

with a weapon. She did not die defending her country; she died trying to tear it down.

Military funerals are sacred. They are reserved for those who upheld their oaths, who defended the Constitution and the rule of law. To grant those honors to someone who participated in an attack on this Capitol would dishonor every servicemember who actually served to uphold that oath.

I have seen real sacrifice. I have buried marines who gave their lives in protecting others. That is honor. Those who serve are expected to uphold military standards even after they leave service. When you violate the law and betray your oath, you forfeit the privilege of having military honors.

If we equate the January 6 insurrection with genuine sacrifice, we cheapen everything our servicemembers have done in the defense of this country. We erode trust in our military, and we feed the dangerous lie that January 6 was anything other than a betrayal of our democracy.

Taxpayer money should not be used to provide a military funeral to someone who took part in an attack on this Capitol. This is about accountability. It is about honoring those who have truly served with integrity, and it is about making clear, 5 years later, that we will not rewrite the history of January 6.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment and to remember the men and women who have defended this country honorably—those who upheld their oaths, who protected our democracy—and those who continue to serve with courage and sacrifice.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER. Mr. President, today is January 6, 2026. We are 6 days into what will surely be a defining year for our Nation. We will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of our country. We will hold midterm elections. Americans will determine the control of Congress.

But while there is much to look forward to on this cold winter night, I find myself transported back 5 years ago to January 6, 2021.

Over the last 5 years, a lot has been shared about the events of that day. It has been distorted, romanticized, even downplayed. But as they say in the play "Hamilton," "It matters who lives, who dies, who tells your story."

For me, a lot has changed since 2021. Five years ago, I didn't carry the title I proudly carry today. No, not Senator, although, I am proud. It is grandmother.

Today, I rise here on the Senate floor to tell my story, not just for the history books but for my granddaughter Lennox and all of the young people of this country. It is a story of sorrow, fear, and loss, love, hate, and betrayal. But it is also a story of redemption, bravery, and resilience.

On January 6, I was a Member of the House of Representatives. Joe Biden had just been elected. Kamala Harris was just about to become the first woman and first person of color to serve as our Vice President. I was ready to watch history.

Because we were in the midst of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, only a few Members of the States contesting the election results could be on the House floor. The rest of us were able to sign up for 1-hour shifts in the House Gallery.

I remember it like it was yesterday. I remember that night choosing what outfit to wear. I remember taking two pairs of boots with me to work. I ended up wearing the more comfortable ones, not knowing I would soon be running, ducking, and crawling on my hands and knees for safety.

I remember signing up for the first shift to watch from the Gallery. There was never a second shift. Not long into the proceedings, I saw the leadership and my colleagues whisked off the House floor. An announcement was made that the Capitol had been breached.

I sat stunned. And as they were taken to safety, I realized they forgot about us trapped up in the Gallery. We could hear the sounds of yelling and banging on the Chamber doors. We ducked for cover and were instructed to get the gas masks out from under our seats—gas masks that we didn't even know existed, that we did not know how to open or use.

And I remember my friend, former Congresswoman Val Demings of Florida grabbing my arm and locking eyes with me and saying: LISA, there is only one who can get us out of this.

And I began to pray.

People say that right before you die, your life flashes right before your eyes. In that moment, I saw history flash before mine. I saw the peaks and valleys of our American story. I saw slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow. I saw a Trail of Tears, women locking arms marching for the right to vote, two World Wars, 9/11, the murder of George Floyd, and a global pandemic.

I saw the history of our Nation and the path that we had traveled to get us to this moment, and I prayed.

I recalled a piece of Scripture that tells us "all things work together for the good," even the bad, because despite the violence, despite the trauma, despite how close we were to losing our democracy, brave men and women stood up to protect this institution, and we will never ever, ever forget them.

We, the Congress, came back in the wee hours of the morning to do our jobs, to certify the results of a free and fair election. It was a moment of redemption. And redemption is part of what makes America America because whenever we falter, there are "shoulders to the till" who push us forward, who remind us of the values upon which our Nation was founded so that we can "come back stronger."

I find myself thinking about those foundational values a lot these days, and a specific phrase from the preamble has risen above the rest, that we are to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

The Founders used the common phrasing of the time where churches spoke of bestowing blessings of knowledge or faith. We, the United States, would bestow the "Blessings of Liberty" and not just for ourselves but for our posterity for future generations, for our children and our children's children, for my granddaughter Lennox.

But "securing the Blessings of Liberty" isn't just a promise, it is a call to action because while liberty is a blessing, it requires work to maintain, work that we have strayed away from many times in our history.

Five years after January 6, we are faltering once again. From efforts to dismantle the Department of Education and the EPA to the weaponization of the Department of Justice, to active efforts to strip birthright citizenship, the Federal Government is losing its ability to protect many of the blessings of liberties we have come to expect as Americans.

But this isn't new. We have seen this before. In the late 1800s, formerly enslaved people gained new rights—many Americans did. The 13, 14, 15 Amendments enumerated these rights. But without enforcement, they became no more than ink on paper.

I believe we are repeating history. There are some more focused on tearing down than building up. But here is the thing, you can tear down the East Wing of the White House, you can put your name on buildings, or try to tear down this very Capitol Building itself like was done 5 years ago, but our democracy is built on more than just bricks and marble. Ours is a democracy built on the values of liberty and justice for all, on the premise of freedom, on the ideals of equality and independence, and on our pioneering spirit of innovation.

Ours is a story of redemption. This very room that I am standing in is a testament to our system of governance, a room built by enslaved people where Lennox's grandmother now has the privilege to serve as a duly elected Senator.

When our democracy expands, when it breathes, we inch closer to those divinely inspired ideals of our founding documents and to truly securing the "Blessings of Liberty."

This is the story of America I want to pass on to my granddaughter, a story of courage and bright hope for a democracy that endures. But again progress isn't inevitable. It is a choice, and it requires effort.

In 2025, we let the aisle between our parties stretch to a chasm, but it is a new year and it is a new day and we must come together to choose progress to move forward to protect our democracy and patch the holes in our Republic, punctured by the few to spite the many.

As I close, I stand here today as a Senator with gratitude to those who protected us and even gave their lives on that day. And I stand here as Lennox's grandmother with words of wisdom from the late, great Justice Thurgood Marshall, who said:

This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on.

To our posterity, to Lennox, to the pages in this room, to the interns in our office, to the young people inspired to save the world that work on our staff, and to each and every young person in this Nation, I would add two more words to Justice Marshall's quote.

This democracy is yours. Make it "your own" because this democracy belongs to you too. So make it your own. Protect it like we did on January 6 and pass it on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, first of all, I want to acknowledge the wonderful comments by my colleague the Senator from Delaware.

There are three reasons why it is very important we have this discussion:

No. 1, we have got to honor the Capitol Police who were on the receiving end of violent conduct by citizens who stormed the Capitol.

No. 2, it is important that we have accountability for who caused this and to be explicit about who caused this and who was the primary motivator.

And 3, it is extremely important for us not to allow history to be rewritten so what happened then will happen again.

So I want to start most directly with what we all share, and that is an incredible appreciation for the Capitol Police. They showed up that day. These are folks who oftentimes have to commute an hour and a half.

The person who was guarding us—I was in the Gallery of the House of Representatives—had an hour and a half commute each day—to and from work. He had two young kids. And the last thing in the world he wanted to do was to have to use his firearm in order to protect us. But it was clear he was going to do his duty.

We saw so many officers who were in the same place, where they were actually being assaulted by American citizens whose democracy was under assault by American citizens.

I want to express today what I think all of us feel and that is a deep appreciation for the men and women who serve on the Capitol Police force, the Metropolitan Police force, and other authorities who came to the assistance.

Second, it is important for us to be explicit about what happened here and who is accountable. We are having a debate about it. There is an effort to rewrite the history of what happened on January 6, but the fact is indis-

putable that the primary instigator of January 6 was the President of the United States then and who is the President of the United States now, and that is Donald Trump.

Why do I say that?

He is the one who lost the election. He is the one who created the narrative that it was a stolen election, despite the fact that of all of the challenges, they were largely dismissed by the courts. There was never evidence. There was the use of the Presidential power that he had because he did have and does have many American citizens who believe in him.

With the trust that he had with those everyday Americans, when they heard their leader say that the election was stolen, understandably, they believed him. When he said: Come to Washington; it will be wild, they came to Washington.

When he made his speech at the Ellipse and he said: We will march down to the Capitol, they marched down to the Capitol. When the whole place was falling apart here and he was getting urgent calls from the then-Speaker KEVIN MCCARTHY, when he was hearing from others, he was going on to tweet against Mike Pence for not abusing the authority of the Vice President of the United States—by the way, it is not even authority. It is a ceremonial function to certify the election.

It was Donald Trump, who was, in the beginning, the instigator of the lie, the instigator of the call to people around the country who did believe in him to come here and stop the steal and who culminated his efforts with his speech at the Ellipse, telling people to march on the Capitol.

Now, the third reason it is absolutely so important is that history can't just be written, in this case, by the winner. And that is, Donald Trump did win the election. It was a fair-and-square election, despite all those things I just said that are true—not just that I believe are true.

But what happened on that day was shocking to me, and it was shocking to all Americans. Here is why: It is not just—when this happened, I was in the Gallery in the House. I was 30 feet from where the shot was fired. I was standing there witnessing the mob trying to break down the doors that the President enters to give the State of the Union Address and saw the glass and heard the glass shatter.

Even as that was happening, and all of us in the Chamber were bewildered as to what was going to happen, fearful of the violence that was occurring now and how that could escalate, I didn't believe it was happening. I didn't believe it was happening.

I was seeing it. I was hearing it. I was witnessing officers with their guns drawn, but I said to myself: PETER, this is the United States of America. We have a peaceful transfer of power. We win elections. We lose elections, but it is the people of this country who decide who the winner is—not politicians, not a mob attacking the Capitol.

This is a blessing that all of us have been bequeathed by those who came before us, the peaceful transfer of power.

The other aspect of this I couldn't believe was I was witnessing violence—and we have never had violence in the Capitol—in an effort to overturn an election. So two things happened that have never happened: an assault on the Capitol in the effort to overturn the results of an election and thwart the peaceful transfer of power.

That is on Donald Trump. I want to say that explicitly, as uncomfortable as that may be, and whatever policy positions he may have and others and many people may agree with, that attack on the Capitol was inspired, instigated, and accelerated by the explicit actions of the then-President of the United States.

We have to go back to where America began, and that is: We have elections; we do all we can to encourage people to vote; we count the votes; and we accept the outcome as decided by the people of this country.

That is what a democracy has to be about, where the competition is about ideas. It is about aspirational connection to the wonderful Americans that we represent and their confidence that we will serve with the honor, the integrity, and the commitment to their needs, not our preferences, that makes us all so proud to be representatives of the people who sent us here.

So this day is a day of commemoration for those who served us. But it has also got to be a day of accountability and assessment about what happened and how. It can't be whitewashed because the current President has support and was elected. He does. We have accepted that—those of us who didn't vote for him. But that does not whitewash, it doesn't exonerate, it doesn't erase what he did to cause this insurrection. He played the major role in this, and it is forever going to be a stain on that President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, 5 years ago, Donald Trump incited a vicious MAGA mob to storm the U.S. Capitol with one goal: to overturn the results of the 2020 Presidential election.

Fortunately, Trump and his gang of violent extremists failed in their mission to undermine our democracy that day, but make no mistake, Donald Trump continues to bear direct responsibility for this disgraceful attack, an attack that forever scarred our political system and scarred our Nation.

We cannot, and we must not forget, what happened on January 6, 2021. That morning, my colleagues and I started the day in this Chamber, ready to fulfill our constitutional duty to ratify the electoral college votes that would elect Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States, a peaceful duty undertaken by Congress after every Presidential election since 1789.

But by the afternoon, the peaceful transition of power was obstructed by armed rioters sent to us by Donald Trump. Trump's vicious mob forced its way into the Capitol Building armed with firearms, bear spray, and baseball bats. The rioters beat U.S. Capitol Police officers with flagpoles bearing the American flag itself.

They blinded officers with chemical sprays. They smashed windows and caused millions of dollars in damage to our temple of democracy. They hunted for lawmakers in the Halls of this building. They called for the hanging of Vice President Mike Pence. For several hours, American democracy hung by a thread.

Those people came into this Chamber. They desecrated this Chamber. They went through the desks of the Members of the Senate here. They hung from the walls of this Chamber. They did the same thing to the House of Representatives. They were looking for House and Senate Members that they could capture.

And our Parliamentarians, they actually took the electoral college votes out of the well of the Senate and whisked them off to safety, and we thank the Parliamentarians for their courage that day.

The insurrection, however, resulted in the deaths of several of our officers here and injuries to more than 140 members of law enforcement, who were here trying to protect the Members, trying to protect the building, trying to protect the electoral college votes.

Just this morning, I spoke to a Capitol Police officer who stood shoulder to shoulder with Officer Brian Sicknick on January 6. He was with Officer Sicknick who collapsed in the Capitol after being assaulted by insurrectionists and, tragically, passed away the next day, trying to protect this institution, trying to protect democracy.

And to this day, the brave officers who defended Congress bear the scars, physical and mental, of that dark day. And thanks to these brave officers, the rioters were ultimately pushed out and lawmakers returned that night, as I could sit at this desk after 9 p.m. that night to return so that we could, in fact, ensure that Joe Biden was certified as the President of the United States, as the winner of the 2020 election. And democracy, though bent and battered and bruised, was not broken. That is what we are remembering here this evening.

But today, we confront something that perhaps is even more sinister than the heinous violence that occurred that day. Today, we face the systemic attempt by supposed leaders, by Trump and rightwing MAGA Republicans, to erase and rewrite the truth of January 6, whitewashing the violence of the riot and calling it a "day of love."

I invite everyone in this Chamber and across the country to watch the footage of that day, to ask the colleagues and families of those law enforcement officers who were hurt and

killed that day if they see January 6, 2021, as a "day of love."

On his first day back in office, Trump pardoned the January 6 criminals en masse. He gave amnesty to the insurrectionists, rightfully charged with and legitimately convicted of assaulting law enforcement with dangerous weapons in this building as they protected democracy.

And as one of the first official acts of President Trump, as he came back into power in January of 2025, President Trump chose not to lower costs for the American people or to end Putin's war in Ukraine in 1 day, as he promised, and instead on his first day in office, Donald Trump chose to betray the brave law enforcement officers who protect us day in and day out. He chose to erase the crimes committed that day for his personal political benefit.

He chose to send the chilling message that political violence in his name would not only be condoned, it would be rewarded. Trump and his rightwing MAGA supporters hailed those who carried Confederate flags and symbols of White supremacy as patriots. That is gaslighting on steroids. The true patriots are our brave Capitol Police officers who fought on the frontline and held the line for as long as they possibly could. The true patriots are the Americans that stand up for democracy and speak out against authoritarianism. The true patriots are Americans who refused to bend the knee to wannabe Kings.

Trump will continue to lie about what happened here on January 6, 2021, but the video, the texts, the personal messages from that day do not. We all saw what happened that day. We all heard what happened that day. We cannot and we must never forget what happened that day.

January 6 was not an isolated incident. It was the first page in Trump's authoritarian playbook. It marked the start of Trump's sustained attack on our democracy, on the legitimacy of our elections, on our government institutions. In just the last year, Trump has unlawfully imprisoned international students for their speech. He has exacted revenge on his political rivals. He has deployed troops in our cities to do his bidding. He has ignored court orders. He has engaged in unauthorized and illegal acts of war. And now, Trump and MAGA Republicans have set their sights on the 2026 election.

They are rigging the system in their favor by peddling lies and misinformation, by enacting partisan gerrymandering schemes and by restricting access to the ballot for millions of Americans. Five years later, Donald Trump remains laser focused on sabotaging our free and fair elections in the United States of America. This President has no regard or respect for the Constitution. This President has no regard or respect for the rule of law. This President has no regard or respect for our most sacred values as a nation. He

is testing our democracy day in and day out.

And in the face of this historic test, every American must denounce the actions of those who chose to subvert our Constitution on January 6. Every American must condemn those who continue to side with lawlessness and authoritarianism over the basic principles of American democracy, equality, freedom, and the peaceful transfer of power.

Every American must stand up and say no to this wannabe King. On the 250th anniversary of our country's founding, a founding that began in Massachusetts, on Lexington Green and in Concord with "the shot heard round the world," we are once again saying we will stand up for democracy. Our future demands it. We ourselves must summon the courage to fight to protect a democracy that began 250 years ago. We must show the same courage to take on a king, a dictator, a despot in the same way that those minutemen and women 250 years ago displayed their courage.

Those great patriots, they did create a Constitution under which we live here, but that is now under assault. So it is up to us to stand up—and by the way, to redeem the courage of all of those police officers, all those law enforcement officers who gave their lives and their own personal health in order to protect this institution. That is what we remember today, and we must never forget it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, it was this time of the evening 5 years ago that the Senate had returned here to this Chamber and then gone back across to the House of Representatives to continue counting the ballots from each State, the ballots for the electors, the electoral college, the number of which would determine who would be the next President of the United States.

It is steeped in tradition. It is a complicated system because we don't have a direct election for a President, and it involves these beautiful boxes that would be displayed here on the Senate desk. They have the official statements and envelopes from all the secretaries of state across the country saying: We are validating that this is the slate from our State elections.

And then when the counting would begin in the House, we would parade over to the House of Representatives, and the ballots would start to be opened, one State and then another. And it was that evening when we started with the alphabet, beginning with the As, and when we came to the third State starting with an A, Arizona, there was an objection to validation of the slate.