

President Trump really well. I have seen Eric Trump underneath my vehicle changing the tire on my vehicle so far back in the woods that you can't imagine how far away we were. They are good people, and they are a good family, and God knows what he has achieved is off the charts. It is so good; it is unbelievable.

Today what we see is, again, the Democrats grasping at straws, doing stuff absolutely to try to make a scene. That is what this is all about. For God's sake, President Trump was elected unbelievably—unbelievably. Why in the world are we not moving on? Why in the world do we continue to waste more and more and more time? Is it any wonder why we earn the badge of courage—14 percent approval rating—and we still won't do anything about it.

We need to do things. We need to really get stuff done here. We need to help our farmers, and I am sure my colleague from Alabama would help a lot of great farmers in the State of Alabama soon. We need to help our families. We need to make American lives better and better. And in my opinion, America needs to lead the world, and that is what we are doing today. Instead of the world absolutely leading us, we are doing what the world wants us to do. We are stepping up. We are leading the world.

Again, I want to thank Senator TUBERVILLE in every way. And to my Democratic colleagues that I respect more than you know in all ways—and I think that is how we all should be—please, let's stop wasting time; and please, let's stop this unnecessary and totally useless grandstanding politics. We have got to stop this. This is a total waste of time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. For those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from California.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today joined by Democratic Leader SCHUMER and so many of our colleagues in raising our voices on this fifth anniversary of a dark day in American history. Yes, it has been 5 years, and some on the other side of the aisle may ask, Why are we still talking about this? I think we just witnessed why it is important to keep talking about this—because the lies continue, the conspiracy theories continue, and the truth must be told. We will not let history be rewritten.

The truth is that 5 years ago today, insurrectionists stormed the Capitol in an unprecedented attempt to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power. The truth is police were beaten as a violent crowd surged forward. The truth is there were Members of Congress literally running for their lives, rushed out of this very Chamber and told to hide and barricade themselves.

It was an attack instigated and fueled by lies, a coordinated campaign by President Trump to overturn the outcome of the 2020 Presidential election.

Now, even on that day, as rioters threatened to hang Vice President Pence, Trump tweeted a message to them that the election had been stolen; that they were “patriots”—his words, not mine—that he “loved them” as the violence erupted.

Special Counsel Jack Smith recently testified that President Trump was the “most culpable and most responsible person” in this January 6 conspiracy. He continued, “These crimes were committed for his benefit. The attack that happened at the Capitol does not happen without him.”

Now, despite the President's attempts to rewrite history, today, for the sake of our democracy and for the sake of future generations, we remember and highlight the truth. See, we all vividly remember where we were 5 years ago. Unlike most of my colleagues who will speak out, I was not in this Chamber 5 years ago. I was still serving as California Secretary of State at the time, where I had spent years working to keep our elections, not just accessible for all eligible voters, but safe and secure, which they have always been despite the claims of the President.

On November 3, 2020, it was my privilege to serve as the chief elections officer in the Nation's most populous and diverse State. I assure you that, even under the best of circumstances, election administrations are complex operations, but in 2020, our election workers faced the additional and unprecedented challenge of a global health crisis. Those election workers stepped up. They rose to the occasion. As a result, California election officials and volunteers administered an extremely accessible, secure, and safe election that drew an historic turnout, and we saw similar electoral performances across the country. By every objective measure, the 2020 election was a success.

But, furious at his loss, none of that mattered to President Trump. He didn't just refuse to concede the election; he filed and lost more than 60 frivolous lawsuits that challenged the election. He personally called State elections officials, including, as I know, the Presiding Officer will remember, the Georgia secretary of state, asking him to find more votes. He also called State legislature leaders in Michigan, in Arizona, and in Pennsylvania, trying to pressure them to change the official vote results; and he lied to the American people, denying his loss. He lied to them again just this morning, to a roomful of House Republicans, calling the 2020 Presidential election rigged.

Online and across the country, President Trump's Big Lie caught fire, and, clearly, it is still burning. Sadly, many Republicans participated in fanning the flames by spreading false claims of voter fraud for political gain. Others

stood by silently as President Trump radicalized his supporters with these lies. They chose loyalty to Trump over the truth, and our Nation paid the price.

On January 6, we saw, we witnessed, we lived through what was once unthinkable—an unprecedented attack on this Capitol by violent extremists who were incited by the President. He told a crowd that was gathered outside the White House to “fight like hell” or “you're not going to have a country anymore.” Then he pointed them directly at the Capitol.

Armed rioters brutally beat police officers and stormed this building. For the first time in our Nation's history, the Confederate flag flew inside the Halls of this Capitol. Members of militarized hate groups searched the hallways with the intent to kill Democratic- and Republican-elected leaders. They found their way to the House floor and to this very Chamber to try and stop the certification of the Presidential election.

The deadly January 6 attack will forever remain an ugly stain on American history. But, yes, thanks to the bravery of the U.S. Capitol Police and other law enforcement officers who risked their lives, including five officers who tragically lost their lives, the assault on our democracy failed. Still, Speaker JOHNSON refuses to install a plaque—required by law—honoring the police officers who defended the Capitol that day. Even this morning, the President is shamefully blaming officers for, as he said, deliberately escalating the violence that day. But thanks to the strength of the American people and our institutions, our democracy has survived. It continues to be tested, but it has survived.

In the aftermath, Congress enacted meaningful changes through the Electoral Count Reform and Presidential Transition Improvement Act.

Despite this action, we are still not out of the woods. Clearly, President Trump's attacks on the right to vote and the very foundation of our democracy have continued. In one of his first acts in his second term, Trump issued a blanket pardon of more than 1,500 of the defendants charged with attacking the Capitol, including more than 1,200 who were convicted—1,200 convicted. Upon hearing the news of the pardon, one of the Capitol Police officers injured that day who testified against the rioters felt Trump was “trying to erase what [he] did.” Not satisfied with that, the January 6 convicts are now seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in payouts of taxpayer money.

Mr. President, I would like to share with all of you that Senator WHITEHOUSE and I are introducing new legislation today to bar these payouts.

But this is about more than just payouts and pardons. Trump doesn't believe he has done anything wrong. The President continues to work to undermine the midterm elections in a desperate attempt to hold onto power.

Five years after January 6, Trump continues to double down on the Big Lie conspiracy. He has already issued an Executive order that threatens to seize authority over State elections administration. Thankfully, much of it has been blocked by Federal courts, but he is threatening more of the same or even a phony national emergency while he tries to disenfranchise millions of eligible voters. He has staffed the White House, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Homeland Security with known election deniers. In 2020, he was trying to make calls to Georgia, demanding 11,000 more votes, but now Trump is pressuring States to redraw congressional districts to tilt the scales before the upcoming midterm elections.

I refuse to stay silent while Trump tries to rig the next election and continue to lie about the last election. We will fight for the future of our free and fair elections in this country.

Mr. President, Senator WHITEHOUSE and I are also leading the No Rewards for January 6 Rioters Act to forbid payouts to January 6 rioters.

I will continue to press the Office of Special Counsel to investigate the many brazen Hatch Act violations related to partisan political campaigns being waged from the current Oval Office and the current Department of Justice.

We must defend bipartisan State election administrations in this country and take to the floor to warn Americans about the Trump administration's efforts to rig election rules ahead of this year's midterm elections. American democracy was here long before Trump came into power, and it will be here long after he is gone because we will continue to fight every anti-voter, undemocratic action this White House rolls out.

I thank my coalition for participating in the floor block this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, 5 years ago, our Nation and democracy experienced one of its darkest days when a violent mob—incited by President Trump—ransacked the Capitol.

Brave police officers were beaten, crushed, bear-sprayed, and maced while defending our democracy with their bare hands. The sacred Halls of Congress, including the Senate floor, where we are standing today, were desecrated. Symbols of hate were flown through these sacred halls. Worse, blood and more was smeared on the walls and floors. The certification of the election was delayed, and later that night, with blood still staining the Capitol Grounds, many of the President's allies still—still—voted against certifying the election.

I was in the House of Representatives on January 6. I was in the House of Representatives exactly 5 years ago. I was asked by Speaker PELOSI to be one

of the managers of the floor debate that day, to be one of the managers opposing the efforts to decertify the electors, and I remember vividly what that day was like.

I remember being surprised to look up from my notes from where I was speaking and rebutting what others were saying to see that Speaker PELOSI was no longer presiding in the Chamber. She had been removed so quickly that I didn't even see her leave the Chamber. Then I saw the Capitol Police come back onto the floor, grab our No. 2, STENY HOYER, and whisk him off the floor. I noticed only peripherally Members were on their phones and not in a way that they were texting but, rather, in that they were watching. What they were watching, of course, were hundreds and thousands of people outside the Capitol who were starting to beat their way into this building. Then I could hear them myself outside the Chamber as they were banging on doors and trying to get in. I remember Capitol Police officers coming back on the floor, making sequential and more serious statements about the emergency and that we needed to get out our gas masks. I remember grabbing one under my seat and the difficulty we all had in just opening them.

I remember when the Capitol Police came back on the floor and said: You need to get out. You need to get out now.

I remember waiting, as Members fled the floor, until two Republicans came up to me.

One said: You can't let them see you.

The other said: That's right. I know these people. I can talk to these people. I can talk my way through these people. You're in a whole different category.

At first, I was moved by their evident concern for my safety. Then my next thought was, if you hadn't been lying about the election, I wouldn't need to worry about my safety. None of us would.

As I walked off the floor and through the tunnels that day, I remember thinking back to when I had first been elected and how, a few months later, it was 9/11 and how we had gathered on the steps of the Capitol—Democrats and Republicans—to sing “God Bless America.” That tragedy had been unifying for the country, and I remember thinking, on January 6, as I walked through those tunnels, that this tragedy would not be unifying.

But little could I have imagined that the person who incited that attack on this building—the person who led that first effort to prevent the peaceful transfer of power—would once again be President and that among his first acts in Congress would be to pardon hundreds and hundreds of violent attackers who beat the Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police who were defending us on that day or that we would hear the rampant kind of denials that we just heard from one of my Republican colleagues on this floor—this repugnant,

this dangerous, this disgraceful effort to rewrite history; to pretend that this was somehow this misunderstood, peaceful gathering of tourists on January 6.

I was proud to serve on the January 6 Committee. What really came home to me while serving on that committee, more than anything else, was a large part of what saved us on that day—what saved our democracy on that day—which were Republicans of good faith who were willing to do their duty and uphold their oath: Brad Raffensperger, who said, when the President called him and berated him for an hour to find 11,780 votes that did not exist, that he would not do it; or Rusty Bowers, the Republican speaker in Arizona, who said to Rudy Giuliani, when he was urging much the same, that what you are asking me to do is a violation of my oath, and he would not do it.

But now we are seeing a systematic effort to weed out anyone who defies the President's false narrative. In hearing after hearing on the Senate Judiciary Committee, candidates for high office and for the Federal bench cannot be confirmed if they admit that Joe Biden won the 2020 election and Donald Trump lost. It is a prerequisite to be nominated or confirmed that you must adhere to the Big Lie. This is where we are.

Most astonishing to me after January 6 is that I would find our democracy in more danger today than I did on that day. The danger has grown along with the denial. The danger has grown along with efforts by this administration to try to succeed next time where it failed in overturning the election by seating within local elections boards diehard partisans who will ignore the law in favor of their favored partisan candidate; by pushing out election workers; by trying to rewrite election laws; by trying to sow doubt in the election system so that, if necessary, if they lose the next election, they can try to deny and overturn that too. This is the danger that we face.

We thought democracy was inevitable. We were wrong. As it turns out, every generation has its own struggle for democracy.

Our parents' and grandparents' generations went off to world war to defend our democracy. What we have to do is by comparison so much less, but it is nevertheless so very important. We have the same obligation as those that went before us to preserve this incredible legacy we have been given by our Founders.

I am grateful to Senator PADILLA for organizing this special order hour for us to remember the horrors of that day, and we dedicate ourselves to making sure that something like January 6 never happens in this country again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, my husband and I sheltered in place right

here in this building and prayed that our lock would hold. Five years ago, we had to hunker down in the Capitol as alarms blared, glass shattered, and rioters stormed the Halls of this building chanting “hang Mike Pence.”

We heard them just outside the room I was in, feet away from this Chamber. They were looking for any lawmaker they could find, screaming “kill the infidels.” We felt them bashing against our door trying to get in. We held our breath and waited for what seemed like forever.

And this time every year, it feels like I am still holding my breath because I know it wasn’t just my husband and I that were in danger that day and it wasn’t just the windows that were shattered. It was our democracy that was under attack—our democracy—and the very idea that we use our voices and our votes in this country, not violence.

And the same forces that ignited the insurrection 5 years ago are still here. The same lies are still being spread about the 2020 election—you just heard some of them—by the same bad actors; the same President who told the crowd just hours before that violent insurrection that he would march to the Capitol with them is now accusing Democrats of treason and sharing calls to execute them.

And the same violent people—the people who stormed and battered our Capitol Police, the people who brought bats and knives and zip ties, the people who left blood and feces and broken glass littered throughout the Halls of this building—they are walking free today because President Trump thinks they were the victims.

On his first day in office, Trump pardoned rioters who assaulted officers with pepper spray and metal poles. Trump pardoned people who crushed police with riot shields. Trump pardoned an insurrectionist who violently punched, slapped, and swatted police and even choked one officer to the ground. Trump pardoned someone who plunged a stun gun into a Capitol Police officer’s neck.

Trump pardoned those people and many like them with no care for how dangerous or violent they were.

He even let the leader of the Proud Boys out of prison.

The story doesn’t end there because several people that Trump let out of prison are now back in jail for other crimes: gun charges, breaking and entering, burglary, a fatal drunk driving accident, child pornography, aggravated kidnapping, sexual assault—even plotting to kill the FBI agents who investigated them.

Months after Trump pardoned Christopher Moynihan—one of the first rioters to breach the police barricades—he was arrested again for threatening the life of Leader JEFFRIES.

Make no mistake: Trump’s mass pardons were a dangerous endorsement of political violence, telling criminals you can beat cops within an inch of

their life as long as it is in service to President Trump.

They are also part of an all-out effort by the President and his allies to rewrite the history of the insurrection of that day. President Trump’s Justice Department just took down the public database that laid out the thousands of investigations.

He just put up a website that blames Capitol Police for escalating the situation. Seriously. Trump isn’t just siding with the rioters; he is trying to blame our law enforcement.

And President Trump’s allies in Congress, to this day, have refused to hang a plaque honoring our Capitol Police officers for their sacrifice.

We lost a Capitol Police officer that day. Several others took their lives in the trauma that followed. Capitol Police officers suffered severe injuries—cracked ribs, smashed spinal discs, brain injuries, even the loss of an eye—and yet, Speaker JOHNSON has turned a plaque that was meant to be proof of their bravery into proof of his own cowardice.

No matter how many criminals Trump pardons, no matter how many lies he tells, and no matter how loudly he tells them, no President can rewrite history unless we stand by and let him.

I, for one, am never forgetting the truth of that day. It is burned into my brain, and I am never letting our country forget it either. This is a battle I have no doubt we can win. But the challenge before us at this moment is greater than just fighting for truth and history.

It is not enough to make sure that we simply remember the truth of the January 6 insurrection. The real fight is to ensure we learn the lesson of the January 6 insurrection because there is no reason to think the same insurrectionists that are now free and the same President—now bolder than ever in challenging our laws and our Constitution—won’t try once again to get their way through threats and through violence.

Trump has already made clear where he stands on democracy. He made it clear 5 years ago when he promised to march on the Capitol. He made it clear last year when he pardoned everybody that did storm the Capitol. He makes it clear every single day.

That is why it is incumbent on all of us in this country to be just as clear where we stand on democracy, especially when it comes to standing up to Trump. Our government of the people, by the people, for the people is an amazing accomplishment, but it is not automatic or inevitable. It takes work. It takes people speaking up. It takes Congress listening and acting.

At the end of the day, our democracy is only as strong as our resolve. It is as enduring as our courage. January 6 was a day that tested that resolve. It was a day that tested that courage.

Frankly, some people in this body failed that test, but 5 years ago today, as I sheltered in place steps away from

right here, it wasn’t just the locks that held. The courage of our Capitol Police held. And most importantly, the resolve of some leaders to put country before party held.

To my colleagues and to the American people: I know we can continue to protect this democracy, but only if we tell the full truth about the threat that we faced 5 years ago and the challenges we face today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I rise with my colleagues and thank them for gathering to talk about this most important anniversary. I think all of us are used to giving speeches on the Senate floor to an empty Chamber.

When you grow up and you learn about the Senate, you generally think people are here listening to one another, but when you come to the Senate, you find that is usually not the case.

One of the things about January 6, 2021, that was very memorable in my mind was that we were all together. We were all here in the midst of a most momentous occasion—the certification of the 2020 election result—looking each other in the eye. And we all experienced the confusion of the Vice President being ushered away and those doors shutting—first the glass doors, and then the wooden doors—as the Sergeant at Arms told us that the Senate was under attack. We remember sheltering here for 45 minutes to an hour before a path had been cleared where we could go elsewhere to be safe.

We remember the brave Senate staff as we were exiting remembering to pick up the wooden boxes that contained the certifications from the various States so that we could actually complete the work of that day and not see those boxes burned by the rioters out on the grounds of the Capitol.

We were all together.

It somehow seems fitting that as we gather 5 years later, it is an empty Chamber again because many want to forget or pretend or ignore what happened that day.

I express my thanks to my colleague from Washington and others to make sure that even if we stand in this Chamber virtually alone, we are not going to forget, and we won’t be silent about what occurred.

I want to mention three things as I think about those days. Only one is a memory that I have, but I want to begin with just telling you the names of the five police officers who lost their life defending this Capitol. All five were residents of Virginia.

Brian Sicknick was a member of the Capitol Police, from Springfield, VA. He was 42 years old. He had served with the Capitol Police for 13 years. He was attacked directly by that mob on January 6, and 1 day later, on January 7, he died from multiple strokes that occurred just hours after that attack.

Brian Sicknick, 42 years old.

It is a little painful to say that the other four names that I am going to now read to you and describe were four police officers who lost their lives by suicide—who were here defending this Capitol, defending us, defending me—and were so traumatized by this seat of democracy being attacked by a mob that they lost their lives by suicide in the days and weeks after the attack.

The first was a friend of mine—and I suspect a friend of many—who were here: Howie Liebengood, a Capitol Police officer who grew up in Vienna, VA. He was 51 years old. He was a 15-year veteran of the U.S. Capitol Police.

Howie was an interesting guy because of his tie to the Senate. His father had worked for the Senate during Howie's entire life. This was his family. It wasn't just his job. He grew up coming to work with his dad. He grew up knowing the Halls of this Capitol as if it was his backyard.

When he graduated from college, he actually tried to break into being a NASCAR driver, which was his passion and his dad's passion. But after a few years of finding that that was hard to do, he went into the family business; he came to the family office, which was the U.S. Capitol.

Most of us remember Howie because he usually worked at the Delaware door into the Russell Building where folks come in, that door that staff and Senate visitors come in too. And I would see Howie every morning. My office is in the Russell Building, one floor up from that door where he would be every morning.

He would be this cheerful guy, greeting you, greeting your staff, making a joke, and always quick with a smile and quick with some funny quip. Howie just seemed like that kind of classic definition of just the hail fellow well met. He didn't ever meet a stranger. He loved this place as if it were his home.

He was here protecting the Capitol on January 6. He saw this place that had been his home under attack. This home of democracy, his personal home for him, everything in his life—his dad's career, his own career, his love for this institution, his love for the people in the institution—he saw it under attack by those trying to disrupt our democracy.

His wife Serena, who has also gotten to be a friend, said that Howie went into a deep depression. After this, a few days later, he came back to work and he actually was in an accident in one of the Capitol Police vehicles because his attention was elsewhere.

One day shortly after that accident, he came home and Serena said he seemed to be in a very distant mood, and he went upstairs and, a few minutes later, died by suicide.

I worked with Serena and other Senators, and I do thank Senators for this because there was a provision in the benefit for Capitol Police officers that, frankly, was a national provision for most that you could receive a benefit if your death was in the line of duty. You

had to prove that it was in the line of duty. If it was during a traffic accident or summer vacation, you didn't get a line-of-duty death benefit, but there was an exclusion if you died by suicide.

You weren't even allowed to prove that the mental health or depression or the pressure that drove you to die by suicide was connected to the line of duty, and that was a bar that was common in law enforcement agency benefits packages all over the United States, including the Capitol Police.

I worked with Senator DUCKWORTH and Senate colleagues, and we got that law changed, so that law enforcement officers who died by suicide after a traumatic event, such as that attack, at least tried to make their case that that death was not in vain, but it was a death that was connected to your law enforcement career.

And I worked with Serena on that, and we were able to get the law changed in a way that affects Capitol Police and others, that corrects an arcane or old-timey view of what suicide is. I think of Howie every time I walk in that door. That is the door I come into work every day. I have been here for 13 years now. It has been 5 years since January 6, 2021. But when I walk in that door, and Howie Leavengood is not there, I think of him.

Jeffrey Smith was a Metropolitan Police Officer and lived in Fairfax. He was 35 years old. He was a 12-year patrolman with the Metropolitan Police Department. Like Howie, he died shortly after the attack by suicide.

Kyle DeFreytag was a Metropolitan Police officer from Alexandria, VA. He was 26 years old, had his whole life before him. He was a 5-year veteran of the Metropolitan Police Department. He died after the attack—after defending this Capitol, after defending us—by suicide.

Finally, the fifth was Gunther Hashida, who was also from the Metropolitan Police, lived in Dumfries, VA, longtime resident of Northern Virginia, 43 years old, an 18-year veteran of the Metropolitan Police Department, also took his life after the attack by suicide.

These were law enforcement officers who are tough people who see a lot of tough stuff, but they weren't prepared. They weren't prepared to deal with an attack on the Capitol motivated by the President of the United States, and that caused them to spiral into a depression. And they are no longer with us as a result.

I just felt like it was important that we tell their stories. They are Virginians. Their families are Virginians. Their names should not be forgotten. Their names should be displayed in the Capitol.

The second thing I want to say is just one memory from that day, and then I will conclude with something that motivates me.

There was only one thing that day that happened that gave me some, I don't know, glimmer of hope, I guess.

And I think we all know in life that sometimes in dark moments you can get a glimmer of hope, and sometimes in really good moments there can be a worm in the apple too. It is one of the mysteries of life.

We were gathered in a room after we had been escorted from this Chamber. It was during the thick of COVID, packed full of Senators and staff. Everybody but one person, as I recall, was wearing a mask, packed together for hours and hours and hours. And we were told by Senate officials that the room had been equipped so that we could complete the electoral college count and certification in that room.

And I give some credit to my Senate colleagues because it was interesting, without even discussing it, all 100 people looked at each other and just said: We are not doing it here. You are going to get the Chamber clear. We don't care how many hours it takes, and we are going to go back. And we will complete this business in the full view of the American public. And we did. But we had to wait for hours to do that because it took hours to suppress the attack.

TV monitors were wheeled into the room so that we could watch what was happening. Here was the only thing that happened that put a smile on my face that day, and it made me reflect upon who we are as a nation and gave me a sense of hope.

As the Capitol Police, together with the Metropolitan Police, were battling to stop the attack, a few hours in, the television showed Virginia State police cruisers arriving so Virginia officers could help defend democracy.

And I went over to Senator WARNER, my colleague and friend of now 46 years, and I said: MARK, the last time there was an insurrection against the government of the United States, 160 years ago, Virginia was leading it. Virginia was leading it. And here we are, and the Virginia State Police are arriving at the Capitol to save the Union from an insurrection fomented by the Commander in Chief of the United States. There was a tragedy in that statement, but there was also something positive about the arc of history in a Virginia that had led an insurrection and was now so committed to the Union that the first to respond, other than those immediately here on the campus, were the Virginia State Police.

The last thing I will say is this, a motivation, because you have got to look for motivation on days like this, and you have got to look for motivation when you think nobody really cares about what you are talking about.

Senators usually wear Senate pins. I generally don't wear mine because I lose everything, and the Senate pin that we wear is actually kind of valuable. And I was told when I got here, if you lose it, it costs \$400 to get a new one. So I have it in a special place, and I don't wear it. And I hope I may be

able to give it to one of my kids one day. But this year, 2026, 250 years of American democracy, I am wearing a different pin, and I have been wearing it most days. And it is the Virginia State seal.

And I will just tell you about the seal quickly. I have talked about it once or twice on the floor, but I just feel motivated to talk about it again.

Mr. President, 250 years of American democracy, July 4, 1776, we know what happened in Philadelphia, the Declaration of Independence. On July 5, 1776, now on the Fourth, there were a lot of Virginians in Philadelphia like Thomas Jefferson and others. The A team was in Philadelphia. The B team was in Williamsburg, the Virginia B team.

And on July 5, 1776, here is what they did: They wrote the Virginia bill of rights and passed it. They passed the Virginia Constitution, the first constitution. They elected Patrick Henry the first Governor of the Commonwealth, and they passed and embraced a draft of a State seal that had been designed in 3 days by a four-member committee, including George Wythe, who was the dean of the William & Mary Law School.

The seal is an interesting one. It is a woman, an Amazon, sometimes controversial because one breast is exposed—it is a figure from Roman mythology—standing on top of a deposed Monarch with his crown falling off with the motto “Sic Semper Tyrannis,” “Thus be it always to tyrants.”

Of all the States, every State has a motto, but Virginia’s is the only one that is kind of a warning. New York has a good one, “Excelsior,” “Onward.” Most States have great—“Ad Astra Per Aspera,” Kansas, “To the stars through adversity.” Michigan is a funny one. “If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you.” I have always wondered about that one.

But Virginia’s motto is the only one kind of a warning or rebuke: “Thus be it always to tyrants,” “Sic Semper Tyrannis.” And those who put this together, they used the future verb tense. They didn’t say: We don’t like tyrants; down with tyrants; King George is a tyrant. “Semper” means always. They used the future verb tense because they knew tyranny was not something that was just in the rearview mirror.

Virginia has never changed its motto. We have never changed our flag. We continue to hold out the sad reality that tyranny is a fact of human nature, not just a form of government. It is a fact of human nature. And the woman standing atop the tyrant in Roman mythology represents virtue, and virtue is a permanent factor of human nature as well.

The Founders believed we had to be on guard against tyranny. The Founders also believed, with confidence, that virtue would prevail over tyranny but not without our effort. And so standing in a nearly empty Chamber today on a day that has meaning to me, and

maybe not to a whole lot of other people, I just say I am motivated by this. I am motivated by the notion that if we put our shoulders to the wheel in this great democracy, at 250, we can win out over tyranny. We can turn this year of 250 into a celebration of American democracy, not a requiem, not a wake, not a saying goodbye but a revitalization.

And with that, I thank you for your indulgence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you to my friend Senator Kaine of Virginia for his good words, and I thank Senator PADILLA for organizing this floor block, and all of my colleagues who have come to the floor today. I see Senator PETERS is waiting.

Why are we here to speak on this difficult and somber day? Because 5 years ago today, down to this very hour, the temple of democracy was turned into a snake pit of mob violence. Its windows were smashed. Its offices vandalized. Lawmakers and our staffs—everyday citizens who love their country and work here every day—hid beneath desks and feared for their lives.

Nearly 140 police officers were injured as 5 people lost their lives. It is like yesterday to me. I was sitting right at this desk. I had just known on January 5, the day before, that I was becoming majority leader because we had won the seats in Georgia. And I am sitting there and looking at something, and all of a sudden, I feel a hand on my collar. It was Michael Lanczycki, the head of my security team. He said: You are in danger. We have got to get out of here. I looked up at my desk, and I saw Pence being rushed off the platform.

We went out the door. We made a right turn. We opened another door, and we were within 20 feet of these hooligans, one of whom recognized me and said: Let’s get him.

Because of the bravery of the Capitol Police officers, nothing bad happened to us, but it was a horrible day. Five years later, I want to thank my detail, but all the members of the Capitol Police, the DC Police, our servicemembers, and all the first responders who helped us. You are heroes. On that day, you were the first line of defense for democracy—the first line of defense for democracy.

And it is shameful and cowardly today that the Trump White House has tried to rewrite history. Countries fail when they don’t learn from their history, and yet to blame the Capitol Police force for creating violence is sickening. How could they do this? On the one hand, they say they love police officers, but right here they blame those here.

They were our heroes, the Capitol Police officers. And the only ones who caused violence were the rioters, egged on by Trump. So we thank our heroes. We also mourn those who perished in the days and weeks and months after

the attack, especially the first responders.

And, of course, the anniversary here on January 6 comes at a bitter and complicated moment. Donald Trump is now back in office. How we could have let somebody who did this, hidden by all the propaganda and lies that he and his allies in the media and his allies in politics propagated, is just incredible. It is confounding. It makes you worry about democracy.

His pardons make a mockery of the rule of law. And on his very first day, he pardoned every single convicted insurrectionist—every first day as President.

That speaks loudly as to who Donald Trump is, the lowness of his character, the lack of any honor. And, sadly, too many of our Republican colleagues remain silent in the face of this obvious evil. Too many have tried to rewrite history. Too many are trying to turn the criminals into martyrs. We were here. I heard one of them say it was a tourist excursion. We were here. It was no tourist excursion. It was no tourist excursion at all.

And while the insurrection lasted just a day, the attack on democracy lives on. There are people, young people here, who may be susceptible to the same kind of propaganda because they think it happened once and the people who did it were heroes and were pardoned.

So this is dangerous, not only at this moment but in future moments and days and months and years ahead.

And that fight against democracy lives on in the threats against free and fair elections; the threats against workers—election workers, poll workers; threats live on in Donald Trump’s very own Justice Department, which has tried to get its hands on State voter data, and it has abandoned any fight against voter discrimination.

And, of course, Donald Trump continues to plug in election deniers within the people’s government. He makes them heroes. It is making night day, turning black into white, white into black.

The attacks are not over but neither—I want to assure the American people—is our fight to protect the democracy we love. The way forward is clear: We must speak the truth. We must fight the lies. We must never relent on speaking what happened on January 6 in the face of the hurricane of lies that comes from Donald Trump and, particularly, so many of his media allies.

To protect democracy, to speak the truth, to reveal and expose the lies, this is our moral obligation as Members of this institution and as citizens of this democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, it is with heavy hearts that we pause to mark the fifth anniversary of the January 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol—this

Capitol, this Capitol that represents article I of the Constitution, the people's representatives in the House and the Senate, forging the vision to be implemented by our Chief Executive.

There are two ways that a republic can be destroyed. The normal vision is with a mob attacking a Capitol or a White House and taking over a country in short order. The second way is for an authoritarian President to dismantle it from within, eroding the checks and balances of the Constitution. I don't think any of us who serve in this Chamber ever thought either was a possibility here in the United States of America with the strength of our two centuries-plus of determined efforts in the course of running a democratic Republic, but we were wrong.

Five years ago today, our Republic suffered just such an assault by a mob. I will never forget seeing an individual run down this aisle, then circle around to the desk where the Vice President was presiding, have the Vice President immediately gavel down the session, be escorted out, and everyone is looking around the room in mystery.

And then, soon, the Capitol Police officers were working to lock the doors on this level and the balconies above, a moment none of us who were here will ever forget and a moment that America should never forget—a mob that was tearing down the American flag and putting up a flag that said “Donald Trump,” a mob that was breaking down these doors and occupying this Chamber, and doing the same in the House of Representatives.

That moment, when we are counting the electoral college votes—the slates, those who were assigned to the electoral college to determine who was elected President—that moment, that is the peaceful transfer of power. The ballot box, the counting of the votes, the peaceful transfer of power—that is the vision at the heart of government by and for the people. That is the difference between a democratic republic and an authoritarian state.

And on that day, we went over to the House Chamber and started the rollcall of States. On the State of Alabama, no one objected. On the State of Alaska, no one objected. And then it came to Arizona, and a Member of the House and a Member of the Senate objected, and we came back over here to debate that issue of whether or not we would accept the slate from Arizona, and that is when the chaos ensued.

You know, up front here were these amazing three boxes. We carried them over to the House, and then when we came back to debate, they came back here to the Senate Chamber, these mahogany and leather boxes with all kinds of straps on them. They look like treasure. They look like they would be filled with gold. But their content is more precious than gold; their contents, the expression through the electoral college ballots of the will of the United States of America about who would next serve as the President of our Nation.

And if it wasn't for the quick action of our Parliamentarian team to grab

those boxes, I am sure that the rioters who entered this Chamber just moments later would have destroyed those boxes—another symbolic destruction of a democratic Republic in an effort by some to create an authoritarian state.

We had some real heroes that day like Eugene Goodman, who got Senator Mitt Romney to safety, and then, seeing people coming up the stairs from the lower level, proceeded to steer those folks away from the center of the building and away from the Senate Chamber where we were sitting—an amazingly effective strategy to buy a few more minutes of time for the security of this Chamber.

And we remember the police officers who so valiantly defended this building—170 injured—and others who lost their lives as a consequence of the attack on that day: Brian Sicknick, Howard Liebengood, Jeffrey Smith, Gunther Hashida, and Kyle DeFreytag.

Now, there is a plaque that has been built, and I ask unanimous consent to have the text of it be entered into the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ON BEHALF OF A GRATEFUL CONGRESS,  
THIS PLAQUE HONORS THE EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUALS WHO BRAVELY PROTECTED AND DEFENDED THIS SYMBOL OF DEMOCRACY ON JANUARY 6, 2021.

THEIR HEROISM WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

United States Capitol Police  
Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia  
Arlington County, Virginia, Police Department

Fairfax County, Virginia, Police Department

Maryland Department of State Police  
Metro Transit Police Department  
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Police

New Jersey State Police  
Prince George's County, Maryland, Police Department

Prince William County, Virginia, Police Department

Virginia State Police  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

Department of Health and Human Services  
Department of Homeland Security  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
National Guard Bureau, Department of Defense

Pentagon Force Protection Agency, Department of Defense

United States Marshals Service

United States Park Police

United States Secret Service

Mr. MERKLEY. The plaque says:

ON BEHALF OF A GRATEFUL CONGRESS, THIS PLAQUE HONORS THE EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUALS WHO BRAVELY PROTECTED AND DEFENDED THIS SYMBOL OF DEMOCRACY ON JANUARY 6, 2021.

THEIR HEROISM WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

And their heroism should never be forgotten.

And that plaque, which by law is supposed to be mounted on this Capitol, has not yet been mounted, and it needs to be mounted.

There is a second way that republics are lost. And in the last 20 years, around the world, this has primarily been the way it has happened—not with mobs storming the Capitol but from authoritarian figures destroying the republic from within. And out of those experiences, in a variety of countries around the world—countries like Venezuela, countries like Türkiye—there has become a set of principles about how to convert a democratic republic into a strongman state without a mob storming the Capitol that includes firing the government's referees, like Trump did when he fired 17 inspectors general and 200 career prosecutors in the Department of Justice; packing the government with loyalists to head key departments, as President Trump has done; demonizing the enemy within, trying to divide and concur; attacking those with dark skin as rapists and murderers and garbage, targeting people on the color of their skin and the language they speak, as this administration has done; disregarding due process; silencing free speech; shutting down programs, even though they are authorized and funded by Congress, in violation of the Constitution; abusing government authorities like licenses and permits and security clearances and research grants; weaponizing the Justice Department; seeking to put the military in the streets to stop peaceful dissent; and rigging the next election—all 10 of these things happening right now.

So 5 years ago, we witnessed the effort to destroy our Republic with an assault on this building, and right now we are witnessing the insidious determination of President Trump and his team to destroy our Republic from within through these 10 strategies.

Just as we stood and stopped the assault on this Capitol 5 years ago, we must stand and stop this President from destroying our Republic today. That is the best way to honor those who defended the Capitol 5 years ago.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, today we mark the fifth anniversary of one of the most shocking attacks on our Nation and on our democracy. For the first time in our Nation's history, our longstanding tradition of the peaceful transfer of power was disrupted in a violent and deadly assault on the U.S. Capitol.

I remember that day vividly, sitting in this Chamber, conducting the ceremonial certification of our election before our proceedings were abruptly stopped.

In the hours that followed, thousands of our brave law enforcement officers, first responders, and National Guard members took swift action to protect every Member of Congress. They put their lives on the line to fend off the violent insurrectionists.

Those U.S. Capitol officers, the DC Metropolitan Police, the National Guard, and all who stepped in deserve our deepest gratitude and recognition for their valiant efforts to defend democracy on that infamous day.

We must also remember the legacy of the five heroic officers who lost their lives in the aftermath of that attack. The attack took an unimaginable toll on the first responders. It also deeply affected the Capitol Hill community and Americans all across our Nation who witnessed the assault on the heart of our democracy with their own eyes on television. We saw the images of officers engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the rioters. We saw pictures and videos of attackers with zip ties in the Senate Chamber and rioters with nooses on the Capitol grounds. To this day, those images are absolutely shocking.

But I have been astonished how quickly so many of my colleagues seem to have forgotten about the events of that day.

Following the horrific attack, as chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I joined with then-Ranking Member Portman, Rules Committee Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR, and Ranking Member BLUNT to lead the first bipartisan oversight hearings, investigations, and report on the immediate changes needed to secure the Capitol and prevent a future attack.

This bipartisan effort evaluated the security, planning, and response failures related to the January 6 attack, which resulted in the implementation of significant recommendations that I am proud to say have strengthened security here at the Capitol and has better prepared us for any future attack.

I also led investigations into the failures of our Federal law enforcement and intelligence Agencies to prevent and respond to January 6 and the threat of domestic terrorism more broadly.

Both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security missed warning signs that could have prevented that day's attack. This was both a failure of imagination and a failure of leadership during the first Trump administration as they directed resources away—away—from the threat of domestic terrorism.

Five years later, I fear that, despite these efforts, our Nation has not learned, and the right lessons from this attack are being forgotten. Instead of confronting the dangerous threat of domestic terrorism head-on, the current administration has spent the last year dismantling the counterterrorism infrastructure meant to keep us safe.

President Trump has also twisted the meaning of the domestic terrorism threat beyond recognition, using it to label and target political speech and groups that he does not like and in ways that threaten all of us in this country.

President Trump has also made major cuts to key components of both the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and he has diverted resources from our law enforcement and intelligence communities that should be focused on addressing terrorist threats to bolster—the reason for this is to bolster his political priorities.

Instead of condemning the violent attack and holding the attackers accountable, President Trump called them “patriots.” And he pardoned nearly 1,500 individuals who were found guilty of assaulting the very same law enforcement officers that we are honoring today—found them guilty in the court of law. Let us be clear, they were found guilty in the court of law because this Nation is a rule of law. But he pardoned them because the views of these rioters and attackers were his political supporters, rather than offenders who should be held accountable for breaking the law.

There is no question that President Trump prizes loyalty over the law, but he has taken that favoritism too far. Not only did he pardon people responsible for those heinous crimes on that day 5 years ago, he also targeted and fired the Justice Department experts who investigated and prosecuted the cases holding the January 6 attackers accountable for their crimes.

But the most concerning outcome in the 5 years since this attack is how quickly many of our elected leaders have helped to rewrite history and minimize the danger that our democracy faced on that day. Instead of uniting to condemn the attack—and the effort to overturn a free and fair election—too many of our Nation's political leaders were cowed by President Trump and repeated his lies and his conspiracies. Those actions have directly contributed to rising climate of political violence that we see today all across the political spectrum.

And finally, I was furious to see some of my colleagues not only fall in line to rewrite the history of this attack, but to insert a provision in recent legislation to give Senators a special payday because they were part of the criminal investigation into President Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election, the effort that led directly to the January 6 attack.

For the past 5 years, so many of my Democratic colleagues have joined me in calling for all Americans to put our country before our party and to commit to upholding our most cherished democratic principles before we lose them forever. It has been disheartening that many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are not joining us in those full-throated calls to defend our system of government that makes our Nation so unique.

If we, as the U.S. Senate or as a country, cannot agree on the lessons of the past, I fear that we are setting ourselves up to repeat them. Over the past year, in particular, it has never been clearer that our democratic institu-

tions—our standards and our traditions—and the rights of every American are still under attack.

We can still come together and stand up for the Constitution, and we can stand up for the rule of law. We could still come together and use our authority as a coequal branch of government to hold this administration accountable for these ongoing attacks and actions that risk making our Nation less safe. And we can still come together to protect the promise of our democracy for generations to come.

So today I implore my colleagues to join me in unequivocally condemning the attack on our democracy on January 6 in 2021, and I urge all of them to help us protect our most treasured democratic principles. We have a chance to restore faith in our democratic way of life, but our democracy and our institutions can only endure as long as our elected leaders have the fortitude and the strength to protect and to defend them against all threats, no matter their origin.

In the 5 years since January 6, we have fallen short of that responsibility. In the darkest times of our Nation's nearly 250-year history, we have always found a way to come together to protect our democracy. And if we continue down this current path that we are on now, I am concerned that we are losing our most cherished freedoms for good. We cannot and must not ever let that happen.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I join my colleagues today to condemn the acts of violence we have all been talking about that occurred on this date 5 years ago when violent insurrectionists stormed the U.S. Capitol.

Five years ago today, a mob viciously attacked Capitol Police officers to try to stop the Senate from certifying—right here in this room—the free and fair election that voted Donald Trump out of office. Now, many of my Senate colleagues will never forget that day because, as I have said, we were here.

I remember it very, very clearly as I was preparing to come up here to stand with the States who legally certified that election and argue against the positions that were coming from some of my colleagues. I remember, as I was coming up here in the Capitol Building, running into a Capitol Police officer who was in one of the restrooms with the door open, washing his eyes out because he had been pepper sprayed.

Now, I remember thinking, This Capitol Police officer here in the U.S. Capitol has been pepper sprayed, and he is here now trying to protect himself but most importantly protect all of us. What is happening that is so close to the Capitol right now that this police officer has been attacked?

But I will tell you what this police officer did, like many others that day—many others. He washed his eyes out.

He looked at us, saw the Senators who were there, and he said: Don't worry. We have got your back. We will protect you.

He ran out of that bathroom, up the stairs, and out the door to protect us. He didn't think twice about it. He had already been harmed by these violent insurrectionists, but he didn't think twice. He kept being the forefront, being out there, running to protect all of us that were doing our jobs here on the Senate floor.

I think that is what is so disturbing to many of us that lived through that day—and you don't have to have lived through this day. You know, I am talking to everyone in this room that was here, whether it is our Parliamentarian, our staff, everybody here, the interns, our reporters, everybody experienced that day. People manning the doors. Everybody felt it.

But you know who else felt it that day, you know, that feel just as emotional about what they saw? It was every American that was watching it unfold on TV because this is their Capitol. This is their building. This is the building of the people. And they were watching these violent insurrectionists try to tear it down and looking for Members of Congress—looking for Members of Congress to do who knows what, to prevent us from carrying out the duties of our office, but most importantly, carrying out the peaceful transfer of power that this country is known for and has been known for, for over 200 years.

Let me say this. That officer, along with another 150 of his fellow men and women in uniform, they were injured during the insurrection. Five police officers died because of it. Some members of President Trump's mob stole riot shields and used them to beat officers. One person assaulted law enforcement with a metal whip. Another choked an officer to the ground.

They brought weapons and zip ties to the Capitol. They used WD-40 and bear spray on our officers, and they assaulted Capitol Police with American flags. We know this firsthand from, not just the police officers, but from the videos of that day. And I know it firsthand because I saw it in the Halls of the Capitol, the paraphernalia that was littered throughout because of the damage that was caused by those insurrectionists.

I will tell you what, you don't have to take our word. Take the word of rioters because the rioters took videos of themselves doing these horrific things and then posted them online. The claims that these were peaceful protesters are disproved by their own evidence. They were proud to attack the men and women who keep us safe in an attempt to steal an election. Why? Because President Trump couldn't handle the fact that he lost, because he would rather see our democracy crumble than acknowledge that the American people voted him out.

So earlier that day, he encouraged his supporters to march to the Capitol

and intimidate the Senators and Members of Congress and his own Vice President, who were in this Chamber to certify those results. The mob smashed through the lines of Capitol Police officers. We saw that on video. They broke into the building. We saw it on video, and we saw it on TV, live. And they left a trail of destruction behind them—all in the name of Donald Trump.

Condemning their lawlessness and their actions against police officers is something we should all be able to agree on, but the truth is that President Trump does not care about that law enforcement. In fact, he is trying to sweep it all under the rug. A year after the insurrection, Congress passed a law to install a plaque honoring the police officers who bravely tried to hold off that violent mob that day; but now Republican leadership in Congress is refusing to unveil the memorial.

Recognizing heroic actions of law enforcement on January 6 is the least President Trump can do, but that would require him to acknowledge that his followers did something wrong. It shouldn't be hard to say that if you commit crimes against law enforcement and incite an insurrection, you should be brought to justice and held accountable.

But instead of standing with our police officers and denouncing these appalling actions, President Trump is rewarding them. He has decided that you don't need to face the consequences of your crime as long as you commit them on his behalf. One of the very first things President Trump did the day he was sworn in was to pardon more than 1,500 January 6 insurrectionists. Now, this is the President who claims he would restore law and order during his Presidency. His actions go against our democracy, our rule of law, and everything we stand for as a nation.

In the United States of America, no one is above the law—not the President and certainly not the convicted criminals he is treating like his own personal army. Letting these bad actors off the hook has encouraged their behavior. In fact, some of them gave interviews saying President Trump's pardons have vindicated their actions. Now, remember, these are some individuals who were convicted in our criminal justice system by a jury of their peers.

These pardons were an endorsement of political violence and an endorsement of attacking our law enforcement. And now, shockingly, within a year of President Trump putting these dangerous criminals back on the streets, several of them have been re-arrested for committing crimes. At least a dozen of these men and women, including the one who assaulted Capitol Police officers with a metal whip, have been picked up on various charges ranging from soliciting a minor to plotting to murder the FBI agents who investigated him, to killing somebody while driving drunk to burglary—and I

could go on. These are the people President Trump called patriots. These are the people President Trump put back on our streets making our communities less safe and putting innocent people in harm's way.

President Trump owns this. Every crime these violent insurrectionists commit while they roam free is on his head. This isn't a policy debate. It is about right and wrong. It is about who we are as a country. It is about our rule of law and order. Pardoning the January 6 insurrectionists is an insult to our law enforcement, to our rule of law, to our democracy, and, yes, to the American people, who believe in it, who fight for it. We cannot stand for it, and my Democratic colleagues and I will continue—continue—not only to speak out against it, because you can't whitewash this, but also to recognize those Capitol Police officers, those law enforcement officers, those men and women who ran headfirst into harm's way to protect us and this Capitol—the people's Capitol. They will be recognized every single day, and yes, we should have a plaque and a memorial and do so much more, and I am proud of my colleagues for drawing attention to this and continuing to support and thank those men and women who risked their lives to protect our rights and our democracy in this country.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, today is a difficult day particularly for our Capitol Police officers. This is the fifth anniversary of the day when a violent mob attacked this building and attacked them. It did a lot of injury and a lot of harm to Capitol Police officers—in some cases, as they say in the law, death resulting. Today, pardoned criminals who participated in that riot are on the streets of Washington, and if they come back to this Capitol, our police officers are going to have to treat them professionally.

And what support are they getting from all of us? In a better world, this would be a bipartisan showing of respect and gratitude for the police officers who suffered and fought that day to protect this building and an expression of bipartisan gratitude. But that is not where we are as a country right now.

One of the symptoms of Trumpism—frankly, of authoritarianism generally—is the obligation to lie. You are not on the team, you are not in the club, you are not part of the movement if you are not willing to lie for it. So you are constantly tested with the obligation to lie—little ones and then big ones. It tests the loyalty and gradually erodes personal virtue of the person who is increasingly obliged to lie.

So, instead of this being a bipartisan expression of gratitude and appreciation, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle seem to be away today, and it is left to us to remember and honor the brave law enforcement officers who defended the Capitol that day.

The MAGA world has decided that no crimes were committed that day. Well, that is new.

At the time, Senator TED CRUZ described those crimes as a “violent terrorist attack on the Capitol.”

At the time, Senator JOHN CORNYN said, “Those who planned & participated in the violence that day should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

At that time, Senator JOSH HAWLEY said that “those who attacked police and broke the law must be prosecuted.”

Those are only a few of the expressions that we heard from our Republican colleagues at the time.

Republican colleagues also once denounced pardoning rioters, particularly violent rioters.

Vice President VANCE and the President of the Senate said:

If you committed violence on [January 6], obviously, you shouldn't be pardoned.

Secretary Kristi Noem said:

We can't have a blanket approach. I would say each one of those cases needs to be looked at specifically.

Senator HAWLEY again:

I'm against it for people who assaulted cops, threw stuff at cops, broke down doors, broke windows.

Well, Trump came in, and he issued that blanket pardon virtually right away—nearly 1,600 rioters—and he commuted the sentence of 14 members of the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers militia. These were not great people. At least 33 of them have already been rearrested, charged, or sentenced for other crimes since that day. Four pardoned insurrectionists have already allegedly reoffended since receiving their pardons. One insurrectionist was charged with a felony for threatening to murder the House minority leader.

Now some of them are so emboldened that they are demanding a reward for having been prosecuted for the crimes that they committed that day and convicted in a court of law. That is an injury to them, in their view.

So, today, Senator PADILLA and I have introduced two bills to make clear that no one who stormed the Capitol should get any kind of payment, even from this MAGA Department of Justice—no taxpayer-funded cash giveaways, which, by the way, echoes that we should not be giving taxpayer-funded cash giveaways to our colleagues because their names came up in the investigation of the crimes of that day because they were called by the instigators of the crimes of that day.

So I urge my colleagues to support these bills. Let us not reward the violence that was done that day. Too many are trying to turn that day into a payday for themselves. It is beneath us, and I urge support for those two pieces of legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, exactly 5 years ago today, I, as well, was in this

Chamber, listening to my colleagues debate something that never should have been in question—the validity of the electoral votes from my State of Arizona. We had just returned from the House Chamber, where we were supposed to be carrying out one of the most basic responsibilities of our democracy, and that is certifying the results of a free and fair election. Then, with no evidence and no shame, Republican Members of Congress challenged Arizona's votes. They were trying to discard the will of voters in my State because they just didn't like the outcome.

I was sitting right here in this seat, next to my friend CORY BOOKER. We knew it wasn't a typical day. We had seen the large protests gathering outside the Capitol, and we knew the President was holding a rally and repeating his lies that, by the way, he still continues to repeat today—his lies that the election was stolen from him. But here in the Senate we were just doing our jobs in following the Constitution and participating in the peaceful transfer of power. Then things started to change. Information came in pieces, and we could hear noise building outside the building. It became clear very quickly that something was wrong.

Vice President Pence was sitting where the Presiding Officer is sitting, and he was quickly ushered out of the room. It happened very fast. Staff began to come in from outside the Chamber while a Senator was still speaking. I was sitting right here, speaking to an intern who was shaking uncontrollably with fear. It was unusual and concerning, but we still did not understand the scale of what was happening beyond these walls.

(Mr. CURTIS assumed the Chair.)

At 1:56 p.m., my brother, Scott, texted me two words: “chaos outside”—no explanation, no context.

I texted him back: “What is going on out there?”

He asked whether I was safe and where my car was parked.

Then the messages kept coming from my brother: “Protesters climbing the walls of the Capitol. Protesters fighting with police inside.”

He used the word “protesters.” We would all come to later learn that maybe “rioters” or “insurrectionists” would have been more accurate.

I have to say, I could not believe what my brother was saying. So I asked him to clarify. I said, “At the Capitol?” because after everything I have seen in my life, the idea that a mob could breach the U.S. Capitol was something I never thought I would ever witness in our country.

This situation was escalating very fast. Capitol Police made the call to evacuate, and we trusted them with our safety. Only later did we fully understand how close this came to something far worse. We didn't know that our colleague, the man who formerly had the Presiding Officer's seat in the

Senate, Mitt Romney, was literally running for his life. He was a target because he had the courage—he had the courage—to speak the truth about the results of an election.

We didn't know that, at that very moment, Capitol Police officers were being pinned in doors, being beaten with flagpoles, and being attacked with bear spray. We didn't know that Officer Eugene Goodman was making a split-second decision to lead a group of the rioters away from the doors of this very Chamber, and we had seen that video from Igor Bobic of the Huffington Post that he had taken of that chase at great risk to his own personal safety.

I am going to read you a quote here:

The doors that lead into the Senate . . . are made of nothing but glass, mostly glass. So they're easily breachable. And if those doors had been breached, more than likely there would have been gunfire at that point.

This is a quote. These are the words of Inspector Thomas Lloyd of the U.S. Capitol Police, as reported in a new book by Mary Jalonick of the Associated Press. Gunfire—in this room—to protect Senators from getting hurt or worse. That is how close we were. Let's call it what it was. This was an insurrection—an insurrection aimed at stopping the peaceful transfer of power, an insurrection aimed at overturning a free and fair election.

Five years ago on January 6, this did not happen spontaneously. It did not happen by accident. It happened because the current President of the United States and former President Donald Trump refused to accept that he had lost. So when people minimize January 6 or try to rewrite what happened, I cannot accept that, and neither should any of us.

No one has done more than Donald Trump. He has used the powers of his office to hand out pardons—pardons to let people off who attacked police officers. I am the son of two cops. He pardoned over 1,000 individuals. Many of them attacked cops in and around this building. It is insulting to me and to law enforcement officers across our Nation.

These pardons, by the way, they do not just erase sentences; they send a message. And the message is: It is OK for you to commit violent acts as long as they are to support Donald Trump.

And in the years since these pardons, we have now seen exactly who these people are. Christopher Moynihan, who breached the Capitol 5 years ago today and came into this very room, he later threatened to kill House Minority Leader HAKEEM JEFFRIES.

John Banuelos, who fired a gun during the insurrection, was later arrested for kidnapping in the Presiding Officer's State of Utah.

Edward Kelley is serving a prison term through 2061 for developing a plan to murder law enforcement officers while he was being investigated for his role on January 6.

And many more have gone on to commit new and violent crimes.

These are the people that Donald Trump pardoned. We know who Donald Trump is. We know he won't take responsibility for this. I am under no illusion. We also know that he is not the man to unite our country, and I do not expect him to change.

We also can't expect these challenges to our democracy to be solved by somebody else or just go away with time. So we have to start being honest about what happened and clear about who caused it, which I think is why we are here today—because this insurrection didn't happen far away. An election wasn't almost overturned on another continent. Police officers weren't beaten in a foreign capital, and guns weren't drawn in some other senate somewhere else.

It all happened right here. It happened in the United States of America. It happened in this room. And fortunately, it failed here. But don't forget why this failed. This failed because of patriotic police officers. It failed because the will of the American people was stronger than an angry mob and stronger than Donald Trump.

But now the question is: If this happens again, will this fail? Democracy is not self-executing. It depends on leaders who tell the truth, respect the will of the people and the rule of law, and put the Constitution ahead of their own ambition. And it depends on every American being involved and holding their elected leaders accountable.

If we do that, if all of us do that, I know that our democracy can remain strong. We can get through this.

This year, we celebrate 250 years of American democracy. What a remarkable achievement. There is nothing our country can't do when we work together. I know that the future of this country and our democracy is bright, but all of us—every single one of us in this Chamber on both sides of the aisle—have to remain committed to it.

Mr. President, I know you are, and so many of us are as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Arizona for his remarks just now, for his patriotism and his leadership.

Today, we mark the anniversary of the January 6 attack on our Capitol, on our law enforcement officers, and on our democracy itself.

You have heard my colleagues recount the horrors of that day. Let me be clear: I, too, was in this Chamber as the events unfolded, and what happened on January 6, 2021, was in fact horrible, brutal, frightening, violent, and in some terrible cases lethal.

To all members of law enforcement who responded that day and to their families—but especially to the Capitol Police—thank you. We are grateful to you. We cannot repay what we owe you, but you are in our hearts today.

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Mr. President, I come to the floor today because I find myself not only

thinking about January 6 but thinking about another anniversary that we marked this week—250 years since the start of 1776, the year of American independence.

It was 250 years ago yesterday that New Hampshire adopted its State constitution after declaring its independence at a meeting in Exeter, a town where my husband and I raised our two children.

This year, there will be no shortage of celebrations of the anniversary of our independence, but it will be up to us—today's citizens of the United States—to decide as a country if these celebrations will represent an empty pageant or a renewal of principle. Because in this moment, a moment when our country is led by a government high on lawlessness and extremism, ambivalent toward freedom, inclined toward authoritarianism, the principles that our Nation was founded on in 1776 feel far more distant than even 250 years.

While the attack on the Capitol may have happened 5 years ago, President Trump's current, constant lawlessness makes every day feel like January 6. So today, it is worth asking: What does January 6 mean for the spirit of 1776? What does it mean for a nation built on self-evident truths that we have a President who continues to tell the lie—the fantasy—that the 2020 election was stolen? What does it mean to be a country where just powers are derived from the consent of the governed when we have a President who has sought to overturn the voices and votes of the people in a bid to stay in power?

Now, our Founders maintained that we are endowed with certain inalienable rights, but we have a President who routinely attacks the right to due process and freedom of speech, who has sought to use the heavy hand of government to banish critics from the airwaves.

We declared independence, in the words of Jefferson, because we didn't wish to be ruled by a King who "cut off our trade" and imposed "taxes on us without our consent."

But today we have a President unilaterally declaring costly trade wars on our allies and imposing hefty taxes on his citizens, a President who withholds the people's tax money already appropriated by Congress based on his latest whim. The power of the purse is now the power of the President because the majority in this body refuses to stand up to him.

Our Founders didn't draft a Constitution in order to build a more perfect Union only to one day have a President who rejects his responsibility and sworn oath to uphold it, and our Founders didn't create two other branches of government—a legislature and a judiciary—merely for a wayward Executive to ignore them.

Our Founders wanted the legislative and judicial branches to be checks on the Presidency, but this President seems to think that the clear rules set

out in the Constitution are merely a suggestion box.

Surely, as patriots risked their lives, treasure, and sacred honor to establish a breathtaking experiment in self-government, they didn't intend to allow a President to use the long and hallowed arm of justice to target political foes, to ignore laws passed by the people's representatives, or to pardon violent criminals who tried to overthrow our democracy in his name.

There is nothing remotely patriotic, remotely decent about pardoning violent criminals who stormed our Capitol and assaulted police officers.

Can anyone in the administration look the families of the officers in their eyes and explain why such a pardon could possibly be justified?

Of course not.

But then again, this administration doesn't think it should have to. And make no mistake: The pardons may have voided the criminal convictions, but the wounds to the officers remain, as does the attack on our democracy.

When we talk about democracy, it is easy for it to feel merely like an abstract principle. But my dad, a World War II veteran, stressed to me, even as a kid, that freedom and democracy made a real difference in people's lives. Democracy is, in short, the best way to solve problems without violence, with the votes of citizens instead of the voices of a violent mob.

Look no further back than over the course of this last year, and you will see why democracy matters. Despite promising to bring down costs, the President has instead made life less affordable. He has taken away people's healthcare, launched costly trade wars on our allies abroad while making everything more expensive at home, and has spent his days flattering himself, putting his name on buildings and constructing monuments in his own honor.

Are we really surprised that a man who tried to overturn the will of the people in a free and fair election does not care about solving the problems that his constituents—the American people—face? If the President didn't think he was accountable to the people's will when he lost the election in 2020, why should we expect him to care about the priorities they want him to address after an election?

Democracy, of course, is about holding leaders accountable when they fail to make people's lives better, and this President disdains democracy because he simply can't deliver.

We are blessed to live in a great country, and we can't forget how unlikely our independence was. In 1776, we subsisted on gasps of hope, our plan little better than a prayer for recurring miracles—not just in Philadelphia but, later, on the icy currents of the Delaware, in the snows of Valley Forge, by the sea in Yorktown.

Mr. President, 1776 was a time when, in the words of Thomas Paine, "nothing but hope and virtue could survive."

Surely we didn't survive the hardships of our birth to, only 250 years

later, allow the way of the despot and the way of the mob to become the way of the future. Surely we did not build a new nation conceived in liberty only for its Capitol to one day be stormed by a mob at the behest of a President because he refused to acknowledge the basic right of every American to vote him out of office, to be free to disagree with him and reject him.

When the Declaration of Independence was signed, John Adams wrote in a letter that, hundreds of years from now, people will celebrate the day with what he called “pomp and parade,” but he also added that it will “cost us to maintain this declaration.”

So we have a choice to make as a country. On this 250th anniversary of the year of our independence, we have to decide whether we wish to be governed by the spirit of January 6 or the spirit of 1776.

What is this spirit of 1776? It is the belief in government of, by, and for the people, not of, by, and for any one leader.

Here, no leader is above the law, nor are they above the people whom they serve. Look around this city. Our great monuments here were built by grateful citizens to honor others. They weren’t built by greedy leaders to honor themselves.

The spirit of 1776 knows that lawlessness and extremism don’t melt away on their own and must be rejected, even when it means standing up to a President or to one’s own party. Political courage can be hard; regaining a freedom lost even harder.

And above all else, here in the United States of America, we know that we are not subjects to be ruled; we are citizens to be heard. This is America. This is where freedom rings. And perhaps these sound like lofty principles. Well, I am from the “Live Free Or Die” State.

In New Hampshire, we know that principles like freedom matter. We know that they matter because people gave their lives for these principles, and they died for these principles in the hope that the rest of us might live by them. So that is why on this January 6, I am choosing to embrace this spirit of 1776, and I hope that freedom-loving Americans of all political stripes do too.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

#### ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. KIM. Mr. President, today is the fifth anniversary of the attack on this Capitol, on this extraordinary building that we love so dearly.

I personally believe that the Capitol Building is the most beautiful building in this country. It is the physical manifestation of article I of our Constitution, and I believe that to defile and disgrace this building is tantamount to defiling and disgracing our Constitution.

It should be the easiest thing for all of us across the political spectrum to

say that this building is sacred ground. And I am speaking here in the Senate Chamber where rioters broke into. Look, regardless of our political affiliation, we should be able to say what happened, that it was wrong, and that it should never happen again.

Five years does not seem like a lot of time, but as anyone with young kids knows all too well, time moves quickly. I remember 2 days after January 6, I drove back home from the Capitol, back home to New Jersey. And I drove actually straight to my kids’ daycare to be able to pick them up. My 2 boys were only 3 years old and 5 years old at the time. My older son usually bounds out and runs up to me, but this time, he walked out slowly, and he came up to me, and he asked me: Are you OK?

And I glanced towards my wife, who shrugged her shoulders, because we had specifically agreed that we would not mention anything to the kids at this point about what happened on January 6. So I looked back at my boy, and I asked him: What do you mean?

And he looked right back at me, and he said: Did something bad happen at work?

Now, he didn’t know exactly what had happened, but he knew something did. He knew something not right happened. A 5-year-old child can grasp that fundamental fact about January 6, that we don’t use the means of violence against one another, especially in determining the results of our democracy.

Now, if a 5-year-old can grasp that, why is it so difficult for so many, including some here at the Capitol, to be able to do the same? Why do so many pretend like nothing happened or seek to downplay the events of that day? I call this a purposeful amnesia. Five years out, it is so much more damaging to our democracy than the shattered windows of 5 years ago. This is the storm after the storm.

Now, here is an example to the extent with which congressional Republicans are trying to erase the history. In 2022, the year after the January 6 attack, Congress passed a law that mandated a plaque be placed on the western front of the Capitol to allow visitors to this building to remember.

Now, the plaque itself, pretty simple, an image of the Capitol with a few lines of text: “On behalf of a grateful Congress, this plaque honors the extraordinary individuals who bravely protected and defended this symbol of democracy on January 6, 2021. Their heroism will never be forgotten.”

And beneath the text, various law enforcement entities are listed. A simple message of remembrance for those brave individuals who acted and for the democracy they defended. Now, we should be able to walk out of this Chamber today and view that plaque. In fact, it was supposed to be installed by March of 2023.

But instead, nearly 3 years after it was mandated to be made public, 5 years after the event it was meant to

commemorate, the plaque is missing, is absent at the direction of Speaker JOHNSON. As of last night, it is not just absent; it is being explicitly denied because of Speaker JOHNSON, who is still refusing to do the simple thing, the right thing, and displaying it for the American people to see.

Now, that absence and denial is part of a broader effort by Speaker JOHNSON, President Trump, and so many others to prevent us from remembering, to encourage us to forget—the purposeful amnesia. Now, they have done this by gaslighting us, downplaying the events of that day. Speaker JOHNSON directed his conference to blur the face of rioters in publicly released images so they couldn’t be “charged by the Department of Justice.”

A member of his House conference referred to January 6 as resembling a “normal tourist visit.” President Trump called that day a “day of love.” He called the rioters patriots, and he pardoned more than 1,500 rioters on his first day in office last year, signing an Executive order directing the Department of Justice to drop pending cases against those suspected of taking part in this attack.

But we know better. We know the truth. Now, 5 years out, I still haven’t found the words yet to fully tell my boys what happened then. I never fully answered my older son’s questions: Are you OK? Did something bad happen at work?

I have avoided it for 5 years, and I have been wondering why. Why is it that I have been unable to be able to find the words to be able to talk to my child? And what I have come to understand today as I have been thinking about it is I have not talked to them about this because I have wanted to hold off on confronting the full implications of that day.

I think what I have been waiting for is some moment where I can say with assurance that things are better now, where I could tell them about what happened on January 6, but immediately say: That was a horrible thing in the past, but we are beyond it now. Things aren’t going to be bad again.

But 5 years on, I am still waiting for that day, but it hasn’t come—not yet. Now, 5 years in, I am faced with the reality that I don’t actually know when that day will come. I don’t actually even know if that day will come. I can’t say for certain that we will get there.

When I look at today compared to 5 years ago, yes, our Capitol is secure today. Yes, our own security here is more assured. But I can’t say that about our country. Sadly, when I reflect back on 5 years ago compared to today, I actually believe we are more divided now than we were 5 years ago.

I believe our democracy is even more fragile now than it was 5 years ago. And I believe that our future as a nation is more perilous than it was 5 years ago. The future threats to our democracy may not come in the form of