch of us did it—was that if the government isn't fully funded, then Congresspeople, A, do not get paid, and B—I will go one further—are not allowed to have government pay for their travel back home, meaning they have to sit their butts down in Washington and negotiate and get it done then and there, without taking taxpayer dollars to go back home. So whether you want to add a \$500 fee, whatever it is—this body is for appropriating money, so I am here for whatever you want to propose.

But I think you have to acknowledge and even the President acknowledges at this point that the American public—Democrat, Independent, and Republican—does not like American citizens being killed in our streets. They do not like going into a human being's home without a judicial warrant. They don't like children being taken and tear-gassed and caught in the crossfire; non-well-trained officers pulling people out of cars and getting into dangerous situations; people being targeted.

You should hate this. When you are walking into Target, they had ICE officers pulling people aside because they looked like they were immigrants and checking their papers. Do you know what that does to a Jew? Do you know what that means, to just check people's papers because of how they look? You should hate that.

So for me, whether we agree or disagree—and I would hope we would

agree on the use of force in America—set that aside. Fund everything else today, now, here. Penalize Members of the Senate who want to go home and ignore the problem—I am with you on that.

But you are holding all of those Agencies hostage because of ICE. You are defending them and not allowing them to get their paychecks. You are holding them back from those three paychecks, not Democrats. We are here ready to pay. You are so protective of ICE, so protective of this President that you will not fund the other parts of DHS, and that is our homeland security. I know about that. That is my entire life. You know. You care about that. I know you do, Senator.

So, please, just excuse the thing we are not agreeing on, fund the rest of it, let's get on with it, and understand that the American public has made their voice clear on this issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. MORENO. So Homeland Investigations is part of ICE. There are 7,000 special agents that work for ICE that stop transnational criminals. You are not suggesting that we not fund them, are you?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I am suggesting that we get everybody in a room on the ICE issue. Lock them in a room here in the Capitol—our negotiators. I need the President to send his envoy so we can actually make some decisions. It has been hard to negotiate with Senate Republicans on this issue because they need the blessing of the White House. Get all the players in a room. We will sit down. I will do it. I will be here all day and all night and all weekend.

But I have to tell you, you can't use one group of people as a shield to not fund all the other border missions, all the other funding, FEMA. You can't do it.

Mr. MORENO. One more question, with your permission.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Please.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. MORENO. So nobody on your side has agreed to fund USCIS. You have not suggested that. USCIS is an independent part of the Department of Homeland Security.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I am in.

Mr. MORENO. That has not been suggested by any Democrat.

I appreciate that you are.

Nobody has agreed to fund the bio-weapons of mass destruction Agency—not been suggested.

You have specifically—not you personally—the Democrat Senators have specifically said they do not want to fund Customs, which you understand really well—really well—what Customs means—and Border Protection.

These Agencies that are listed on this board—there has been no movement among Democrats to fund these, and this is why my point is the same.

I am not suggesting to my colleague from Michigan at all that we permanently fund this forever. What I am saying is 2 weeks. Let's reopen the Department of Homeland Security for 2 weeks. Let's let people of good faith—you and I—look, we agree on what you said. Let's take our paychecks away. Let's prevent us from flying home. Let's make us—I will use your words—keep our butts here until we get this done, if that means today, tomorrow, Saturday, Sunday. We could play pickleball in between; that would be fantastic, OK? But we don't leave. If that means right through Easter, by the way, we do not leave this Chamber, and we lose pay every day that goes by until we have funded the whole thing, because we can work it out. We can work this out.

But I look at some of your colleagues who said they are serene as to where we are on this. I don't think there are 260,000 families that are serene about this, and I don't think you are either.

So, again, I would just ask that you amend your resolution to say let's fund the entire Department for 2 weeks. We don't want to defund ICE. I am not hearing you say that. I hear some of your other colleagues say that. But we are not looking to defund ICE, and we are certainly not going to stop Homeland Investigations.

Let's fund the whole thing for 2 weeks. Let's get the American people to understand we can get things done. Let's absolutely not leave—forget DC; let's not leave this Chamber, the Capitol, until we get this done.

That is my ask. That is my plea.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 362, S. 4127; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. MORENO. Reserving my right to object, just to be clear on what was just proposed, what was just proposed is to fund just TSA, nothing else.

Mr. SCHATZ. What is wrong with that?

Mr. MORENO. Nothing else.

And what is wrong with that—in case you didn't hear the peanut gallery, what is wrong with that is that there are hundreds of thousands of other government employees who, through no fault of their own—they did nothing wrong. They didn't have anything to do with what happened in Minneapolis, had no role in that whatsoever. They go to work every day, doing the best they can to keep us safe.

Yesterday, for the first time in my life, I attended a dignified transfer ceremony in Dover. And I am thinking to myself, these three Ohioans—what did they die for? They died to preserve freedom for us. They didn't ask any

questions. They went willingly. They volunteered.

Can we honor their sacrifice by saying: Do the right thing. Fund the Department of Homeland Security for 2 weeks. Senators stay here without pay—not held pay, docked pay—because we haven't done our job. Article I—we are the power of the purse.

So I would ask one last time before concluding this, can I get my colleague from Michigan, who is a good person, to agree to amend her proposal to fund the entire Department of Homeland Security for 2 weeks and then force every Senator—and I think that she has the influence to convince her colleagues—to stay here without pay until this gets done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the request?

I repeat: Is there an objection to the request?

Mr. SCHATZ. Is that a request?

Mr. MORENO. Yes.

Mr. SCHATZ. I object.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Is there an objection to the original request?

Mr. MORENO. I, with a broken heart, object. And we did not do the right thing for the American people today, and it is a shame. Politics got in the way of helping working Americans. It is a disgrace.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Colorado.

S. 1383

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, I am going to switch gears a little bit here. I want to talk a little bit about the SAVE Act.

Despite its name, the SAVE Act is not going to help you or anyone in America save on anything. It won't help you save on your gas bill, your medicine, your rent. It won't help you save on student loans or childcare or what you pay for utilities. This bill has nothing to do with money at all, and it certainly isn't about helping Americans.

We are going to fight against this bill with everything we have got, and it will fail because it is bad for the country. That is right—the Republicans know the bill will fail, and they are intent on dragging this out for hours, for days that could be spent addressing the real issues that Americans face.

The cost of gas is rising every day, week after week. In parts of Colorado, the price of gasoline has almost doubled in the last several weeks. That is money taken straight out of your pockets. Grocery prices are going up. Doctor's visits are going up. Housing costs are going up as well.

Right now, one in three American households spends more than 30 percent of their income on housing—one-third. And when they are not shelling out for rent, they are shelling out more for healthcare. Despite living in the wealthiest country in the world, Amer-

icans pay the highest costs for healthcare globally and in many cases get worse results.

But we don't have to tell all of America this. We don't have to tell all of you this; you already know it. You are living it every single day—at the checkout line, in the pharmacy, at the doctor's office, when you pay your electric or water bill.

And here is what makes it worse. You are doing everything right. You are working longer hours, picking up second jobs. You are cutting back in every way you can to make ends meet. You are skipping vacations. You are delaying buying a home. You are putting off starting a family. Some folks today are even skipping doses of medication just to stretch their prescription a few more days. This is not because you want to but because you have no choice, you see no other way.

A year ago, at his inauguration, our President promised lower prices and no more foreign wars. This administration has already spent 20 billion of your dollars waging war on Iran, and the war has gotten bigger, bloodier, and more expensive every day since. Just today, the Pentagon announced their plan to ask Congress for \$200 billion to fund the war in Iran—\$200 billion. That is money that we don't have. Our deficit last year was somewhere in the vicinity of \$1¼ trillion. Yet Congress is going to be asked to borrow \$200 billion more and add that to the national debt.

The SAVE Act isn't going to save any of that. It is not going to save any American any money, and it certainly isn't going to change reality.

So what is it really about? I think it is about saving this administration's failing agenda. And how is that? It is through voter suppression.

The President knows that costs are high. He knows that you are angry. He knows that the majority of Americans disapprove of the war, are unhappy that their costs keep rising. But instead of actually lowering prices, he is backing a bill that is going to make it harder for most people to vote, especially for Americans whom he doesn't trust will vote for him.

The SAVE America Act creates mountains of redtape for voters and will ultimately remove millions of Americans from the voting rolls—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. It requires every voter to dig through their basement, go up into their attic, and try to find their birth certificate—right—find their passport, just so they can register to vote, something most of them have been doing year after year for decades.

But there are problems—real problems—with this plan. More than 21 million American citizens don't have their original birth certificate handy or they don't have a passport, they don't have either one of these types of identification; and 69 million married women have birth certificates that don't have their correct last name. They changed their name when they got married.

Taken together, the SAVE America Act would make it more difficult for tens of millions of people to vote. It would also dismantle vote-by-mail as we know it. Now, about one in three Americans voted by mail in 2024, an election that President Trump won. During the 2024 election, the voters most likely to vote by mail were those over the age of 65. It is the single best way for folks with limited mobility to exercise their constitutional right.

Just look at Colorado. Almost 99 percent of Republican voters in Colorado voted by mail in 2025. Now, way back in 2013, when I was still the Governor, we passed a set of laws that established our State as the gold standard for secure and accessible elections. We started by making voting as accessible as possible. We established one of the first universal vote-by-mail systems in the country. Now, you can still vote in person, but every single Coloradan gets a ballot mailed to them. Now, these reforms were largely created by Republican county clerks working with our Republican secretary of state.

Vote-by-mail has proven to be less expensive, more secure, and people love it. The turnout just goes up. It is perhaps the single most effective way to increase voter turnout. Today, as I said, every single registered voter gets a ballot in the mail. Every ballot that they receive in the mail is printed on paper, meaning that we have a physical record across the entire voting system that can be easily audited at even the faintest hint of fraud. And we go beyond that.

It is basic common sense. The ballot arrives weeks before the election, which gives Coloradans plenty of time to research the candidates, talk around the kitchen table about whom they think is going to do the best job, and submit their ballot by mail or go drop it off at a ballot box. And even if voters wait until the last minute, they can still register to vote and vote on election day.

Now, Colorado Republicans were behind this initiative literally every step of the way because this was about making voting, the act of voting, easier for everyone. Coloradans—Democrats, Republicans, Independents—we have almost a third—actually, we have more than a third Independents now—everybody loves this system. During the 2025 election, 98 percent of all the Coloradans who voted, voted by mail. They submitted mail-in ballots. They dropped it off or they put it in the mail.

And Coloradans didn't just make voting accessible; we made it secure. We created a multilayer system of checks and balances. Every single drop box that receives ballots is under 24-hour video surveillance from the time the box opens for ballot return until the end of an election—day and night. We made sure Coloradans could track their ballot the same way you would use FedEx or UPS to track a package so voters could trust that their ballot had been counted.

And in 2017, under the leadership of the Republican secretary of state Wayne Williams, Colorado took election security to the next level. We became the first State in the Nation to conduct a bipartisan statewide audit after every election. The results from these audits over the 6 years show that Colorado's vote-counting systems were more than 99.99 percent accurate. We put the burden on a team of Democratic and Republican leaders to use the State's resources—in other words, the State pays for this—to ensure that every person who votes is eligible and every vote counted matches the ballot.

Now, the SAVE Act would completely reverse this progress. It would bog down the voter in endless mountains of new redtape, and in the end, millions of Americans wouldn't cast a ballot at all. Now, think about it and ask yourself who this really impacts: seniors who no longer drive, rural Americans who live hours from a government office. These are likely Republican voters, but it is going to impact them negatively. It will impact working parents who can't take time off to track down paperwork or take work off to vote in person. It would impact women whose last names have changed, as I mentioned. At the end of the day, none of it helps you, the voter.

It is all a distraction—a rather large distraction. Every hour that we are spending in the debate about the SAVE America Act is an hour we are not spending bringing down the cost of groceries or housing, healthcare.

While Americans are worried about costs and they are worried about their families and their future, the administration is relitigating the 2020 election and waging a war most Americans don't want. All of this chaos—from Colorado to Venezuela to Iran to Minnesota—is one big distraction from this administration's failure to lower costs for Americans.

The bill was never about saving Americans money. They call it the SAVE Act. It creates a misrepresentation. But what we should be here today to accomplish is to figure out how to save money for the American people, for all of you.

If your agenda is working and you are delivering on promises, you don't have to make it harder for people to vote. I would argue that agenda might not be working. I think the results, if your agenda is working—and the people—speak for themselves.

So let me spell it out. Americans want lower costs—not wars abroad, not violence in the streets. Americans are looking literally for any sign that this administration still sees them, still sees the rising grocery costs, the gas prices, the huge bill increases from doctors' offices.

This administration refuses to acknowledge these problems exist, and there is so much infighting within the President's ranks that they can't decide whether this war will go on for 2 weeks or 5 weeks or a year. Are Amer-

ican troops going to be deployed? The jury is still out on that as well. It is a lot of noise and not a lot of substance. So far, there is no evidence of a comprehensive plan and certainly no—and by that I mean zero—accountability to the American people.

Let's remember, the Pentagon just announced their plan to ask Congress for \$200 billion to fund the war in Iran. They want the American taxpayers to sign off on borrowing—because we don't have the cash—\$200 billion more money—\$200 billion more. With that kind of money, we could fund universal pre-K in every State in this country, we could get to universal healthcare coverage, we could have free school meals for every child and free community college for every American for a full year.

So when they shout out the importance of the SAVE Act, remember this one thing: It will not help you save a penny on your rent, your groceries, the cost of your healthcare. The only thing it is saving, I would argue, is their political skin.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. 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 Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am back again to address the SAVE America Act, and what I can't really get my brain around is the fact that in a recent poll, 71 percent of Americans support the SAVE America Act.

Now, it is no secret that our Nation is politically polarized, but when 71 percent of Americans think that this is a good idea and we can't get it done, it is pretty hard to explain. So let me try.

So why would you say that we oppose only American citizens being able to vote? Why would you say that? Why would you oppose the proposition that only American citizens can vote? And why would you oppose the proposition that in order to cast a ballot, that you need to produce an ID, a picture ID?

Well, maybe there are other explanations that I haven't thought of, but the explanation that occurs to me is because you think that illegal aliens should be able to vote. Maybe you think that people should not have to produce a photo ID so they can pretend to be somebody they are not and cast a ballot on their behalf.

I wish our Democratic colleagues would just come out and fess up and admit that that is their motivation: letting illegal aliens vote and letting people commit voter fraud by pretending to be somebody they are not because they are not required to produce a photo ID.

Well, I can think of maybe one other explanation. You remember back when

the President spoke at the State of the Union, he asked for all the members of the audience there assembled before him in front of the whole country to stand if you support law enforcement and public safety and not illegal immigrants? All Republicans stood; all Democrats sat on their hands.

I found it particularly telling when some of the TV cameras zoomed in on some of the Democrats who were very—if I am interpreting their body language correctly—they were very uncomfortable because they knew that what they were doing was wrong, but they felt like for some reason they had to do it.

And then there is the decision of the President to eliminate the nuclear weapons program of the Iranian regime. The Iranian regime is the No. 1 state sponsor of international terrorism. They have had American blood on their hands for 47 years, since the Iranian Revolution, produced these explosively foreign penetrators that killed or maimed the servicemembers of the United States over many years, their proxies, the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Iranian—the Shia militias. They have American blood on their hands, and the Biden administration and previous administrations knew that they aspired to have a nuclear weapon.

Now, I cannot imagine anything worse than the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism getting a nuclear weapon. They are committed to the death of Israel. They want to wipe Israel off the map, but they also chant “Death to America.”

What is it about that, that we don't understand and believe? And thank goodness President Trump had the courage—political and otherwise, and the confidence in the United States military—to do what needed to be done in order to protect our own troops in the Middle East and help prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

What do our Democratic colleagues do? They said: Well, Trump started the war, and there is no identifiable end state, so we oppose what President Trump is doing.

So Trump derangement syndrome causes people to do really strange things, to take the side of the No. 1 state sponsor of international terrorism that wants a nuclear weapon, to cause Members of Congress to sit on their hands rather than to support and applaud our law enforcement personnel that keep our communities safe.

And now, we see this happening at our airports across the country where, because of Democratic obstruction, our TSA agents—the people who are maintaining the security at the airports—they have been working. They have now missed two paychecks—and for what good reason could that be?

Well, I think it is Trump derangement syndrome. They know that President Trump wants the Department of Homeland Security funded, which means they automatically reflexively

don't want it funded and they frankly don't care who they hurt.

It is shameful. It ought to be embarrassing, but some people can't be embarrassed. So Democrats are now forced into a strange posture on this SAVE America Act, which requires proof of citizenship to vote and proof of identification in order to cast a ballot.

Democrats are forced into the awkward position of saying we should block—they should block this legislation that so many of their own constituents apparently want and agree with.

I have to say listening to some of what passes for arguments on the other side, I find myself unpersuaded by their fearmongering. I remember I asked in the Judiciary Committee the other day—I asked the ranking member, the Democratic whip Senator DURBIN from Illinois, I said: What is it that the Democrats dislike about the SAVE America Act?

He said: Well, it will disenfranchise people.

Well, not if you can show you are an American citizen, not if you have a photo ID. You are not going to be disenfranchised. So that must mean that you are worried about disenfranchising noncitizens, illegal immigrants. You are worried about disenfranchising the election cheat who wouldn't be required to show photo ID but yet casts a ballot pretending to be someone they are not.

Two days ago, Minority Leader SCHUMER came to the Senate floor and said: The SAVE Act is not about election integrity. It is voter suppression. Well, he is half right. It is illegal-voter suppression.

But his general argument that American citizens would be denied the opportunity to vote is patently false. Thirty-eight States, including States like Georgia and Rhode Island, currently represented by Democrats, require voter ID. Are those States suppressing the vote? Is the minority leader suggesting that 38 out of our 50 States are actively engaged in voter suppression?

Well, that is preposterous on its face. Some States like my State of Texas requires voters to show an ID with an option to sign an affidavit alongside the secondary form of ID to establish their identity. In other words, we make it easy.

So the idea that the SAVE America Act will disenfranchise legitimate voters is a baldfaced—well, let me try to be generous. It is not true, and he knows it. The Democratic leader knows that is false, but he has the temerity to stand up here on the Senate floor and to tell people who may not be informed about the details of this, that we are trying to take away their right to vote.

Well, it is the Democrats who are diluting your vote if you are a qualified voter by allowing noncitizens or people who engage in election fraud the opportunity to vote.

They are diluting your vote, making it less valuable. So the SAVE America

Act will not disenfranchise legitimate voters. It will simply universalize ID requirements, so that all 50 States will play by the same rules.

Another charge that we are hearing is that, well, it is just too hard to prove you are an American citizen because you need a passport. You will need a passport to vote, and any requirement that you need a passport will be too burdensome. Well, of course, anybody who has traveled will have a passport, of course.

But, once again, this argument that you need a passport to vote is not true. The SAVE America Act allows Americans to prove their citizenship by a variety of documents, including, but not limited to, a passport.

Americans can present an enhanced driver's license, a REAL ID-compliant license, or a State ID card, all of which are sufficient under this bill to prove you are an American citizen.

I have a REAL ID driver's license in my pocket as do most drivers. We required licenses, post-9/11, to prevent terrorists from getting false identities and traveling on our airplanes and blowing them out of the sky. We required that States eventually would require a REAL ID, which just has a radio frequency chip in it that is hard to counterfeit so that we have assurance that people who produce a driver's license with a REAL ID in it are who they say they are.

So you don't need a passport. You can use a military identification card. You can use a certificate of naturalization, if you weren't born in this country but became, by grace of God, an American citizen.

Furthermore, if an American does not have any of the above, they can pair a photo ID with their birth certificate, a consular report of birth abroad, or similar documents. In other words, there are a lot of different ways that people can establish that they are qualified to vote.

Finally, and perhaps the most outrageous charge that our Democratic colleagues have been flinging at us is that married women—we are going to disenfranchise married women whose birth certificate does not reflect their current married name. They won't be able to vote.

Well, that would be foolish if that were true. As somebody who is not only married for 46 years but the father of two adult daughters, I promise I would be the last person on the planet to tell a woman she has no right to vote.

So this is nothing but a scare tactic. Certainly it is easy to be able to establish, based on a marriage license or something else, some other qualifying document, that your birth certificate name is different than your married name. So this is nothing more than a scare tactic by our colleagues who want, what? Why are they objecting to this? Let me put it less charitably. They want to make it easier for people to cheat. That is a harsh statement, but you tell me what the other alter-

natives are. They want to make it easier to cheat.

The reality is, the SAVE America Act provides a process for anyone who changes their legal name for reasons of marriage or otherwise to register to vote.

And anyone who is already registered to vote at the time they change their name would just have to update their voter registration. Well, I think women voters should be offended that somehow they are not capable of being able to identify themselves, either with a marriage license or a birth certificate, or that it is just too hard for them; they can't figure it out.

That is insulting. Well, I have full confidence that American citizens who happen to be female who go through these heroic efforts to keep our businesses running and take care of our families, I have full confidence they will be capable of updating their voter registration to match their new married name.

To listen to our Democratic colleagues, you would think the American people are incapable of thinking for themselves or are incapable of simply locating these legal documents.

And we are not doing this for frivolous reasons. It is because, apparently, our Democratic colleagues think that noncitizens should be allowed to vote and that election fraudsters should be able to vote without proving their identity.

On behalf of the 32 million Texans I represent, I find this argument deeply offensive.

America is the greatest place on Earth. What we have here is the envy of people around the world who want to come here because of the opportunities that this great country provides.

But one of the most important aspects of America is that our laws are passed by elected representatives and that our laws are legitimized by the consent of the governed, who cast a vote on behalf of those officeholders, those Members of Congress on their behalf. And these are positions of trust that we hold. But the authority comes from the voters and comes from the citizens, not illegal immigrants, not election fraudsters.

That undermines the very foundation upon which the legitimacy of our government rests. I think a country with citizens bright enough to put a man on the Moon and to build the strongest, most powerful military in the world and the greatest economy that the world has ever known, I think those folks are smart enough and capable enough to be able to locate their driver's license when they cast a ballot and to establish their citizenship in order to qualify to vote.

Any suggestion to the contrary is ridiculous.

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.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. 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 Tennessee.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, you know, it is so interesting that we are finding ourselves here on a Thursday, and one of the pressing issues is DHS funding for Homeland Security. And I find it so interesting that my colleagues across the aisle continue to be given to this concept that they have grown over the last few years.

And it is that we need to defund Federal law enforcement, and we need to abolish ICE. And, of course, we know they have made this commitment to their leftist base that what they are going to do is find a way to go through defunding Federal law enforcement and abolishing ICE. And to them that is the holy grail.

So let's look at what this actually would do. I think it is important to note that the Department of Homeland Security—that ICE is already funded, fully funded, and will be fully funded through 2029.

Now, they can rant and rave all day long, but nothing is going to change that. That is already there. We did that this summer, and it was in the Big Beautiful Bill, working family tax cuts, but, of course, they all voted no. No one on the Democrat side voted for that, even though it was the largest tax cut in our Nation's history.

So they obviously never read the bill to find out what was in the bill, but one would think that with this much time having passed, that they would be aware that ICE is fully funded.

Now, what they are doing is prohibiting funding from FEMA, Secret Service, the Coast Guard, and other components of Homeland Security. And FEMA makes up 35 percent of the DHS budget.

And I just think it is so important to note TSA is not being paid, and this is now day 35 that the Democrats have said to TSA and to the American people: We are going to use you as our pawns because we want to make certain that we are defunding Federal law enforcement and we are abolishing ICE.

So our TSA workers are out there working without a paycheck because of this singular focus of our friends across the aisle. I encourage them to set this aside. We need to make certain that Homeland Security investigations, that TSA, that FEMA, that the Coast Guard, and that the Secret Service are all receiving appropriate funding and that we make certain DHS—Homeland Security—has the funds to keep this Nation safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

HONORING PRIVATE LUTHER LERU "DUSTY" RHODES

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life, service, and

long-awaited homecoming of Private Luther Leru "Dusty" Rhodes of Edneyville, Henderson County, NC, a U.S. marine who gave his life in defense of our Nation during World War II.

Luther Rhodes was born in Edneyville on March 22, 1924, and raised on his family's farm in the Blue Ridge, Appalachian Mountains alongside nine brothers and sisters.

From an early age, Luther learned the values of hard work, devotion to family, responsibility to others, values that shaped the man that he would become and guided his decision to serve his country.

At just 17 years old, Luther was determined to enlist. After receiving his father's permission, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps on November 11, 1941—just weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor. He completed recruit training at Parris Island and was assigned to L Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division at New River—now Camp Lejeune—NC.

In late May 1942, Private Rhodes deployed to New Zealand and soon thereafter took part in the amphibious landings on Guadalcanal on August 7, 1942—the first major American offensive of the war in the Pacific. His unit captured Henderson Field and then endured months of sustained, often brutal combat, including Bloody Ridge and battles along the Matanikau River.

During this period, Luther became known among his fellow Marines as the Kid and by the nickname "Dusty." He was young and slight, with light blond hair and a boyish face, but he demonstrated courage and resolve beyond his years. He earned the respect of the men with whom he served.

On the night of October 7, 1942, during the Third Battle of the Matanikau, Japanese forces attempted to break through marine lines. In the darkness and confusion of that engagement, Luther Rhodes was killed in action. He was 18 years old.

His fellow marines recovered his body the following morning. One of them, Lawrence "Hardrock" Gerkin, who had taken Luther under his wing, was informed personally of the young marine's death. When Gerkin saw Luther's body wrapped in a poncho, he was overcome with grief. He ordered the men carrying him to handle him with care. Decades later, those who witnessed that moment still recalled how Luther's blond hair appeared alongside the battlefield.

But the chaos of the war and the movement of his remains afterward created lasting uncertainty. Luther's body was buried in a temporary Marine cemetery on Guadalcanal, but his remains were never returned home. In 1949, he was declared permanently non-recoverable.

His parents wrote to the Marine Corps in 1946, pleading for information and expressing their hope that their son could one day be returned to the United States for his final resting place.

Their youngest son Marvin grew up never knowing his brother. Luther died when Marvin was just 6 months old. For decades, Marvin searched for answers. He submitted DNA. He attended briefings. He followed every lead that he could, and eventually he lost hope that his brother would ever be found.

Then, last year—in 2025—the phone rang. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency had identified Luther Rhodes from remains buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. Advances in DNA technology had finally made it possible.

After 83 years, Luther was coming home.

For the people of Henderson County, that news meant something deep. It meant a son of the mountains who left home as a teenager to serve his country was finally coming back to the hills that raised him.

Next weekend, Luther Rhodes will be laid to rest at Edneyville United Methodist Church, near his parents and siblings, in the soil they prayed he would one day return to—back in the Appalachian Mountains, among his own people.

That identification came through persistence, careful research, and an unwavering commitment to the principle that no American servicemember should ever be forgotten. It came through the extraordinary work of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. It came through the advocacy of the Hedrick-Rhodes VFW Post 5206 in Hendersonville. It came through the determination of family members and community leaders who refused to abandon the search.

To Marvin Rhodes and the entire Rhodes family, the people of North Carolina honor your brother. We honor your sacrifice, and we are grateful that Luther is finally coming home.

I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring Private Luther Leru "Dusty" Rhodes, U.S. Marine Corps, and in reaffirming our commitment to never cease our efforts to account for those who remain missing in action.

May God bless the memory of Luther Rhodes, and may God bless the United States of America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, 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.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I had spoken a little bit earlier about what was happening with Homeland Security funding. One of the things that we are hearing from so many school groups and church groups and

people and families who are coming up for spring break is their disappointment with these long lines at the airports and the difficulty in making those travel arrangements.

Again, I think it is so important to encourage our colleagues across the aisle to accept some of the concessions and the offers that have been made to them in order to fully fund DHS and focus on our Nation's security, but, as I mentioned earlier, they choose not to do that because they want to abolish ICE. That is their North Star right now. That is their guiding principle.

They are all about abolishing ICE, so let's look at what that would mean. One of the things that we learned from the American people is they wanted to see our Nation's borders closed. They wanted to make certain that we—the American people—know who is coming into our country and why they are coming into our country. We know that we want to be certain that people are not coming here with ill intent.

We have seen this play out. We know for a fact that there are about 18,000 known terrorists who came in during the 4 years of the Joe Biden administration. Many of these people came in with criminal records. We know they are on these Terrorist Watchlists. We know that they have moved across our country and that the Department of Homeland Security has been locating these individuals, moving to apprehend these individuals in order to detain them and prosecute them and to get them out of our country.

Interestingly enough, the vast majority of the American people agree with that process. They agree that these are individuals who should be removed from the country.

It is really quite amazing to me. In Tennessee, I have not talked to one single person—not one—who says “Marsha, do you know what? I hope we get more terrorist moving into our neighborhood” or “Marsha, I hope we have more gangs, more drug dealers, more drug traffickers, more human traffickers, more sex traffickers, more pedophiles” in their communities. They don't want that, and there is a good reason for that. The people in this country value public safety. They value that. They want our Nation to be safe. They want our communities to be safe. They want to make certain that we are going to have a safe environment in which to live.

Public safety and defending our country—that is kind of at the top of the to-do list when you talk with people about their expectations of the activities we are going to take up.

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Mr. President, there is another thing that is at the top of their to-do list, and that has to do with the SAVE America Act that is before us right now.

This legislation holds two provisions that the majority of the American people agree with. Democrats give it a 71-percent thumbs-up approval rating,

Independents approve it by about 85 percent, and over 90 percent of Republicans approve of this. It is really quite simple. It really is common sense—common sense, obviously, to Democrats all across the country, to Independents all across the country, and to Republicans all across the country, but to the Democrats in this Chamber, they say: Oh, no, no, no. No, you don't. The two provisions are these:

No. 1, if you are going to register to vote in a U.S. election, you have to prove that you are, indeed, a U.S. citizen—very common sense. We don't allow people who are not citizens to register to vote because they are not a citizen.

Now, if you were to follow the illogic that is on display from many of my colleagues across the aisle, you would hear them say: Well, we need to allow these individuals to be a part of the community.

Do you know what? They are illegally in the country. They do not have a right to vote, and they should not register to vote.

But we have 19 States—19 in this country—19 States—that will allow people who are illegally in the country to get a driver's license. Well, what does that have to do with voter registration? It is because of the motor voter law. What they will do is get that driver's license, and then they will check that little box that says they can register to vote or that they want to register to vote. Then the responsibility of getting them off that registration goes to your State registrar of elections because they are going to have to match up their voter rolls against the list of individuals who are in the country illegally and make certain they are not there.

States also can clean up these rolls by making certain that what they are doing is checking it against the IRS-Social Security death rolls. This is how you make certain that your rolls are accurate. That, indeed, is what needs to be done to ensure that people who are eligible to register to vote are the only ones who are registering to vote.

Now, there is another thing that can be done to help with making certain we are respecting citizens, respecting “one person, one vote,” and making certain we are respecting that right to cast that ballot, and that is having individuals who are going to the polls to vote actually show their ID.

Now, in Tennessee, we do this. This is standard process for us in Tennessee. And, by the way, we clean up and verify our rolls. We make certain that we are doing that. We check them against the Social Security and the DHS rolls, and we are certain that people are a citizen.

Makes sense, doesn't it? If you are going to vote, you have got to be a citizen. And when people go to the poll, they take that photo ID, and they show that ID before they cast that ballot. This is an action that shows respect. It shows respect for “one person, one

vote.” It shows respect for the process. It shows respect for our citizens.

The SAVE America Act and what it embodies is making certain that people prove they are who they are when they go to that poll, that people prove they are indeed a citizen of this great Nation—the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth—and that they are thereby entitled to register to vote. These are actions that certainly are there to help protect that process, and we want to make certain that the SAVE America Act is passed, that it makes it to President Trump's desk, and that it is, indeed, signed into law.

And I think that all of our colleagues across the aisle, when you look at the fact that 71 percent—71 percent—of the Democrats support this, 85 percent of the Independents support this, 90-something percent of the Republicans support this, so it leads you to ask the question: What are they afraid of?

Well, one of the things that we continue to look at is, as we talk about elections, we should make it easier to vote and harder to cheat. And verification, clean rolls, respecting that process—yes, indeed, that is going to make it easier to vote. It is going to make it harder to cheat. That is something that the SAVE America Act would accomplish. But our colleagues across the aisle are fearful of that.

I would encourage my friends to think long and hard: What are they afraid of with the SAVE America Act? Are they concerned that it would eliminate fraud? Are they concerned that it would clean up elections? Are they concerned that our counties and States might verify and clean up those voter rolls? Why would they not want to do this?

I was doing a telephone townhall with Tennesseans the other night. We had several thousand on the phone, and a gentleman asked this question, he said: I don't get this. What are the Democrats afraid of with the SAVE America Act?

And I told him, I said: You know what? I don't get it either because if we want to preserve “one person, one vote,” if we want to make certain we are protecting your right to make certain your vote counts, then these two steps would go a long way to giving individuals the confidence that they want to know that their elections are going to be fair.

And, in Tennessee, we have been ranked as having—we are ranked as No. 1 in election integrity. We go through all of these steps, and it would be a wise move for other States to begin through this process.

I would encourage these 19 States that don't require you to show identification or either don't require you to show citizenship or don't require documentation to register as they are going to vote, I would require them to look very closely at this to respect the voter and to make certain their rolls are cleared.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUDD). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent to use a framed photograph as an exhibit during my remarks.

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

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I have been saying all week, colleagues, that Democrats will be here on the floor fighting this Republican voter-suppression bill, this so-called SAVE America Act, tooth and nail for as long as it takes, and we are keeping that promise because Republicans are trying to pull off this bait and switch for the American people.

Let me be clear: This bill is anything but a voter ID bill. If you are a married woman who chose to change her name when she got married, you could be kept from registering to vote under this bill.

If this were to pass, vote-by-mail, that option would be gone. No-excuse absentee voting, that too would be gone. Your driver's license, which most people think would be sufficient under a voter ID law to access the ballot box, not good enough anymore.

Why? It is because the American people are tired and angry about the Donald Trump disastrous agenda, the failures of the Republican majority to improve their lives. And instead of facing the consequences of their actions and owning their record, they want to change the rules of our elections to avoid consequences from the voters.

And I can't help but note the timing of this debate. Sixty-one years ago this week, President Lyndon Johnson came to the Capitol and addressed a joint session of Congress, delivering a powerfully important message to his fellow Americans, a message that is still resonating to this very day. He said:

Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved Nation.

A challenge to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our Nation, that is a pretty good summary of what is happening this week.

President Johnson went on to say:

Every American citizen must have an equal right to vote. There is no reason which can excuse the denial of that right. There is no duty which weighs more heavily on us than the duty we have to ensure that right.

President Johnson was speaking not just to Congress, but to America in the days after Bloody Sunday, when civil rights activists, including former Congressman John Lewis, when they were violently attacked and beaten crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge as they marched for the right to vote.

Now, many of us have treasured memories with John Lewis. Mr. President, I keep this photo in my office where it inspires me every single day.

In the weeks that followed Bloody Sunday, our country and Congress rose to meet the moment and, coming together, Congress passed one of the most significant pieces in our Nation's history, the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Yet, here we are today, debating a bill that would turn back the clock, that would do so much to deny so many their most fundamental right as Americans, our right to vote.

That is shameful. In this country, the right to vote is a sacred thing. After casting our ballots, so many people are so proud to share with their friends, share with the public, that they have participated in our democracy; they have done their civic duty—they wear buttons; they wear stickers—which is why we cannot allow these efforts to restrict voter access that are at the heart of this bill.

Now, doing so would be an enormous and dangerous step backwards. Under, again, the so-called SAVE America Act, all 50 States would be required to send their voter rolls—including a lot of private information of voters—to the Department of Homeland Security. I spoke a couple of days ago as to why the Department of Homeland Security is the last entity you would want handling this vital information.

Now, once there, known election deniers who have been appointed by the administration would certainly run these lists through the Department of Homeland Security's SAVE Program—different kind of "save" than the name of this bill, the SAVE Program. And they would then give back to the States lists of names of voters that should be removed from their lists.

Now, colleagues, as you know, a substitute amendment has been filed for the SAVE America Act that is before us that now forces further reliance on unreliable data from the Social Security Administration.

It wasn't that long ago that we discovered that data was being misused by DOGE with a secret agreement to share the data that they got their hands on with outside political groups seeking to overturn election results.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle, let me be abundantly clear with this point: This is not an accusation. Trump's Department of Justice has admitted to this in court.

And here is another admission that the administration has made "Due to misspellings of names, transposed numbers, or incomplete information, the SAVE Program may produce inaccurate results." Again, this is not theoretical. This is not an accusation. It is happening right now.

Twelve States have chosen, or have been politically pressured, to cooperate by providing the Trump administration with their voter rolls, and there has been analysis that reveals how this demonstration is going.

NPR reports that as of December, the information of more than 47 million voters had been run through the SAVE Program at DHS, and that means the administration is already flagging American citizens—eligible American voters—to be purged from the rolls. Of course, you know what happens when a voter has been purged from the rolls: The burden falls on the voter to undo it, to navigate bureaucracy in order to prove their citizenship, once again, and to register to vote, once again.

But many won't even know there is a problem until they show up on election day, and they are turned away because even though they have been voting there for years and years and years, all of a sudden they are not on the list.

Texas is 1 of those 12 States. And again, the review of the activity that is already happening by DHS and this so-called SAVE Program in Travis County, 25 percent of the flagged names had already proven their citizenship—one in four voters.

And in Boone County, MO—another State that is participating—more than half of the voters that DHS told those States to remove were citizens. So let that sink in for a moment: 25 to 50 percent of the names were flagged in error; one in four voters—half of voters.

Can you see how this would be a huge problem? Eligible voters being removed from the rolls and even referred to DHS for possible criminal investigation, that is the broken system that Donald Trump wants to use to maintain voter rolls nationwide, and that is the question being posed to the Senate and to Congress. I know how Democrats are responding. So the question is really, Is this what Republicans want too?

As you look through the rest of the bill, you know that this SAVE Program utilization is not the only problem. And we don't have to guess as to what the strict documentation requirements would cause if imposed on the voters.

Look no further than the State of Kansas when they tried something very similar to this just a few years ago: 31,000 eligible citizens blocked from registering to vote—31,000 eligible citizens blocked in Kansas. If I were the Senator from Kansas, I would be up in arms.

Or look to New Hampshire. Hundreds of voters were turned away last year under a recently enacted State law because they didn't have a passport or a birth certificate on hand when they went to the polls—the very types of requirements in the language of the bill before us.

Joshua Bogden was one of those voters. In the late afternoon on election day, he turned up at his polling site to vote, only to be turned away because all he had on him was his driver's license that day. He had to race home and frantically search for his passport; then race back to the polls before they closed. Thankfully, he was able to vote that day, but he admitted later that if

there was anything that might have delayed him—having to take longer to find the passport, maybe getting caught up in traffic—he would not have been able to cast his vote. He would have been denied his fundamental right to vote.

Now, I have also heard some of the sponsors of this bill say: Oh, don't worry. If you don't have the proper paperwork in hand, there is going to be a separate process. And they replied to me: Well, just read the bill. Well, guess what. I have read the bill, and I will tell you about this last-minute provision, this last-minute affidavit process that has been inserted into the bill to try to provide cover for those hiding behind the true intent.

The fact of the matter is that there are no clear standards for this alternate process that they are pointing to. There is no clear explanation as to how it would work. All we do know is that if this bill were to pass and be signed by the President, it would go into effect immediately.

So let's be clear about what is fundamentally happening here. Maintaining accurate voter rolls is vital for our elections. It requires precision, it requires transparency. Trust me, I served as California's secretary of state prior to coming to the Senate. Nobody understands this in this body better than I do. But I also understand that that transparency, that precision is not in this bill.

Instead, this bill creates a system where mistakes are inevitable. And if mistakes are inevitable, then it is inevitable that people will be denied their fundamental right to vote.

There is a reason, colleagues, that President Johnson and civil rights leaders came to push so hard for the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. It was to move our country forward, not backward.

But this bill—this so-called SAVE America Act—would be a huge step backward for our country.

Democrats are prepared to meet this challenge. We will continue opposing this bill—I will say it again—today, tonight, tomorrow, for as long as it takes. Nothing is more fundamental in our democracy than the right to vote, and we will do everything in our power to protect it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong opposition to the SAVE America Act.

Let me be clear right off the bat: I believe in protecting the integrity of our elections. I believe our elections should be, and are, safe and secure. And I believe we must always make sure there is no meddling in our elections.

Every eligible American deserves to have their voice heard at the ballot box, and they deserve to have confidence in our democratic system.

So this is not a Democrat or Republican value. Free and fair elections are

the foundation of the United States of America, and protecting these free and fair elections should be something every elected official should support, but that is not what this bill is really about. It is not what this bill is really about.

The hyperpartisan so-called SAVE America Act, it isn't about making our elections any safer. It is not even about keeping our elections free and fair. It is quite the opposite. This bill is about making it harder—making it harder—for eligible Americans to vote and shrinking the size of our electorate to benefit Republicans.

This bill would impose strict restrictions on Americans' ability to vote—restrictions so severe that a woman who gets married and changes her last name could be barred from voting because her last name doesn't match her birth certificate. Think about that. You take your husband's name. Now you can't vote because your current last name doesn't match your birth certificate.

You know, you see Donald Trump and Washington Republicans, they are so, so afraid of being held accountable for their actions and their jobs and what they are doing that they are trying anything that they can possibly do to prevent people from voting in order to increase their odds in this year's midterm elections.

They know their actions to raise gas prices, cut your healthcare, increase costs with illegal tariffs—groceries up, rent up, utilities up—they are not popular with the American people, and that is why Trump first tried to rig congressional maps in red States like Texas and Missouri to give Republicans an advantage.

And when that didn't work, Washington Republicans—well, they decided to push a hyperpartisan bill. You heard me right. Instead of working to improve your lives, to improve lives of Americans by lowering costs at the kitchen table, by expanding access to healthcare, and face the voters on the merits of their work, they would just rather restrict the electorate. In other words, they just want to stop people from voting and at a time when families are struggling—they are struggling to make ends meet—when people are being squeezed by rising prices at the grocery store, now at the gas pump going higher and higher every day and, well, at the doctor's office, if you still have insurance.

Washington Republicans have chosen to focus all of their efforts—every single one of them—on preventing people from voting. Washington Republicans are not lowering your costs. They are not helping working families get ahead. Instead, they are making it harder for Americans to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

So let's not kid ourselves here. Washington Republicans are using this totally unnecessary and harmful bill, well, as a distraction, a distraction from the fact that families are strugg-

ling to keep up with the rising costs of their lives, a distraction from the fact that gas prices are going up every single day, a distraction that groceries are more expensive, and they are going up every single day, along with the price of gas.

It is a distraction from the fact that too many Americans are just worried about how they are going to afford their healthcare and their medication and what tough choices they may have to make in order to make ends meet.

These are the things that really keep people up at night, and these are the things that the Senate should be focused on. And so Trump and Washington Republicans have done absolutely nothing to lower the price of your groceries or your gas and nothing to make sure that your healthcare is more affordable. Washington Republicans simply don't care about your monthly bills going up and up. Instead, we are debating a bill that does absolutely nothing to make life more affordable for anyone.

So what should we be doing? We should be working together to protect against real threats to our elections like foreign interference, voter intimidation, and making sure that every legal vote is counted, not creating new obstacles for Americans who are simply trying to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

We should be working together to address real threats and the real challenges that American families are facing today. It is taking care of your family, kids going to school, rent, groceries, utilities, opportunity.

We should be working together to address those financial pressures that families are under to come up with the good solutions, good policies that will actually make a real difference for people in their lives at their kitchen table, and that is really what we have been elected to do.

And so we owe it to the voters to do that, and we also owe it to the voters to protect their right to vote in future elections.

So, to be clear, I will not support policies that make it harder for eligible Americans to vote. So I urge my colleagues to reject the SAVE America Act and get back to focusing on what actually matters to the American people: lowering everyday costs, making life more affordable and a good future more attainable.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I want to read excerpts of a letter of March 17 to Senators COLLINS and BRITT from the border czar and the Director of

Legislative Affairs for the Trump administration. I won't read the whole thing, except to point out that there are five substantive areas in which the administration expressed a willingness to enact reforms.

Now, that sounds kind of encouraging, but I want to read the five points. I will summarize.

The first is, we will expand the use of body-worn cameras by DHS law enforcement undertaking immigration enforcement operations.

Fine. Let's codify that. I think the retention of data is important. I think the last time we talked about body-worn cameras, there was a willingness to fund body-worn cameras. There was a willingness to indicate that it was the policy that people should wear body-worn cameras, but there was not yet a willingness to codify that requirement in Federal law. But that is workable.

The second thing is, the administration will limit civil immigration enforcement activities in certain sensitive locations, like hospitals and schools—like hospitals and schools.

There are more sensitive locations than hospitals and schools—churches, synagogues, mosques, polling locations. There are multiple sensitive locations where we have just decided—until now—as a society that that is not a good place for law enforcement, especially a roving patrol, to be. The government should not be in a church or a synagogue or a mosque or a temple. The government should not be in a hospital conducting immigration enforcement. The government should not be in a polling location or near a polling location conducting immigration enforcement.

So the idea of limiting civil immigration enforcement activities at certain sensitive locations is a reasonable start; however, I would like to rule out all of the sensitive locations and not just say "like hospitals and schools."

Now, here is where it gets a little—like, those are fine. That is workable. That is negotiable.

I want to take you through the next three bullet points.

This is the third bullet point, which starts with "The administration will adhere to current law that affords Congress oversight of DHS detention facilities." It is literally saying: We have five concessions we are willing to make, and one of them is to adhere to current law.

What in the hell is happening to this country where it is a concession from one political party to the other to adhere to Federal statutory law? That is not a concession. That is not something we have to negotiate for. That is not a show of good faith.

It is also a concession that they were not adhering to current law until now.

This is an offer. We offer that we are going to follow the law.

The fourth point is that the administration will enforce the use of visible officer identification.

I think that is also referring to a current Federal statute.

By the way, the question of masks is a little sticky. There is no question in my mind that masks are being over-used, and if there is no reason that ICE officers and ICE officers alone all have to not reveal their face, their badge number, even what Agency they work for—the reason people trust their local police department is because when something happens, you see their face.

Hello, I am Officer So-and-So. How can I be useful?

There are some very narrow circumstances—an undercover operation or if an agent has been doxed—where you may want to protect their privacy, but that is not the norm, and it has become the norm within ICE.

Here is the final bullet point: The administration will adhere to existing law and practice of not deporting any U.S. citizens.

That is a concession? We are not going to deport any U.S. citizens in violation of Federal law? That is a give to us? That is not a give to anybody; that is the Federal law. And this was what was sent as a "Look, we are working on it."

So all of this is to say that we are not that close to a deal on ICE. It is not that discussions are not ongoing. It is not they are not people of good faith trying to figure out how to both fund this Agency and reform this Agency. Those conversations are going on. But there is not a serious person in this building who thinks a deal is imminent. There is not an imminent deal.

By the way, even if we had conceptual agreement, it takes time to draft legislative text, vet legislative text, and get House and Senate Republicans and Democrats and the White House on board. We are not that close.

In the meantime, TSA workers are not getting paid. In the meantime, the Coast Guard has experienced a lapse in appropriations. In the meantime, FEMA has a lapse in appropriations. In the meantime, CISA, which does our cyber security in the middle of a war, has a lapse in appropriations.

So all I am asking—all we are asking is release the hostages. These government Agencies did nothing to deserve being defunded.

By the way, that is exactly what we did about 6 weeks ago, is we decided: We are just not in agreement about DHS, so let's fund the rest of the government.

Ninety-six percent of the government is now funded. We funded the Department of Defense. We funded the State Department. We funded the National Institutes of Health. We funded the Centers for Disease Control. We funded the Department of Energy, the Department of the Interior. We funded all of those Departments because they have nothing to do with the current debate.

So what I am saying is that we are not there yet on ICE, but why in the heck would we punish TSA? Why in the heck would we punish the Coast Guard? Why would we do that?

So I am completely flabbergasted at the position of the Republicans, and I respect the person who is about to object, and we are going to engage in all of this. But let's just be really clear on what their position is: They won't fund TSA, they won't fund Coast Guard, they won't fund FEMA, and they won't fund Cybersecurity unless we attach ICE to it.

Let's just be adults, continue our negotiation about ICE, and release the hostages. These are American citizens working for the government, working for the public without a paycheck, and we could solve this right this moment.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the Murray bill that is at the desk; that the bill be considered read three times and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, my friend from Hawaii makes a great case in a lot of areas, and he is correct—this has been incredibly frustrating for TSA, for the Coast Guard, and for so many other folks that are national security professionals.

DHS has a quarter-million Federal employees—a quarter-million. ICE has 20,000 of that quarter-million. And the argument has been about those 20,000 somewhat, but the problem is those 20,000 also do a pretty vital job for the country.

Let me give you an example. Homeland Security investigators are part of ICE. Those Homeland Security investigators are the Federal agents that actually investigate human trafficking. They are the Federal agents that do drug smuggling across the border. Homeland Security investigators are the investigators that actually prohibit American arms sales going out of the country to foreign nationals. These individuals are very important to us.

Now, a fraction of ICE is what they call ERO, which is actually doing the arrests here, but a large portion of ICE, of those 20,000 folks, are actually doing a lot of our drug smuggling, human trafficking, arms trafficking—all those functions.

So to be able to say "I am defunding ICE" is one thing, but you are also defunding all those Federal entities that are homeland security entities on it as well. That is our challenge in this.

As I have said to my colleagues before, when they defund ICE, at what point does it ever turn back on? At what point do they ever come back to my Democratic colleagues and say: It is time to actually fund ICE.

The pressure from the hard left outside has been so focused on defunding ICE, defunding ICE, defunding ICE that it is going to make it very, very difficult for any of my colleagues to ever vote and say they are going to do this.

Now, as far as the negotiation process, my colleague from Hawaii is correct. There have been some letters that have been exchanged. Part of my frustration, and I have shared it with him before, is that the offer he was dictating was actually made, and there was no response that came back for 18 days.

So the offer was made to say: Let's talk about this. Here is a proposal.

Eighteen days later, there was a response. We lost 2½ weeks of time in negotiation to be able to do it.

Now, thankfully, it has moved past just that letter. There is actually legislative language. That language is being debated behind closed doors now, finally, to be able to talk about it. There have been Democratic Members that are meeting with the White House and with Republican Members here in the Senate to be able to go more in depth to be able to figure out what to do.

It is deescalation training. Yes, it is definitely body-worn cameras and including how they are going to be used, to try to be able to mandate those. It is identification for officers. It is when they step out of their vehicle, to identify who they are, to be able to track that. It is a lot of the aspects that have been discussed, including the warrant issue. My Democratic colleagues have said it is really important. We want to be able to deal with the warrant issue as well.

All those things are in current negotiation around legislative language.

Last week, I stood here and said: Why aren't we staying through the weekend to be able to work to solve this? Why are we leaving and going home? We should stay at the wheel and keep working until it is actually resolved—not just for the quarter-million folks that are in DHS but also those 20,000 folks that also work with ICE. They have families as well. They have mortgages as well. They also want to be able to get paid, the same as everybody else.

So the challenge now becomes—we are not going to just defund ICE and then never turn it back on, so ICE agents quit because they know they are not getting paid, and it just drags on for a long time. We need to actually resolve the differences.

My colleague and I agree on body-worn cameras. We agree on deescalation. Now, we disagree somewhat on the mask issue because the problem has become unique. There are now activists who have apps. They are snapping pictures and saying: There is an ICE agent here. They are snapping a picture of their vehicle. They are putting it together. And other people are snapping where they are, tracking, using facial recognition to be able to identify where their family is. ICE agents, for the first time that I know of ever, now literally put their families at risk from Americans. In the past, ICE agents knew there were cartels that were pursuing them. Now it is not just cartels; it is leftwing activists

that are now trying to snap a picture of them.

So while they are in one city, you can actually have an activist show up in their hometown, at their home address, and to be able to torment their family there.

For the sake of the ICE agent and for their kids, why would we not allow them to be able to protect themselves and to be able to protect their family? They are doing a job that the Federal Government has asked them to do, to go pick up criminals and to go pick up criminal aliens. Let's protect our family in the process of actually doing that.

So I do object to this, but I would love to be able to offer a second alternative to this in the days ahead.

So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, first of all, I didn't get a chance to thank the Senator from Oklahoma for keeping the Senate the Senate last week. There was a moment where there was an exchange of views, and actually, the majority leader had a perfect right to kind of monopolize the time and make it so that it would have been six Republicans in a row and we would have been just standing there, but he is the one that said: Look, it is the Senate, we have to have a debate, and caused us to take turns.

That seems like a small thing, but it is not a small thing because we ought to be hard on the issues and easy on each other. And I just appreciate his steadfastness in being decent while being extremely conservative at the same time.

I will just make a couple of final points. On HSI, in particular, I think a lot of us would feel more comfortable carving that out if it weren't for the fact that so many of these HSI people are actually being taken off of their current assignment to help conduct immigration enforcement.

And so people are literally being taken off of preventing child pornography, preventing arms trafficking and drug smuggling, and they are now in these immigration enforcement actions. Three hundred remain in Minnesota. There is a little bit of the devil being in the details as it relates to getting our arms around this because we don't want whatever we do to only apply to the narrow question of the appropriations bill.

For instance, when Members said: I have a right under the appropriations law to go and visit this detention center, the people of the detention center who turned away Members of Congress said: We are not funded by the appropriations bill; we are funded by the OBBBA. Different pot of money, different set of rules that attach.

And so whatever agreement that we achieve, if we achieve one, we can't mess around with color of money and detailees from HSI or CBP. As these operations manifest themselves on the

ground, nobody is tracking what the color of money is.

So all of the reforms that we are talking about have to attach to OBBBA money, have to attach to detailees from either the FBI or HSI or any other Federal law enforcement Agency. We are trying to actually get this Agency under control.

But my basic problem is, this is cordial, this is constructive, but you and I both know we are not that close, and people have to make their rent and their mortgage now.

And so the idea that nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed to sounds good in diplomacy, but the practical effect is that our coastguardsmen and women, our TSA, our FEMA employees, our CISA employees are going to miss paychecks because we are still in an argument about a very, very narrow swath of the Federal Government.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, my friend from Hawaii is actually correct on the color of money issue. There shouldn't be a difference. Those are taxpayer dollars, all of them, so the taxpayers should have accountability in that, and there shouldn't be a limitation on that. That is one of the areas that I have also expressed frustration with DHS on because I am also one of those folks that have made a call, that I want to make a quick drop-in on one of the DHS detention facilities to be able to see it, and I was also told no. That should not be so.

So I agree with my colleague from Hawaii on that, that whatever rules that apply should apply no matter what account that it comes from because the account is actually the American taxpayer, so that should apply in every single spot on that.

I do agree as well that we have got to be able to finish this out. We have tried to offer several opportunities to be able to do it, want to continue to be able to do that as well. At the very beginning of this, we couldn't reach an agreement, so we did what was called a continuing resolution, saying let's pay everybody short term until we can actually get through this. That is how we started this. That actually ended, and now, we don't have anything on it as well.

So I would like to offer a 4-week version of that to say for the next month, let's try to work through this. I think we are closer. That is my opinion on this. I think we are closer to the debate and being able to get this done. But if it is my family trying to be able to get to a paycheck, they just want to know it is going to get done.

So I would like to offer a simple amendment, that is take DHS funding, do a continuing resolution for the next month, and be able to have it all funded. Let's keep debating. Let's keep working this out but make sure that everybody gets paid.

So I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 156, H.R. 4553. I further ask that the substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I will be brief. I always enjoy our exchanges, and this one, I think, was particularly constructive on substance. I will just say, my job is to count, and the votes do not exist for what the Senator from Oklahoma is asking for. They just don't exist, not if I wanted it, not if Senator SCHUMER wanted it.

The votes are not there. I think that one of the things that I have tried to convey to my Republican colleagues is the depth of feeling, not because there is some group demanding that we be tough on this, but because American citizens have been deported, American citizens have been killed at the hands of this Agency.

It doesn't mean everybody in this Agency is not trying their best. It does mean that this Agency is in desperate need of reform, and we do not have the votes to extend funding for this Agency without reforms, whether it is 1 day, 1 month, or 1 year.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. SCHATZ. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I am going to address two issues. The first is the funding of DHS, and the second will be on the SAVE America Act. I actually agree with the Senator from Hawaii. I don't think we are close, and here is why.

The Democrats have made it very clear they are hell-bent on defunding ICE. They have demonized these husbands, wives, cousins, sisters, brothers, to the point where they have painted themselves into a corner where there is nothing that they will accept, short of eliminating immigration enforcement in this country.

The White House has acted in good faith with the Democrats on this, with some reasonable measures, like more training, body cams, you know, things like that. But here is what they really want. What they really want is—they don't want people deported.

They don't actually believe in the sovereignty of the United States of America. They don't think that as a country we should decide who is here and who has to go. It is a fundamental disagreement that didn't exist before. If you listen to a Bill Clinton speech

from not that long ago, he talked about strong borders and deporting people.

Barack Obama deported millions of people. What they want is a dynamic. And if you listen closely, the reason why they want masked agents—or ICE agents not to wear masks is they want them identified. They want the ICE agents' families to be terrorized. They want the facial recognition software that exists on Facebook and others, when people are doxed, to be very clear and usable so that nobody wants to join ICE anymore.

This is the exact same phenomena that happened with the "defund the police" movement. What happened was because the police officers were demonized by the left, people retired early. People stopped joining police departments. Recruitment dived. That is what they want with ICE.

They want to muck up the process with this whole idea of judicial warrants, knowing full well that warrants currently exist right now. There is a full disposition for deportation through the process that both Republicans and Democrats have agreed to over the years, including Republican and Democrat Presidents. That is not good enough because they want to make it harder to deport people.

So this fundamental question about whether or not we are going to get funding for DHS is going to be very hard to solve when the Democrats on the other side don't actually want to solve the problem.

And CHUCK SCHUMER, he wants the chaos. I have talked to rank-and-file Democrats who have no idea about the reasonable nature of what the White House has offered because the minority leader doesn't want them to know because this is what he wants.

He wants the chaos. He wants people stranded on spring break at airports because he creates a bigger problem and he thinks that all goes back to Trump. This is not like rocket science, but it is—it is dirty.

And what the Republicans have said is: The White House is dealing in good faith. These people deserve to be paid. We shouldn't be holding all these people hostage, these TSA agents who are now going to miss their third paycheck here pretty soon. Listen, I fly back and forth every week. People can't afford that. Real people can't do that.

So this is where we are at. I think they want to create a dynamic like they did with the "defund the police" movement that they were so supportive of a decade ago with the defund ICE movement so that they can't do their jobs and their jobs become so difficult and their families are terrorized that nobody wants to be an ICE agent anymore.

And then what do you have? You have amnesty for the 15 million people who are here illegally, de facto amnesty because they are not going to be deported. That is the truth.

Now, they are not going to say it on the Senate floor, but that is really

what is going on. And so as far as I am concerned, we are not going to do anything that kneecaps ICE's ability to do their jobs. The American people—this was on the ballot—they support deportations. They don't think that rapists and murderers who are here in this country illegally are more important than American wives and daughters.

So that is the dynamic.

S. 1383

Mr. President, I also point out, as we talk about the SAVE America Act, the graveyards of history are littered with the bones of once great republics that chose to die, not because foreign armies stormed their gates in a single dramatic assault, but because their own leaders slowly, deliberately, and cowardly surrendered the thing that made them nations in the first place. Rome didn't fall in a day. Constantinople didn't collapse overnight. They died by a thousand small surrenders, each one dressed up as compassion, progress, or decency, until there was nothing left worth defending.

Today, this Senate stands at the same crossroads. Great republics don't die by accident; they commit suicide. And the suicide always begins when the ruling class loses the moral courage to defend citizenship, truth, and the innocence of the next generation.

The SAVE America Act before us is not three unrelated titles; it is one urgent existential question: Will America still have the will to live or do we join the long list of civilizations that quietly chose decline?

Yesterday, I answered the Democrats' lies with the actual text of the bill. Today, I rise to warn the body. We are watching a nation decide whether or not it chooses to exist.

It won't happen overnight, but over time, this is what happens. First comes the surrender of citizenship itself, and that is title I of the substitute that I have offered, SAVE American Voters.

We just endured 4 years of the wildest open border in American history. Millions and millions and millions and millions of military-aged men from 160 different countries flooded into this Nation while Democrats cheered diversity and equity.

Now, those same Democrats have the audacity to claim that simply asking people to prove that they are American citizens before they register to vote is somehow voter suppression.

Let me translate what they are really saying. They want those people who came here illegally to vote for them to suppress the vote of actual Americans. They fear actual American citizens voting more than they fear the fraud.

American elections are for Americans, and we need safeguards. When I was Missouri's attorney general, I stood in court and fought the left's dark money lawyers to defend these very safeguards. Missouri fought back. We didn't settle. We fought back, and we won. The American people deserve that same victory here because, when citizenship becomes optional at the

ballot box, the Republic itself becomes optional.

Next comes the surrender of truth—title II of the SAVE American Sports provision of this underlying substitute.

A civilization that lies about something as basic as the difference between men and women has already begun a death spiral. Title II simply says what every normal American already knows: Women's and girls' sports are for women and girls. Biological males cannot declare themselves women and steal scholarships, records, locker rooms, and safety from actual females.

We have watched this fraud unfold in realtime—boys with superior strength and bone density dominating girls' competitions while the ruling class calls it inclusion.

Isn't this wonderful? Isn't this progress while they sip champagne at their cocktail parties?

That is theft. That is cruelty. It is the law conscripted into service of a lie.

I have two daughters in Missouri who love sports. They should never ever be forced to surrender fairness, privacy, or physical safety so that Washington elites can pretend their biology is a mere suggestion and feel good about themselves at cocktail parties. A nation that tells its own daughters they must accept boys in their locker rooms has already lost the will to tell the truth about anything.

Finally, we reach the most unforgivable surrender of all—the betrayal of our children, title III of SAVE American Children.

This title draws on a clear moral line against the genital mutilation and chemical castration of minors. It says that confused children do not need scalpels, cross-sex hormones, or life-long medical dependency. They need protection. They need patience, truth, and love.

What the other side calls "gender-affirming care" is nothing less than a profit-driven scandal, and Big Pharma and activist doctors turn childhood confusion into permanent patients and permanent revenue streams.

Children are not ideological property. They are not raw material for adult experiments or corporate greed. A decent civilization does not answer a child's distress with irreversible harm. The final sign of a dying civilization is when it sacrifices its own sons and daughters on the altar of adult delusion.

I look around this Chamber right now. Watch the Democrats on this floor today, melting down, screaming about Elon Musk, challenging and changing the subject on everything except the actual text of the bill before us. Democrats are not debating this legislation because they cannot defend what this bill exposes—open borders and open season on America's daughters and children. They prefer managed decline so long as they are in power.

This Senate was not sent here to manage decline. Enough with the slow-

motion suicide of this Republic. The American people did not send us here to preside over the death of a country. They sent us here to fight for its life and for renewal.

Working families in Missouri and across this Nation are done—done with citizenship being treated like a suggestion, done with their daughters being erased in the name of inclusion, done with their children being targeted by an ideology that profits from permanent harm. This is the moment of truth.

To my Democratic colleagues, stand up right now. Defend what you really believe. Tell the American people on the record—on the record—that citizenship should mean nothing at the ballot box; that boys belong in girls' sports; and that children should be chemically castrated and surgically mutilated in the name of "care." Tell us that. Tell it to the American people. Tell it to your voters who don't support that. Say it plainly. Own it.

To every Republican in this Chamber, this is why the people gave us the majority. This is the reason we exist in this moment—no more excuses, no more polite theater, no more managed decline. Pass the SAVE America Act. Restore the ballot to American citizens. Defend our daughters from fraud. Shield our children from harm. Prove, once and for all, that America still has the will to live. The age of excuses is over. The time to fight for the life of this Republic has arrived.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The Senator from New York, Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise today to address the merits of this bill, per my colleague's request.

I rise to speak out against President Trump's un-American efforts to keep millions of eligible voters from the ballot box. The President is more focused on preventing Americans from voting than in lowering prices for working families who are suffering right now because of his economy and because of Trump's tariffs.

Make no mistake, the SAVE America Act is not about preventing voter fraud. It is a voter suppression bill designed to silence American voters. This legislation would virtually eliminate voter registration methods that 90 percent of Americans rely on. That includes mail-in registration, online registration, voter registration drives, and automatic registration at the DMV.

It would also require citizens to present documents like a passport or a birth certificate in person while registering to vote—and not just when they register for the first time. Every time someone moves or if a woman changes her name when she gets married or if a person wants to update their political party affiliation, they have to go back to the election office in person to reregister with those specific documents.

Up to half of all active registered voters—that is 100 million Americans—

register or reregister to vote every Federal election cycle. While coming up with these documents may sound easy, the reality is that more than 140 million American citizens, including over 5 million New Yorkers, do not have a valid passport, and getting one for the first time costs \$165 and takes several weeks, if not months. On top of that, nearly 70 million women who have taken their spouses' names do not have birth certificates that match their new legal married names.

The newest version of this bill also ends mail-in and absentee voting, with very limited exceptions, putting up a massive barrier to people's ability to vote if they work during the day or otherwise can't make it to the polls in person. That means, in practice, this legislation would disenfranchise millions of American voters.

It wouldn't just make it harder for new voters to register or for registered voters to change their information or for people to actually vote. The SAVE America Act would also force States to submit voter data to the Department of Homeland Security under the guise of verifying voter citizenship status. But here is the catch: Registered voters who are flagged by DHS, which has a history of misidentifying U.S. citizens as ineligible to vote, would then have to prove their citizenship or be removed from the voter rolls. That means that registered voters could be purged from the rolls, then face the additional burden of confirming their citizenship in person with an accurate passport or birth certificate. That is an extraordinary burden to put on working Americans who are just trying to exercise their right to vote. It is unacceptable.

Let me just put a finer point on this. If you take out your wallet and find your identification, it is going to be a driver's license. It is going to be an insurance card. It is going to be your military ID. None of those pieces of identification are valid. So the process that we have today for showing who you are is not valid under this bill.

The right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy. It is the purist expression of what it means to be an American. From the founding of this Nation to the hard-won struggles of the civil rights movement, generations of Americans have fought, marched, and died to guarantee that every citizen has a voice in their government. That sacred promise should never be weakened, suppressed, or denied, but that is exactly what is happening right now.

So, as we prepare to vote for this legislation, I ask you all to consider what this means for your constituents.

Think about the servicemembers who have to move every few years when they get a new base assignment and would have to go through this onerous process of reregistering in person over and over again.

Think about those in the rural communities in your State, where it might take hours to get to the location where

they can appear in person to confirm their citizenship to maintain their registration.

Think about the seniors and the people with disabilities who are homebound and who rely on mail-in and on-line registration to make their voices heard.

Think about the nearly 70 million women, like me, who have taken their husbands' last names. The SAVE America Act would effectively block us from voting if you don't have a passport or didn't go to get a new birth certificate with your married name on it.

All of these American citizens would be disenfranchised by the SAVE America Act.

Make no mistake, this bill is not about preventing election fraud. If it were, I would be for it. It is already illegal for noncitizens to vote in our elections, and numerous studies have confirmed that voting by noncitizens is extremely rare. Instead, this bill is a poorly concealed effort by President Trump to consolidate his own power and strip Americans of their constitutional rights.

The President himself said that, by passing the SAVE America Act, the GOP will "never lose a race for 50 years."

What do you think President Trump meant by that?

It is a blatant admission that this legislation is designed to subvert the will of the American people to keep President Trump's allies in power. We will not let them get away with that.

Whether you live in a rural town or in a major city, whether you vote red or whether you vote blue, whether you are old or whether you are young, whether you are rich or whether you are poor, your vote is your voice, and your voice deserves to be heard.

Here in Congress, we have a duty to protect and strengthen the right to vote for all Americans. This legislation does the opposite. I urge my colleagues to vote no on the SAVE America Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the SAVE America Act.

The principle at the heart of this legislation could not be simpler. It is not confusing, and it could not be more important. American elections are for American citizens. The fact that we are even here debating this tells you everything you need to know about how far some in this great country have drifted from common sense.

I have been fighting for the integrity of our elections for a long time. As a senator in the Mississippi State Legislature, I voted multiple times on the record to establish voter ID requirements—something Mississippi voters eventually approved as part of a citizen-led initiative.

Photo IDs have been required at the polls in Mississippi since 2014. And let me tell you something, the Civil Rights Division of the Obama Department of

Justice reviewed Mississippi's voter ID law, deemed it lawful, and never took a single legal action against it—because it is lawful, it is fair, and it works.

Despite naysayers' argument that a photo ID requirement would place undue burdens on the elderly, the poor, and the minorities, it continues to work with voters able to show or acquire a legally recognized photo ID. Did voting rights in Mississippi collapse? No. Did democracy in my State end? No.

Mississippians vote, and our elections are decided by American citizens who have greater public confidence in the integrity of our electoral system. That is the issue before the U.S. Senate today.

For years now, we have heard Members of this body, pundits, and politicians lecture the American people about the very real threat posed by foreign interference in our elections, and they were right to be concerned. Foreign interference in American elections is a serious matter.

So let's talk about foreign interference. Foreign interference in our elections is more than misleading or false posts and news stories planted online or in the media by foreign adversaries. Foreign interference has another form. If you are a citizen of another country and you participate in an American election, you are interfering in that election on behalf of a foreign nation. It is as simple as that.

Right now, today, noncitizens are taking advantage of loopholes to register and vote in American elections without ever proving they are a legal citizen of this country—no documentation, no verification.

And it is happening all over this country: in Oregon, in Pennsylvania, Montana, Arkansas, Virginia, New Jersey, the District of Columbia—the list goes on. Illegal aliens can obtain a driver's license in 19 different States. And in many of those same States, that driver's license can be used to register to vote—no proof of citizenship required.

The American people are not naive. They see what is happening, and they have been asking us—demanding of us—that we do something about it, and they are right. It is happening, and it is past time to do something about it.

The SAVE America Act does something about it. It requires proof of citizenship to register and vote in Federal elections.

That is not radical. That is not voter suppression. That is a basic, commonsense safeguard that a big majority of Americans support because we all know that we all have to show a legal photo ID to do most anything in this country.

The bottom line is that every single vote cast by noncitizens dilutes the vote of a real law-abiding American citizen. That is not rhetoric; it is math.

We can debate a lot of things in this Chamber, but we should not be debat-

ing whether American elections should be decided by Americans. The answer is yes.

For a dozen years, Mississippi voters have produced photo IDs before they vote, and they do so with the knowledge that this simple act helps to ensure the integrity of their vote.

This is the same goal at the heart of the SAVE America Act. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. Let's defend the ballot box and restore confidence in our elections.

The right to vote in this great Nation belongs to the citizens of this great Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

NOMINATION OF MARKWAYNE MULLIN

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, I rise today in support of our colleague and my dear friend, a U.S. Senator from the great State of Oklahoma and President Donald J. Trump's nominee to be the next Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Senator MARKWAYNE MULLIN.

Many in this Chamber have had the opportunity to get to know MARKWAYNE, and that is both a privilege and something that doesn't take long because with MARKWAYNE, what you see is what you get. He is authentic in every interaction, and he has never met a stranger.

MARKWAYNE and I became not only fast friends as freshman Members of the Senate, but, importantly, we became real friends. Over the past few years, my husband Wesley and I have cherished getting to share memories and that same level of friendship with his wonderful wife and much better half Christie and their six children.

Both personally and professionally, MARKWAYNE MULLIN is the real deal. He is a man of faith and deep conviction, a devoted husband and father. Whether it is coaching his children at their wrestling matches, being home when his girls get picked up for their homecoming dance, making doctor's appointments across the country, or leaving our freshman dinners early enough to get home to do FaceTime devotions with his boys, MARKWAYNE makes sure that his family always comes first.

He is honest, loyal, selfless, and principled—all of the qualities of a true leader and public servant.

But to really understand the kind of leader that MARKWAYNE is, you need to start from his roots. Throughout his life, he and his beautiful family have poured so much of their time, energy, and efforts into serving their community, State, and our great Nation. Oklahomans first sent MARKWAYNE to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2012, and nearly a decade after that, sent him here to the U.S. Senate. His constituents recognized that he was uniquely positioned to represent them because his story is similar to theirs.

He is a true son of Oklahoma. Growing up in Westville, he began his education on a wrestling scholarship to

Missouri Valley. But when his father got sick, he left his scholarship immediately and went home to run his family business.

He didn't hesitate. He knew it was the right thing to do. And he and Christie, who has been part of his success since day one, took a struggling business and turned it around over the next 20 years, making it the largest provider company in the region. They built that family business into an incredible success.

His grit is absolutely unmatched, and he never backs down from a cause, person, or a principle that he believes in. MARKWAYNE is driven by purpose, and there is no challenge, no matter how great, that he is afraid of.

MARKWAYNE has already stepped up twice to serve the United States both in Congress and here in the Senate, and now he has answered the call again by accepting the incredible responsibility of running the Department of Homeland Security as its Secretary.

As chair of the Senate DHS Appropriations Subcommittee, I can say from personal experience that navigating the Department of Homeland Security is no small task. It is one of the largest and most complex Federal Agencies in our government, and the responsibilities span from our border to interior enforcement, to disaster response, to counterterrorism, cyber security, to the protection of our Nation's leaders, and more.

Leading this Department at this point in our country's history will require a leader willing and able to solve the issues facing our Nation, and that is why I am here today to tell you that MARKWAYNE is not only qualified, but that I know without a shadow of a doubt that he is the right person at the right time to lead this Department.

It is worth noting that as I speak today, the Department of Homeland Security is shut down. MARKWAYNE is no stranger to tackling challenges, and he has repeatedly demonstrated incredible skill in the way that he approaches them here in this Chamber.

Over the past several years here in the Senate, he hasn't just served his constituency back home, he has also served as a liaison between this body, the House, and the White House, trying to figure out what was possible and find a pathway forward.

His ability to build relationships on both sides of the aisle and having the tenacity to figure out what to do and how to do it is why Leader THUNE tapped him to serve on his leadership team and why Whip Barrasso has him as a deputy whip.

MARKWAYNE doesn't just talk about problems or issues that we are facing, he puts in the work and the time to find real solutions. It is a rare breed in this town and something we undoubtedly need more of.

With strong relationships on both sides of the aisle, he is willing to sit down with anyone, anywhere, and figure out a pathway forward. His strong

character, love for our country, and determination is exactly what this Nation deserves in our leaders.

President Trump was elected to a second term with a clear mandate, and that was to secure our border, and to protect us from threats here in our interior and abroad. I have absolute confidence in MARKWAYNE's ability to carry out that mission at the Department of Homeland Security.

He believes in our laws. He believes in enforcing them. He knows the way you do it matters, and MARKWAYNE is committed to doing it the right way.

From our ICE and CBP officers to our Coast Guard servicemembers, to the men and women at FEMA, to our cyber security personnel at CISA, to our hard-working Secret Service agents, to our TSA officers, and so many more, MARKWAYNE will never back down from supporting you, the men and women who serve this Department, the men and women who stepped up to say: We want to be a part of the mission of securing our border and protecting our homeland.

He will never back down from the responsibility of ensuring the safety and security of our American citizens. He will never back down from the mission of protecting our most valuable asset: our people. He is not going to back down from protecting his family, and I can promise you, he will not back down from protecting yours.

I believe he is going to be the best and most consequential Secretary the Department of Homeland Security has ever seen. I look forward to seeing his leadership and the success he is going to bring to our Nation, and I look forward to supporting his nomination in the coming days here on this floor. And I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I want to thank President Trump for nominating such a tremendous man and leader, and I look forward to brighter days ahead because of MARKWAYNE's leadership.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The Senator from Alabama.

WITHHOLD MEMBER PAY DURING SHUTDOWN ACT

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, I think that if we are going to go and sit here for—how many days is it? I don't know.

The Senator from West Virginia, maybe, what, 48 days, 30-something, people without paychecks?

I really think we should think long and hard about Senator KENNEDY's bill. I fully support it. I hope that we can get every one of our colleagues down here to do the same because what Senator KENNEDY's bill says is that if there are people who have stepped up to serve our government in any capacity that are not getting a paycheck as a result of this body not doing its job, then we shouldn't get one either.

I think that is pretty common sense. I can promise you that if the staff in this building, if the men and women in this building, if Members of Congress—House, or Senate—weren't getting a paycheck right now, they would be

much more eager to come to the table and to have a conversation and to figure out a pathway forward. And I just think we should take a long and hard look at it. I fully support it. If there are men and women who have stepped up to serve, in this instance the Department of Homeland Security, which the very mission of that is to keep our homeland safe—to keep American citizens safe—many of them taking an oath to do just that, and they are not getting a paycheck. If they are not getting one, we shouldn't be either.

Look, people are sick of different rules for different people. And I can think of no better example of that than this right here. So let's put Senator KENNEDY's bill on the floor. Let's do it. And let's see where everybody falls on this. I can guarantee you if this body and that body don't get paychecks, they will be much more eager to make sure that other people get theirs.

So I urge this body to take a look at Senator KENNEDY's legislation. I fully support it and hope we will vote on that in the days to come.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I first would like to say to my friend Senator BRITT from Alabama that her introduction of our colleague Senator MULLIN was terrific. I would say high fives to everything that you have said about our friend MARKWAYNE, and I know that he will lead that organization in a stellar way. I look forward to his leadership.

S. 1383

Mr. President, so this week, the Senate officially begins debate on a package of commonsense—commonsense—I am probably going to say it about ten times—commonsense measures that should unite all Americans.

Americans deserve to have confidence that every vote that is cast and counted comes from an American citizen and that the system itself is fair, secure, and transparent from start to finish.

That confidence is not automatic. It must be earned. It must be maintained and reinforced through clear, consistent standards that people understand.

It sounds pretty simple. The bill we are considering on the floor right now is something that we should all agree on. Specifically, here is what it does. It requires all voters show a photo ID. Think of all the times that we show photo IDs. This is not an onerous or a discriminating task. It requires all voters provide proof of citizenship when registering to vote, and it ends the abuses of the absentee voting system that we have seen in several States.

In addition to these simple, straightforward policies on voting, the bill has two more commonsense measures. It doesn't allow men in women's sports, and I have long championed this issue of such importance to our girls in West Virginia and across the Nation. And it does not allow transgender mutilation surgery for children.

So common sense. So let's discuss the substance of this when it comes to elections. The SAVE America Act reflects the basic expectation that America's elections need to be safe and secure. It does not reinvent the wheel. It simply reinforces standards that most Americans already are abiding by.

Think about it. In everyday life, as I said, we are routinely asked to verify who we are, whether it is to board a plane, check into a hotel, start a new job, drive, or even visit the doctor's office. No one views these steps as extraordinary. Maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago—maybe—but no longer. No one sees them as controversial. Applying similar standards to our elections is not radical. It is just common sense.

The SAVE America Act ensures that those who are registered to vote are actually those who are eligible to vote. It ensures that the person who shows up to cast a vote—a ballot—is, in fact, who they say they are. These are not extreme ideas. They are very practical, reasonable steps that align with how we secure other important aspects of our society. In fact, more than 80 percent of Americans support ID requirements, including a strong majority of Americans. And the majority of States—including my State of West Virginia—already require some form of ID to vote, and we have for years.

Let me turn to the other core principle of this bill and one that I believe most Americans consider simply fundamental. Only American citizens should be able to vote in our Federal elections. It is not a partisan statement. It is a basic premise of what it means to have a sovereign democracy. Voting is one of the most important rights that we gain as citizens, whether you are a born citizen, a naturalized citizen—it is a precious right, and with that right comes the responsibility to ensure that it is reserved only for those who are legally eligible.

The SAVE America Act makes that expectation explicit by requiring proof of citizenship at the point of registration—again, not complicated. It is not controversial. It is basic. It is common sense. It is about ensuring the integrity of our Federal elections. It is not just protected on election day, but it is protected at the front end of the voting process.

As I said, it seems commonsense because it is. And you might wonder why we would need a policy to enforce this, but in 19 States—in 19 States—individuals who entered our country illegally are able to obtain a driver's license. It is a pathway in many States to the ability to vote. It provides them an opportunity to register and vote without a proof of citizenship.

The SAVE America Act closes this illegal voting loophole by requiring photo ID to vote, proof of citizenship to register, and requiring States to remove noncitizens from the voter rolls. Americans do not want illegals to vote. In fact, 62 percent of Americans support proof of citizenship in order to register to vote.

The bill also addresses an issue that has generated a lot of discussion in recent years, which is absentee or mail-in voting. Let me be clear: This legislation does not eliminate absentee voting or mail-in voting. There are legitimate reasons why people vote like this. It could be an illness, disability, military service, being away from home for business or pleasure, or other hardships that prevent someone from voting in person. These voters absolutely need to continue to have access to the ballot.

But what the bill does is draw a clear line between access and abuse. In some States, we have seen practices that go well beyond traditional absentee voting. That includes mass, unsolicited mailing of ballots to individuals who did not request them. Let's say you had a family of five. Let's say the kids have left—all three of them are still registered. You get five ballots. You could send them in. That is fraud. Or it includes also automatically enrolling voters in advance in absentee voting simply because they had used it once before. These kinds of policies raise serious concerns about ballot security and ultimately public confidence, most importantly, in the outcome.

The SAVE America Act vote puts guardrails in place to prevent those abuses while still preserving absentee voting for those who truly need it.

And I will note this issue is not an issue in West Virginia. It has not created major challenges for us. In the 2024 general election, only 2.9 percent of our West Virginia ballots cast mail-in ballots.

We have early voting. Over 40 percent of our electorate votes on early vote. Our system has a more traditional, secure approach, and it is one that has helped maintain confidence in our elections. That is the balance that this bill is trying to strike: Protecting access while ensuring integrity. It is just common sense.

Ultimately, this is about preserving confidence in our democratic process. When people trust the system, our participation grows, outcomes are respected, and our institutions are strengthened. This is something every American, regardless of party, should agree on, and that is why this effort matters. That is why these commonsense protections deserve serious consideration.

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. President, I also must address a separate matter that grows more serious with each passing day, and that is the Democrat-led shutdown of DHS. Today marks day 34—34 days of political brinksmanship. Thirty-four days where partisan posturing has taken precedence over the safety and security of the American people.

Enough is enough—especially now. Last week, we saw two terror-related incidents play out in Virginia and in Michigan. These are not distant threats or hypothetical scenarios. They were real events that underscore the very real dangers we face every day;

and yet, at this very moment, the Department charged with helping to prevent, detect, and respond to such threats remains hamstrung by a lapse of funding. I really find it deeply troubling and frankly unacceptable that my Democrat colleagues have chosen to let disagreements over policy escalate into a full-scale funding lapse for our critical national security operations.

This is not an abstract debate, and these are real people that are missing their paychecks. This has real immediate consequences. Because of this shutdown, vital resources for our airports and TSA are strained. They are beginning to not show up in larger numbers. In fact, I just met with the folks from my local airport this week, and they told me they are starting to see this with a small cadre of TSA agents. The men and women who ensure the safety of millions of travelers every day are being asked to do their jobs with uncertainty hanging over their head. We are heading into a holiday season here where a lot of families are traveling. This is only going to escalate.

We have got FEMA, the Coast Guard, and thousands of law enforcement officers operating during a time when Americans expect and deserve effective emergency response. Let's be clear what is at stake here. This shutdown weakens America's border security. It undermines maritime security. It erodes our readiness to respond to emergencies.

We should not be playing politics with our national security, and we should not be gambling with the safety of our own citizens. The Americans expect us to lead here. They expect us to govern—that means get things done. And they expect us to come together, especially when the security of our homeland is on the line.

It is imperative that we fund DHS immediately—not tomorrow, not after another round of negotiations or shadow negotiations. So let's just set aside the politics. Let's fulfill our most basic responsibility to protect the American people.

I urge my colleagues to end this shutdown, restore stability, and put the safety of our Nation first.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I recognize the Democrat whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, did you hear what the President said about this piece of legislation that is entitled the SAVE America Act—how important it is to him? Earlier this week on social media, President Trump said:

Only sick, demented, or deranged people in the House or Senate could vote against THE SAVE AMERICA ACT.

And then he threatened to sink any Republican who doesn't fall in line. Here is what he said "I WILL NEVER (EVER!) ENDORSE ANYONE WHO VOTES AGAINST" this legislation.

What is going on here? What is it about this bill that the President is so

aggressive about? Why is he saying these outrageous and exaggerated things? I will tell you: Because this legislation is the crown jewel in a grand scheme to rig the results of the upcoming midterm election.

Some of my Republican colleagues have come to the floor to defend it, saying it is necessary to safeguard our elections. So let's just look at the facts.

Let's pick a period of time. How about from 1999 to 2023—24 years in American history. Every 2 years, we have an election cycle, and 80 to 100,000,000 people are going to register to vote in each of those 2-year cycles.

So in the period of time between 1999 and 2023—24 years—12 different election cycles and millions of people registering to vote in the United States, how many were discovered to be falsifying their country of origin and to be illegal and unqualified to vote? Take a guess. Seven million, right? No. Well, 700,000. No. How about 700? No. Seventy-seven people were found to have tried to falsify where they were from to vote in a 24-year period of time—77 in 24 years.

You say to yourself: And so this bill is a death by legislation for us? Take it or leave it?

I don't buy it. There is something more to the story.

When I got involved in politics, the fellow who used to counsel me said: DURBIN, when you get in politics, there is always a good reason and a real reason.

The good reason is voter fraud. But 77 in 24 years? We have the cleanest and most accurate elections in the world. We ought to be proud of it. There is only one man who disagrees with that. He happens to be the President. He still has this Big Lie concept that he won in 2020. He will go to his grave believing he won in 2020, but he didn't. He lost fair and square. He just can't accept defeat. It is beyond him.

So you say to yourself: What does this bill do? Well, what this bill does is establish a standard for registering to vote in America. The current standards generated 77 violations in 24 years. They want to change them all. And you go through the first few pages, and the way they approach it is amazing.

One, if you want to register to vote, present your passport. Well, guess what. More than half of Americans don't have a passport.

You say: Well, go buy a passport then.

What does that involve? There is a \$165 fee to pay for a passport in this country. If you want an expedited passport, it is another 60 bucks. So in order to vote, you have to buy a passport, you have to pay for a passport. It is kind of like a poll tax, isn't it? So 165 bucks if I want to vote in November? No, thanks. I will spend it on gasoline. I don't need to buy a passport. But that is what the bill says. It is one of the first provisions.

The second thing you can produce is your birth certificate to show you were

born in the United States. Do you know where yours is? I don't know where mine is at home. It is in a box somewhere in the bedroom. I will have to go looking for it. If I find it, I am OK.

My wife has a problem with hers. It has her maiden name on it. She got married to me a few years back—happily, I hope—and she doesn't identify by her maiden name any longer. But to prove she was born here, she is going to have to do some fancy footwork with documents to prove it.

So I looked at this, and the interesting thing is what this is all about. There is a belief in the White House among the political leaders that they are going to do poorly in the November election, so they want to change the rules and they want to keep some people from voting. How do you keep people from voting? Well, you set hurdles up like this.

I will give you an example. We have more support in the African-American community than Republicans do, so if the Republicans want to enhance their chances of winning, they want to diminish the African-American vote.

Let's take a look at a few statistics. When it comes to passports, 42 percent of White Americans have a passport; 34 percent of African Americans. So if you demand a passport as proof to register to vote, it puts them at a slight disadvantage, doesn't it?

How about birth certificates? Well, 6 to 7 percent of all U.S. adults—that is 15 to 18 million—are in a situation where they have no easy access to proof by birth certificate—6 to 7 percent of all U.S. adults, 11 percent when it comes to people of color. What is the problem? Some of them were born in the South. Some were born in segregated hospitals. Some were given a birth certificate and some were not. So there is a slight bias against African Americans when it comes to birth certificates.

Well, how about government-issued photo IDs? Eight percent of White Americans don't have government-issued photo IDs—8 percent—and 25 percent of all African Americans do not.

How about low-income people, who may be inclined to vote for Democrats, perhaps? They are less likely to be able to prove their citizenship than those who are better off.

So it isn't an algorithm; it is a bias that is built into this bill that says it will be less likely that people who are going to vote Democrat are going to register to vote. That is why it is so important to the President. That is why he is threatening members of his party: If you don't vote for it, I will never support you. He feels that strongly about it.

But I don't think it is fair. It is fundamentally unfair. With only 77 cases of voter fraud in 24 years, why in the world are we doing this? Why are we changing the rules? Why are we creating obstacles? Why are we forcing

people to spend hundreds of dollars to go buy a passport so they can register to vote?

If you are legally in America—and most people who vote overwhelmingly are—then you shouldn't face these obstacles. That is what this is all about, and it ought to come to an end with a big "no" vote on this floor.

I will be voting no. I am sorry the President won't be supporting me, but I am not running again anyway.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise in strong opposition to the so-called SAVE America Act. What it should be called is the "Save Trump Act." This bill is not about protecting elections; it is about making it harder for eligible Americans to vote, and Republicans know it.

Right now, my Republican colleagues are trying to hide the ball. They talk about voter ID at the polls as if that is all this bill requires. But that is not the case. That is not the truth. The truth is that this bill requires every American—every American, millions of Americans—to provide documentary proof of citizenship, like passports or birth certificates, in person, just to register to vote, OK?

Right now, we have a situation where millions of Americans are voting, but suddenly that is not going to be OK. This bill will require every American to reregister, register, and show proof of citizenship.

So Republicans are hoping that Americans won't know the difference between having to show a photo ID when voting and the requirement to prove citizenship in order to even register to vote.

Let me be clear. This bill is not just about showing a picture ID when voting; this bill is about having to prove citizenship in person before you can even register to vote.

The SAVE Act will make it harder, more expensive, and certainly less convenient to register to vote. Republicans know this. This is the part that the Republicans are not talking about as they continue to sell the SAVE Act as a voter ID bill. It is the part that Republicans are hoping people will not notice or understand until it is too late, until they are told: Wait a minute. You can't even go to the polls or you can't even vote unless, ahead of time, you register by proving your citizenship.

So once Americans do understand what this bill does, it becomes clear: This bill is not about securing our elections; it is about controlling which Americans get to participate in them through imposing onerous voter registration requirements.

Let's be very clear about something else. Noncitizen voting in Federal elections is already illegal. It is a Federal crime. If a noncitizen illegally votes in a Federal election, they could be prosecuted and even sentenced up to 5

years in prison. Who is going to commit this kind of fraud knowing that they could be imprisoned for 5 years? And as my colleague just mentioned, my colleague from Illinois, there have been so few of these kinds of so-called fraud in the years that millions and millions of people have been voting.

So Republicans would like the American people to believe that noncitizens are voting in our elections in the thousands, and the truth is that noncitizen voting is extremely rare, to be practically nonexistent.

The Cato Institute found that voting by noncitizens in the United States is virtually nonexistent. The Heritage Foundation found fewer than 70 instances of it over a 40-year period. Think about it. Millions of people vote every year, and the Heritage Foundation found only 70 instances in over 40 years of people voting. That amounts to one ten-thousandths of the over 1 billion votes cast during that same period. And we all know the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation are not liberal think tanks.

In continuing their claims of mass voter fraud necessitating this bill, Republicans are perpetuating a lie about something that is practically nonexistent and already illegal.

So why are Republicans so obsessed with passing this bill? Why is Donald Trump calling it “one of the most important and consequential pieces of legislation in the history of Congress”? Because he and the Republicans know that their agenda—gutting Medicaid, slashing SNAP, taxing us through illegal tariffs, and dragging us into an illegal war—is deeply unpopular with the American people. It is so unpopular that people will be motivated—that is the fear the Republicans have—that people will be motivated to vote against this agenda and vote for Democrats. Republicans know that when more people vote, they lose. So instead of changing their policies and actually listening to what the American people really need, which are things like lowering housing costs and food costs, the Republicans want to change who gets to vote. They want to cherry-pick who gets to participate in our democracy.

In every State except North Dakota, people have to register to vote before voting. Many States, including Hawaii, have made voter registration as simple as possible to encourage more voter participation. But not under this bill. Under this bill, Americans would have to prove their citizenship by producing documents like a passport or birth certificate in person in order to register to vote.

Imagine you are living in a rural community somewhere and you have to go somewhere in person to register to vote. Republicans know that this is not a simple requirement that they want to impose on people who would want to register to vote.

More than 140 million Americans—nearly half of American citizens—do not have a passport, and my colleague

just said that there are more White Americans who have passports than there are Black Americans. So that will already give you an idea of who the Republicans are hoping to discourage from even registering to vote.

In addition, more than 21 million eligible voters do not have ready access to documents proving their citizenship. In other words, for tens of millions of Americans, producing these documents is not a simple hurdle; it is a huge barrier. It is a barrier for young people trying to register for the first time, for seniors who no longer have easy access to documents, for working families who can't afford the time or cost of navigating more government paperwork just to register to vote.

A new passport costs over \$150. If this sounds like a poll tax, a price to exercise our constitutional right to vote, that is because it is. It is a financial burden on Americans at a time when millions are struggling just to put food on the table and to pay rent, to put a roof over their heads—yet another reminder of how out of touch this regime is with the lives of average, everyday Americans.

Unsurprisingly, the burdens that this bill creates would fall disproportionately on communities who have historically had to fight for their right to vote, including women.

An estimated 69 million women do not have a birth certificate that matches their current legal name, their married name, including over 300,000 women in Hawaii alone.

In fact, there was a time in Hawaii and probably other States where if you got married, you could not keep your name. You had to take your husband's name or your spouse's name. Hawaii got rid of that, but I just want to mention there was a time when there were lots of limitations on what women could do.

So 300,000 women in my State and millions more across the country would face new barriers to voting. Talk about heading people off at the pass.

If women can be stopped or dissuaded from registering to vote, frankly, that is OK by Republicans. Republicans know full well the consequences that this bill would have for women across our country in red and blue States alike.

While women will suffer under this bill, so too will many other communities, including our servicemembers and their families.

Don't take my word for it. Let me share with you a letter I received from a military spouse in Hawaii. She writes—and I am going to quote her letter because she notes some very important realities for our servicemembers.

She wrote:

The SAVE Act would have disastrous impacts on military families like mine. Most active-duty families move every two or three years. In addition to these moves' disruption of our established support networks, changes in our children's education and social lives,

and limits on our employment and career paths, these moves also impact our ability to vote.

We have a 27-percent voter participation deficit compared to civilian voters, partly due to how many logistical challenges we already face. If passed, this bill would mean that military servicemembers and their families could functionally no longer register to vote from a far-away duty station.

Additionally, if an eligible voter was born overseas like many in our community—if an eligible voter has changed their first or last name since birth, like many spouses do when they get married—or if an eligible voter simply doesn't have access to their documents because they're in the middle of a military move—this bill could deny them the ability to register [to vote].

The SAVE America Act would cut families like mine out of the ability to participate in our own democracy, the very democracy we have committed to protect.

There are more than 2 million people serving in our armed services, more than 40,000 of whom live in Hawaii. Our servicemembers risk their lives for our country, but this bill will make it harder for them to participate in the very democracy they fight to defend.

And let's not pretend this bill exists in isolation or in a vacuum. Under this regime, we have seen a relentless campaign to undermine trust in our elections and to enact new restrictions on voting.

Under the direction of Attorney General Pam Bondi, the Department of Justice has sued 29 States and the District of Columbia, demanding these jurisdictions hand over their voter rolls and all the personal data contained in these voter rolls.

Now, what are Trump and the person he considers his lawyer, Pam Bondi, going to do with all of this information? Interfering with our elections comes to mind. And it was just weeks ago that now outgoing Homeland Security Secretary Noem refused to rule out stationing ICE agents outside polling places this fall.

If that isn't intimidation or voter interference, I don't know what is.

Taken together—making it harder to register to vote, suing States to turn over voter rolls, refusing to pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act, and continued false allegations of voter fraud—this regime is obsessed with controlling the outcome of our elections and obsessed with this bill.

Republicans know they can't win over voters with their policies so they are trying to limit who can vote. We have seen this before, from poll taxes to literacy tests. Southern States spent decades making it as hard as possible for Black Americans and other communities of color to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

We have come a long way since the days of Jim Crow, but this bill is a chilling reminder that the battles we thought we had won don't stay won. Eternal vigilance is required of all of us.

The SAVE Act is not some benign piece of legislation. That is why we Senate Democrats are here speaking up

and fighting back. We know what is at stake, and we refuse to stand by while Republicans undermine our democracy and our sacred right to vote under the false pretense of security.

Here is the truth: Republicans don't give a rip about saving America. All they care about is saving Trump's ass, deluding themselves into believing everything Trump says.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I rise to join my Democratic colleagues today in opposition to the SAVE America Act, which is really just President Trump's and Republican leadership's shameful and disingenuous attempt to interfere with our elections and make it harder for American citizens to vote.

Republican leadership has given two reasons why they want to pass this bill. I have been listening to the floor debates. I have been talking to some of my colleagues, and I want to address some of the arguments on the other side that I have heard because they are just not true.

The first is that illegal immigrants are voting in our elections, and that is why we need the SAVE America Act. The second is that it is just common sense that this is just a voter ID bill, and that is all we need. Now, I am going to break down these two things.

I want to make it very clear from the outset, this bill is not just a voter ID bill. This is not a voter ID bill. This is voter suppression at its worst. I want people to keep that in mind.

Let me jump to the first argument.

I want to make something very clear: The United States of America has the most safe and secure elections in the world. It has been proven over and over again, including in my State in Nevada.

I know. I served as Nevada's attorney general for two terms. That is 8 years. And I helped prosecute voter fraud. In fact, I was part of an election fraud task force in my State, with the secretary of state and our Federal law enforcement, the FBI, every election season.

In those 8 years, I can count on two hands how many cases of voter fraud we found, and they were all prosecuted.

Now, Democrats don't oppose this bill because it would stop noncitizens from voting. In fact, we completely agree that noncitizens should not be voting. That is why it is already illegal for noncitizens to vote and why every State has a process to ensure people who register to vote are citizens.

The bill that we are talking about today is a solution in search of a problem that does not exist. As you have heard my colleagues say, the conservative Heritage Foundation has a database of noncitizens voting that shows there have only been 77 cases between the years 1999 and 2023—77 cases in 25 years of noncitizens voting.

And why do we know that? Because they were caught and prosecuted. And

for each one of those individuals, they were held accountable by the authorities.

In Nevada—in Nevada—a local news investigation found that out of the more than 7 million votes cast in our elections in Nevada since 2008, the number of votes cast by noncitizens was exactly 2—not 2,000, not 200, 2.

So if you want more proof that this is a massively overblown problem, last year President Trump's own Justice Department opened an investigation over alleged voter fraud in Nevada during the 2020 Presidential election. President Trump lost the State of Nevada in that election by more than 33,000 votes that year. But what did President Trump's Department of Justice find?

Well, the investigation closed this January without a single charge of voter fraud. Now, I personally find it curious that there was no investigation in my State into fraud during the 2024 Presidential election, where President Trump won—only the election that he lost—but so be it.

I am here to tell you we have the most safe and secure elections in the world, and noncitizens are not voting wholesale in them and out there running rampant. We know the data. And not only do we know the data, but we have it because they have been successfully investigated and prosecuted when, in the extremely rare cases, they are caught.

So that is the first argument that my colleagues are saying: There are so many noncitizens voting, and we need to solve it.

That is not true.

Here is the second argument. Republican leadership is saying that we need to pass the SAVE America Act because it is just a voter ID bill. It is just a voter ID bill, and everybody shows ID no matter what they do. You have to show ID to drive. This is the same thing.

Well, let me just tell you, this could not be further from the truth. The reason this bill is so outrageous is because it goes far beyond showing just a driver's license or voter ID when you vote. It is about voter suppression.

Here is how the SAVE America Act hurts our elections. One, it mandates that the Department of Homeland Security, a Federal Department, collect voters' personal information and store it in a Federal database that has a history of deleting eligible voters from the voter rolls for no reason. Two, this legislation makes U.S. citizens jump through unnecessary, burdensome, and sometimes impossible hoops when registering to vote. And three, it effectively ends widely popular methods of registering to vote to discourage Americans from making their voices heard in our elections, which is a constitutional right.

So let me break those down for you. First, the SAVE America Act would force States to turn over all their voter data to the Department of Homeland

Security SAVE Program. This is a notoriously unreliable program designed to identify problem voters and then kick them off the voter rolls.

This program is not accurate. It is not effective, and it has already disenfranchised hundreds of perfectly eligible voters.

What does that mean? It means that Americans who have already been determined by their States to be citizens and who have potentially been voting in their States for years or even decades without an issue—without an issue—could be removed by the Department of Homeland Security, flagged by the Department of Homeland Security for removal from their State's list of eligible voters. And when they show up to vote, on the day, where they have voted for so many years, at the same location where they have always gone, they will be turned away for no reason.

We are already seeing this happen. There are States that have entered into agreements with the Department of Homeland Security to give them access to their voters' private information. Nevada is not one. And we have evidence of American citizen voters being misidentified as noncitizens in those States.

If this bill goes into effect, who knows how many Americans are going to be kicked off the list of eligible voters of their State, only to show up on election day and be told they need to reregister and produce numerous documents proving they are citizens.

Let me take it one step further. The SAVE America Act mandates that States need to remove eligible voters off their list if they have not presented the documents mandated under the bill, under this legislation, to prove they are U.S. citizens.

Now, keep this in mind. I am going to walk you through this. You have been voting in your State for the last 30 years, 25 years, same location, your library, wherever you go, you are voting. All of a sudden you are being told by your State: Sorry, you were flagged by the Department of Homeland Security. You can't vote on the day of an election.

And now you say to yourself: OK. I don't understand this, but how do I reregister? What do I have to do? You now have to either have a passport or a birth certificate—a passport or a birth certificate—and you have to go in person now to reregister to vote.

Literally—literally—anybody because of the Department of Homeland Security having this data can be kicked off the voter rolls. It is a problem, and that is the first step for inhibiting and putting a barrier in front of people for their right to vote.

I am here to tell you this is the challenge of this bill and why Donald Trump and the Republicans are here. They are putting barriers in front of people to make it harder for them to vote. Why? Why?

It shouldn't be that way. This bill requires Americans registering or reregistering to vote to provide documents to prove you are a citizen, documents that thousands of Americans just don't have access to. If you are a victim of DHS's erroneous voter roll purge and need to reregister to vote or if you simply want to register to vote for the first time, this bill would require a document that confirms that you were born in the United States or that you are a naturalized citizen.

Does a driver's license alone do that? No. Neither does the REAL ID from my State and most States. That is not enough. Even presenting your birth certificate wouldn't be enough to prove citizenship. Americans would be required to present their birth certificate and a valid government-issued photo ID card, like a driver's license.

Now, a passport would be enough to prove citizenship, but half of Americans don't have a passport—half—and that is true in Nevada too. Roughly, 56 percent of Nevadans—56 percent of Nevadans—have a passport. That means nearly half of the people in my State would have to have their birth certificate or other documentary proof of citizenship on hand.

And if they wanted to get a passport, it would cost \$165. That is not an amount most Nevadans can shell out, especially with prices so high these days.

I hope, if you are one of the 146 million Americans who doesn't have an up-to-date passport, that you have your birth certificate and another government-issued photo ID readily available.

But if you are among the 21 million Americans who don't, maybe because they don't drive or they simply don't have a birth certificate, then Republicans who support this bill want to tell you that you can't register to vote.

Now, let's dive into this part of the bill a little bit more. The documentary proof of citizenship required under this bill is just simply nonsensical. For example, let's say you are a Native American; you show up to an election office ready to register to vote. They have their Tribal ID in tow. That wouldn't be enough for them. That Tribal ID would have to be an enhanced version issued by the Department of Homeland Security, which most Tribal members don't have or, if their Tribal ID was issued by their Tribe, it would have to display that they were born in the United States, which many don't.

Let me give you another example. Say you are a servicemember in our military and you take your military identification card to register to vote, but under this bill, unless you have also presented your U.S. military record of service showing you were born in the United States or your birth certificate, you don't have the proper documentation. These restrictive portions of the bill would create barriers for all kinds of eligible Americans looking to follow the rules and just to

register to vote so they can exercise their constitutional right.

Keep in mind, this is not just for new voters registering for the first time. If you have to update your registration and your name doesn't match the documents that you present, this bill would make you take additional steps to prove your citizenship.

For example, if you are 1 of the 69 million married women who has changed your last name, but you don't have an up-to-date passport and you are updating your registration to vote because you moved, you might have to go through this onerous process just to prove who you are. If your name doesn't match in all of the documentation you provided, you would have to provide more documents or sign an affidavit just to vote.

If you can't get all that done, sorry, you don't get to vote. That is what President Trump and Republican leadership want. Americans' right to vote is guaranteed by the Constitution. We should not be making it harder for Americans to participate in our elections. It is bad enough that this bill has an unnecessary documentary proof of citizenship requirement, what is even worse is that if you want to register to vote, you have to present that proof of citizenship in person.

That means nobody would be able to register to vote online or by mail. Think about the implications of this. Voter registration drives that encourage Americans to participate in our elections would grind to a halt. That would impact Black and Latino voters the most as well as those who didn't graduate from high school. Those groups are most likely to rely on third-party voter registration.

Many citizens in Nevada register to vote at our DMV. If you think the lines are long at the DMV now, just think of the chaos and confusion that this legislation would require.

And if you live in a rural area, like many Nevadans, and your nearest county clerk's office is hours away, you have to figure out how to get there in order to register to vote.

Nevada only has two urban counties, Clark, where Las Vegas is, and Washoe County, where Reno is. There are 15 counties in Nevada that are entirely rural, and they have about 240,000 active registered voters in them.

If you are a rural Nevadan and you have to register to vote or update your registration, Republicans who support this bill want you to spend a day off of work trying to do it. It is just cruel.

Let me give you an example. In Nye County, NV, someone who lives on or near Duckwater Reservation would have to travel roughly 270 miles round trip to show an election official at the Nye County clerk's office their proof of citizenship.

Now, that is one of the longest roundtrip journeys across the country to register to vote, and this is in one State. It is no wonder that in 2022, only 5.9 percent of Americans registered to vote in person.

Why? Because it is inconvenient. It is unnecessary when we have already proven, effective safeguards in place to ensure you are who you are, when you say you are, when you get there to register to vote.

But this bill would force all Americans to take that burden on if they want to exercise their constitutional right to vote, and it is just absurd. Not to mention, if it were to pass, this legislation, the bill, would go into effect immediately—immediately—without giving States any additional resources to implement these complex provisions.

Most bills that significantly alter our systems give plenty of time to ensure smooth transition into the new system but not this bill. President Trump and the Republican leadership want to make sure it is done in time for the upcoming midterms because they are afraid of what American voters, using their voices to speak out against them, would say and how they would vote.

We all know why Republican leadership wants to pass this bill. They want to pass it badly because they think that they will lose this election in this midterm because their current policies are extremely unpopular with Americans.

Raising costs in this country instead of lowering them, kicking millions of Americans off their healthcare, and starting an unauthorized war with no exit strategy, that is an awful record for Donald Trump's Republican Party. And through our elections, Americans have a chance to make their opposition to his policies heard at the ballot box. Trump's Republican Party is trying to prevent them from voting, trying to choke off American votes in a desperate bid to stay in power.

This bill goes beyond bad faith; it is just vile. Instead of trying to make Americans' lives better and passing legislation people actually want, instead of supporting our democracy, our Constitution, President Trump's Republican Party and followers now want to pass this bill and make it extremely difficult for millions of Americans to exercise their right to vote.

Why? Because President Trump is afraid of being held accountable by the American people.

The SAVE America Act would require States to turn over voter information to the Department of Homeland Security. It would kick millions of eligible voters off the rolls. It would make it infinitely harder for Americans to register to vote, and it would cause chaos in our States.

It wouldn't solve a single problem, especially not the ones President Trump and the Republican leaders pretend exist, just the opposite. It would create huge problems for our elections in every State across the country, resulting in voter suppression.

Nevadans and all Americans deserve better than this cowardly bill from Republicans trying to run from the issues they created for themselves.

That is why my Democratic colleagues and I will not let it pass.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I appreciate the passion that my friend and colleague the distinguished Senator from the State of Nevada puts into her job, into scrutinizing legislation. I appreciate the concerns she has expressed.

Now, if I believed all of the things that she said, well, just about any of the things that she said, I would be concerned too. Fortunately, for all of us, the things that she is saying about this bill are either, in some instances, incomplete, leaving out material information to complete the picture, resulting in a much different impact than has been suggested or, in other cases, they are completely wrong.

Go back to a few first principles about what the bill actually does. There are two basic precepts in the bill, and the fundamental purpose of them is to make it easy to vote and harder to cheat.

We do that through two principled mechanisms in the bill: One requires proof of citizenship upon voter registration, and the other requires voter ID at the time and place of voting.

Now, as to the citizenship component, contrary to what was being suggested briefly for a moment, you know, I would almost like to believe from some of her remarks that this would require Americans en masse to go and immediately reregister.

Perhaps I misunderstood her on that part, if I did, my apologies, but just so that there is no ambiguity at all, so that we are very clear on what it is that it does and what it is that it does not do, it doesn't require mass reregistration. If you have already registered to vote, there is nothing about that that is going to invalidate your voter registration.

If you move to another State or otherwise have to register to vote as you would if you have to move, for example, from one State to another, then you will have to register at that point. But there is nothing about your existing registration that is going to be nullified just because this bill becomes law.

And on the point of the proof of citizenship, there has been a lot of misunderstanding, some of it in good faith. Although the bill itself has just been characterized by my friend and colleague from Nevada as "beyond bad faith" and "vile," those are pretty sweeping accusations, and I don't ever make those lightly on any piece of legislation. If I do, I am prepared to back them up. Those can't be backed up here.

There is nothing about this that is in bad faith. There is nothing about this that is vile. This is dealing with a very commonsense problem, a problem that has been many decades in the making—decades in the making ever since, in some ways, Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act, NVRA, in 1993, the motor voter law.

At the time, it was understood that we could allow participating States—which nearly all States participate—to set up a process whereby voters could, while applying for a driver's license at the local DMV, also register to vote. After all, it involves some of the same information to establish who you are, whether you apply for a driver's license and also when you register to vote.

There are some things that have happened since then that have changed the landscape.

One of them has been that 20 years after the enactment of the NVRA, the Supreme Court, in a case called *Arizona v. Inter Tribal Council of Arizona*, concluded that the NVRA preempts out the States ability to even request any type of documentation or other proof of citizenship. Even if they are aware of circumstances suggesting that some would-be voters are, in fact, not citizens, they are prohibited from doing so.

Remember, all you have to do under the NVRA form is sign your name after checking a box, saying: Yes, I would like simultaneously to register to vote. So, if the States are then prohibited from even inquiring into citizenship—attempting to document it, to prove it, or otherwise—then there is no way to make this happen. As a result of that, it leaves open this open, gaping wound. We now have an estimated 30 million-plus noncitizens residing in this country.

That leads to another development that is relevant to this.

Over the years, there were differences of opinion between the States as to whether, to what extent, and in what circumstances to offer driver's licenses to noncitizens. In some cases, they would issue them to noncitizens as long as they were lawfully here. In other cases, they wouldn't issue them to any. Over the years, it has evolved to the point where, in nearly every State, you can get a driver's license as a noncitizen; and in 19 States, plus the District of Columbia, you can get a driver's license even if you are in the United States unlawfully.

So, in light of that fact and in light of the Supreme Court ruling in 2013 saying that the States, even if they have reason to believe some voters are not eligible because they are not citizens—and they can't look into it further because the NVRA, supposedly, preempted them out. As wrong as I think that ruling was as a matter of statutory interpretation, it is conclusive, and it stands to this day. Then you add to that the fact that we had an estimated 10 to 15 million people enter the country unlawfully between 2021 and 2025.

When you add all that up together—and it becomes even more startling—you realize that, in several States, they made a decision to allow noncitizens to vote in some local elections. In those cases, there is still voter registration that goes into that, and those States, along with the most blue States in America, have refused to

enter into any kind of memorandum of understanding or otherwise cooperate or enter into a cooperative agreement with Federal Agencies to ascertain whether, to what extent, and under what circumstances there might be noncitizens registered to vote in their States, nor have they been willing to cooperate with the Federal authorities who manage the so-called SAVE database within the Department of Homeland Security. They haven't been willing to show them any methodology or any techniques that they use in those particular States that allow some noncitizen voting to occur in local elections. They have done nothing to show how it is that they separate out those voter registration files from the voter registration files of those who are eligible to vote in Federal elections. This creates a genuine vulnerability, one that we couldn't, in good faith, just overlook and pretend doesn't exist.

Let me just say that, insofar as people find concerns with the methods that we have allowed you to use when establishing your citizenship at the time of voter registration, if we have left out some form of documentation that should have been included to make this easier, let us know. I would love to consider that. But the truth is, we were very inclusive with it.

One important thing to keep in mind is that this is not the only circumstance in which Americans are routinely required to establish their citizenship. Perhaps the most familiar one on the books currently exists in the context of labor and employment.

Every time any American starts a new job with a new employer inside the United States, he or she is required to fill out a form called the I-9. When you fill out the I-9, if you are an American, then you have to prove that you are a citizen. It is a pretty rigid, fairly inflexible standard. One technique involves showing a U.S. passport establishing citizenship. Another involves a combination of a birth certificate, a photo ID, a Social Security card, et cetera, but that is about it. That is about as far as the options go.

There are additional options that we have worked into the SAVE America Act, including, for example, that subset of Real ID driver's licenses. Not all Real ID driver's licenses establish citizenship. Some of them do; some of them don't. If you happen to have one of those that establishes that, you can accept that. Certain Tribal membership cards are also eligible because they establish citizenship. Not all of them do. We try to identify those that do.

But most importantly—and this is the part that often goes overlooked—when we hear comments from the other side of the aisle in this Chamber, it is that there is a catchall provision dealing with all of these circumstances and any deficit that we may have left out.

It also deals with the problem of those who maybe can't find some other documentation. Let's say, if you are

someone who has gotten married and you have changed your name after getting married and you have got the rest of your documents but you can't find your marriage certificate, we have got you taken care of.

The same provision in the same part of the bill also deals with individuals who may have lost all of their documentation either because it was eaten by their dog or maybe their house burned down yesterday and all of their documents are missing or because they never had them to begin with or their crazy Aunt Madge, for no reason at all, scooped up all the documents, took them to the landfill, disposed of them, and nobody can find them—or maybe you just never had them to begin with for whatever reason. These things happen.

This bill doesn't cast any judgment about these people. This bill doesn't desire, in any way, shape, or form, to disenfranchise those people or to make them ineligible to register to vote. In fact, it makes it incredibly easy.

The provision to which I am referring to often goes overlooked. More or less, universally, it goes overlooked from across the aisle. It starts on page 12 of the House-passed SAVE America Act, which we are debating right now. The bill on the table, at page 12, line 22, and following through the text going on to the next page, makes clear that, even if you are missing some of your documentation or even all of it—regardless of the reason—and you want to register to vote, you can still do so by writing out an affidavit. It establishes a process whereby a stock affidavit structure could be recommended by a committee that has long existed to help facilitate some of these election issues. Each State would then fine-tune the process that they would utilize in their State whereby the would-be voter writes out a sworn statement, under penalty of perjury, outlining the circumstances that give them citizenship—meaning, if they were born in the United States or are otherwise natural born citizens of the United States—perhaps if they were born outside but to U.S. citizen parents residing abroad at the moment—and were at the moment of their birth, by virtue of the circumstances of their birth, entitled to birthright citizenship as of the moment of their birth, then they are natural born citizens. They can establish those basic facts.

Then the burden falls upon the State to confirm or refute the truthfulness of those things. States have access to databases by which they can compare and contrast what the voter says in the affidavit, saying: Yes, I don't have my documents, but I am a citizen, and here is why and here are the relevant dates or date ranges to consider. It becomes the State's burden. No American citizen need shell out a single dollar.

This is one of the other arguments that I frequently hear raised: that not every American has a passport.

Well, yes, that is true.

They also go on to say: Well, a passport costs money—about 200 bucks.

That is also true.

Nobody should have to go out and get a passport just to vote. If they have got one, great—it makes it easy to establish citizenship—but you don't need to have one. You don't have to shell out a single dime to register to vote under this bill, nor do you have to go out and get duplicate documents or be left out in the cold because you can't find your documents or they never existed or you never had them or your house burned down. Whatever the case, this is taken care of; but this, too, was ignored by my friend and colleague, the distinguished Senator from Nevada.

This question is startling because we hear over and over again how people are going to be left out in the cold. Yet every American who has ever had a job as an employee with an American company in the United States of America has had to establish their citizenship under standards using documents that are far less forgiving, far more rigid, far less flexible than what we allow here.

Now, look, it is theoretically possible—not likely but theoretically possible—that there are other ways of establishing citizenship not yet contemplated in this bill that would still do the job. If so, bring those ideas forward. Help us improve the bill. We would be happy to do it. I think we have made it as easy as we possibly could have. I would love to hear those ideas, but that is not what we are hearing. They are, instead, wanting to engage in scaremongering tactics in order to make people fear that they are suddenly going to be disenfranchised; that they are suddenly going to face what some are really disingenuously calling a poll tax and dishonestly suggesting that this will cost anyone money. There is not a reason for anyone to shell out a single dime, a single nickel, a single penny—or fraction thereof—in order to register to vote.

So, when we look at the proof of citizenship, it is simply not fair to point to any one of these documents in isolation and explain the reasons that some people might not have them, might never have had them, might have lost them, and why it is such a travesty that people will be disenfranchised without them unless they either spend money or spend days or weeks hunting down all the relevant documentation because there are other, easier ways to establish that. If you have got ways of making it even easier, while satisfying this demand that we make sure that only those who are citizens are voting, let's bring them forward.

It is curious, moreover, in getting back to the States—not just the States in which they currently allow lawful votes to be cast in some local elections by known admitted noncitizens. But beyond that, there is a wide range of States, mostly with Democrat Governors and/or Democrat legislatures, that are refusing to cooperate at all

with Federal authorities to share anything about their voter registration files, to share the information to make sure that those voting in Federal elections are, in fact, U.S. citizens.

Now, look, this is part of the cooperative federalism model that is built into the Constitution itself. There are certain responsibilities that belong to the U.S. Government, and it is as equally important to respect those powers that are distinctively, unavoidably, necessarily, and by the text and structure of the Constitution, Federal. It is important to keep those in Federal hands just as it is important to reserve to the States the powers that are reserved to the States, not under Federal and not prohibited to the States by the Constitution. Both are equally important to federalism, and bad things happen when we disrespect either.

Under article I of the Constitution, we have the power—it is our authority, and I believe it is our duty—to set basic terms and conditions relevant specifically to these Federal elections—elections for the U.S. House of Representatives and elections to the U.S. Senate. Those are, after all, Federal races.

And which government is it—the State or local level?—that ascertains and has records sufficient to establish, confirm, or refute citizenship?

Well, it is this government.

In fact, one of the very first provisions of article I, section 8 of the Constitution—outlining Federal power by outlining the powers granted to Congress—involves laws dealing with, you know, immigration, naturalization, and citizenship. It is this government that is the only Government of the United States—no one State has the capacity to do that—to establish or refute the existence of citizenship.

So why are so many States that happen to be run by the Democratic Party refusing entirely to cooperate—to enter into memoranda of understanding or otherwise cooperate—with Federal Agencies whose job it is to go through and figure out who is and who is not a citizen for the purpose of voting in Federal elections?

That, too, is another reason we need the SAVE America Act. It is because this is chaos if we don't do that. If we don't do that, then our laws are dead letter. Our law is saying that only U.S. citizens may vote, and if a non-U.S. citizen votes in a Federal election, he or she has committed a serious felony offense.

People often will point to the dearth, the paucity, the rarity of instances in which voter fraud—particularly voter fraud based on noncitizen voting—has been detected, charged, fully prosecuted, and resulted in a conviction. Yes, these are few. These are very, very few overall that have happened, and there are reasons it is very few. When you have a system of laws in place, it makes it very easy to register to vote even for those who might not be citizens, and it makes it impossible for a

State to even inquire, even where actual doubts exist, as to someone's citizenship. You make it almost impossible to detect and very, very difficult to prosecute.

Voting is, moreover, something that happens in a finite time and place. Most of the time, by the time it all happens, the matter is moot, and so it can be difficult to move on.

This is why sometimes I will compare this to when people say that we don't need to put these procedures in place because it is already against the law for noncitizens to vote and therefore they don't vote and that is why it is so rare.

That is a little bit like saying we don't need laws that require liquor stores to make people show ID before they buy alcohol because we already have laws prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages to children. If we didn't have ID laws or record keeping requirements in place for such things, that, too, would be very, very difficult—close to impossible—to detect and enforce and prosecute and result in convictions.

So, look, this debate will continue. I look forward to hearing any contributions, any suggestions as to how we could make it better, more inclusive. But the status quo in which we simply pretend that this does not happen is untenable.

We already know, based on the handful of States that have started their own investigations, that there are thousands just in the last year or two alone. We learned of thousands of voter registration files that have existed that have involved noncitizens.

With as many noncitizens as have entered this country recently and the development of our laws, it would be folly, it would be morally irresponsible for us to assume this does not happen.

But let's keep our debate focused on truth, on facts, on what the bill actually says and not on what it doesn't say.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. President, I rise today against the so-called SAVE America Act.

I believe that our elections are the foundation of our democracy. Most Americans do. It is how we protect our country from tyranny and dictatorship. It is how we remain the greatest country in the world. But the SAVE Act does not safeguard our elections; it does the opposite.

My Republican colleagues like to repeat over and over that this is about voter ID at the polls, that showing ID at the polls is something we have to do, and that is what this bill is about.

That already happens. Most Americans—99.999 percent of Americans do what everyone else does: They walk into the polls on election day. They bring their ID. The volunteers and the clerks check your ID, they check it to the voter rolls, and they say: Come on in and go ahead and vote. That already

happens across the country and certainly in the State of Michigan.

This bill is not about voter ID, which hopefully all Americans are in agreement about; it is about making it harder to vote so that more Americans are excluded from voting.

It requires that Americans have proof of citizenship in order to vote. Just by example, I brought my Michigan license, OK? Michigan license—it is the official State version. There is no proof of citizenship. It says my address. It says my eye color. It says all these things, but it does not have my citizenship. It is just not on the license. For most Americans, it is not on the license.

So how would I prove my citizenship? Well, I can do it, I guess, in two ways. You can either bring a passport with you or you can bring an original birth certificate in the name you want to vote with.

Passports—60 percent of Michiganders have no passport. They have never applied for one. They don't need one. They are not interested in one.

If you want to get a passport, it is nearly \$200. So now we are charging a fee for people to do what I hope most people believe is a God-given right as an American—to vote. If not, you have to have an original copy of your birth certificate in the name you want to vote in. Well, as you can imagine, for millions and millions of women who took their married name, took their husband's name, their birth certificate doesn't show the name they plan to vote with. So it puts an unbelievably onerous requirement on those married women.

This bill also truly constrains mail-in voting. This is going to hurt senior citizens, military, folks in nursing homes, college students who don't live at home. This is intended simply to make it harder to vote.

I want to double-tap this because Michiganders weighed in on the ballot on this very issue. In 2018, Michiganders voted in a law that said that anyone could vote absentee for any reason, and it passed with 67 percent of the vote. And I will remind you that Donald Trump has won my State twice. In the years since, voter participation has gone up. I would hope that would be seen as a good thing.

Mail-in voting is safe, it is secure, it is the law in Michigan, and undoing it is simply to satisfy President Trump's very specific goals of making sure "only the right people vote."

As a nation, we have made a lot of strides in the past 50 years in getting more people to vote. The SAVE Act undoes that, and it represents a significant change—it gives the Federal Government enormous power over voting. That is exactly what the Founding Fathers wanted to avoid. They specifically wrote into the Constitution that the administration of elections is to be done by the States. In the commentary on it, they said that was because we

never want a President and his supporters to have overwhelming power over the organs of democracy, over the foundation of our elections. So they give that administrative power to the States.

President Trump and my colleagues across the aisle have railed against Federal involvement in our elections. They have signed amicus briefs and talked about overreach by the Federal Government in our elections—when they thought it was going to hurt them. Now they have done a complete 180.

If you want to understand where my colleagues really stand on this issue, just look at their comments and President Trump's Statement of Administration Policy when the House in 2019 passed the John Lewis Voting Rights Act—literally in many ways a codification of the Voting Rights Act of the late sixties.

Many of my colleagues were happy to criticize the Federal Government telling States how to run their elections. They gave speeches about it. They went on the media about it and talked all about Democratic overreach.

But this is how you know they have lost the plot—because when it is their team that is in power, when it is their team that is in the White House, when it is their team that is giving them their orders, they are happy to federalize things.

Everybody knows that the Republican Party was always the party of smaller government and States' rights. That is like the brand.

So now here we are. Donald Trump says in the State of the Union that if his team doesn't win in November, the elections are rigged, and he only wants "the right people voting."

So here we have this bill that they don't have the votes for, and they are talking about what they are going to do to help "save America."

In Michigan, just to put the issue in perspective, because my colleagues like facts, we have about 6 million voters out of 10 million in our State. In 2024, in an election won by Donald Trump—wasn't contested by anyone on the other side of the aisle—15 individual voters were flagged as potentially being noncitizens—15 out of 6 million. Even one noncitizen voting is a bad thing, and they should be held accountable, and they were to the highest and utmost of the law in Michigan, including spending some time in jail for one guy. But 15 out of 6 million is 0.00025 percent. These 15 were flagged and even confirmed quickly as noncitizens.

This bill is like using a bazooka to go after a housefly. It is not smart. And in the process, it makes it harder for millions of Americans—particularly women—to vote in these elections. And make no mistake, that is the point.

We are only debating this bill because of one fact: Donald Trump doesn't like to lose elections, and his team wants to shield him from another embarrassing loss this coming fall. That is it.

He has shown us from the beginning how he feels about fraud. Seven months before the 2020 election, he got up in front of the United States and said: If I don't win in 2020, the election is rigged.

You know, people in this body wrote strongly worded letters. They pooch-pooched it. They said there is no way an American President will actually try to refute the results of a democratic election where clerks, Democrat and Republican, across the country are just doing their jobs.

Fast-forward to January 6, and people in this body are hightailing it off this floor, barricading themselves in their offices—as I did on the House side—looking for a weapon to protect themselves, as a mob instigated by the President crashed into this very floor. It sounds familiar to me.

In the State of the Union just a month ago, the President said:

The only way the Democrats can get elected is if they cheat.

Is that what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe? Do you believe that the only way that I am here is because I cheated?

Donald Trump won on the top of my ballot. Did I cheat to get here? Did he win his last election or no?

Passing the SAVE Act will “guarantee the midterms” for Republicans—another thing he said.

We are only here because you are doing his bidding and trying to pass a bill that he says will help him guarantee the election.

He said:

We will never lose a race. . . . For 50 years [if this passes], we won't lose a race.

Does that sound like someone who actually gives a flying fig about actual democracy or does that sound like someone who is asking his boys to rig elections for him in November?

Now, I was polite the last time the President of the United States did this. In 2020, I was one of those people who said: You know what, the President can't really mean this. Let's send letters. Let's talk about it politely on camera.

I spoke up at hearings. We asked the military what they were going to do if the President tried to steal the election.

Frankly, I and a lot of us on this floor had a failure of imagination for what this President would do, but I am not going to make that mistake again.

I will close with this: The President of the United States has laid out what he believes for everyone to see. We have to believe the words he is telling us.

That same President is now grinding the Senate to a halt by trying to pass a bill that doesn't do a single thing for your pocketbook, your house, your kids, your healthcare, or anything else he ran on. He is busy taking weeks at a time on this floor—time we could otherwise be working in a bipartisan manner to pass things that would help people with their cost of living—but he

wants to do this because he wants to make sure he is not embarrassed in the fall.

All of those promises he said he was going to fulfill, that he has left open—he doesn't want the chickens to come home to roost for him in November.

So as Michiganders are waiting in line at the gas pumps right now, as the price of gas jumps 60 cents per day in some cases, as middle-class Americans are unable to buy a home, we are talking about making it harder for women and old people and the military to vote.

Instead of addressing the fundamental issues of Americans, we are doing the bidding of the President of the United States because he told us all that if he doesn't win, it is rigged, so we better cover down for him.

This is not what we should be spending our time on. Focus on the issues that the American public is calling all of us—asking us to address. It is not what we need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER. Mr. President, I rise today not only as a Senator but as an American and as a descendant of enslaved men and women like those who built this Chamber and fought hard for the right to vote.

I rise today with a deep concern that we are balancing on a knife's edge and that if the SAVE America Act becomes law, we will undercut one of the most fundamental things that make America America—the right to vote.

We are literally in the midst of elections right now, and it is my understanding that this bill would actually take effect immediately.

We have Americans who are concerned about the cost of living, everything from their rent now to their energy costs. We are in the midst of war. And we know as a country we have the most safe and secure elections in the world.

So to my colleagues, I ask the question: What are you saving us from—being able to participate in our democracy? We have been down this road before. Behind me is a copy of a document that my sister Thea found when researching our family roots. We turned this into a scarf that I carried with me on the day that I was sworn in at the U.S. House of Representatives, in 2017, because it was a historic moment, and I wanted to carry history with me. And, again, I carried it with me when I was sworn into this august body—the U.S. Senate.

This document is a window into our Nation's and my family's history. It captures the moment when my great, great, great grandfather—a formerly enslaved man—gained the right to vote. He couldn't read or write; so he signed his “Returns of Qualified Voters and Reconstruction Oath” with an “x.”

I have been reflecting on this document and how it relates to the moment that we are in as a nation—how it is a

physical manifestation of our democracy's ability to expand and contract, how we can bring people together, and how we can separate them.

It is a part of the American experiment. Yet 159 years after my great, great, great grandfather signed this document and gained his right to vote, and 61 years after President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law, protecting that fundamental right and expanding it for Black women, we in the Senate are debating the possibility of placing burdens and barriers on voting for millions of Americans—a contraction of our democracy.

We are just a few months from marking our Nation's 250th year, months away from acknowledging how far we have come as a country, but it is my belief that our democracy is under attack, that there is a coordinated effort to undermine voting rights in America from right here in Congress to the Judiciary, to the Executive.

Let's start with the reason that we are here today—the SAVE America Act. This bill is as dangerous as it is unethical. It is a thinly veiled attempt to make it harder for some—some—Americans to participate in our democracy.

So here is what it does: It enables this administration to supercharge their voter roll purges by forcing States to share their voter lists with the Federal Government. It would end proven and safe voter registration systems, including online and mail registration. It would impose new costs on Americans who want to vote, creating a modern-day poll tax. It would undermine voting by mail, and it would criminalize election workers, and more.

Our distinguished minority leader called this bill Jim Crow 2.0. I am calling it Jim Crow 2.No.

Here it is by the numbers: 146 million, 165, 69, and 4.5. So 146 million is the number of Americans who don't have passports at this moment. So unless they can prove their citizenship with their birth certificate or social security card, those millions of Americans will not be able to vote.

And 165 is the base price for getting a brandnew passport. If you have a passport and it is expiring, it will cost you \$130 to renew. So if you can't find your birth certificate or social security card, there is now a pricetag on your access to the ballot.

And 69 million is the number of women who have changed their names. Not only will they have to provide proof of citizenship, but under this bill, they also would have to bring their marriage certificate to a voting booth, or maybe a signed affidavit from a judge proving their name change.

Four and a half—4.5 hours is the average amount of time a rural voter would have to drive round trip to prove they are a citizen and ensure that they can vote in the next election.

My colleagues will have you believe that we don't believe IDs are important. That is not the case. It is just not

true. Many States are already—across the country, we have to use our IDs to vote. I took my driver's license with me when I voted recently in a local election. That is not the point of this bill.

The point of this bill is trying to solve a problem that is not there, and in doing so, it moves the goalposts for people who want to vote. It will squeeze people out of the democratic process by finding ways to cost you money and cost you time if you want to vote.

Bottom line: If this bill passes, a driver's license, REAL ID, travel ID, college IDs for students, or military IDs will no longer be enough. If this bill passes, you would have to mail in a photocopy of your proof of citizenship with your ballot, making it exponentially harder for Americans to vote by mail, not to mention undermining privacy.

If you are married, if you are in a rural community, if you are a student on a college campus, if you are a person with a disability, if you are a senior, or if you have changed your name at any point in your life, like so many of us have, including myself—I was married, I was divorced, and I was widowed—this bill won't save you. It will hurt you. But this is just one aspect of the current attack on voting rights.

The second comes from across the street, where the Supreme Court has been chipping and chipping and chipping away at voting rights. The systematic weakening of our voter protections started decades ago when the Supreme Court undermined the preclearance provisions of the Voting Rights Act, the VRA.

Preclearance required jurisdictions with a historical record of racial discrimination in voting to clear any changes to their voting laws with the Federal Government. This was a backstop that protected access to the ballot box for many voters of color.

Once it was struck down, some States began to take advantage, passing restricted voting ID laws, restricting voter registration timeframes, reducing early voting, and more.

In 2021, the Supreme Court made it harder to prove racially discriminatory voting practices under the VRA. And later this year, they will hear a case that would make it even harder for minority communities to sue States for discriminatory congressional maps.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the threat to our democracy that comes from the executive branch. Let me start from the beginning.

Since January of 2025, the Trump administration has used DOGE to steal our personal information and data. They pulled information from the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service. Why? Maybe to track the American people.

Now the administration has turned their attention toward establishing an unsanctioned, nationwide voter database.

They also raided a Georgia voting center under false pretenses, undermined access to mail-in ballots by changing the rules around how mail is postmarked, and sued and threatened States like Minnesota over access to their voter files—all of this from a President that wants to "take over the voting" so that the GOP "will never lose a race for 50 years."

This is a coordinated and un-American campaign against the very core of who we are as a nation. It is not something that I say lightly, but it is something that I believe must be said, especially as we approach the 250th anniversary of our country.

In those 250 years, we have seen our democracy expand and contract multiple times. Our democracy expanded when my great, great, great grandfather signed his name with that "x" and gained the right to vote. His descendant now stands in the Senate, a living reminder that our democracy has the ability to grow and change.

But our democracy has contracted too, and we need to learn from that past if we are going to prevent further contraction in the future.

I fear we are on the cusp of falling into a trap our ancestors sprung 100 years ago. You see, my great, great, great grandfather earned the right to vote in Georgia with his signature. But it is unlikely that he was able to really exercise that newly won right for very long because, from 1877 to 1901, while some Americans were enjoying the Gilded Age, Black Americans were living through a period known as the Great Nadir. If apex is the highest, then nadir is the lowest—voter suppression, political violence—things that you see and feel even now.

Many of the rights enumerated in the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments—including the right to vote—were being eroded, washed away by partisan gerrymandering, poll taxes, grandfather clauses, Jim Crow laws, and even Supreme Court decisions. For decades, civil rights leaders fought, not just to achieve new rights but to reinstate the ones lost.

Our democracy has expanded and contracted. The first Black Senator, Hiram Revels, was elected to Congress in 1870, and then Blanche Bruce. But it was 86 years between those two Senators and 1967, when we had the next Black Senator—86 years. Right now, there are five of us, and this is the first time in our history where there are two Black women at the same time.

If the SAVE America Act passes, we are on the verge of another contraction. The parallels with the Great Nadir are as stark as they are many.

Once again, laws are being proposed to strip us of the access to the ballot box. Once again, the Supreme Court is postured to send us backward, rather than protecting the path forward. And once again, voting rights are under attack by the Federal Government.

I look around this room, and I know that we have a choice to make: wheth-

er we will allow partisan divides to enable the backsliding of our democracy, or if we are willing to stand shoulder to shoulder to protect the bedrock of our Nation—the right to vote.

So what can we do? First, we must block the SAVE America Act from advancing any further. As Senators, we have a responsibility to call it as we see it and to conduct oversight and expose executive overreach. And that is what this bill is—executive overreach that would undermine our right to vote across this country.

As Democratic Senators, we plan to stand in its path, and I hope that some of my Republican colleagues will join us.

And to all of those watching at home, I want you to know there is strength in numbers; that your power lies in being educated and informed and organized and mobilizing.

And in this moment, I stand here and say no to Jim Crow 2.0.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I appreciate the passion and the remarks provided by my friend and colleague the distinguished Senator from Delaware.

I do feel the need to respond to a couple of things, and a couple of things that were said previous to that by the Senator from Michigan.

With regard to the Senator from Delaware, there are a number of claims made that are very serious; and because they are very serious, they need to be responded to immediately.

She used terms like "poll tax," "Jim Crow 2.0," talking about adding costs as if we are charging someone to be able to have ballot access to be able to vote, which would be a poll tax. We ended that some 60 years ago by a constitutional amendment. This is not that.

Not only are we not charging someone to vote, but we are not charging someone to register to vote; nor are the documentary requirements in place anything that would cost any individual any money at all. It would not cost them a single penny because even if you don't have every document that you need in order to establish citizenship, something that is already required by a whole host of other laws—familiar to most Americans would be in the labor and employment context, where every time you start a new job as an American citizen, in the United States as an employee, you have to fill out an I-9 form, and you have to provide a very specific set of documents to establish citizenship. You may do so with a U.S. passport establishing citizenship. If you don't have a U.S. passport, you may do so with a birth certificate, together with a photo ID. A Social Security card can also come into play, but it is a fairly limited set.

What we have established in this bill is far more flexible than that. We have added a bunch of other documents. We tried to be as expansive and as inclusive as humanly possible in order to do

that. And then we provided a failsafe—a failsafe that I have yet to hear any of my colleagues across the aisle refer to when making these very aggressive accusations that this is a poll tax, that this is Jim Crow 2.0, or that this is going to disenfranchise women or people of particular racial minorities. It is just not true.

They are ignoring the existence of the provision that begins on line 22, page 12, of the bill and continues onto the next page, which says that if for any reason or no reason at all you don't have the necessary documents—any of them or all of them; you have none of them—you can still handle this by an affidavit that you can write out, thus putting the burden on the State to confirm or refute the underlying facts establishing your citizenship, whether citizenship through natural born citizen status, by virtue of the circumstances at your birth, at the time of your birth, making you a citizen or the circumstances that led to your naturalization; you were a naturalized citizen. That does not cost anyone a single dollar, and it puts the burden on the State to track down the necessary background so that the State can certify you.

So these arguments are not only missing the point; they become aggressively wrong to the point of just being flatout false, demonstrably false.

So we can hear this over and over and over again, but it doesn't change the fact that, in the bill, nobody is charged a thing to vote—not one person. And so when we hear about this being costly, that just isn't true.

Likewise, another comment was made by my colleague from Delaware referring to a vote-by-mail provision, referring to some more sweeping changes that are made in a separate amendment that are not part of this bill right now. This bill has two principal provisions. One deals with establishing proof of citizenship at the time of voter registration. The other deals with photo ID at the time of voting.

This one doesn't do that. Yes, one or more amendments have been filed that would expand that to include some significant restrictions on mail-in balloting. That is not what is being debated on the floor right now. I have no objection to anybody wanting to raise those now, given that the amendments have been filed and there has been some talk of this. But just to be clear, the bill on the floor doesn't contain those.

I also need to respond to a couple of the more egregious points that were made by the preceding Senator, the Senator from Michigan. Among other things, she repeated some of the same false accusations that this would somehow disenfranchise married women. It absolutely, emphatically, would not. In addition to making it very easy for someone who has all the other documentation but maybe doesn't have a marriage certificate backing up the name change or maybe they are miss-

ing all of them, again, you go back to page 12, line 22. Any person, whether they have changed their name or are missing some of their documentation or all of it, may establish it by affidavit, putting the burden back on the State elections official.

The Senator from Michigan also made some curious claims with regard to the Constitution, with regard to federalism and the relationship between States and the Federal Government. Among other things, she insisted that the Founding Fathers—those who wrote the Constitution, those who ratified it—were emphatic about the fact that they did not want, as she put it, the Federal Government running elections. Well, there is some truth to that, but her ultimate conclusion is 180 degrees opposite of what the Constitution says and what they did and what the words say, though it is very important for us to do this to make sure that we are talking about the same things.

So if you go to the Constitution—go to article I, section 4, clause 1. It doesn't talk about them because it doesn't need to talk about them, the States conducting their own elections for State offices. That goes without saying that the States are in charge of that. But it does talk—in article I, section 4, clause 1—about the fact that the State governments will be in charge of setting up rules and regulations governing the conduct of elections for Federal officials. And it also says, right after that, in the very same sentence, “but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations,” and that is what we are doing here.

Because these involve Federal offices, we have the authority to set important terms and conditions specifically for Federal offices. It is not that we are encroaching on any constitutional power; this is our power. It may lay dormant insofar as we choose not to exercise it. But it is not currently dormant. In fact, we legislated on a number of occasions; and there are at least four or five, maybe six major pieces of existing Federal law that deal specifically with the States' conduct of Federal elections, separate and apart from another very serious Federal criminal penalty that makes it a felony for a noncitizen to vote in a U.S. election.

So in all these respects, the Congress can, it may, it is expressly authorized to legislate, and it has indeed legislated. Among other things, it legislated with the NVRA, passed in 1993.

It is the NVRA specifically and the manner in which it has been interpreted by the Supreme Court and implemented that necessitates these provisions—specifically, the citizenship provisions—of the SAVE America Act because but for the Supreme Court's ruling in *Arizona v. Inter Tribal Council of Arizona* in 2013, a case decided some 20 years after the NVRA was enacted by Congress in 1993, the Court in that case said the States may not even inquire into someone's citizenship,

may not require proof of it even where they suspect that some voters might be noncitizens.

Now, that interpretation was wrong. It was contrary to the text, to the structure, to the original public meaning of that statute. It was wrong, but it is nonetheless conclusive. It is a majority opinion of the Supreme Court. It hasn't been overturned. And that is why this is necessary.

So to call this a federalism problem, to call this an overreach by the U.S. Government into the exclusive domain of the States, is literally not true. Why? Well, because in the first place, the Constitution itself makes it Federal, and it is necessarily Federal. I would add to that that that is even more important here because this bleeds into another one of the Federal Government's exclusive powers and exclusive abilities; namely, the ability to identify and ascertain the citizenship of any American citizen.

That is not the role of the States, nor do the States have the comprehensive databases that the Federal Government does have. The Federal Government has the ability, conclusively, to determine whether or not somebody is a citizen. The States do not, and that is yet another important reason for us to make that determination.

It is also relevant that this is where we get into trouble with a number of these blue States—the Democrat Governors and Democrat legislature States—that are refusing even to talk to the Federal authorities who run the SAVE database within the Department of Homeland Security.

Remember, it is against the law for a noncitizen to vote in a Federal election, and that is why we have these laws and these systems and this database, the SAVE database, already set up. Yet a number of these blue States—a whole lot of them—are refusing even to talk to Federal authorities, even to share with them what, if anything, that they are doing to make sure that noncitizens are not voting in U.S. elections. This has become a problem of especially great concern in recent years given that, in some States—a handful of at least four or five States and the District of Columbia—now have in place systems where, in some local elections within their State's jurisdiction, noncitizens are openly, by State law, allowed to vote in those elections.

Therefore, when they register to vote, they have a voter registration file. Basic questions have been asked of them: How do you differentiate those who are noncitizens who have registered to vote in your State, and how do you make sure that they don't get ballots to vote in a Federal election; for example, for a U.S. House of Representatives race or a U.S. Senate race?

They have refused to answer the question. They have refused to cooperate. They have hidden these details. These are important details, details that we have constitutional authority,

a moral obligation, and a legal obligation to look into to make sure that our laws are faithfully executed, and they refuse utterly to cooperate. If that is not chilling, I don't know what is.

My friend and colleague from Michigan also implied that there is a—I don't know—some sort of *de minimus*, marginal concern, in her State and every other State, about noncitizens registering to vote.

Oh, it happens every once in a while. Somebody gets in there. We remove them.

But let's remember—I looked up some articles on this. I have one right here from a publication called the Michigan Bridge. One of the ways that they found a handful of noncitizens registered to vote was in a sort of haphazard way. They found 15 just by doing something very simple. They compared a list of people who had gone into court after being summoned for jury duty. Jury duty, remember, typically turns on what they call the wheel, a random selection from among registered voters in the jurisdiction. You are called up if you are a registered voter, randomly, to serve on jury duty.

Periodically, in Michigan and in many other States, people will show up for jury duty. There are all kinds of tricks that people use to try to avoid jury duty if they don't want to. This one may or may not be a trick in some circumstances, and in many circumstances it wasn't. People were truthfully saying: I am not a citizen; therefore, I may not, must not, cannot, will not serve as a juror.

So somebody came up with the idea: Let's compare a list of—I don't know—250 or so who happened to have made that argument; then they compared them against Michigan's voter registration database. And they found that at least 15 of those individuals were noncitizens who had registered to vote. That is a far cry from saying that there are only 15 noncitizens registered to vote in the State of Michigan, when you consider the haphazard, random way in which they found this out. It would suggest not only that there could be more but that there likely are a lot more because most people aren't getting called in for jury duty, and most who are aren't necessarily invoking this defense of: I can't serve; I won't serve; I may not serve because I am not a U.S. citizen.

Finally, with regard to the federalism point, I find it very curious that this argument continues to surface, and it surfaces, in particular, from our Democratic colleagues. And the reason I say that is that, all of a sudden, they are very concerned about federalism, about maintaining the sanctity of the distinction between that which is State authority and that which is Federal.

That is important to me. I focus on a few things more than that. I think the core structural provisions of the Constitution—the vertical protection that

we call federalism and the horizontal protection that we call separation of powers—are as important as any other feature in the Constitution. And when we deviate from those, we cause all kinds of ripples downstream. So I am very sensitive to these issues. I want to avoid any semblance of trampling on States' sovereign authority. This, sir, is not that—and especially when we hear this from those who, just a few years ago, during the Congress that ranged between January 3, 2021, and January 3, 2023, in which both Chambers of Congress were controlled by Democrats and we had a Democratic President, President Biden.

During that time, they supported legislation known as H.R. 1. Now, if you want to see a Federal takeover of elections, H.R. 1 was that. It was vast. It was sweeping. It covered all sorts of things that the Federal Government has no business taking over in elections. Among other things, it would have designated every single voting jurisdiction in the entire United States of America, regardless of what part of the country they were in, regardless of what, if any, history they may have had with past *de facto* or *de jure* discrimination or segregation of their State, subjected them all to preclearance; meaning, anytime they passed any law affecting the way votes were cast, precincts were drawn or otherwise, they would have to go to a Democratic political appointee inside the Department of Justice to seek a “Mother, may I,” an advance blessing from the Federal sovereign, before they could make those changes.

That is a violation of federalism, and that is something that, last I checked, every Democrat who now serves in the Senate who was here at the time supported. So I am sorry. I am surprised that they would make a federalism argument now in reference to a bill that focuses solely, exclusively on powers that the Federal Government does, in fact, have.

And in fact, the only reason this bill is necessary is because of existing Federal law—the way it has been interpreted and the way that it is being implemented. That is the only reason we need any of this. That is not a federalism problem; that is inappropriate exercise of Federal power.

We do just as much violence to federalism when we deny to the Federal sovereign the ability to exercise Federal power as we do when we do the same to the States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

IDITAROD

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I come to the floor this evening to speak about the SAVE America Act. Before I do that, though, I want to take a pause for maybe a little break in the conversation about elections to update people on Alaska's greatest sport, and that is the Iditarod. So just a moment here to update folks.

Yesterday, Jessie Holmes came into Nome after 9 days, 7 hours, 32 minutes,

and 51 seconds on the trail. This is a 975-mile trail that he accomplished with his extraordinary team, led by Zeus and Polar, taking him all the way to Nome. He ended up with 12 dogs in the harness that were happy and barking and hungry and still ready to go. Truly an amazing feat.

Jessie—this is not his first winning the Iditarod. This is actually his second in a row. He is actually the fifth person in Iditarod history to win 2 years in a row.

I visited with him at the ceremonial start, and we talked about his focus on the race and how much it meant to those in rural Alaska and the culture of rural Alaska and how as someone originally from Alabama, he had embraced that with an enthusiasm that is really infectious.

So I am honored to be able to acknowledge his success and that of his team. I called him a couple times already—first to congratulate him just after he won, and then I called him again today because I read in the news that after this arduous 9 days on the trail, he was at the end of the Iditarod under the Burled Arch to greet every musher who was coming in. He has that much love for the Iditarod, that much love for his fellow mushers, and that much admiration for the teams that are on the road.

There are still 24 mushers that are out there on the trail. We are wishing them the best and safety along the way. The weather there is not good, but these are men and women and canine athletes that will take the toughest test.

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Mr. President, it kind of segues a little bit into some of the points that I want to make here this evening about my State particularly. We all come to these debates about policy with the background and the unique circumstances from the places we call home.

I want to begin my comments this evening about the SAVE America Act and why I have spoken out in opposition to this measure—not because I disagree with what my colleague from Utah has shared—that it should be a privilege allowed to U.S. citizens, this privilege of the vote. I also would agree that asking for valid ID in order to participate in voting is not an unreasonable thing. In fact, my State certainly requires that, and I think most others do. But, as with so much that we deal with, it is not just in the headline; it is not just in the top line; it is, how would this apply in your given situation?

As a Senator that comes from a big State and some would say a very unique State, a very complicated State—I don't think there are too many where you have dog races that go just about 1,000 miles. And we celebrate them. And the fact that the trail these animals and their mushers took goes through an area where, yes, people live but is not connected by any roads—the

way we get around is just a little bit different from other folks.

So recognizing and appreciating the distinctions that come to bear when you take a measure that is good in purpose—citizens should be allowed to vote; valid ID should be required—but you have to peel back the cover here and see, how is this going to be implemented?

So I want to focus—I know there are multiple versions of the bill. The Senator from Utah just pointed to that. I want to speak to the substitute amendment to S. 1383, which we have now, and focus on the particular challenges and the practical challenges that it creates for a State like Alaska that is one-fifth the size of the United States, with a population of just over 700,000 people.

So it is the challenges we have specifically with registration, with the requirements for photo ID, and then I will speak a little bit to the mail-in voting limitation.

One of the first places to start is you are saying: All right. If you said, LISA, you don't oppose the intent of this, and you come from a big State, and there may be logistical challenges in implementing it, when does all this come into play?

Well, that is an important consideration because, as the bill is drafted right now, these provisions are effective upon passage of the bill. So that means that Alaska and every other State is going to have to comply with a new set of laws that, in my State's situation, contradict our State laws, and we are in the midst of an election cycle. We are less than 8 months away from our general election.

In addition to immediate implementation of the provisions under this bill, there is no support that comes to the State. When I say support, there are no Federal resources that come and say: All right, you need to figure out how you can get more photo identification mobile units out to remote areas where it is hard to do. You need resources. You need people in order to absorb this. The numbers that you will see when people come to your division of elections or your public assistance office with original documents—you need more folks. Well, here is the money.

Well, we are not helping with that, so the States would be forced to bear the entire cost of implementation right away—just right away. So this is a tall order. Again, you are trying to stand all of this up while we are in the midst of an active election year.

Certainly in my State, we would be redirecting—if we had to comply with the Federal law, we would redirect funds from elsewhere. But this is just—OK. It is a logistical challenge. Is it insurmountable? Maybe not. Is it going to be really hard to do in certain places? I think that is fair to say.

So maybe I am starting with the easiest point here, which is the implementation on the timeline that this bill outlines is pretty near impossible

in a State like Alaska right now given the lack of infrastructure that we currently have.

So let me move to the next point, and this is with regard to the registration to vote. Requiring proof of citizenship—OK. We can figure this out.

I listened carefully to the Senator from Utah when he said: You know, when you have a name change, it may be complicated to get your documents, but ultimately you are going to figure out a way to get your documents.

But I am going to walk you through the challenge of what it means to meet a requirement that says you have to provide your proof of citizenship—you have to provide your documentation in person in order to register to vote.

Don't get confused. That is not when you are actually voting. That is where the voter ID comes into place. What we are talking about right now is just the registration to vote.

This would be a major, major departure from how most Alaskans currently register to vote. Just setting the scene here, in 2024, over 80 percent of applicants registered by mail, they registered online, or they registered through our permanent fund dividend application. This is a process that every eligible Alaskan will go through each year at just about this time, and so we have set up a process that allows you to register when you are applying for your permanent fund dividend application.

In 2023, that number in terms of the applicants who used that process—either by mail, online, or through PFD—was more than 90 percent. So this is where people are going right now to register.

So what this would require is—you might be able to start the process online, but the requirement to present the documentation in person is still there.

There were about 29,000 new voter registrations in 2024, and under the SAVE America Act, it would have effectively forced about 25,000 of these Alaskans to go to the Alaska Division of Elections offices to provide the documentation in order to certify their citizenship.

Now, people have said: Well, wait a minute, it is not just the division of elections that you can go to. There are potentially other agencies that you can take documentation to, whether it is State public assistance agency, the department of motor vehicles, or other locations that the State has designated as voter registration agencies.

Let me just walk you through. Again, I should have my map of Alaska overlaid on the continental United States. But we are one-fifth the size of the United States. These stars here are the six divisions of elections that we have in Alaska. We have six divisions of elections.

So, again, if you had my other big map, Alaska stretches from Florida to just about California, down from the southwest, practically up to the Cana-

dian border. So it would be like, you know, going from Washington, DC, to Ohio to go—my map is probably off on that, so maybe I shouldn't be using those States.

My point is that you have six divisions of elections that are throughout the State—Juneau, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome, Wasilla, and Kenai. So it is clear through the SAVE America Act that this is where Alaskans can present their documentary proof of citizenship. What is less clear is whether or not you can present that documentary proof if you go to a division of motor vehicles, if you go to a State public assistance office, or if you go to other locations that currently provide voter registration services, although pretty low levels.

But, again, don't get excited to think that now we have stars all over the map in terms of where you can go to actually present your documentation because there are only 10 other locations around the State that then fall into this bucket of places that have a DMV, State public assistance offices. So what you are seeing here is a logistical reality in terms of how you would meet the requirement for production of your documents.

The SAVE America Act doesn't change the Federal law that mandates that States designate public assistance and disability offices as what they are calling voter registration agencies. That might extend voter registration beyond, again, these six election regional offices, but the law is not consistently enforced. So that is an issue here.

For instance, down here in the southeast, in an unstarred area, the Sitka office is an area where public assistance is provided for, but that office is currently limited to what they call general inquiries only. So if that changes, it is unlikely to be feasible that you could actually present your documentations there.

In addition, none of these offices are equipped to handle in-person voter registration that the SAVE Act could force upon them. Again, you are talking about the need for additional resources. Most of these offices are places where you have one or two folks, oftentimes with limited hours, and quite honestly, they are trying to get out SNAP benefits, LIHEAP benefits. Now you are going to task them with not only registering somebody to vote, but now it is this confirmation of official documents that, again—you have a new private right of action and criminal penalties that could be imposed if you are not doing this right.

So States can also continue to designate other nongovernment offices as voter registration offices, but only—so you have to agree to do that. And, again, you have got resource challenges. OK.

But this issue that then comes with this new private right of action to a low-level employee who may be working in a one-person office, handling

State public assistance—it is a concern that you have the ability to not only put an additional requirement to them, an additional responsibility that comes with certain liability. Also, the State is looking to, how are we training these folks, or are we going to hire new folks to help facilitate at any of these Agencies?

So I show you the stars. In most other States, you would be looking at how all these stars connect through a road. These three here are connected by a road. This one connects to this one by a road. That is it. That is it.

So I have got 83 percent—83 percent—of Alaska's communities. This is 20 percent of our total population. So, again, there is not a lot of people out here, but you know what?—these folks, these folks have been here for a long time. Many of them Indigenous people in Native villages that have been here for generations, millennia they say.

So getting to the practical realities of forcing Alaskans to present documentation in order to vote, and the requirement that you have to present in one of six regional locations, possibly another location in the State. This is not only a logistical challenge, but it presents a fiscal challenge.

And I heard again the argument by my colleague from Utah, that we are not asking for fees to vote, but in order to get me to go, like, let's start: I am 18 years old, I want to register to vote, how am I going to do that?

I was born down here in Ketchikan. There is no star in Ketchikan. Now there is a DMV in Ketchikan, so maybe I could start my application there in Ketchikan, but I am still going to have to go to Juneau to go present my documentation.

All of the southeast, there is no roads down there. There is a ferry. It is 20 hours from Ketchikan up to Juneau there. Or I take the Alaska Airlines jet. It is only an hour, but—I don't know—it is \$420 to get me from here to there.

If I am in Fairbanks, where I went to school, OK, I have got the ability to present my documentation there; but if I am in any of these North Slope communities here, this is where I have to fly to present my original documentation.

If I happen to live here in Kotzebue, big town, I have got to fly here to Nome to present my documentation. If I live here in this Bethel community over here, I am going all way to Anchorage to present my documentation.

So you are moving around. You are flying. You are flying to all these places. So this is going to be hard. This is going to be costly on Alaskans.

And, again, these are people who are eligible to vote. They are citizens of our country, but if they are looking at a situation where I am going to have to spend \$1,000 to get me to where I can present my documentation to vote, they are not going to do it. They may do it. There will be many who will do it.

Let me say that. There will be many who will do it because these are proud Alaskans. These are proud Americans, and they want to vote.

But this is hard. This is hard. And so I fear that they won't register because financially they won't be able to register. And if they are not able to register, they can't vote. And while disenfranchisement may not be the intent of the SAVE America Act—and I don't think that it is—I think we will see that. In fact, I fully expect it to be an outcome of this.

So I am going to give you some specific examples. This is St. Lawrence Island. It is a little bit closer to Russia than it is to mainland Alaska, but there is great Alaskans that live out there. I have been out there many times.

So if you are a 17-year-old girl who lives in Savoonga, you are turning 18 in October. Super excited because you are going to be able to vote for the first time ever. So what is this young person going to have to do in order to register to vote?

She is going to have to book a flight to Nome—so it is not that far, but it is all across water. There is no boats that take you there. But that flight—that flight—we don't have jets out of St. Lawrence Island, so it is a propjet. It is going to cost you \$720 just to start. The flights, if there is one a day, you are lucky; that is good. But you are going to have to stay overnight because you can't return on the same day.

There aren't a lot of hotels in Nome. A night at the Aurora Inn is \$310, but I would guess that since the Iditarod is going on right now and there is a lot of excitement there, it is probably a little over \$310. Then you add in food for the day, cab fare. You are probably looking at, at least \$1,000—at least \$1,000—for a quick day trip to go to Nome to register so that you can present your documentation so that you have the privilege to vote.

And keep in mind, in my example, I am a 17-year-old girl, super excited about turning 18 and being able to vote, but I don't have a \$1,000. And the people in the village, fishing village of Savoonga or in the other community of Gambell, they don't make this kind of money. So this is probably the best case scenario for flying in and out of Savoonga because you have got weather that hits all the time.

And, again, you are not in a jet; you are taking a prop. You can get weathered in or out. Your trip can last several days. Storms blow in; you are stuck there; you can't move for a week or so. This is not—this is not uncommon.

And so it just, it adds—and I feel like these stories are important because, well, my example of a young 17-year-old who is excited to vote, there is no name. I haven't talked to such a person, but these are the scenarios that people live with when your State is geographically blessed. I was going to say challenged, but I think we are blessed with our geography.

So you are saying: OK, LISA, that is an extreme example because that is a big island out in the middle of the big ocean, but other places that are more connected, it is not that bad.

Let's go to the largest fishing community in Alaska and the fishing community that brings in more fish per volume than any place else, Unalaska.

So we are sitting out here. We are right—actually we are right at the end here because, once again, we are so geographically blessed, we can't have a map that actually shows that the Aleutians go all the way out here. So you are in Unalaska. Say you are a fisherman or a teacher.

The flight to Anchorage—because this is where you are going to have to go. You are going to have to go into Anchorage, 800 air miles. 800 air miles. The cost one way right now, if you can get a seat, is somewhere between \$1,100 per seat, if you can maybe get on a charter, to possibly as much as \$1,300. This is one way. This is one way to get you from here to there.

Now, granted, this is crab season going on, and so the tickets—you are not able to get many seats. But that is what we are talking about. So you have got—you have got over \$1,000 just to get you there.

Then you get to Anchorage, and you are not home free. It is not like the division of elections is sitting there at the Ted Stevens International Airport. You have a 5-mile drive to get into town. Maybe you rent a car. You probably don't rent a car; you get a cab. But surprise, again, there is no return flight home to Dutch Harbor, Unalaska on the same day.

This is not a one-and-done, in-and-out. I have got to overnight. That means I have got to get a hotel. I am probably going to need to have something to eat. So, again, the reality that we are looking at is it is costing thousands of dollars to just get me to the place so that I can register to vote.

I have been spending a lot of time with the folks in the southwest region of the State that were impacted by ex-typhoon Halong in October.

It is a thousand-mile storm that just blasted through these communities, and the small village of Kipnuk was devastated. Homes literally floated off of their pilings and floated as many as 3 to 5 miles away.

The homes are not—it is not possible to go back to those homes. So I have been talking to residents from Kipnuk who have said: I lost everything, and there is no way I can go back there.

These villagers who, no doubt that they are U.S. citizens—no doubt that they are U.S. citizens—they no longer have the documentation to prove their citizenship. It is lost. Now, it can be recreated, but it is going to take time. And, again, I take it back to my first point, which is all of this happens now when the bill is signed into law.

So another example. Lots of folks who have been in the State for a while are elders, lived in a time, were born in

a time when being born in a hospital was not the norm. We didn't become a State until 1959. So say you are an 85-year-old man from Selawik. Selawik is right up here in the interior. He spent his entire life there. In Selawik there is no need for a driver's license. You can't get one in Selawik.

You were born in your parents' house. He certainly doesn't have a passport. Getting a certified copy of your birth certificate can be really, really difficult if you have never had one before. And we know because these are certain examples of some of the things that we do with casework in my office.

It is not easy. It can be done, but it is not something that you can just say: Here is a copy of my passport. I have got a certified copy of my birth certificate.

I have mentioned just the logistics, the sheer logistics of trying to satisfy the requirements of the law when it comes to registration. It is so costly to get yourself there, and it is costly to secure the documents that you need to prove citizenship in the first place.

It has been mentioned that passports are \$130; applications take 4 to 6 weeks, unless you are paying an expedite fee.

We have got pretty good statistics in Alaska when it comes to those who actually have a passport, about 50 percent of Alaskans have one. Getting a certified copy of your birth certificate or marriage certificate, it is not free; that is \$30.

One of the problems that we found out in Alaska right now is our vital records department for the whole State has a notice on their website that says that there is a processing time of 1 to 2 months.

So, for instance, if I am coming out of Ketchikan here and I want to go to Juneau—fly to Juneau—so I can present my documentation, if I have got a copy of my birth certificate but it is not certified, I am either going to have to fly back to Ketchikan to see if it is possible to get one there or I can go to vital statistics. But then I am told you have got to wait a couple of months, perhaps. So now I have spent \$420, and I am still not registered to vote.

I have shared how challenging it is to meet the requirements with, really, no advanced lead time to transition to allow for States to stand these up.

It has been mentioned before the challenges that women have with name changes. I have talked to women in domestic violence shelters who have shared with me that one of the scary things about their situations is knowing that the abuser in a domestic violence situation continues to hold the papers that will allow them to move about.

So whether it is a birth certificate, whether it is a passport, whether it is a Tribal ID card, in Alaska, we have got an estimated 155,000 female citizens, aged 15 years and older, who have names that don't match their birth

certificates due to a host of different reasons.

It has been fascinating, with this whole discussion, the number of conversations that I have had with women, including myself, where we talk about how hard it was to get REAL IDs because of a name change or there has been a hyphen, and you can't match up all of the documentation.

Again, is it impossible? No. Is it going to be really challenging? Absolutely, yes.

So I have talked about the registration part of that. Let's assume now you are registered to vote. Now the SAVE Act is going to require a new photo ID with specifics attached to it. So it is not only a photo ID. It has to have an expiration date on it. You have got to have this to vote.

I have said I support voter ID. Alaska requires ID to vote, as I think they should. But I think what we have here is a very prescriptive approach to it. Again, my fear is that it would result in disenfranchising voters who have been voting for decades simply because they can't produce a piece of ID with a photo on it.

There has been a lot of discussion about Tribal IDs, and don't they qualify? They qualify for you to go through the TSA, but the act requires that you have a photo ID that has an expiration to it. Most Tribal IDs do not have expiration dates to them, and some of them do not have photos. So it would be a significant challenge to so many not only in Alaska but within the lower 48 as well.

Others are saying: Well, if what you need is just a photo ID, you can have a State ID. You can have your driver's license. Keep in mind, in most of these communities—the 20 percent of Alaskans who do not live on the road system, the 83 percent of our communities that are not connected by the road—if you are not really connected by the road, that means we don't really have a lot of roads in a lot of these place. So why do you need a driver's license? You don't. You might live in a boardwalk community, where you really don't have any roads, and you don't have the ability, again, to provide for a department of motor vehicles in these communities.

So there is an exception, and I want to acknowledge that that recognizes that voters would be able to provide the last four digits of their Social Security number and an affidavit attesting that they are unable to obtain a copy of a valid photo ID, but it says, "after making reasonable efforts to obtain a copy." So I want to know: What does that mean? What does "reasonable efforts" really mean? Because I worry that it might open the voter up to potential liability and result in different standards around the States.

So it matters when we say: Well, you can make "reasonable efforts." But what does that really mean? What do I tell that person who comes from the boardwalk community that doesn't

have a driver's license, who doesn't have a State ID, or whose Tribal ID doesn't include an expiration date? Does "reasonable efforts" mean that you have got to fly to Anchorage in order to get that? I don't know. I don't know.

This version also goes further and sets a new default rule for Federal elections of in-person voting. This contradicts Alaska's long-allowed, no-excuse absentee voting by mail. In the way the amendment is drafted, absentee ballots would only be allowed if the voter were a member of the armed services or is stationed abroad or out of State, unable to vote in person due to illness, infirmity, hospitalization, or physical disability, is the primary caregiver of an individual who is medically incapacitated, or will be absent from the State due to verified travel. Now, there is a fifth "hardship" category, but we understand that the drafters are pretty clear that this is meant to be construed narrowly.

The bill then goes on to describe very different and specific chain-of-custody rules for a State's handling of absentee ballots, on top of the other changes that SAVE America would mandate be implemented immediately.

In addition to the geography, I am going to introduce you to the climate and to the weather because, in November, when we hold our elections—along with everybody else in a Presidential year—the weather is notoriously not good in Alaska. I don't care what part of the State you are in. So what has happened is Alaskans have taken their voting responsibility very seriously, and they are, like, I am not going to be shut down by the weather because remember, a few years ago, we had that bad storm, and we weren't even able to get out of the driveway to go to town. So I am going to vote absentee.

We have allowed no-excuse voting for a long time for lots of good reasons. Most notably, people want to make sure that they are able to participate in the vote, and when your conditions are shut in, you can't do it, and you might not feel safe in doing it. So you are securing it early by being responsible.

One of the things that we have done in the State of Alaska is to make sure that the absentee process is very secure. We have got an ability to track your ballot once you have cast it. So we have worked this long and hard and well to accommodate the many, many tens of thousands of Alaskans who will vote by mail. In the 2024 general election, over 50,000 Alaskans voted by mail. So believe me, when you tell Alaskans that you might not be able to do this, that is not something that sits very well.

I will restate again that the goals of what we are talking about with the SAVE America Act I support. Only

U.S. citizens should vote in our elections, and Federal law already—already—makes it a crime for noncitizens to vote in Federal elections. Voters should be required to present identification, which State law requires, and list specific forms of ID that work to provide that identification in the State. But as I tried to share by way of a map and by way of some stories here, there are significant impediments that I see in the implementation of this act in my State.

I do have additional issues with the reforms that the legislation would impose on States, including the federalization of the election process, as opposed to the State-driven process that is contemplated by the Constitution. And one example is the requirement for States to run their voter rolls through a Federal database that was not designed for this. We have already had some legitimate issues in multiple States with regard to that.

So I have asked: Do we see evidence for the need of these sweeping changes, given the lack of credible evidence of noncitizens voting at a significant level, certainly, in my State?

I have asked specifically, and we have had that review. Over a 10-year period, there have been 70 instances that were flagged in terms of actually following through to determine whether or not it was illegal. But that is, basically, seven a year.

So you look at what we are trying to chase here with this and balance it with disenfranchising so many who would be faced with almost insurmountable challenges in order to register and/or to vote. So I look at this, and on balance, it doesn't have weight.

I am also not happy to see some provisions tucked into the substitute that target transgender individuals simply because there is, apparently, an opening to do so. I don't know that that has anything to do with voting, but these provisions add to the opposition that I have.

Really, the practical impacts on Alaskan voters are the easiest things to express here. They have not been solved by the updated text. I have introduced over a dozen amendments—germane amendments—to make what, I think, would allow this bill to work better. But I think they are just kind of the tip of the iceberg of changes that need to be made.

Again, the SAVE America Act may be well-intended, but how its goals are achieved matters, and the implementation matters. We cannot create a situation that doesn't work for Alaska, where so many who should be able to vote and who may have been voting for years—lawfully voting for years—are suddenly unable to do so.

The States should remain in charge of their own elections. They should set their own requirements based on what works for them because we can't shift to a system that works for many rightful voters but not all, and particularly so close to election day and with no

funding for the States to implement the new mandates.

I know Alaska is always a little bit unique, and you all know that Alaska is a little bit unique because I tell you so. But I appreciate the recognition of the distinctions that we have among our many amazing 50 States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MOODY). The majority leader.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for Senate amendment No. 4421.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on amendment No. 4421 to the motion to concur in the House message to accompany S. 1383 with substitute amendment No. 4420, a bill to establish the Veterans Advisory Committee on Equal Access, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Roger Marshall, John Barasso, Bill Hagerty, Pete Ricketts, Bernie Moreno, John Cornyn, Rick Scott of Florida, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, Jim Banks, Jon Husted, Joni Ernst, Marsha Blackburn, Ted Budd, Steve Daines, Tommy Tuberville.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

#### MOTION TO SUSPEND

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, pursuant to the notice given by me on March 16, 2026, I move to suspend paragraph (n)(1) of rule XXV.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is debatable.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to suspend the operation of rule XXV, paragraph (n)(1), to permit the Committee on Rules and Administration to consider the pending motion with respect to the message to accompany S. 1383 to fund TSA and as noticed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on March 16, 2026.

Charles E. Schumer, Alex Padilla, Brian Schatz, Chris Van Hollen, Raphael Warnock, Tammy Baldwin, Peter Welch, Jack Reed, Richard J. Durbin, Amy Klobuchar, Adam B. Schiff, Jacky Rosen, Christopher A. Coons, Tina Smith, Cory A. Booker, Catherine Cortez Masto, Mark R. Warner.

Mr. SCHUMER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Mr. HUSTED. Madam President, I have been here for a little while this afternoon, this evening, and have listened to a lot of the concerns of my colleagues, and I believe I have something tonight that will provide some common ground that, hopefully, we can all support.

I come to this conversation having been twice elected and entrusted as the chief elections officer of the State of Ohio, as being elected their secretary of state. I oversaw elections: presidential elections in 2012 and 2016, as well as midterm elections in 2014 and 2018, and many primaries, local elections, special elections, ballot initiatives, on and on and on.

I know my election law. I know my election administration, and I believe Ohio is the gold standard for how to run an election. I made my mission clear in that role to make Ohio a place where it was easy to vote and hard to cheat.

And many other States do it right; many other States do it right. They have voter ID laws. They properly maintain the voter rolls. However, other States do not do that.

I enforced voter roll maintenance, the voter roll maintenance standards in all 88 counties, to make sure that no one could nefariously or accidentally cast a ballot, and this standard was upheld in the case before the U.S. Supreme Court of *Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute*.

And I can tell you, it is a chore to make sure that only legally registered citizens are on the voter rolls because there are millions of people in this country who can get driver's licenses, who get Social Security numbers, who are not citizens of the United States of America. They may be here on a visa, a green card, a refugee, someone here on a TPS—temporary protected status. They all get the things that you need to register to vote in many States.

And when you are in a swing State, you have lots of outside groups that just want to register everybody because they get paid more and more and more the more people they register, even if those people are not legally allowed to be on the voter rolls. It is an important responsibility.

I also launched an annual voter fraud and suppression report, which was a postmortem on each election cycle, and we found cases every election of fraud and attempted fraud, even with all those safeguards in place. It was rare, but it was real. It was out there.

And you may say: Well, what is the big deal? It is a few hundred here, a few hundred there. We had 200 elections during my tenure. When you add up the local elections that were decided by 1 vote or tied—local elections, township trustees, political officials—every vote counts; every vote matters.

Ohio then implemented a required photo ID law at the polls, and with these reforms, there has been no evidence of voter suppression. In fact, with all of these measures in place, in the 2024 Presidential election, it produced the second highest turnout that we have had in the past four Presidential elections.

And it is not surprising that people don't find it hard to produce an ID when they come to vote because it happens in their lives every single day. I know, for me, in the last week, I have had to provide an ID to enter a government building, an ID to rent a car, an ID to stay at a hotel. But many other things we commonly do in life, whether that is someone going to the local store to buy alcohol or tobacco, you name it, lots of reasons that people have to supply IDs. They are very accustomed to doing it. They do it all the time.

So when they show up at the polls and ask for an ID, they already had it with them because they probably were already asked for it once that day.

And in Ohio—and I know other States do this and are perfectly capable of doing it—if you don't have an ID, the State of Ohio will get you one free of charge at the DMV.

So when we talk about the SAVE America Act, it is trying to solve a simple problem—at least the provision I am here to talk about tonight—that we need to make sure that we know who is coming to the polls to cast their vote because election integrity matters. But there are 14 States that do not have voter ID laws, even though 80 percent of Americans think it is a good idea. This is one of those issues that, whether you talk to Democrats, Republicans, or Independents, they say: Yes, photo ID makes sense. It is just kind of common sense that we would want to know who is voting when we cast a ballot to elect Presidents and Senators and Governors.

And, like I said, I have tried to listen. I heard my Democrat colleagues say that they don't oppose photo ID laws. I heard Senator SCHUMER say our objection as Democrats is not to a photo ID. I heard Senator FETTERMAN say he supports a photo ID law. And I guess if I can quote him:

If GOP wants real reform over a show vote—put out a clean, standalone bill, and I'm AYE.

Well, that is what I am doing tonight. The voter, under this legislation, could present a photo ID of any of the following: a State-issued driver's license that includes a photo and an expiration date, State ID that has a photo of the individual and an expiration date, a valid U.S. passport, a valid military ID, or a valid ID issued by a Tribal government that includes a photo of the individual and an expiration date.

Pretty simple. Not complicated. Easy to do. It is proven effective because many States already do it. We certainly do it in Ohio.

I will add that it is also easier to administer when you have a photo ID and you are an election official because we have our neighbors show up every 2 or 4 years to work at the polls. They might be young children, young adults. We know we let high school students participate in that in Ohio. It might be a senior citizen. It could be anybody that decides they are going to give of their day to go sit at the polls and check in voters.

When you have a photo ID, it is simple. You just look at it or you slide it through the card reader and the voter's information pops up and you know which precinct they are from, which ballot they have, and whether they are legally allowed to vote. Rather than trying to do it the old way, the bureaucratic way of having to look through poll books and making every poll worker who works there once every 2 or 4 years become a signature-reading expert to try to determine whether or not somebody is truly allowed to vote in that precinct and they are who they say they are.

So I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle realize or really do support a photo ID law because this legislation is the simple, easy, proven way to do it.

So showing a photo ID is common sense. The American people support it by an 80-20 margin. And as I have been saying for more than a decade and a half, it is possible to make it both easy to vote and hard to cheat, and we should make that a national standard with the photo ID law that is easy to implement and is proven effective.

Passing voter ID requirements is common sense and passing this provision that I offer tonight as part of the SAVE America Act is right for election integrity and it is the right thing to do for voter confidence and I urge a "yes" vote.

So now, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 4155, which is at the desk; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

And I recognize, Madam President, that I have some colleagues here that may want to offer something.

Madam President, let me withdraw that request and allow my colleagues to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I want to thank my friend and distinguished colleague, the Senator from Ohio, for his observations, for his insights on this. This is one of many true talents we have in the Senate. He is particularly well qualified in this area, given his experience in the State of Ohio with mastering the election laws of that State and the Federal election laws that overlap with State election laws.

I am not sure there is anyone in the Senate, currently or who has ever

served here, who has a greater knowledge of these laws and the ways that they intersect.

For the same reasons articulated by the Senator from Ohio, I think this is an exceptionally good idea. It is not every bill where it makes sense to separate out a provision, try to pass that provision on its own, separate from the rest of the text of the bill, but this is one of those instances where it makes sense.

Don't get me wrong. Neither I nor the Senator from Ohio are suggesting that we still don't need the rest of the SAVE America Act. That is not our point.

The point is that these are separately divisible such that they could be enacted separately, and insofar as there is a greater degree of consensus with regard to the voter ID component of the SAVE America Act than there are with regard to the citizenship components, it makes sense for us to get this done now.

Let's pass it. Let's pass it right now. Let's pass it unanimous consent. Let's make this law, and then we can proceed back to deal with the rest of the issues within the SAVE America Act.

This is what progress looks like. This is what consensus building looks like.

And I thank my friend from Ohio for raising this.

Look, no matter how you feel about the rest of the provisions of the bill, it is not too much to ask somebody to show who they are when they show up on voting day. That provision is very simple.

Let's get this passed. Let's get it done right now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. HUSTED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 4155, which is at the desk; further, that the bill be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I appreciate the information from my colleague from Ohio and my colleague from Utah brought forward. But just minutes ago, another colleague from Alaska was on this floor laying out the enormous difficulties that this very proposal would create, disenfranchising a tremendous number of people across her State.

Now, this is part of a larger bill that has the goal of stopping citizens from voting. It is targeted directly to making it very difficult for women to vote. It would proceed to make it very difficult for students to vote. It would make it very difficult for Tribal members to vote.

My colleague from Ohio mentioned the phrase: The goal is to make it easy to vote and hard to cheat. But, in fact,

it is all about making it hard to vote. This broader bill is all about creating a national voter registration database that the administration has the ability to purge. They can then ding people, give them a little ping, if you will, and say: We stripped your name out. Try to go reregister. But, in fact, they can do that right before the election.

And it has already been laid out. You can't even register to vote under this broader law with your birth certificate. No, you have to have a birth certificate and something else.

They do say you can register to vote with just your passport, but that brings in a very expensive enterprise, and it takes 6 months to do that.

But let's focus on this particular piece. This measure before us proceeds to destroy the secret ballot. In 2024, 48 million citizens voted by mail. That includes the State of Utah that my good friend was just speaking from and representing. It includes the State of Oregon.

Now, those 48 million folks are told: You have to tell the world how you are voting because you have to put a copy of your birth certificate or your driver's license in with your ballot. So when they open your secret ballot, your name is inside there with the same document of how you voted.

Well, that is pretty troubling, this effort to destroy the secrecy of the ballot for 48 million Americans.

Now, my colleague from Ohio has a lot of studies and experience that I will acknowledge, and I am not familiar with all of the studies that he has conducted, but I am familiar with the study from the good State of Utah, an examination of 2 million voters.

That examination, done by his State government, found that there was 1 person registered who should not have been registered out of those 2 million people, but that person had never voted. So the number for amount of fraud was zero out of 2 million.

I am not sure if Ohio could even match that incredible level of integrity that Utah achieved to be able to have an audit that shows that zero people that weren't qualified to vote voted.

Oregon had a study that covered 20 years of voting—20 years. That is a long period of time. They found cases that were, if you will, potentially a problem in less than one out of a million. I am not sure Ohio could match that either, because the system of voting by mail has a lot more integrity than the system of voting at the polls.

You see, voting at the polls introduces so much opportunity for shenanigans. The people involved who don't want a particular community to vote—well, they move the precinct locations between elections, so people go to the wrong place. They put the precinct election places where there is no place to park—a deliberate effort to disenfranchise individuals. They proceed to put in machines that don't work in order to create long lines. Others have put out false information about the lo-

cation and false information about the date.

This is a whole series of proven strategies to corrupt elections on election day. And that is why President Trump wants to shut down vote-by-mail—because it is easy to manipulate and corrupt the election on election day using these systems that have been well studied and well practiced in many jurisdictions.

Well, I value integrity, and Utah and Oregon have shown me that type of integrity. In fact, Utah's Lieutenant Governor—I might mention that he shares the party that is across the aisle from me—he noted that this bill would violate the State election law, which guarantees a secret ballot.

An assault on the secret ballot, an effort to be able to manipulate election day in a corrupt manner, an effort to rig the November election—that is what we are talking about right here.

This is absolutely wrong because we should be down here defending the high-integrity system of vote-by-mail, not trying to corrupt its secrecy or trying to stop it altogether.

Thus, Madam President, I ask that the Senator modify his request and take my amendment at the desk to be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** Is there an objection to the modification?

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. HUSTED. Reserving the right to object, I want to address some of the points that were made by the Senator from Oregon.

There were a lot of points made about citizenship. The amendment that I am proposing has nothing to do with citizenship; it has to do with photo ID—five simple ways that have been proven successful in many States to determine if the person showing up to vote is, indeed, the person who is registered to vote. It is that simple. Five forms of identification that everyone has access to. This particular amendment is not about citizenship; it is about photo ID.

Secondly, I want to address the issue about protecting the secrecy of the ballot.

Let me also say that there are no birth certificate requirements in this particular amendment I have.

Then I want to talk about the secrecy of the ballot. Let me explain the administration of how elections officials make sure the ballot that is being mailed in is, indeed, a legitimate vote.

There are two envelopes. The first envelope is the security envelope. That envelope determines if the individual is eligible, in which they could put their—inside that envelope put their copy of their photo ID or their Social Security number on the form you would have them fill out.

The second envelope contains the actual ballot. What happens once that

ballot is received is that two elections officials in the State of Ohio—one Republican and one Democrat—look at it, they validate the integrity of the envelope that was received with the ballot, and then remove that, separate all the identification over here, and put the secure ballot that has been validated as legal into another box, which is then loaded in the machines and later counted on election night.

The secrecy of the vote is in no way jeopardized by that process. How do I know? We have been using it for years. It has never been a problem, and we have a Democrat and a Republican right there with their eyes on it making sure that happens.

Now, to the substance of the gentleman's amendment, there are many reasons that I could object to this, but I will take one, because this is the Freedom to Vote by Mail Act. It is a very large amendment in which it authorizes unsolicited mail-in ballots—let me repeat: unsolicited mail-in ballots—meaning I didn't ask for it; you just sent me a ballot.

Why is this wrong? I will give you a couple of examples.

In Wood County, where Bowling Green State University is in Ohio, at one point in time, we had more registered voters than there were people in the county.

You say: How could that happen?

Because Bowling Green State University is there, and every 4 years when you are a swing State, people really, really try to get every single student to register to vote on that campus. So over years, according to the National Voting Rights Act, you cannot remove somebody for being an inactive voter, meaning just because I didn't show up and vote, I am on the voter rolls; you can't remove me.

Well, I want to just give you a reason why they might still be on the rolls—because when they graduate from college, they don't think to call the Wood County Board of Elections and remove themselves from the rolls; they just stay on there.

According to Federal law, you just can't remove them for being inactive for at least 6 years, and you have to go through a series of verifications, which is what I did in Ohio and was part and parcel to the Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute, a process that was approved.

So in States that don't do that, which there are many that don't, what you have are people that may attend the University of Oregon; they may be from Columbus, OH; they may graduate from college and live in an apartment on campus; and when they move back to Ohio, you wouldn't know the difference. They are still on the rolls, and you are sending them a ballot—and they are not even legally allowed to vote in that State—because you can't remove them from the rolls without going through a 6-year process. That is the Federal law.

That is why we have so many people—so many ballots in States that do

unsolicited absentee balloting with ballots floating around out there, and they are not supposed to be sent. The person they are being sent to is not legally allowed to vote because they may very well be registered in another State, and you wouldn't even know it.

So on that basis, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection to the modification is heard.

Is there an objection to the original request?

Mr. MERKLEY. Yes. Reserving the right to object, I noticed my colleague didn't answer the fact that student IDs are not one of those five, that Tribal IDs are not one of those five, and that nobody in the country can say any system is better than Utah's, which has zero cases out of 2 million. And I would guess a study of Ohio would find that it is probably not as good as Oregon and probably not as good as Utah. The reason why is because our States take so seriously integrity in the voting process. That is why these surveys show that the issue of fraud is either zero or vanishingly small—so vanishingly rare, you have a better chance of being struck by lightning.

This bill that they are presenting, this broader bill—it is not to address fraud; it is to make it very hard for targeted groups in America to vote and to make it impossible, in the broader bill, to vote by mail because they want you to have to vote in a system that can be manipulated.

I did notice he didn't address a single one of the six ways I noted that voting at the polls is often manipulated.

For that reason and because I believe in the integrity of our voting process and will not allow it to be degraded in this horrific fashion, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Thank you, Madam President.

May I be recognized after Senator MERKLEY, Madam President?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNET. Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### EPSTEIN FILES

Mr. MERKLEY. Back in 2022, Ghislaine Maxwell was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison for sex trafficking minors as Jeffrey Epstein's coconspirator in their horrific crimes against women and girls. She was a key person in the grooming, the abuse, and the rape of a vast number of young girls.

Bureau of Prison policy requires that sex offenders be housed in at least low security prisons. To explain, there are high security, medium security, low security, and then way down at the bottom—you know, think hotels—there is this minimum security.

Prison policy requires that minimum security is unacceptable for people who

have been sex offenders—people like Ghislaine Maxwell—but then, in July of 2025, Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche spent 2 days meeting with her in conversations that are completely opaque to everyone else in America, and suddenly, after these 2 days of conversation in which who knows what was promised, she was transferred to a minimum facility in Bryan, TX—otherwise known as Club Fed.

Now, in this minimum security facility, there is an athletic field, there are extracurricular activities, there is vocational training and access to service dogs. I guess that is pretty important to me because I love dogs, and I would love, if ever I was incarcerated, to have access to a dog. Hopefully, I will never be incarcerated.

On top of all this was a set of special treatments that she received after Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche had her transferred to "Club Fed." What kinds of special treatment did she get? Well, her meals were customized and prepared by Federal prison camp staff and then personally delivered to her cell by Federal employees.

When she wanted to arrange a private meeting with visitors, the warden personally arranged it for her. The warden, the head of the prison, personally was her personal assistant. And then she provided a special cordoned-off area for the visitors to arrive and an assortment of snacks and refreshments for her guests. Does that sound like prison to you? The special assistant, the head of the prison, arranges snacks and refreshments. It sounds more like a congressional reception.

Her guests were permitted to bring computers, an unprecedented action approved by the warden specifically for Ms. Maxwell. When Ms. Maxwell wanted to review and edit documents quickly, she was allowed to use the warden, Tanisha Hall, as her personal secretary and administrative assistant. Ms. Maxwell's correspondents would email documents directly to the warden, who would then provide them and deliver them to Ms. Maxwell, who could then review them and edit them and provide them back to the warden, who would then scan them and provide them back to the original sender.

For other inmates, even at this minimum security prison, simple mail can take weeks to arrive and is frequently lost.

An inmate who trains puppies to become service dogs was instructed to provide one of these puppies to Ms. Maxwell so she could play with the puppy, even though neither inmates nor staff are ordinarily allowed to play with the dogs in training.

And when she wanted to go to the prison exercise area, she was personally escorted there after hours—that is, after normal hours—by prison guards so she could work out all by herself and enjoy recreation time in the staff-only areas.

Folks, what happened in those 2 days when Deputy Attorney General Todd

Blanche went down and had all these private conversations—and, by the way, the type of conversations that are never held in that fashion by a Deputy Attorney General? Only him, with her. And now the head of a prison is her personal assistant, and she gets to use the staff area for her personal recreation. And she gets her puppy time, and she gets her meals prepared and hand delivered.

Folks, "Club Fed," for a woman who facilitated the grooming, the abuse, and the rape of untold numbers of young women. This, my friends, is absolutely wrong. It is a slap in the face to every victim. The victims may not even be able to live in the way that she is living in this minimum security prison with the warden as her personal assistant. And so I think we can all agree on that.

So I ask for the Sex Offender Security Classification Integrity Act—that the Senate proceed to immediate consideration of the bill that is at the desk. And it would ensure that a sex offender who under prison policy cannot be put in a minimum security facility could not be put into that minimum security facility the way she has.

Madam President, so I ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The majority whip.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, reserving the right to object, the Senator brings an absolutely extraneous and unrelated measure to the floor. What we are supposed to be discussing here is what Senator HUSTED just offered, a voter ID proposal. And it is revealing to hear my Democratic colleague try to change the subject from something that is very popular—voter ID—to his very unpopular position, which is his opposition to having voters present voter ID.

You need a photo ID to buy a beer, to board a plane, to cash a check. Why not voting in elections? Why do you want to keep changing the subject?

Senator HUSTED's bill is simple. It simply requires voters to show a photo ID when they show up to vote. Senator HUSTED knows about administering elections, and he knows it better than any other Member of this body because he spent years as Ohio's secretary of state. His job was to run elections that were fair and safe and secure, and he did it successfully. He did this in one of the most closely watched battleground States in America. If anyone knows what it takes to protect the integrity of elections, it is Senator JON HUSTED of Ohio. He knows that this simple, commonsense requirement of a photo ID would make elections more secure.

Now, here is what is astonishing. Just a few days ago, the minority leader said that his caucus is not opposed to a photo ID when you show up to vote. Well, I agree with that. Yet here

we are, just days later. The Democrats are here on the floor opposing Senator HUSTED's commonsense bill to require a photo ID when you show up to vote.

Apparently they were for it before they were against it. And here is what is most interesting. Thirty years ago, the minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, then a Member of Congress, championed photo ID requirements to receive welfare benefits. He famously called photo ID requirements then anti-fraud. Again, he was for it before he was against it.

Democrats are here on the floor objecting, as we have just seen, to commonsense photo ID requirements to vote in American elections. Photo IDs are common sense. They are necessary. Senator HUSTED's bill should pass without amendments, without delay. And therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I will just note, once again, the failure to completely address the point that this bill is targeted at stopping students from voting, stopping Tribal members from voting, and that the broader bill from which it is derived is aimed at ending vote-by-mail altogether and taking away the secrecy of the ballot for 48 million people across America.

The fact that none of those points were covered speaks for itself.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

S. 1383

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I thank the Presiding Officer for the recognition.

I spent last weekend in Grand Junction. I am happy to be here tonight on the floor with my colleague from Colorado JOHN HICKENLOOPER. I spent last weekend in Grand Junction, in our State, on Colorado's Western Slope. And my conversations with young parents and with families just starting out, I think—I would hope—would be familiar to many colleagues that are here. We discussed the price of housing, which has surged over 80 percent over the last 10 years in Colorado; the price of healthcare, which is ratcheting higher and becoming impossible for families to afford, not just in Colorado but all across our country; the cost of childcare, which is making it harder for families to live any semblance of a middle-class life—families that are working two jobs just to pay the mortgage can't even afford childcare when they are working with those two salaries—and our inability as a nation, as a State, to prepare our kids for the dynamic and potentially hugely unforgiving economy they are about to enter. This is a tough economy that we are in today, and tariffs and now gas prices haven't helped.

Last week, colleagues, I met with a food bank from El Paso County, who told me that they stay open late—listen to this, U.S. Senate. This food bank

in El Paso County said that they stay open late 1 day a week to have teachers' night so the teachers that have worked all week teaching children have the opportunity to come to that food bank in the evening to get food to feed their own children at home.

I doubt very much that there is a living American who can remember a decade in this country when we took it for granted that teachers would have to go to a food bank to feed their own children.

Can you imagine, in the 1950s, in this Chamber, if it were known that people teaching in America—in inner-city America or in the suburbs of our great cities—that the pay wasn't satisfactory, so they had to go to a food bank after work?

And that is happening to working people all over our country, people that are in what we think of as traditional middle-class lives, because of how savage this economy has been, because of the affordability crisis that, I will say, has been with us for decades in this country but the current administration, the Trump administration, has made far worse and now is making it even worse with what they are doing to energy prices because of their unauthorized war in the Middle East.

I wish we were working on that affordability crisis today. I wish we were working on building an economy that worked for everybody, not just the people at the very top.

This is a choice that is being made by President Trump and the majority in this Senate, the Republicans, who have spent the entire week fighting for a bill that will make it harder for family members and for aging parents and for their cousins to vote or to register to vote. That is what they have chosen to use the floor of the U.S. Senate to do. It is shameful. It is shameful both because it is ignoring the affordability crisis that our families are facing, but it is shameful because there is no excuse for taking away the right to vote from people all over the United States of America.

These are people who are supposed to believe in States' rights, believe in the ability of States to be able to run their own affairs. And Donald Trump—President Trump—and the Republican's SAVE America Act rewrites the way we run elections in America completely. It rips up the processes all over the United States of America at the local level that county clerks and election officials understand. It requires the Federal Government to have access to the voter rolls, a shocking thing from the party that is supposed to be about States' rights.

And it creates yet another unfunded mandate for States and for local communities. There is no money in here to fund the stuff that is in this bill.

Most troublingly, it imposes new document requirements for voter registration that many Americans do not have or do not have access to. Madam President, 146 million Americans don't have

a passport. Almost 70 million women do not have a birth certificate that matches their real name. That should be self-evident to anybody in this Chamber, but it is ignored completely by the people who wrote this legislation.

Over 8 million Americans have moved to a different State within the last year, and an average of over 17 million will have moved counties. Many of them—probably most—do not have the paperwork that this bill requires. That doesn't make any sense. These people aren't trying to evade the law. These people are availing themselves of their right as an American citizen to move from place to place in this Nation.

This radical legislation actually requires people to register in-person, banning common methods, as we heard from the Senator from Alaska who is standing up for her State as she always does.

We should be supporting her. We should be supporting Alaska's way of running their elections rather than imposing Donald Trump's corrupt way of running his elections.

This radical legislation actually requires people to register in-person, banning common methods of registration—online registration, through the mail, or automatically at the DMV.

That is how 94 percent of Americans register to vote. Many of them are seniors. Many of them live in rural communities. I would like to see the majority party in this Chamber come to western Colorado and try to take—rather than having this fake filibuster—try to actually take mail-in ballots from the people of western Colorado.

I would like to see that. They would avail themselves of any means necessary to prevent that from happening.

The SAVE America Act would set our voter registration process back decades. If you are one of the more than 60 million Americans who live in rural areas, you might now need to drive hundreds of miles to stand in line at a local election agency.

If you live overseas, you will have to fly back. If you don't have a passport, you better have your birth certificate. If you don't have your birth certificate or you changed your name like tens of millions of married women across this country living in the 21st century, you will have to provide additional documents and sign affidavits.

All of this will—

Mr. LEE. Will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. BENNET. I will not yield. I will not yield. I have waited an hour—

Mr. LEE.—inaccuracy on the bill.

Mr. BENNET. You will have your time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah, the Senator from Colorado has the floor.

Mr. BENNET. Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I will yield for the one inaccuracy you think that I have—Mr. LEE. No. No. It is not one. It is many. I am going to focus on—

Mr. BENNET. Well, then you will have to wait. Then you will have to wait. Then you will have to wait.

Mr. LEE. If you read the text at the beginning on page 12, line 22, which makes clear—

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I haven't yielded the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado, you did yield.

Mr. BENNET. I didn't. I said I would yield for one inaccuracy. That is all I said.

Mr. LEE. I am asking a question, sir. Are you not willing—

Mr. BENNET. I am not willing to hear it. I am not willing to hear it. I will hear it after—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado, are you withdrawing your yield?

Mr. BENNET. I don't believe I did yield.

Mr. LEE. You yielded.

Mr. BENNET. If I did yield—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. So you are exercising your right to withdraw your yield?

Mr. BENNET. I will exercise my right to withdraw.

Madam President, all of this will have to be done in-person. Kansas tried to implement its own State-level version of President Trump's SAVE America Act in 2013 with disastrous results.

This law, which included citizenship documentation requirements, ended up blocking the voter registration of more than 31,000 U.S. citizens who are otherwise eligible to vote. That represented about 12 percent of all Kansas voter registrations during that period.

Even Kansas Republican secretary of state who championed the bill when he was a State legislator has warned against the bill now before us. He has warned against the bill now before us saying: It didn't work out so well.

And Kansas law was blocked by a Federal court, as it should have been.

If we pass this bill, we will have now two different election—Madam President, can I have the floor without the interruption of my colleague from Utah?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be in order. You may proceed.

The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. If you guys are done, I would like to—Madam President, I would like—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is in order. You may proceed.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, if we pass this bill, we will now have two different election regimes in this country—one for Federal elections and one for local elections. That is insane in and of itself and begs the question: Why does Donald Trump want to pass this bill?

He wants to run roughshod over our election system because he claims

there is an epidemic of voter fraud caused by undocumented people voting. That is at the heart of his claim, and that has been the heart of his claim throughout two Presidential elections and this Presidency.

The problem is that he is blowing up our elections, and there is no evidence to support his claim of fraud. The fact is that even his own Department of Homeland Security used by many States to verify voter citizenship returned .04 percent of voter participants as noncitizens.

A bipartisan policy center analysis of the Heritage Foundation's debate of noncitizen voting found only 77 cases in 25 years of nearly 2 billion votes cast.

And individual States tell us the same. We heard it earlier tonight. Last year, Utah performed a citizen review of its entire voter registration list. There was no noncompliance. After an assessment of more than 2 million registered voters, Utah identified only 1 confirmed instance of noncitizen registration and no instances of noncitizen voting.

We definitely have a crisis in our democracy and in our economy and they are related. Over the decades, we have suffered through an economy that has reduced economic mobility and hollowed out America's middle class.

At the same time, we have built a tax system that disproportionately benefits those who own assets and perpetuates the inequalities that accumulated with generational wealth, a tax system that allows Donald Trump and Elon Musk to pass their stock portfolios onto their heirs without paying a dollar on the gains that they have accrued.

That is a crisis. The lack of economic mobility is a crisis, and I am sorry to say that that tax regime, that has been done in a bipartisan manner. Republicans definitely more than Democrats have pursued trickle-down economics, but Democrats and Republicans both played a role creating an unfair system that reinforces our desperate lack of economic mobility and concretizes our deep and growing economic inequality.

At the same time, this body has failed to make important investment in our infrastructure while saddling future generations with ever-greater amounts of debt, debt whose service costs will now predictably take up \$1 trillion of our annual budget in interest—more than we spend on Medicare or defense, a higher share of the economy than at any point in American history.

We are in a dangerous moment at home and abroad. There is no doubt about that. And at the same time as Coloradans and Americans across the country are struggling to get by, as teachers are going to those food banks to feed their own children, when confidence in our institutions and in our politics is at record lows, and we have a campaign finance system that gives inordinate power to the wealthiest.

Tonight is not the night to go through how wrongly decided Citizens United was, how wrongly decided, how ignorant that decision was of the way politics actually works in this country.

But let me just point out to you that in 2008, before Citizens United was decided, the top 100 individual donors contributed a combined \$80 million—\$80 million in 2008. That is what the 100 donors contributed.

In 2024, the top 10 donors—the top 10 donors—contributed over \$1.2 billion. Spending by outside groups has exploded from a total of \$574 million in 2008 to almost \$4.5 billion in that last election, an increase of 8 times—8 times.

No one could possibly believe that the amount of money—that that amount of money is helping our democracy. Let me tell you something: Does the SAVE Act do anything about that corrosiveness in our politics? Of course not. Of course not.

And let me tell you something that was a fatal flaw in the Supreme Court's decision while I am here. Maybe the pages, when they are Senators, will be able to fix this problem because we sure aren't going to fix it.

At the end of that—at the end of their decision, they said: By the way, if the Congress ever passes a constitutional regulation of—in their words—constitutional regulation of the outside spending in our political system, we will, of course, have to give that the proper analysis, the proper—excuse me—the required constitutional analysis.

Of course, nobody will ever pass that around here because the billionaires that are writing checks to these elections just have to rattle the pennies in their pockets and the change in their pockets and threaten to run a primary against anybody in this place, and the bill won't be brought.

And then there is a profound corruption of inaction that sets in as a result to our legislative branch both here and in the House of Representatives.

Does the SAVE America Act address any of this? Of course not. Instead, Donald Trump and the Republicans have brought to the floor a bill to make it harder for ordinary American citizens to register and to vote.

Fundamentally, the SAVE America Act is an astonishing Federal overreach in search of a scandal that doesn't exist and would have the effect of undermining fraud-free elections like we have in Colorado.

Colorado was the first State in America to complete a risk-limiting audit, the gold standard for verifying the integrity of election results.

It entails counting and comparing a representative sample of ballots to the reported result. To prevent hacking, none of our voting machines are connected to the internet. We require county clerks to use two-factor authentication to access voter databases.

Once a vote is cast, a bipartisan team of election judges in each county

checks every signature against the copy in the database for any discrepancies. All election officials and judges with access to the tabulation process must first pass a Colorado Bureau of Investigation background check. And Colorado has spent years—years—implementing top-tier cyber security measures and audits to prevent hackers from interfering in our electoral process.

We should be modeling our Federal system off the gold standard framework we have in Colorado, a national leader in terms of voter access, election security, and might I say, voter turnout.

Instead, the SAVE America Act would eliminate—eliminate, outlaw—many of the practices that Colorado has adopted to keep our elections safe and increase voter confidence.

How dare you?

It would end Colorado's mail-in and online voter registration system. It would force Colorado to increase the security risks of our voter data and routinely purge voter rolls. It would push experienced county clerks and election workers out of the field. It would remove the possibility of using a number of State IDs when going to vote. It would create two tiers of voting for Federal and State elections and possibly upend our mail-in ballot system itself by requiring that every Coloradan proactively request a ballot and resubmit proof of ID alongside their ballot request in every election.

Colorado already has ID requirements when casting a ballot. We already have among the cleanest voter rolls in this country. We don't need Donald Trump to corrupt our process. Even the Heritage Foundation ranked us as second in the Nation in 2020 for clean lists—the Heritage Foundation.

We have one of the most secure election systems of any State in our country, and because Coloradans have trust in our elections, we have some of the highest voter turnouts in the country.

But the SAVE America Act—the so-called SAVE America Act—does not bring our system anywhere close to what we enjoy in Colorado. Instead it turns into a dark but familiar pattern in American history.

And I am sorry to say, but this bill before us is just another in a long line of legislative efforts to limit the franchise in this country, to add new restrictions and additional obstacles.

Nobody wants voter fraud. I do not want voter fraud. I come from a State where there is no voter fraud. We set the gold standard, in part because of the work my colleague JOHN HICKENLOOPER did when he was Governor of Colorado.

This is a pretext. This is a pretext to invade our elections.

I know my colleague from Texas wants to speak. So I am trying to skip ahead here.

We have had a fight over many, many, many years in this Nation to broaden the franchise, from the very

beginning, and that fight was won by men and women who marched to demand that their vote count equally in this country, no matter what color they were, no matter where they lived in our Nation, no matter what education or religion their parents had or whether their parents were immigrants to this country.

In this modern era, when one of the real fundamental risks to our democracy is the American people's loss of confidence in our institutions, including our voting process and elections themselves, we now have a group of people who are trying to create political advantage for themselves by restricting the vote in the name of addressing a mythical voter fraud that does not exist.

The American people will not be fooled by this. They will be angry about this, as they should. The American people have come to rely on vote-by-mail, and registration by mail, and early voting. They believe our system is fraud free, and where it is not, the State should address it.

Our citizens have come to rely on having the franchise extended through modern technology and modern practices. Nobody I know in Colorado has said they doubt the validity or veracity of our voting system—no matter what party they are in or whether they live in rural Colorado or urban Colorado—or the importance of the ability to register online, or for students and others to have the benefit of same-day registration.

I wish everybody in this country had the benefit of that. Those are ways of encouraging participation in our democracy. None of us want fraud.

None of us want fraud. And there is no fraud. The good news is there is certainly no evidence in Colorado or across the country that that fraud exists.

And this is the most sweeping effort, make no mistake, by Donald Trump, by the Republicans here in the Senate, to "nationalize our elections," to undermine voter confidence, and inject new chaos into a system he is terrified will turn against him; to make life harder for Americans that he thinks voted against him, and probably will make it harder for the people who voted for him.

Since the President's return to office, he has focused relentlessly on false narratives of voter fraud. He has issued Executive orders that are unenforceable. He has sued States that have refused to comply and threatened to take control of the electoral process in States he views as political enemies.

He has sent Federal agents from the FBI and the Director of National Intelligence to seize ballots in Georgia, election records in Arizona, and voting machines in Puerto Rico.

His Justice Department has sued 30 States, including Colorado, demanding sensitive, unredacted voter data to create a national voter database. And President Trump has pursued a long-

standing and inexplicable grievance against mail-in voting, which he falsely claims can be used to commit mass amounts of fraud. It is simply not true. It is simply not true.

He sees it, in his own words—the SAVE America Act—as a method to "guarantee the midterms" this November. He sees, in his own words, the SAVE America Act as a method to "guarantee the midterms" this November. And that is why they put this on this floor now? I hope not. I really hope not.

This is an election bill that distorts our shared understanding of what free and fair elections should look like, and Coloradans want no part of it.

This legislation, by the way, is wildly unpopular in America. We have received thousands of calls and letters in opposition to the SAVE America Act. We received over 7,000 last month alone.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that these constituent letters be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CONSTITUENT FROM COLORADO SPRINGS

I am writing today to ask you to vote against the SAVE Act, as written.

This week I assisted my 85 year old mom get her first-ever passport. She did not get it so she could travel with us and enjoy her remaining years. She got it because she felt it was the best way to ensure that she had proper identification/proof of citizenship to continuing voting and/or change her voter registration. Like many married women, her surname on her driver's license and her surname on her birth certificate do not match.

My mom spent \$195 to be able to apply for the passport: \$15 for a certified copy of her birth certificate, \$130 for the passport book, \$15 for the necessary photo, and \$35 for the facility acceptance fee. She lives in Colorado Springs, but we drove to Woodland Park for the appointment to drop off her passport application because getting an appointment at either of the Colorado Springs acceptance locations is, well, let's call it "challenging."

Fortunately, \$195 won't keep mom from eating and we had the ability to run around and make this happen. Not all who find themselves in an ID/proof of citizenship name mismatch can say the same.

Voting is a right, not a privilege. And a passport is for travel, not for voting. Again, I ask that you vote against the SAVE Act.

CONSTITUENT FROM FORT COLLINS

DEAR SENATOR BENNET: I currently live in France. I moved here recently after 27 years living in Fort Collins. I still feel very engaged with my state and with my country, and I vote in every election and in every race. I also pay taxes to Colorado and to the US Treasury.

Please do not allow this disastrous SAVE act pass. It's clearly designed to suppress votes. If it is passed, I will not be able to vote, which as a citizen I have the right to do.

As you know, Colorado has an efficient and safe voting record. It's easy, engaging, and accurate. Obviously, this scares the Republican Party, because the only way they win is by corrupting voting results. Please do not let them win this round of corruption.

CONSTITUENT FROM FIRESTONE, CO

Please do not support the save act and work with your colleagues to ensure this

does not pass. I have been an election judge in weld county for many elections so I know personally how safe and secure our elections are. As a woman who changed my last name when I got married it is terrifying the rights that trump is insistent on removing from me. Please at least ensure I have the right to easily cast a vote as it is my constitutional right.

CONSTITUENT FROM BRECKENRIDGE

Hello! Wanted to write and convey my deep objection to both the SAVE voter suppression act (as a woman with a daughter, it's unacceptable to put greater burden on women to vote than men . . . not to mention it's easier for a man to acquire a gun than a woman to cast a vote) as well as my objection to Markwayne Mullin, not please no!!!!

CONSTITUENT FROM DURANGO

Please vote no the Save Act. This is truly voter suppression and nothing more. We are going backwards in women's rights. Please vote no on this bill not just for my rights but for the rights of all women now and in the future.

Please vote no!!!!

CONSTITUENT FROM BOULDER

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act currently being considered by congress. Since voter fraud is a very rare occurrence in this country, this bill seems entirely unnecessary. Although many people seem to support the bill in order to keep non-citizens from voting, that is already covered by other laws and rarely occurs.

I am deeply concerned that this bill could interfere with mail-in voting, which I value as a civic right and believe greatly improves voter participation. I am also concerned that the additional "paperwork" for voter verification could disqualify valid voters, including myself. Please commit everything in your power to defeat this unnecessary, unconstitutional infringement on my voting rights.

CONSTITUENT FROM THORNTON

Good day Michael Bennet, I am a constituent from Thornton, Colorado. I urge you to vote no on the SAVE Act. This bill is a voter suppression tactic that would make it harder for eligible Coloradans to vote by requiring in-person documentation. When the government requires you to have a specific document to vote, and that document isn't free, that is essentially a poll tax which is unconstitutional and illegal per the 24th amendment and is an unnecessary burden on voters. I personally will not look kindly at any senator who votes yes on this and will be looking to vote for alternative candidates who align better with my values in the next election.

CONSTITUENT FROM WELLINGTON

I urge you to vote "No" on the SAVE Act. Voting rights would be severely abrogated if this bill passes, and many legally eligible voters would have difficulty voting. The proponents of this bill point to voter fraud caused by immigrants, but the facts are that such violations, according to the data, are extremely low.

Please do all you can to stop the SAVE Act.

CONSTITUENT FROM LOVELAND

Hello, my name is Melissa Kelley. I have lived in Loveland for the last 16 years. I'm writing to you today, because I want you to vote no, on the Save Act. It is a badly hidden attempt at infringement of my voting rights. I had to show my birth certificate to get my marriage certificate, and my driver's license. I appreciate your attention on this matter. Thank you, and I hope you have a good day.

CONSTITUENT FROM DENVER

SENATOR BENNET: As a Colorado resident and taxpayer I am asking you to please not

vote for the SAVE act, as it will disenfranchise legal voters across the state, if not the nation.

CONSTITUENT FROM COLORADO SPRINGS

The public goal of the SAVE Act is to solve a problem that is miniscule.

It impact of the SAVE Act is to disenfranchise millions of legitimate voters: some have no passport, some have changed name (marriage/divorce) since last registration, some have moved in the year preceding an election. Most Americans do not vote in person due to transportation limits, work schedules, child care or illness.

Please do not support this legislation.

Mr. BENNET. The Founders understood the gravity of the debate before them about who could and who could not claim the franchise. The authors of Federalist No. 52 explain that "the definition of the right of suffrage is very justly regarded as a fundamental article of republican government."

They wrestled with this question. They wrestled with this question. They debated it. And, ultimately, they excluded the great number of subjects who were newly made Americans, but, nevertheless, were denied, as those at Seneca Falls wrote, "the first right of citizen."

This was the founding generation's great mistake—this and the enslavement of Americans. And we have spent centuries working to rectify it—centuries working to rectify it.

Should the SAVE America Act pass, we will fall further away from realizing this country's promise and retreat the familiar errors of the past. We should reject that vision of our democracy. We should reject that return to a history that we have fought so hard to free ourselves from. Coloradans and all Americans deserve better than this.

I yield the floor and look forward to hearing my colleague from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

END SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR CONGRESS AT AIRPORTS ACT OF 2026

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, it has been 34 days since Democrats chose to shut down funding at the Department of Homeland Security, jeopardizing America's safety and well-being.

No less than 120,000 DHS employees have missed paychecks, including the hard-working TSA agents and screeners that work at our Nation's airports, who have been working around the clock, without pay, to keep spring break travelers and others safe.

For example, in my home State of Texas, Houston Hobby Airport has been recommending that travelers arrive at least 3 hours before their flights, and if it is an international flight, they recommend 4 hours in advance.

Well, they are not alone. Staffing constraints have not only led to longer wait times around the country but also significant delays, disruptions, and missed flights.

The only reason I can fathom, other than being completely out of touch,

that our Democratic colleagues would do this is because not all Members of Congress are being forced to experience the same mess of their own making right now.

As many Americans probably don't know, but most of us in Washington do know, airports around the country allow Members of Congress to bypass the usual TSA security screening process at airports nationwide. In other words, they get to skip the line.

This should end today. Instead of enduring the same travel tribulations and security requirements that everyone else has to meet, Members of Congress are getting an unfair perk, while TSA officers have to work without pay.

That is why I come to the floor today to pass my legislation, called the End Special Treatment for Congress at Airports Act, to stop the practice of expediting TSA screening processes for Members of Congress at our Nation's airports.

This legislation would ensure that no Federal funds or resources will be used by TSA moving forward to provide Members of Congress with these special privileges. In other words, Congress is going to have to live with the laws that everybody else has to live with.

Ending these courtesy escorts for Members of Congress in our Nation's airports during a DHS funding shutdown is the right thing to do.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be discharged from further consideration of S. 4123 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4123) to prohibit preferential screening for Members of Congress at airports, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Cornyn amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 4707) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the definition of Trusted Traveler Program)

On page 2, strike lines 8 through 13, and insert the following:

(4) TRUSTED TRAVELER PROGRAM.—The term "Trusted Traveler Program" means any of the following:

- (A) Global Entry.
- (B) The PreCheck Program.
- (C) SENTRI.
- (D) NEXUS.

(E) Any other United States Government program that issues a unique identifier, such as a known traveler number, that the Transportation Security Administration accepts