

have to have another fight, we can get the amendments in the bill to strengthen the bill, and we can move on, with the two parties together doing something that is right for the Nation. Why don't we do it?

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would say to my friend, I don't blame her for asking, but why in the world would we change settled law for 39 years in order to accommodate the minority's view on this bill, and to change, as I said, what has been the law of the land?

Since the Senator voted for this very language previously this year in the Judiciary Committee—since she co-sponsored it, I don't really understand it since she voted for the legislation that is referred to here that has that amendment. Does the Senator see this as breaking new ground? Is she trying to expand or eliminate the Hyde amendment?

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I see it for standing up for a principle. I know something about these girls. I know something about the history of abortion in this country. I am old enough to have gone through it and know that I don't want to go back to those days. I don't want young women who take the law now so much for granted to have to return back.

This is just one small step. There is nothing wrong with accommodating the minority on what is a relatively small point. In the House, 435 people over there didn't want it in. So why not accommodate the minority? The Senator just comes out a bigger person.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would say to my friend I appreciate her courtesy and her indulgence in having this conversation. I also feel on principle this limitation on tax dollars is an appropriate one. I understand the Senator disagrees and she would like to eliminate this from this point forward. But I am simply unable on principle to accommodate the Senator in that request.

As I said, I do appreciate her courtesy.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I appreciate it, too. And I appreciate the discussion. Principle doesn't know minority and majority. Principle is deeply held.

I thank the Senator very much.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

DEMOCRACY RESTORATION ACT

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I support the Democracy Restoration Act. This important legislation would re-

store a voice in our democracy for millions of Americans who cannot vote simply because they have a criminal conviction. I thank Senator CARDIN for his leadership on this issue. I am honored to be an original cosponsor of this important criminal justice reform legislation.

The right to vote for all is a principle that goes to the very heart of all democracy. Voting is a fundamental right because it is the right from which all other rights derive. Participation in the political process is about giving a voice to the voiceless. It is about who we are as a Nation and whether we want citizens that contribute to our society to have a say in who represents them in the Federal Government.

The road to extend voting rights to all Americans has been long and not without bumps. Our country was founded at a time when African Americans were denied the right to vote. For over a hundred years, we silenced entire populations of Americans and deemed them unworthy of participating in the political process merely because of their race.

During his famous Gettysburg Address, President Lincoln called for the country to have a "new birth of freedom." After the Civil War, the States ratified the Civil War Amendments to the Constitution to honor President Lincoln's promise. One of those amendments, the Fifteenth Amendment, gave African Americans the right to vote. Decades later, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women suffrage.

Despite this progress, many States passed laws during the Jim Crow era to disenfranchise African Americans, including literacy tests, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses. These States also passed laws that banned people with certain convictions from voting. With the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, many of these State disenfranchising laws were outlawed. But the ban on voting for people with certain convictions was not touched and it remains the law in many States.

Today, 35 States restrict voting rights of persons who were formerly incarcerated. In fact, felony disenfranchisement laws prevent 5.85 million Americans from voting. This is a staggering number of Americans that do not have a say in our political process.

Punishment is a legitimate goal of our justice system. But once someone has served their time and been released, we must help our fellow citizens get back on their feet. As President George W. Bush said in his State of the Union Address in 2004, "America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life." To further punish people who are back in the community by denying them the right to vote counters the expectation that citizens have rehabilitated themselves after a conviction.

The Democracy Restoration Act would restore voting rights in Federal elections to millions of disenfranchised

Americans who have been released from prison. It would require prisons receiving Federal funds notify people about their right to vote in Federal elections upon leaving prison or being sentenced to probation. It would empower the Department of Justice and former offenders harmed by a violation of this legislation with the right to sue.

This bill corrects a civil rights wrong. It would sweep away the last vestige of Jim Crow laws. It would outlaw State disenfranchisement laws that have a disparate impact on racial minorities. It would provide a uniform standard to govern the restoration of voting rights.

This bill reforms the criminal justice system. Every year, over 600,000 people leave prison. We must find ways to reintegrate them back into the community. Civic participation gives ex-offenders a stake in government, which motivates law-abiding behavior and reduces the likelihood of future crimes. No evidence exists that denying voting rights to people after release from prison reduces crime. To the contrary, it makes sense that people who have paid their debt to society should reclaim their rights.

This bill builds off of the progress in the States. Recently, 8 States have either repealed or amended lifetime disenfranchisement laws. Two states expanded voting rights to persons on probation or parole. Ten States eased the restoration process for people seeking to have their right to vote restored after the completion of their sentence. The Federal Government should follow their lead.

Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come. This Congress can remedy the barriers to full citizenship faced by millions of formerly incarcerated people in our country, if this bill is enacted into law. Restoring the right to vote is good public policy.

To protect basic public safety and strengthen the core of our democracy, I urge my fellow Senators to support the Democracy Restoration Act and quickly pass this important legislation.

CONGRATULATING NANCIE ATWELL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the inspiring accomplishments of Nancie Atwell from Southport, ME, who was awarded the first Global Teacher Prize by the Varkey Foundation. This international, nonprofit organization is committed to improving the quality of education worldwide. Nancie's selection as the foundation's first ever prize recipient is a testament to her outstanding contributions to the teaching profession and her effect on countless students and teachers. The \$1 million prize was awarded at a ceremony in Dubai attended by former President Bill Clinton and Sheikh Mohammed

bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates.

Heralded as the “Nobel Prize of Teaching,” the prestigious Global Teacher Prize shines a spotlight on the critical role that teachers play in our society. Nancie was selected from more than 5,000 nominations received from 120 countries. The candidates were evaluated based on their innovative teaching practices, including their ability to prepare students to be global citizens.

The pool of thousands was narrowed down to a group of 10 remarkable nominees, including teachers from Afghanistan, India, Kenya, Haiti, Malaysia, Cambodia, and the United States. Within this elite group, Nancie Atwell rose above the rest. Nancie has been a teacher since 1973. In 1990, she used money from her own pocket to found the Center for Teaching & Learning, an independent demonstration school that educates students from kindergarten through eighth grade in the small town of Edgecomb. Her vision was to foster a more meaningful education for Maine students. The center serves a close-knit population of approximately 75 students who travel from several surrounding towns because they are attracted to the school’s small class sizes, research-based curriculum, and teacher outreach programs.

In a gesture that exemplifies her deep commitment to her students, Nancie announced that she intends to donate every last penny of the \$1 million prize back to her school to support its resources, scholarships, library, and to replace its worn out furnace.

Nancie, who has authored many books and articles about education and hosted 140 education workshops, embodies a teaching philosophy based on student engagement, not just assignments. She encourages her pupils to identify and pursue their passions. By enabling students to choose to read and write about what interests them, the center has created an environment where children are excited to learn and eager to demonstrate their knowledge.

In addition to teaching students, the center does remarkable work teaching teachers. Educators from other schools regularly visit the center for professional development. Once there, they observe school-wide morning meetings, libraries in every classroom, and student-driven writing workshops. The center facilitates a teacher internship program that pairs visiting educators with teachers at the school. These intern-teachers observe and confer about instruction methods and leave equipped to make substantive changes back in their own schools.

In her acceptance speech, Nancie said:

When children are engaged, when learning is joyful, those are the lessons that stick. Those are the lessons that are worthwhile and meaningful and hang around.

This philosophy has inspired teachers and students alike. In fact, it was one of Nancie’s former students who nominated her for the prize.

Under Nancie’s leadership, the Center for Teaching & Learning has earned national praise. How wonderful it is that Nancie’s work has now earned global recognition. The people of Maine—and especially its students—are fortunate to have such a pioneering and driven educator fighting for a brighter future. Nancie is a remarkable ambassador for both the State of Maine and our country, and I congratulate her on this outstanding accomplishment.

RECOGNIZING TONY ALEXANDER

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Tony Alexander, executive chairman of the board of FirstEnergy Corporation. Tony’s 43-year career at FirstEnergy and its predecessor companies was characterized by a commitment to superior customer service, greater value to shareholders, and more opportunities for employees. As FirstEnergy’s longest serving chief executive officer, Tony’s vision, drive, and leadership helped propel the company to the forefront of the energy industry.

Through Tony’s management, Akron-based Ohio Edison quadrupled in size to become today’s FirstEnergy. Over the course of his career, he guided the company through significant mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures; complex regulatory and environmental challenges; and a wide range of operational and financial issues. His willingness to push hard for important ideas and policies made him a strong advocate during one of the most challenging periods in the history of the electric industry.

Tony’s principled leadership has also shown through his tireless work to improve his community. As a recognized leader in his community, he currently serves as an advisor to the boards of trustees for Akron Tomorrow, Team NEO, and the University of Akron. Additionally, he serves on the board of directors and President’s Advancement Council of the Austen BioInnovation Institute.

Tony’s service has not gone without notice. He has been awarded the Dr. Frank L. Simonetti Distinguished Business Alumni Award from the University of Akron—a testament to his community leadership.

I congratulate Tony, his wife Becky, and their four sons for the profound impact he has made throughout his community and the energy industry.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:09 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1029. An act to amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 to provide for Scientific Advisory Board member qualifications, public participation, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1191. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1029. An act to amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 to provide for Scientific Advisory Board member qualifications, public participation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time:

H.R. 1191. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-941. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Dimethomorph; Pesticide Tolerances” (FRL No. 9923-59) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-942. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Boscalid; Pesticide Tolerances” (FRL No. 9921-01) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-943. A communication from the Chief of the Planning and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Food and Nutrition Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Programs Personnel as Required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010” (RIN0584-AE19) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-944. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Gypsy Moth Generally Infested Areas; Additions in Minnesota, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin” (Docket No. APHIS-2014-0023) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 13, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-945. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Homeland Defense and Global Security), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a consolidated