

The question is, Will we keep our promise to them?

Their promise was much tougher than our promise. All we have to do here to keep the promise is vote the right way, vote in the U.S. Senate to make sure miners get their pensions and health care and vote in the House in the same way. That is not hard to do—to walk into the well of the U.S. Senate or somewhere in this Chamber and put your hand up. That is pretty easy to fulfill the promise we made to them. This isn't a lot of money for these miners. In addition to Social Security, sometimes it is about 530 bucks a month for all of that work they did. So it is not hard to fulfill this promise that our country and our government made to them.

These are people who are not in the newspaper every day, they are not on television. They may not have a lot of power. They may not be connected to people who are powerful or people who are wealthy. They are just hard-working people who did their job and deserve to have that promise fulfilled.

I believe this is a matter of basic justice. It is basic justice whether we are going to fulfill that promise. Saint Augustine said a long time ago, hundreds of years ago: "Without justice, what are kingdoms but great bands of robbers."

If you apply that to today's terminology, a kingdom in some sense is like our government—a governing body for a nation. Without justice, what is a government but a great band of robbers. We owe people that basic justice, that promise.

So let's fulfill our promise as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents in the U.S. Senate. Let's not allow inaction or other circumstances, political or otherwise, to prevent us from doing the right thing. Let's not rob these miners and their families of what they deserve, what they earned. We are not giving them anything. We are just voting the right way so they have a promise fulfilled.

I would hope that before everyone goes home to do whatever folks will do—travel to their States or campaign or whatever they are going to do—I would hope, at a minimum, we would take action on a number of things we talked about today but in particular that we make sure families don't have to worry about the horror and threat of Zika, something we can prevent the spread of if we take action; that families will not be threatened by it in Florida or Puerto Rico or anywhere because beyond that, we don't get to the solution, the action. Of course, we hope we can go home and say we at least said to miners and their families: We have fulfilled the promise the government made to you generations ago. That is the least this body and the other body should do before we leave Washington.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO TIM MITCHELL

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I didn't want to leave today without joining the chorus of commendations for Tim Mitchell. I think technically tomorrow is his 25th anniversary, if I have that right, and I heard some of the comments this morning, but I didn't get to the microphone earlier to say anything, and I should have. I will be brief.

I just want to thank Tim for his remarkable service to the Senate these 25 years, and I know he has more work to do, but it is an important anniversary to highlight.

Some people mentioned his great baseball knowledge, where I am often deficient, despite having two great teams in Pennsylvania, the Pirates and Phillies, but Tim knows just about as much as anyone. In addition to his knowledge of baseball and his great work in the Senate, which often in the Senate goes unrecognized or unheralded, Tim is someone who brings to the job great character, integrity, and a kind of decency that sometimes we all don't exercise every day of the week. Sometimes he is getting seven questions from nine different people and he handles every one. Sometimes you ask him the impossible question which he tries to answer, but he probably shouldn't, which is: When will we finish this week, which is always an open question with an uncertain answer. I have at least kept my faith with him by saying: Tim, I won't quote you, but tell me when we might wrap up this week.

He is a great example of public service in the Senate and a great example of what we all hope to be when we work in a government institution or in a Chamber like the U.S. Senate. I am so grateful to Tim for his ongoing commitment to public service. I wish him 25 more years on top of the 25 years that preceded this anniversary.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania.

Several of us came to the floor earlier today to pay tribute to Tim Mitchell in his service to the Senate, which is certainly deserved on this occasion of his 25th anniversary of beginning work here.

(The remarks of Mr. DURBIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 3347 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I rise today to address the recently released new report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights entitled "Peaceful Coexistence: Reconciling Nondiscrimination Principles with Civil Liberties."

The Commission on Civil Rights has a glorious and profound history in our Nation. Founded in 1957, the Commission initially had the grand cause of ending the horror and the tragedy of Jim Crow laws in our Nation.

Sadly, however, the Commission's focus has recently strayed, and its new report poses profound threats to the historic American understanding of our First Amendment. In the Commission's just released report, the majority reveals a disturbingly low view of our first freedoms. It actually puts the term "religious liberty" in scare quotes, and it says that religious liberty must now be subservient to other values.

Here is a snapshot of the majority's position from this new report, in their own words:

Progress toward social justice depends upon the enactment of, and vigorous enforcement of, status-based nondiscrimination laws. Limited claims for religious liberty are allowed only when religious liberty comes into direct conflict with nondiscrimination precepts. The central finding which the Commission made in this regard is:

Religious exemptions to the protections of civil rights based upon classifications such as race, color, national origin, sex, disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity, when they are permissible, significantly infringe upon these civil rights.

Additionally, the Commission's Chair, Martin Castro noted:

The phrases "religious liberty" and "religious freedom" will stand for nothing except hypocrisy so long as they remain code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Christian supremacy or any form of intolerance.

But are the phrases "religious liberty" and "religious freedom" simply hypocritical code words? Are they shields for phobias, intolerances, and power struggles?

Of course, they are not.

Religious liberty is far more beautiful, far more profound, and far more human than that. Our national identity is actually based on this very premise.

The American founding was unbelievably bold. Our Founders were making the somewhat arrogant claim, almost, that almost everyone in the history of the world had actually been wrong about the nature of government and about the nature of human rights.

Our country's Founders believed that God created people with dignity and that we have our rights via nature. Government is our shared project to secure those rights. Government does not