

Hoeven, John Cornyn, Lindsey Graham.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 54.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Clifton L. Corker, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Clifton L. Corker, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

Mitch McConnell, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, Chuck Grassley, John Cornyn, Tom Cotton, David Perdue, Ron Johnson, Joni Ernst, Mike Braun, Martha McSally, John Boozman, Richard Burr, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, Johnny Isakson, Thom Tillis.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 175.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Lynda Blanchard, of Alabama, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of

the United States of America to the Republic of Slovenia.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Lynda Blanchard, of Alabama, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Slovenia.

Mitch McConnell, Ron Johnson, Steve Daines, John Kennedy, James E. Risch, Roy Blunt, Thom Tillis, Cory Gardner, Johnny Isakson, Pat Roberts, John Thune, John Hoeven, Tim Scott, Mike Crapo, John Cornyn, John Barrasso, Bill Cassidy.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 183.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Donald R. Tapia, of Arizona, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Jamaica.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Donald R. Tapia, of Arizona, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Jamaica.

Mitch McConnell, Martha McSally, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch, John Barrasso, Tom Cotton, Roger F. Wicker, John Cornyn, Jerry Moran, Shelley Moore Capito, Deb Fischer, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Richard Burr, Thom Tillis, John Boozman, Chuck Grassley.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise to address one of the most pressing crises the American people are facing today. Our refusal to address the border crisis is inexcusable.

Right now, Texas and other border States are being overwhelmed by thousands upon thousands of illegal immigrants who are flooding into small communities monthly. The inaction of the U.S. Congress leaves these communities responsible for paying for where these illegal immigrants will stay, for how they will receive medical care, and for where they will go when they are released.

From Brownsville to McAllen, to Laredo to Eagle Pass, to Del Rio, to El Paso, and beyond, Texas communities are at their breaking point in terms of resources and manpower in dealing with this crisis. I am hearing from elected officials throughout South Texas—Democrats and Republicans—that the crisis has reached a breaking point.

Our hard-working Border Patrol agents are also struggling with the enormous influx of illegal immigrants. It has been reported that there are now more illegal immigrants in custody than Border Patrol agents on the southern border and thousands more being apprehended daily.

Since last October, over half a million illegal immigrants have been apprehended at our southern border, many of them having traveled through Mexico from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Over 200,000 of these illegal immigrants were single adults, and over 56,000 of them were unaccompanied children.

During this time, the Border Patrol also apprehended nearly 700 gang members trying to illegally enter the United States. In the month of May alone, the Border Patrol apprehended over 144,000 people coming through the southern border—144,000 in a single month. If that pace were to continue for a year, we would be looking at nearly 2 million apprehensions in just 1 year. That is a staggering number of illegal immigrants for Texas and other border States to take in.

Instead of acknowledging that this crisis exists, instead of doing the responsible thing and taking action, congressional Democrats instead have stubbornly clung to open-border fantasies. Speaker PELOSI has called the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants coming through our border a “manufactured crisis.” Some of our colleagues on the Presidential trail have called it a “fake crisis” and “fearmongering of the worst kind” or have said that climate change is a more serious crisis. All I can tell them

is to go to the border. The crisis at the border is very real, despite what the Democratic talking points say.

Last week, I visited the Rio Grande Valley, as I have done many times in representing the State of Texas in the Senate. I have toured the Rio Grande Valley Centralized Processing Center, the largest immigration processing center in the United States. I also traveled to Rincon Village, which is ground zero for illegal border crossings near Mission, TX. What I saw there was staggering. When I was in the Rio Grande Valley, the RGV Sector Chief told me that in 2014, just 5 years ago, roughly 2 percent of single adult men crossing illegally into the Rio Grande Valley had a child with them. Today that number is roughly 50 percent. It went from 2 percent all the way up to 50 percent. The word is out among traffickers, among smugglers, among others seeking to illegally enter the United States that coming with a child is a get-out-of-jail-free pass. According to the Border Patrol, family unit apprehensions have increased by 463 percent since last year, with increases of 2,100 percent in El Paso and 1,034 percent in Del Rio.

I also learned of a recent pilot program that used rapid DNA tests to discover whether these family units were real. Nearly 30 percent were found to be fraudulent in the Rio Grande Valley. In other words, the adults bringing kids into the United States illegally weren't related to the children.

One of the most tragic elements of the crisis is the number of children who are being trafficked, who are being physically abused, sexually abused, and neglected. Often they are being used as pawns.

That is not all. In the Rio Grande Valley, 60 percent of Border Patrol Agents are now helping to process and care for children and family units. That means only 40 percent are dedicated to border security. More than half the Border Patrol agents in our Nation's busiest crossing point for illegal immigrants are not on the border stopping narcotics traffickers and stopping human traffickers because they are instead changing diapers. Instead, they are caring for children because the volume is so massive.

Just recently, the Rio Grande Valley Sector canceled their horseback patrol because they lacked the manpower because they are instead caring for the massive influx of illegal immigrants. On average, they make 30 trips to the hospital a day. On average, in the Rio Grande Valley Sector, one child is born each day to an illegal immigrant who has come over. Last week, 12 people died.

This is a crisis. By refusing to address our border crisis, we invite child smuggling and child abuse. That is shameful, and that is a tragedy. We know how many illegal immigrants are being apprehended. We know more and more illegal immigrants are trying to get into our country, and we know Bor-

der Patrol doesn't have the manpower or the resources to handle a humanitarian crisis of this scale. It is a fact, and it is a reality that our Democratic colleagues need to face.

Nobody who is compassionate, nobody who wants to be virtuous, nobody who cares about other human beings would want to perpetuate what is happening at the border for even a single day. We should be angry. We should be angry at politicians who say this is a made-up crisis. We should be angry at politicians who keep the loopholes in place that ensure that more and more children—more and more little boys and girls—will be abused at the hands of human smugglers.

While the passage of the \$4.5 billion border supplemental bill a few weeks ago was a good first step, Democrats in Congress need to finally do their job and work with Republicans and work with President Trump to secure our border. We need to build a wall. We need to enforce immigration laws already on the books. We need to reform our amnesty laws to prevent asylum abuse, and we need to support the brave men and women of the Border Patrol with all the resources they need to effectively secure the border.

I have introduced legislation to secure the border using the billions from El Chapo's criminal fortune that the Department of Justice is seeking to have criminally forfeited and use El Chapo's ill-gotten goods and those of other drug lords to build the wall. The EL CHAPO Act would reserve any amounts criminally forfeited to the Federal Government as a result of criminal prosecution of El Chapo or other drug kingpins for the building of a border wall and other border security assets.

I am also a cosponsor of the WALL Act, which would fully fund the border wall by closing existing loopholes that provide illegal immigrants with Federal benefits and tax credits, all without affecting the benefits and tax credits used by American citizens.

These bills are just two commonsense ways to secure the border. Everyone should support taking money away from murderers, from drug smugglers, and from human traffickers such as El Chapo and using it to prevent murder, drug smuggling, and human trafficking—all without costing American taxpayers even a dime or adding anything to the Federal deficit.

We also need more judges. We need to close the loopholes in our asylum system. Right now, immigration courts have a backlog of about 900,000 pending cases—nearly a million. Increasing the number of immigration judges and providing an expedited process for asylum claims is necessary so migrants who don't qualify for asylum can be quickly returned to their home countries rather than released into the United States.

These reforms are necessary, and they need to happen. We know how to solve this problem. We don't have to

ask theoretically because we have seen it happen specifically. In the first 6 months of 2017, right after President Trump was elected and sworn into office, illegal immigration dropped nearly 70 percent. It plummeted. I remember going back down to the valley in early 2017 and asking the Border Patrol agents: Why did the illegal crossings drop? We hadn't built a wall yet. We hadn't hired new Border Patrol agents. What changed? What those Border Patrol agents told me was the only thing that changed is the human smugglers, the traffickers, now believed there was an administration in office that would enforce the law that would deport them if they came here illegally. That one change—the traffickers believing the administration would send them home—dropped illegal immigration 70 percent.

Then what happened? Why did we see this enormous deluge we are seeing right now? Well, the answer is the Congress put loopholes in the law that mandate the release of children. In a short timeframe, and under a court decision called the Flores decision, adults with a child get released as well. That process is what is known as catch and release. It means someone who is apprehended is given a court date some months or years into the future and then are let go on the hope that they will magically show up. Far too many of them don't show up.

What happened in the summer of 2017 was illegal immigrants would pick up the phone and call their friends or family back home and say: The policy hasn't changed. They still let us go. We still get to stay. There are still no consequences. Come on over.

Even worse than that, smugglers learned that bringing a child is the ticket to crossing illegally into this country. There was a portion of the detention facility I saw in the valley that the officers refer to as "daddy daycare" because it was simply filled with young single men who had little kids with them. Five years ago, 2 percent of single men had kids. Today, 50 percent of single men have kids because if you grab a little boy or a little girl, you can come over. I will tell you because of the loopholes Congress has put in place, Border Patrol has been forced to release people who are convicted murderers, forced to release people who are convicted pedophiles, forced to release adults with sexual assault convictions and children in their custody. Why? Because it is so expedited that by the time they find out about the convictions, they have been forced to release them already.

This is cruel. It is inhumane. When the rapid DNA testing is showing that nearly 30 percent of the adults are not related to the kids, it explains why we are hearing more and more reports of children being rented or sold by the cartels.

This has to stop—the political posturing from the Democrats who are running for President and the Democrats in Congress who are refusing to

solve this problem. It is past time for those games. It is time to solve this crisis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, America's strength is in our values. In that vein, I rise to talk about human rights and America's historic role as a defender of universal human rights for all peoples.

I have been a member of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe for many years. It is also known as the Helsinki Commission. The Helsinki Commission is an independent entity that brings together lawmakers and members of the executive branch to represent the United States at the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was created to explicitly promote human rights, democracy, and economic, environmental, and military cooperation among its 57 member nations, including the United States and Canada, all the countries of Europe, and the former Soviet Union countries.

When the Helsinki Final Act was signed in Finland in 1975, it enshrined among its 10 Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States a commitment to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."

Few people have predicted the sweeping, largely unforeseen consequences of the adoption of this document. From this one provision, among the 10 that focus on human rights and fundamental freedoms, there were movements sprung that embraced the Helsinki process as a sword and as a shield. Independent civil societies coalesced around this basic principle and used the followup processes that were set in motion by the Helsinki Final Act to hold their governments' feet to the fire.

In 1976, Congress established the Helsinki Commission with the mandate to monitor and report on compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and, most importantly, to press successive administrations to make human rights and democracy priorities in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

In the subsequent years, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, Solidarity in Poland, and Watch Groups in Moscow, in Kyiv, and in Vilnius sprang up to push for the release of political prisoners and to defend the rights of those who wanted nothing more than to worship and to have the freedom to advocate for reformers and others who sought to reunite with their families across borders.

Through what became known as the Helsinki process, Congress and previous administrations supported the rights of Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, Natan Sharansky, and countless others

who emerged as leaders in their supporting of the historic transitions to freedom 30 years ago with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the end of communism, the unification of Germany, and as President Bush proclaimed, a "Europe whole and free." The Helsinki process of monitoring, reporting, advocating, urging, meeting, and witnessing was a catalyst for these historic changes.

Most importantly, at a time of historic transition, the countries participating in the Helsinki process all acknowledge that democracy was the only form of government that we could accept and that issues related to human rights and democracy were never matters of internal interference but were matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating states. This means, quite frankly, that we have, under the Helsinki Accords, the legitimate right—I would say the obligation—to challenge the failure of any one of those 57 states in its meeting of its Helsinki commitments. That is why it is right that we in the U.S. Senate speak out against Russia or speak out against Turkey or speak out against any member state in the OSCE when it violates these basic principles.

Over the July 4 work period, I was proud to participate in the largest delegation we have ever had to the annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The Parliamentary Assembly—facilitating lawmaker-to-lawmaker interactions and discussions—was established to complement the intergovernmental work being done. One of the OSCE's strengths is that there is a parliamentary dimension. It is not just government officials; it is also parliamentarians who meet to implement these commitments to human rights and good governance.

The OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly have been used to advance U.S. interests, including their support for human rights, free elections, combating anti-Semitism and human trafficking, and other initiatives that have come from the U.S. Congress that have then served as the foundation for U.S. positions and, ultimately, agreements that have been adopted by all 57 states that have participated in the OSCE.

I remember discussions in the Congress that dealt with fighting modern-day slavery and trafficking and fighting anti-Semitism. We initiated them in the Congress. Through the Helsinki Commission, we raised them in the Parliamentary Assembly. They then got raised in Vienna, which is where the Ambassadors who represent all of the states meet, and they were adopted as policy in all 57 states. We have had a very positive impact.

During this recent Parliamentary Assembly, I hosted an event called "Countering Hate: Lessons from the Past, Leadership for the Future." As I stated during the event—and I will underscore now—we have observed an uptick in hate-based instances across the OSCE region and beyond—from Pitts-

burgh and Poway to Christ Church. When we fail to act, we endanger not only the most vulnerable within our societies but the very foundations of our democracies.

Given how much has been accomplished by the United States and others through the OSCE over the past 30 years, it is deeply concerning to see our own American President embrace a drawback of universal human rights in our own country and embrace dictators around the world, who rule by promulgating fear and hate.

President Trump has called Turkish President Erdogan a "friend" and has shared love letters with the very brutal Kim Jong Un after calling him "very talented." Turkey, which has been a member of the OSCE since its inception and a member of NATO, has witnessed a dramatic acceleration in President Erdogan's efforts to consolidate power and hobble his political opposition.

His unrelenting pressure on the judiciary and purges of its ranks of judges and prosecutors have left respect for the rule of law and due process in crisis. Tens of thousands have been detained in sweeping dragnets following the failed coup, including independent voices from virtually every sector of society—opposition politicians, civil society activists, journalists, academics, and many more. These vast purges have had a chilling effect on the free press and the freedom of expression.

The Committee to Protect Journalists considers Turkey the world's worst jailer of journalists, with 68 documented cases, although a local Turkish press freedom organization lists more than 130 who have been detained. Reporters Without Borders ranks Turkey as the 157th out of 180 countries for press freedom—its lowest ranking ever. Under emergency powers assumed by President Erdogan after the coup attempt, the Turkish Government closed around 200 media outlets.

As for North Korea, Kim Jong Un has one of the most deplorable human rights records in the world.

According to Human Rights Watch:

Kim Jong Un—who serves as chairman of the States Affairs Commission and head of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea—continues to exercise almost total political control. The government restricts all civil and political liberties, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, and religion. It also prohibits all organized political opposition, independent media, civil society, and trade unions.

President Trump has been repeatedly willing to take the word of former KGB agent Vladimir Putin over his own intelligence services.

On March 3, 2018, in speaking about Chinese President Xi during a private fundraising speech at Mar-a-Lago, he said:

Xi is a great gentleman. He's now president for life—president for life. No, he's great. And look, he was able to do that. I think it's great. Maybe we'll have to give that a shot someday.

That is not who the President of the United States should be embracing.

He has repeatedly praised Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines. This is the same leader who independent press, civil society groups, foreign governments, and international organizations have all confirmed is engaged in the extrajudicial killing of his own citizens—work that President Trump praised as doing an “unbelievable job on the drug problem.”

Mr. Duterte himself, as a former mayor, has admitted to murdering people. That Mr. Trump would laud Mr. Duterte for his barbaric atrocities is outrageous and is another indication that instead of standing up for America’s values, President Trump continues to endorse leaders around the world who violate the very principles that America’s Founding Fathers enshrined in our Constitution.

I mention our Founding Fathers not in passing, but as we recently celebrated our Independence Day on July 4, I quote from the Declaration of Independence, which set our Nation on a path with the ideal that we hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; and that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

So I was particularly troubled that within days of July 4, the Trump administration, through Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, unveiled what he referred to as a Commission on Unalienable Rights. In his announcement, Secretary Pompeo called this new Commission “one of the most profound reexaminations of the unalienable rights in the world since the 1948 Universal Declaration.”

I, along with many colleagues in the U.S. Congress, fear that this Commission, whose purpose it is to advise the Secretary of State based on the principles of natural law and natural rights, will undermine or curtail State Department advocacy in critical human rights arenas, including women’s health as well as LGBT rights.

For 243 years, with all of her imperfections, America has been a beacon for peoples around the world. Those who have embraced natural law have not been welcoming. They peddle in hate and division. The ACLU notes that references to “natural law and natural rights” are code words often used to undermine the rights of women and the LGBT community. This is just the latest in a string of attacks on women and the LGBT community by this administration. If the President and the Secretary of State want to build on protecting human rights, they will work within the framework that the United States helped to establish, not question the definition or universality of human rights.

#### IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, on immigration, during his first days in office, the President began his administration by sign-

ing an Executive order that attempts to impose travel bans on Muslims and to ban refugees. He signed an Executive order that greatly expanded the number of people who were subject to detention and deportation, and practically speaking, he eliminated the focus on the most dangerous, violent criminals in our communities.

The President has tried to deny sanctuary and asylum to those refugees who legally seek protection in our country as they flee violence and persecution in their homelands.

He rescinded protections for the Dreamers and those with temporary protective status, which cast a cloud of uncertainty over the futures of these individuals and their families. It basically put an expiration date on their backs.

In our communities, I think we all know that the Dreamers and those with temporary protected status now have a fear as to whether their futures will be here in the United States. They have been here for a long time, and as we all know, they are part of our communities. The American values of empathy and compassion seemingly no longer find a champion in the White House.

#### VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. President, on voting rights, the Trump administration has rolled back the clock by creating a so-called Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity—designed to suppress the vote—under the guise of trying to prove the problem of nonexistent voter fraud.

The Justice Department changed its position and supported the use of voter ID laws. It backtracked from its earlier position that such laws were intentionally racially discriminatory and designed to suppress minority votes. One of the principles of a democratic state is to get the maximum participation in elections.

The Department of Justice has tried to make it easier for States to purge voters from their rolls, as well as to make it easier for States to make voting changes that could disenfranchise minority voters without there being the proper Federal review or oversight.

#### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Mr. President, on criminal justice, the Department of Justice has aggressively rolled back its use of consent decrees, like the one put in place in Baltimore under the Obama administration after Freddie Gray died in police custody.

It is interesting. Since that episode, we have had Members of Congress, along with city officials, ask the Federal Government to do a pattern-or-practice investigation on what led to the consent order because we knew we had a problem in Baltimore’s policing.

The Baltimore consent decree is a perfect example of a joint local-Federal partnership that will help overhaul the police department and provide long-overdue constitutional policing to the citizens of Baltimore.

This Federal civil rights role is critically important—especially after a series of officer-involved shootings of African-American residents—as we try to rebuild trust between the police and the communities they serve.

In terms of free press, President Trump has consistently attacked the free press, notwithstanding the First Amendment’s protections, and particularly has labeled critical news stories as “fake news” in an effort to undermine any critical coverage of his administration. He has shown callous disregard for protecting journalists and the free press both at home and abroad.

As Thomas Jefferson famously wrote, “The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

In terms of LGBTQ rights, the Trump administration has consistently argued that businesses and government contractors have a right to discriminate against customers based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. He has nominated judges who want to turn back the clock on equality and force transgender individuals from the ranks of our military.

Our Nation and form of government are founded on “We the People of the United States.” Yet this President is doing all he can to lessen the power and squelch the voices of perceived opposition.

As we approach the second anniversary of the deadly protests in Charlottesville, VA, I will never forget how President Trump used his bully pulpit to further divide our Nation by equating those who espoused White supremacy with those who were protesting against such White supremacist views.

Let us remember the great civil rights leaders in our history who have struggled to help our Nation form a more perfect union, establish justice, and secure the blessings of liberty, as promised by our Constitution. The deadly violence that occurred nearly 2 years ago must never be permitted to happen again.

I strongly condemn all acts of intolerance and remain certain that the moral arc of history, although long, bends toward justice. What is good and just in America is stronger than hate and will prevail.

The Trump administration’s attack on women’s healthcare is unconscionable. Women’s rights are human rights.

The President has taken action to undermine the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the ACA, finalized administrative rules that allow discriminatory practices to domestic and global family planning providers, as well as women seeking reproductive healthcare.

One of the first actions President Trump took in office was to impose an expansion of the global gag rule, which

forces global health providers eligible for U.S. assistance to choose between receiving U.S. funds and providing comprehensive healthcare and family planning services to their patients. What a horrible choice. You need the money, but you have to provide the services.

Trump's global gag rule restricts virtually all global health assistance provided by the U.S. Federal Government, including from the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Defense, impacting \$8.8 billion in financial support for global health programs. Where is the U.S. leadership on global health? The rule has eliminated access to contraceptive services and supplies for almost 26 million women and girls around the world. This hurt women in conflict zones and rural areas, as well as refugees, women with disabilities, and indigenous women.

President Trump has also imposed the domestic gag rule, which restricts physicians from providing complete information to patients about their healthcare options and providing appropriate referrals for care.

The new rule guts title X, the Nation's only Federal grant program dedicated solely to providing individuals with comprehensive family and related preventive health services.

Women make up more than half the population of this Nation. It is outrageous that President Trump continuously implements policies that discriminate against women's healthcare. We cannot allow women to be treated this way here in the United States or anywhere around the world.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." This has been the American ideal and a guiding principle for our Nation since our founding. All men and women are created equal. Each one of us on this Earth deserves freedom, respect, and dignity.

For generations, the United States has stood as the sentinel, defending these universal rights. I would think Republicans and Democrats alike agree with that statement. The outlier is President Trump. This President has done everything in his power within the borders of our Nation and overseas to diminish human rights and disregard the rule of law. He continues to embrace dictators, opening the doors of the Oval Office to men who deserve prosecution more than a welcome embrace by the leader of the free world.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to uphold their oath to defend and protect the Constitution of the United States and to work together to restore America's role as the defender of universal human rights.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Ohio.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOON LANDING

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor this afternoon to talk

about a landmark moment in human history that occurred 50 years ago next week—the Apollo 11 mission that landed the first person on the Moon.

Today, 50 years after that incredible feat, we sometimes take for granted that we explored the Moon. But think for a moment about the generations of men and women from the beginning of time until July 20, 1969, who looked up at the Moon's pale light in wonder at what secrets and insights may lay on its surface. Think about the countless paintings and poems depicting the Moon as an unchanging and unknowable presence in the sky. Think about how, after hundreds of thousands of years of such mystery and reverence, we actually went there.

On July 20, 1969, the world watched in breathless awe as grainy footage came in from the Moon landing. It was beamed in from the lunar surface 239,000 miles away to millions of TV screens all around the globe. As a 13-year-old teenager, I saw two figures clad in bulky spacesuits bounce across the screen against the stark black-and-white landscape.

As anyone who witnessed it can remember and tell you about, there was a great sense of pride as Americans—Americans who broke the earthly bonds that had tethered our ancestors for eons, to set foot on the surface of a body we only saw in the distant night sky. I also felt pride as our pristine American flag was unfurled and planted on the Moon's surface, forever marking our country's trailblazing spirit. I felt pride in being from Ohio, as my fellow Buckeye, Neil Armstrong, was the very first man to step onto the Moon, continuing our legacy in the State of Ohio as a pioneer in flight and in aerospace.

In 2003, actually, Congress officially designated Ohio the "Birthplace of Flight" due to the Wright brothers. They were born and raised in Dayton, OH, and it was in their bicycle shop that they dreamed up and researched the first fixed-wing aircraft anywhere. But for such a lofty title, Ohio has played an even greater role in the story of mankind's progress in the skies and beyond—even beyond the Wright brothers. In fact, one of my predecessors in this seat here in the Senate was John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth. In all, two dozen astronauts to date are natives of Ohio—more than any other State—and I am proud to say that many more call it home today.

Our legacy of flight in Ohio continues today. In Dayton, OH, we have the National Air Force Museum, which houses more than 300 historic aircraft, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base—one of the largest in the country—trains not only our pilots in our Air Force, but those of our allies all around the world.

Just last month, I had the honor of announcing, with Neil Armstrong's widow, Carol Armstrong, that the Smithsonian will be bringing a special exhibit on the Apollo 11 mission entitled "Destination Moon" to Cincinnati's own Museum Center.

On that day in 1969, Neil Armstrong became all of our heroes, and it was at a time when our country was deeply divided over the war in Vietnam and other social and cultural issues. At a time when we were yearning for heroes, Neil Armstrong inspired us and brought us together as a country.

I have one story I would like to share that I thought about while walking over this afternoon. It is about how Neil Armstrong inspired a particularly important group of Americans.

In 2011, the year before Neil Armstrong died, he came here to the U.S. Capitol at my request to join my wife Jane and me at our swearing-in ceremony. I was elected in 2010, and the swearing-in was early in 2011. As we walked into the Capitol, we looked up on the left and saw a mural, and it is a mural that is still down on the first floor of this Capitol on the Senate side, and it is of Neil Armstrong on the face of the Moon. I pointed it out to Neil and his wife Carol—his wonderful wife Carol who was with us. Neil's comment was, that is interesting. The 30 or 40 people who were with us walking into the Capitol that day—they didn't think it was interesting; they thought it was amazing.

I later found out that Neil Armstrong was the only American living to have a mural painted of him in the U.S. Capitol.

That night at dinner, one of my other friends, Col. Tom Moe, came to me and asked if he could speak with Neil Armstrong and whether I would introduce him to Neil. I said: Of course.

Col. Tom Moe is a hero in his own right, an Air Force pilot who was shot down over North Vietnam. He spent many years in the prison called the Hanoi Hilton with our former colleague John McCain—a true hero.

When we went over to see Neil Armstrong, Col. Tom Moe shared a story with him. He said that the prison guards in the North Vietnamese prison were intent upon telling the prisoners that America was falling apart, that there were protests on the streets, which was true, that the country was deeply divided, and that America was going backward. He said in particular they didn't want the prisoners to know that America had accomplished what President Jack Kennedy had laid out as an ambitious vow, which was to go to the Moon by the end of the decade. They had kept that from them. Then one day, the prison guards somehow let a letter go to one of the prisoners from his mom, and that letter included a postage stamp, of course. Guess what was on the postage stamp. A photograph of Neil Armstrong stepping onto the Moon.

Colonel Moe told Neil Armstrong that it was incredibly inspiring. It lifted the spirits of all the prisoners. Immediately they went to the pipes and they tapped out what had happened, which was the way they communicated with one another in the Hanoi Hilton. Through the pipes and the tapping, he

said you could just feel the momentum building and the morale improve.

Neil Armstrong was not a very emotional guy, but when he heard that story, he became very emotional, as did Colonel Moe.

That is just one more example of where Neil Armstrong inspired all of us—in this case, a group of Americans who richly deserved and badly needed that inspiration.

Over the years, my family and I have come to know the Armstrong family. Carol Armstrong is still in Cincinnati, a dear friend. We were his neighbors in Cincinnati.

As we have shared stories in the lead-in to the 50th anniversary of the Moon landing, I have been reminded of how extraordinary it was that this towering figure had truly been such a modest, unassuming man despite all the notoriety.

In my view, how he handled the spotlight into which he was thrust said as much about Neil Armstrong as the time he spent on the Moon a half century ago. He was a true hero, but even before he blazed trails through the cosmos, Neil was already contributing to Ohio's rich legacy of pushing the boundaries of flight. He had already served his Nation with bravery and skill on Gemini 8. As a test pilot pushing the envelope, he had strapped himself into terrifying-looking contraptions with gigantic flame-belching engines tied onto huge fuel tanks.

Before he was a test pilot, he distinguished himself through his service to his country as a naval aviator—among other things, flying 78 combat missions over the Korean Peninsula. In one such mission, in fact, he was forced to eject from his plane into enemy territory, holding out long enough, thank God, for the U.S. Marines to locate him and escort him to safety.

For all of these accomplishments, this son of Ohio received the highest honors a grateful nation could bestow: the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Congressional Gold Medal, and the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.

God smiled upon Neil Armstrong throughout his extraordinary life. Neil returned the favor by living his life with honor and dignity.

In 2012, Neil returned to the heavens above, this time venturing into the Kingdom of Heaven. I had the honor of being among those who delivered the eulogy at his funeral. Then, as today, I remembered him as a hero and as a friend. He was a humble Midwesterner and a proud Ohioan who believed that the honor of serving his country and meeting great challenges in his own stoic way was all the reward he deserved. He was a refreshing counterweight to the celebrity culture we too often embrace today.

The Apollo mission was many things to many people. To the world, it was mankind's greatest journey to date, a daring sojourn to the crown jewels in the night sky. For Americans, it was an affirmation of America's

exceptionalism, that we could beat the Soviets and respond to their Sputnik Program by following through on President Kennedy's bold vow to land a man on the Moon by the end of the 1960s.

For me, and for thousands of other young boys and girls across Ohio, it was simply the next act in our State's leadership in aviation, done with that quintessential Midwestern resolve and humility.

As Neil once so eloquently said, "The important achievement of Apollo was demonstrating that humanity is not forever chained to this planet and our visions go rather further than that, and our opportunities are unlimited."

Fifty years on, as we look ahead to chart our next voyage to the stars, let us always remember the bravery and patriotism and the humility of Neil, also of his other astronauts—Michael Collins, Buzz Aldrin—and the thousands of men and women who supported them on Earth, and the many courageous astronauts who preceded and followed them. Let the Apollo 11 mission be an example of what our great country can do when we come together to achieve the seemingly impossible.

Let us commit to come together into the future, into the distant horizons. Like the Apollo 11 exhibit exhibiting American leadership and benefiting all of mankind, there is more for us to do. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

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#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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##### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

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##### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for votes Nos. 202 and 203. Had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Peter C. Wright to be Assistant Administrator, Office of Solid Waste, Environmental Protection Agency. I would have also voted nay on confirmation of the Wright nomination.

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#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

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##### REMEMBERING MARIAN SPENCER

• Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a great Ohioan and transformational civil rights leader, Marian Spencer. Born in Gallipolis, OH, as the granddaughter of a slave,

Spencer honored her grandfather by dedicating her life to fighting for a more equal and inclusive country. Spencer became a member of the NAACP at the young age of 13 and is best known for leading the fight to integrate Coney Island and its swimming pools in the 1950s.

After graduating from high school, Spencer attended the University of Cincinnati, where she made Cincinnati her adopted home and campaigned to integrate the university's Whites-only college prom. From there, she chaired the education committee of her local NAACP branch and helped raise \$30,000 to desegregate Cincinnati Public Schools, before becoming the chapter's first female president in 1981.

Spencer believed in the power of activism as a means of social change, and her efforts led her to becoming the first African-American woman elected to Cincinnati City Council. Spencer gave a voice to the disenfranchised and underrepresented, and she will be remembered as trailblazer for civil rights, women's rights, LGBTQ rights, and the environment.

We lost Marian Spencer this July, but her legacy will live on for generations. Her leadership and progressive ideas had a profound effect on our city, our State, and our Nation, and her work will remain a source of great pride for Ohioans. I am proud to honor Marian Spencer for her contributions to making our country a little freer and a little more just. ●

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#### TRIBUTE TO MIKE AND TARI CONROY

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I rise to recognize Mike and Tari Conroy for their impact on Ravalli County and the surrounding areas. Through their work as bluegrass musicians, the Conroys have brought delight to the hearts of their Montanan listeners.

The Conroys' devotion to bluegrass extends beyond their respective playing of the banjo, guitar, and other traditional bluegrass instruments. The events the Conroys take part in, such as celebrating the birthday of a 90-year-old U.S. Army veteran or the closing of an essential Missoula landmark, represent the very best of Montana. It is no surprise that Mr. Conroy is the president of the Montana Bluegrass Association.

Additionally, the Conroys have worked tirelessly to share their love of bluegrass music with their fellow Montanans by organizing the annual Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival, which takes place just south of Hamilton, MT. This festival brings numerous bluegrass bands from the Northwestern United States to perform in Montana. Despite the financial and logistical hurdles, the Conroys are committed to sharing their passion with their fellow Montanans. As the festival enters its 11th year, it has truly become a cultural staple of the Bitterroot.