

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.

And it is at that moment that we journeyed back from the House of Representatives here, and those beautiful wooden boxes with straps and buckles were replaced on the table here before the dais of the Senate. And then as we were in that moment of preparing to debate whether or not we would agree or disagree with the acceptance of the slate of electors from Arizona, that is when all hell broke loose. That is when rioters stormed the Senate steps, beat up the police officers, pushed through, and came into the Capitol seeking to stop the peaceful transfer of power, a moment none of us ever expected to witness in our lifetime.

In the course of that riot, more than 170 police officers were injured, and as a consequence of that day, five police officers died.

I would never believe it if I was reading a book, a novel, a fiction story about the Senate that rioters would storm the Capitol. I would never believe that this Chamber would be taken over by those rioters, that their fierce assault with flag poles and fire extinguishers and all sorts of handcrafted weapons would result in the death of a group of officers and more than 170 being injured. But it happened.

The end of that day was a good story because we returned to this Chamber, and we re-paraded over to the House and continued the counting and proceeded to establish who would be the next President of the United States of America.

But it feels particularly important today to honor those who defended this Capitol. It was certainly not within their frame of reference the degree to which that riot would be ginned up. Ginned up are the words of our then-sitting, outgoing President, President Trump, who wanted to interrupt the counting of the ballots, so he could continue to be President, break this chain of peaceful transition that had existed for 200-plus years.

It really was not within the frame of reference of any of us; it was outside the box of what we considered possible, what happened this evening 5 years ago. This is why earlier today, I was shocked to read that the plaque that we had passed a law to commemorate the service of the officers, that that plaque had been cast in bronze, but never actually displayed as required by the law that we adopted in 2022.

Here we are on the 5-year anniversary, and we have never put up this plaque. I have the plaque right here. It is incredibly elegant, a picture of the Capitol, and it says:

“On behalf of a grateful Congress, this plaque honors the extraordinary individuals who bravely protected and defended this symbol”—

The Capitol.

“this symbol of democracy on January 6, 2021. Their heroism will never be forgotten.”

And yet this plaque is forgotten—stuffed into a room, out of sight, never mounted.

How can that possibly be the case? We passed a law that this would be dis-

played. So, well, this is the night to fix that. This is the night to come, draft a simple resolution, and say: We here in the Senate, Democrats and Republicans together, want to see this plaque up on a wall.

Our leadership on both sides has already agreed to put up the plaque, but to do so in the course as required by the 2022 law requires some agreement from down the hall in the House of Representatives that, for whatever reason, hasn't been secured. But we can at least get it placed up here on the second floor of the Senate, the floor where we sat 5 years ago, the floor where the House sat 5 years ago. The Chambers are on this floor where we had the ballots from the States across the country that contained the electoral college slates.

So I drafted a resolution, and I wanted to be able to get unanimous consent tonight, but I also want it to be bipartisan. And it turns out that sometimes the gears here move more slowly, even on simple tasks, than one would like. But instead of asking for unanimous consent on this resolution tonight, instead, I am going to work with a colleague across the aisle, a colleague, a Republican from North Carolina, THOM TILLIS, who came here earlier today with the same sentiment in his heart that I have in my heart that this plaque needs to be up, needs to be up in the hallway here on the second floor.

And pending resolution of agreement with the House on where it should be, we can put it up here.

So I will read you the resolution, and here it is:

Directing the Architect of the Capitol to prominently display in a publicly accessible location on the second floor of the Senate wing of the United States Capitol, a plaque honoring the members of law enforcement responding on January 6, 2021, until the plaque can be placed in its permanent location; whereas, the United States owes its deepest gratitude to these officers of the United States Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia, as well as officers from other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and protective entities who valiantly protected the United States Capitol, Members of Congress, and staff on January 6, 2021; whereas, section 214 of division 1 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 directed that a plaque be placed on the western front of the United States Capitol to honor the extraordinary individuals who bravely protected and defended this symbol of democracy, the United States Capitol, on January 6, 2021; and whereas their heroism should never be forgotten, now therefore be it resolved that the Architect of the Capitol shall prominently display the plaque authorized by section 214 of division 1 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 in a publicly accessible location on the second floor of the Senate wing of the United States Capitol until such time as the plaque can be placed at a permanent location on the western front of the United States Capitol.

So my colleague from North Carolina Senator TILLIS and I are carrying this sentiment in our heart; that here on the fifth anniversary, in which so many officers sacrificed so much, sustaining

injuries, five sustaining death as a result of what transpired here, this plaque needs to go up, and it needs to go up this week.

But tonight, I am not asking unanimous consent because I want colleagues on both sides of the aisle to be able to do what is appropriate in the U.S. Senate, to be familiar with this, so that they can willingly—and, hopefully, enthusiastically—agree that this will be done.

Let not this representation of our appreciation of the sacrifice of the Capitol Police and other police departments—Federal, State, and local—that came to the defense of this Capitol, let this symbol of our appreciation not sit, stuffed into a back room, but be prominently displayed here on the second floor of the Senate wing of the Capitol because their heroism must never be forgotten.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

VENEZUELA

Mr. KAINES. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the invasion of Venezuela that the U.S. military carried out last weekend, which will be the subject of a War Powers Resolution vote on Thursday morning.

The news that President Trump had ordered an invasion of Venezuela on Saturday to capture Nicolas Maduro was a shock but not a surprise. Beginning with unauthorized military strikes against unknown persons on boats in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific starting in early September and continuing through the massing of U.S. military assets in the region over the past several months, the likelihood of this happening one day has been obvious to most observers.

In November, I forced a vote on a privileged and bipartisan War Powers Resolution to explicitly prohibit the use of the U.S. military to strike Venezuela without congressional approval. The administration, in my view, has not provided any clear rationale for the military pressure campaign, much less any legal rationale or request for congressional authorization for military action against this sovereign nation.

At that point, all Democrats supported my resolution, and two Republicans did so as well. But there were insufficient votes to pass it.

Many of my colleagues who voted against the resolution at that time told me that they did so because they viewed that President Trump was bluffing, and so they voted no for that reason.

In the aftermath of the invasion with the administration claiming it has the right to seize Venezuelan oil and “run Venezuela” under the supervision of the U.S. Secretaries of Defense and State, and with the President threatening to put boots on the ground and even conduct additional strikes to control the country, we can now agree this was no bluff.