

and business owners are achieving economic growth that is unmatched in recent memory. It is driven by a 21st century tax code that lets Americans keep more of their own money and encourages job creators to invest in our Nation's workers.

It is made possible by historic regulatory reform, which has leveled the playing field for American consumers and small businesses. From farmers and ranchers to community bankers, the burdens of an out-of-control regulatory state are being lifted.

So after a decade of stagnation, Republican policies have gotten Washington out of the way and freed American workers and job creators to do what they do best—build a dynamic economy that is literally the envy of the world.

But as impressive as some of these statistics may be, I think it is important to keep in mind that these stories are, at the end of the day, human stories. More than 1 million new jobs have been created just since we passed tax reform last December. That is not an abstract number. That is 1 million opportunities for young workers who are just starting out and need to begin climbing the first rungs of the economic ladder; for young fathers and mothers who can now leave a position where their pay has stayed flat for a new opening in their industry; or for midcareer professionals who were sidelined by a tough economy and can now suit up and check back in to the game.

These aren't just economic statistics; they are American men and women who have new chances to support their families and build their lives that they simply did not have under the policies of the previous administration.

I am glad that we fought and won—and will continue to win—major accomplishments for the middle-class families we represent.

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#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

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#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

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#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, this week, we will be taking up the National Defense Authorization Act, which Congress has passed for 57 consecutive years to support and guide our country's military. Earlier this month, the Armed Services Committee voted overwhelmingly—25 to 2—to advance this important legislation to the Senate floor, so when I hear people say that there is no bipartisan consensus for anything in Washington these days, I think that is belied by the facts and certainly in this case by our bipartisan commitment to provide that support and guidance for our Nation's military.

According to the Department of Defense, there are 1.8 million Americans around the world on Active Duty in the U.S. military. The United States has 737 installations overseas, and the DOD—the Department of Defense—is the world's largest employer. Supporting all these people and the facilities they occupy is a Herculean task, and the Defense authorization bill is one very significant way that we do just that. It is how we make sure that all of our American servicemembers are trained, equipped, and paid and that our alliances are strengthened and our military facilities are properly modernized and maintained. We have an All-Volunteer military, and it is important for us to do all of these things in terms of quality of life, in addition to the basics, to prepare our warriors for hopefully an avoidable fight, but when it is unavoidable, to prepare them for that conflict.

In Texas, there are roughly 200,000 military men and women stationed in places like Fort Hood, Joint Base San Antonio, the Red River Army Depot, and Ellington Field. These are the people I think about as we take up this Defense authorization bill. They rely on us to deliver what we have asked them to do, to give them the tools, the equipment, and the training to do what we have asked them to do. That goal is increasingly difficult because the world is a very complex and dangerous place. The array of national security threats facing the United States is more complex and diverse than at any time since World War II. Our leadership at the Pentagon says that the strategic environment has not been this competitive since the Cold War. Simply put, America no longer enjoys the competitive edge it once had over our competitors and adversaries.

Secretary Mattis and the Department of Defense have admirably craft-

ed the national defense strategy that was delivered to Congress earlier this year laying out its strategic goal. This was a critical first step, but now the strategy must be implemented. The Defense authorization bill will align that strategy with the resources necessary to implement it—the investments, the policies, the authorizations—with the new orientation articulated in that strategy.

The Secretary of Defense will reevaluate the highest priority missions for the Department of Defense, the roles of the joint force, as well as the capabilities required to complete these missions.

All told, in its current form, the Defense authorization will support \$716 billion for our national defense. To those who would think that the price is too high, I would say there is no option. There is no nation in the world that is as capable of keeping the peace and deterring aggressors around the world. In fact, the No. 1 responsibility of the Federal Government is to provide for our common defense.

All of the rights that we enjoy in this great country of ours flow from the freedoms that are protected by our men and women in uniform. We have seen what has happened in the last few years when America has receded and retreated from its leadership role.

We don't have to fight all of these fights on our own. As General Mattis says, it is appropriate for Americans to fight by, with, and through our allies, which is the strategy we are using now rather than placing boots on the ground in many of these locations.

One important piece of the bill is bolstering recruitment, retention, and effectiveness of our Armed Forces.

A second important piece that was included in the committee markup of the NDAA is legislation I introduced called the Children of the Military Protection Act. This will close a jurisdictional loophole affecting military installations when minors commit criminal offenses on base. Because it is a military base, the Federal Government has the jurisdiction, but frequently Federal prosecutors don't have the time or the resources to prosecute the cases, so they fall through the cracks. This legislation will allow Federal prosecutors to relinquish jurisdiction to the State in these instances, allowing State-level authorities to take up the case when the Federal Government's other responsibilities and finite resources prevent it from being able to do so.

I am proud to join with Senator KING, the junior Senator from Maine, in this effort. This is a bipartisan priority that Members on both sides of the aisle should rally behind. Our children on our military bases must be protected at all costs. When they are assaulted, their assailant should not escape justice because of loopholes in the law.

Although the Federal Government maintains jurisdiction over military

bases, as I have said, unfortunately, it does not always assert its prosecutorial authority. Historically, Federal prosecutors have pursued roughly 15 percent of juvenile sex offense cases, and that is clearly not enough. We have to address this black hole for juvenile justice. We have to give local prosecutors the authority they need to go after these cases on our bases with the agreement of the Federal authorities.

I look forward to my legislation being a part of the NDAA when we vote on it perhaps as soon as next week.

There is one final aspect of the Defense authorization bill I would like to touch on, and it involves how we address future threats to our national security.

I have spoken quite a bit on the floor about the threat China poses to the United States, and they are not even coy about it. They have told us what their plan is. Their plan is to grow their economy and to grow their military in a way that dwarfs the power and economy of the United States.

Let me talk a little bit about the threat. I have spoken about that threat, but let me quote the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, who recently said that it is “in the Indo-Pacific region [where] the United States faces a near-term belligerent threat armed with nuclear weapons and also a longer-term strategic competitor.” Of course, my friend Congressman MAC THORNBERRY is talking about China, “the competitor,” and the “belligerent threat” he identified was North Korea.

That is why this year’s Defense authorization bill, among other goals, prioritizes military readiness in the region and strengthens our key partnerships there. It promotes security and stability in the Indo-Pacific through exercises with our allies and supports improving Taiwan’s defense capabilities.

Even more important, the Defense authorization bill will include legislation I coauthored, along with the senior Senator from California Mrs. FEINSTEIN, known as the Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernization Act, or FIRRMA.

This legislation will allow us to better intercept threats to our national security posed by China when its companies masquerade as normal corporate actors, but, in fact, they are an arm of the Communist Party and the leadership in that country.

As has been well documented, China is intent upon, No. 1, stealing our intellectual property, and when they can’t do that, strategically investing to get access to both the intellectual property and the know-how to be able to take advantage of all the research and development expenditures we have made in our country and to short circuit that in developing their equivalent. Our legislation will modernize the review process of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States and ensure that we are better protected

from these sophisticated threats and help us maintain our technological edge in the national defense realm, but, as I said earlier, the Defense authorization bill is important for reasons that hit much closer to home.

In years past, this bill has authorized needed improvements at our military facilities. It has given our troops a much needed and much deserved pay raise and updated advanced aircraft, ships, and ground vehicles. These, too, have implications in all of our States, and Texas is no exception.

So when I vote on the Defense authorization bill, I will be thinking about servicemembers back in my State in addition to all those who serve in remote locations overseas. We need to get the Defense authorization bill across the finish line for them and for our country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### WELCOMING EVERYONE BACK

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, let me welcome you and all of my colleagues back from another productive State work period. I traveled a good deal around my State, spoke at a bunch of graduations, and found it fun and productive. I learned a lot. I am glad to be back but glad we were out in our States.

#### RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

First, Madam President, let me address the President’s recent comments on the Russia probe, then our negotiations with North Korea, and then healthcare.

This morning, the President tweeted that he has the “absolute right” to pardon himself and that the appointment of the special counsel is totally unconstitutional. President Trump, you went 0 for 2 on the Constitution this morning.

First, of course no President has the power to pardon himself or herself. If they did, the Presidency would function above and outside the law, counter to the very founding principles of our country. We don’t have a king. We are a nation of laws, not men. That is why the Founding Fathers created America; they didn’t like the monarchy. But if a President can pardon himself, it is virtually a monarchy, at least as far as the President is concerned. If Presidents had the power to pardon themselves, we would no longer be a democracy.

As the Department of Justice legal counsel wrote 4 days before Nixon resigned, “Under the fundamental rule

that no one may be a judge in his own case, the President cannot pardon himself.” This is virtually indisputable.

Does the President get to choose what he can pardon himself over— theft, murder, who knows? The President does not have the right to pardon himself. That is for sure.

Second, of course the appointment of the special counsel is constitutional. Never mind the fact that President Trump’s own Republican appointees made the appointment of the special counsel; this is far from the first special counsel to investigate a serious matter concerning the President. Again, if the President were beyond the reproach of any investigation, there would be no check on the President’s conduct. The President could engage in rife corruption and self-dealing without consequence. Surely, that is not what our constitutional system envisions. That is not the structure of America that the Founding Fathers set up and that we have followed for more than 200 years.

The President’s tweets are silly, farcical, and even absurd. They are not legal arguments to be treated seriously. Rather, they seem to reveal increasing desperation on the part of the President. President Trump has escalated his criticism of the Russia probe from smearing the special counsel and his team and hawking outrageous conspiracy theories to attacking the very legal architecture of our country.

Special Counsel Mueller has already issued more than a dozen indictments. He has secured several guilty pleas from top Trump campaign officials. The probe is not only legitimate; it is finding violations of the law on the part of the Trump campaign and others.

As wrong as President Trump was in his tweets this morning, you have to wonder, why is he asserting his right to pardon himself? Why is he questioning the constitutionality of an investigation in the first place? For a man who constantly proclaims his innocence, President Trump is doing an awfully good impersonation of someone who believes he has something to hide. It is hard to think of another explanation for the increasingly ridiculous and far-fetched legal theories peddled by the President and his lawyers.

The pundits and the analysts in the media are debating whether it makes smart, strategic sense for President Trump to sit down for an interview with the special counsel. They are asking the wrong question. The President’s strategy and political interests shouldn’t be the basis for whether he sits down with the special counsel.

If the special counsel requests an interview with the President as part of his investigation, the President should agree to provide testimony. If President Trump has done nothing wrong, as he so often and so loudly claims, he should have nothing to fear by sitting down with the special counsel.

## NORTH KOREA

On another matter, Madam President, North Korea, over the last few weeks, we have seen an on-again, off-again routine from the Trump administration when it comes to the potential summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un. Now that the meeting will seemingly proceed as planned, we want to make sure that the President's desire for a deal with North Korea doesn't saddle the United States, Japan, and South Korea with a bad deal.

We are all hoping the President succeeds. We are all rooting for peace. We very much hope he will be able to achieve a strong and enduring agreement because the danger of a nuclear-armed, ICBM-equipped North Korea is very, very real to the United States. But the President needs to be willing to take time to construct a good deal, and if he finds that one is not achievable, the President must be willing to walk away from the table.

In a letter to the President, Senator MENENDEZ and I strongly urged the administration to ensure that any agreement with North Korea meets five key principles.

First, North Korea must dismantle or remove every single one of its nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

Second, North Korea must end the production and enrichment of uranium and plutonium for military purposes and permanently dismantle its nuclear weapons infrastructure. That means test sites, all nuclear weapons research and development facilities, and enrichment facilities have to be destroyed.

Third, North Korea must continue to suspend all ballistic missile tests.

Fourth, North Korea must commit to anytime, anywhere inspections for both its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, including all nondeclared, suspicious sites. If inspectors reveal any violation, we must be permitted to implement snapback sanctions.

Lastly, any agreement between the United States and North Korea must be permanent.

If President Trump meets with Kim Jong Un and reaches a deal that meets these principles, he will have made the world a much safer place. But if he tries to reach a deal with Kim Jong Un just for the sake of reaching a deal, and if the agreement fails to live up to the principles we have laid out, then he will have been bested at the negotiating table yet again.

These five principles are the lens through which Senate Democrats will evaluate any deal with North Korea. If the deal doesn't live up to these standards, then the President should not expect Democratic support in the Senate if he tries to lift sanctions to implement an agreement.

## HEALTHCARE

Finally, Madam President, on healthcare, today, health insurers in the State of Washington proposed an average rate increase of 19 percent. In my home State of New York, insurers

are requesting an increase of 24 percent, half of which they said is due to the Republicans' repeal of the healthcare coverage requirement.

Following rate increases in Virginia, Maryland, Vermont, and Oregon, these increases confirm what we already know to be a trend: The policies of the Trump administration and congressional Republicans are driving up healthcare costs for millions of Americans.

President Trump promised the American people that healthcare would be "far less expensive and far better" but once again has failed to deliver. Instead of "far less expensive and far better," Americans have gotten health coverage that is far more expensive and will be far worse, and it is a direct result of Republican policies and President Trump's actions.

President Trump has deliberately sowed major uncertainty in the marketplace. He will start offering expanded junk insurance plans, and congressional Republicans repealed the coverage requirement in their tax bill. Each of those actions, taken separately, have destabilized our healthcare system. Taken together, these policies are causing chaos, skyrocketing rates, and the return of dark days in which people with preexisting conditions faced higher premiums, denied care, and medical bankruptcy.

On healthcare, as on many issues, President Trump made bold promises but has failed to deliver the results that middle-class Americans need and expect. On healthcare, he has swung at the ball and struck out.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

## "GASPEE" DAYS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, the night spanning June 9 and 10 marks the anniversary of a key chapter in American history—one whose first shots spurred our Nation on toward independence from Britain, yet one that remains unfamiliar to most Americans today, which is why I come here each year to tell the tale of the *Gaspee* Raiders.

I encourage my colleagues and all students of history to explore this chapter in more depth, in histories such as "An Empire on the Edge" by Nick Bunker or "The Burning of Her Majesty's Schooner *Gaspee*: An Attack on Crown Rule Before the American Revolution" by Steven Park.

Here is the tale in brief form.

It is 1772. Tensions between England and the Colonies have grown increasingly strained. Rhode Island is a seafaring, trading colony, without much regard for His Majesty's taxes. King

George III stations the revenue cutter HMS *Gaspee* under the command of Lieutenant William Dudingston, in Rhode Island waters. The *Gaspee*'s mission: to interdict smuggled goods and enforce the payment of the Crown's taxes.

Lieutenant Dudingston was an arrogant sort, who quickly became infamous for destroying fishing vessels, seizing cargo, and flagging down ships only to harass, humiliate, and interrogate the colonial sailors. According to Gabriel Weis in his 1916 "Guide to Newport, Rhode Island," "This unprincipled ruffian had ruthlessly ravaged the Rhode Island coast for several months, destroying unoffending fishing vessels and confiscating everything he could lay hands on."

Rhode Island seamen and traders chafed at the harsh tactics of Dudingston. A number of them delivered a petition seeking relief against the *Gaspee* to Rhode Island Chief Justice Stephen Hopkins, later a signer of the Declaration of Independence. On this occasion, Hopkins provided a legal opinion saying that British officers were obliged to present their orders and commission to Rhode Island's Governor before entering local waters, asserting a measure of colonial sovereignty.

Dudingston, of course, refused such an impudent notion and threatened to hang any man who tried to oppose the *Gaspee*. His first mistake, in the winter of 1772, was to seize a sloop named "Fortune," along with its cargo of rum and sugar, from Nathanael Greene, the wealthy son of a Quaker minister. As Daniel Harrington wrote in the *Providence Journal* last year, "the patriotic fervor . . . sweeping the colonies [had] seemed to elude [Nathanael Greene] until Dudingston snagged his Fortune and ignited the righteous spirit of resentment that now consumed him."

After first suing Dudingston for the return of his ship—and winning—Nathanael Greene would join the Revolutionary cause, ultimately commanding Rhode Island's army and then rising in General Washington's ranks to become the commander of the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War. During the war, General Cornwallis wrote to his wife: "That damned Greene is more dangerous than Washington."

Thank you very much, Lieutenant Dudingston, for igniting Nathanael Greene's righteous spirit.

Dudingston's various provocations continued until they reached the breaking point on June 9, 1772, when he set his sights on the sailing vessel *Hannah*, traversing Narragansett Bay from Newport to Providence. The *Gaspee* ordered the *Hannah* to stop and allow a search. On board the *Hannah*, Captain Benjamin Lindsey refused and continued on his course to Providence, ignoring warning shots fired by the *Gaspee*. Knowing that his *Hannah* was lighter and had a shallower draft than the *Gaspee*, Lindsey raced up Narragansett Bay and over the shoals off Pawtuxet

Cove. The heavier *Gaspee* kept up its chase of the *Hannah* but ran aground in the shallow waters off Namquid Point. The *Gaspee* was stuck fast on the shoal in a falling tide.

Captain Lindsey sailed on to Providence and, with the prominent merchant John Brown, later the founder of Brown University, rallied local patriots to a meeting at Sabin's Tavern, in what is now Providence's East Side. The Rhode Islanders gathered there made a fateful decision.

The British Navy was the most powerful military force on the planet. The British Crown was the most powerful political force on the planet. The Rhode Islanders had managed to strand one of His Majesty's vessels, a symbol of their oppression, helpless in an outgoing tide.

They resolved to attack.

In the early moonless hours of June 10, several dozen men—perhaps benefiting somewhat from the refreshments of Sabin's Tavern—led by John Brown and Abraham Whipple, shoved off in longboats from Providence, with blackened faces and muffled oars, to row through 6 miles of dark waters for the *Gaspee*.

As the boats surrounded the *Gaspee*, Whipple called out and demanded Lieutenant Dudingston surrender his ship. One witness later recounted his demand in this form—forgive me for the language involved, but it is historically correct.

I am the sheriff of the county of Kent, God damn you. I have got a warrant to apprehend you, God damn you; so surrender, God damn you.

Dudingston refused this polite offer and instead ordered his men to fire upon any men who attempted to board. The determined Rhode Islanders then forced their way aboard the *Gaspee*, and a struggle ensued. In the melee, Lieutenant Dudingston was shot in the groin and arm by musket balls. Gabriel Weis wrote: "The attack on the '*Gaspee*' caused the first bloodshed in the struggle for American independence, and was the first resistance to the British Navy."

Brown and Whipple's men soon overpowered the British crew and took control of the ship. Brown ordered one of his Rhode Islanders, a physician named John Mawney, to tend to Dudingston's wounds. He survived. They transported the captive Englishmen safely to shore and then returned to the abandoned *Gaspee* for one final act of defiance to the Crown and riddance to the ship: The Rhode Islanders set the *Gaspee* afire.

Now, the *Gaspee* was a gunship, and gunships store gunpowder, and the gunpowder is kept below decks in a powder magazine. The *Gaspee* burned until—wham—its powder magazine exploded, blasting into the Rhode Island night what remained of His Majesty's meddling ship, her debris flying across the blast-lit waters of Narragansett Bay.

Word quickly spread of the Rhode Islanders' daring raid. The news was

spread through pulpits and pamphlets up and down the Colonies, stoking the flames of revolution. The furious King George offered huge rewards for the capture of the insolent rebels. A trial in England was announced, but in characteristic, impressive solidarity, not one Rhode Islander would step forward to identify a single one of the raiders. The royal threats broke vainly against the silent solidarity of the Rhode Islanders. The royal nooses hung empty. The story of the *Gaspee* is just one part of a daring Rhode Island resistance, stretching across the years and months before the *Gaspee* incident, into that explosive night on Narragansett Bay, and on throughout the Revolution.

His Majesty's Navy had not heard the last of Abraham Whipple, for instance. In 1775, Abraham Whipple was in command of a small fleet facing off against the British frigate the HMS *Rose*. The captain of the British ship sent a menacing and accusatory note to Captain Whipple:

From Captain Sir James Wallace of the *Rose*:

You, Abraham Whipple, on the 10th of June 1772, burned His Majesty's vessel, the *Gaspee*, and I will hang you at the yard-arm.—James Wallace.

To which note Whipple replied with acerbic brevity:

To Sir James Wallace, Sir:  
Always catch a man before you hang him.—Abraham Whipple.

By the way, Rhode Islander John Millar, two centuries later built a replica of the HMS *Rose* which obtained a starring role in the movie "Master and Commander" as Captain Aubrey's warship, the *Surprise*.

Rhode Island is proud of our role in sparking our Revolution. We have made a tradition of celebrating the *Gaspee* incident with our annual *Gaspee* Days celebration and parade in Warwick, just ashore of where the *Gaspee* was led aground.

This year, the Rhode Island State Archives is staging a new exhibit called "*Gaspee* Raiders: Pirates or Patriots." King George was pretty clear about which, but we are pretty clear also about which. There, visitors can learn about the events of June 1772 and even experience the entire *Gaspee* Affair in virtual reality.

Much of the world does not remember the burning of the *Gaspee*, but we do not forget. Beyond our State borders, most Americans think of other events as catalysts of the Revolutionary War. More than a year after the *Gaspee* incident, up in Massachusetts, some Boston worthies fortified their courage with strong drink and pushed tea bales off the deck of a British vessel. That is not bad—I guess it ruined the tea—but, personally, I think it is more impressive more than a year earlier to have blown up the British ship and shot its captain, but, for whatever reason, the Boston Tea Party is the better known historical event.

In fact, many of my colleagues, having heard me give this speech, tell me

they never even heard this story. Maybe it is because Massachusetts had two of our first Presidents, the Adams' father and son, and they talked it up. Maybe after the war, Rhode Islanders just went home to their farms and boats and businesses while Massachusetts wrote the early history books. Whatever the reason, the seizing and burning and blowing up the *Gaspee* deserves a more prominent place in Revolutionary history.

We are the State that first enshrined separation of church and State in the New World. Samuel Slater sparked America's Industrial Revolution with his mill in Pawtucket, and we drew first blood in the fight for American independence that night on Narragansett Bay. The *Gaspee* Affair is not a peculiar, drunken anomaly; it is part of a robust and early resistance by a proud colony, now a proud State.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The 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 Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

Mitch McConnell, John Hoeven, John Kennedy, Johnny Isakson, Jerry Moran, Cory Gardner, John Cornyn, Thom Tillis, James E. Risch, Pat Roberts, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Richard Burr, Tom Cotton, Jeff Flake.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), the Senator

from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 90, nays 1, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 112 Ex.)

YEAS—90

Alexander	Gardner	Murray
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Paul
Barrasso	Graham	Perdue
Bennet	Grassley	Peters
Blumenthal	Harris	Portman
Blunt	Hassan	Reed
Booker	Hatch	Risch
Boozman	Heitkamp	Roberts
Brown	Heller	Rounds
Burr	Hoeben	Rubio
Cantwell	Hyde-Smith	Sanders
Capito	Inhofe	Sasse
Cardin	Isakson	Schatz
Carper	Johnson	Schumer
Casey	Jones	Scott
Cassidy	Kaine	Shelby
Collins	Kennedy	Smith
Corker	King	Stabenow
Cornyn	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Tester
Cotton	Leahy	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tillis
Cruz	Manchin	Toomey
Daines	Markey	Udall
Donnelly	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Durbin	McConnell	Warner
Enzi	Merkley	Warren
Ernst	Moran	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Murphy	Wyden

NAYS—1

Hirono

NOT VOTING—9

Coons	Heinrich	Nelson
Duckworth	McCain	Shaheen
Flake	Menendez	Young

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 90, the nays are 1.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Ohio.

VOLCKER RULE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, last winter, this body passed a \$1.5 trillion deficit-financed tax cut for millionaires, for billionaires especially, and for corporations that ship jobs overseas. More than 80 percent of the benefits will go to the top 1 percent of the wealthiest people by the end of this decade.

Two weeks ago, Congress passed another big giveaway to Wall Street, loosening taxpayer protections on big banks that had received a combined \$239 billion in taxpayer bailouts. We know Wall Street can never get enough handouts. Too many people in this body, too many people down the hall in the House of Representatives, too many people in the Oval Office, too many people in Washington never get tired of giving these handouts away. From the day President Obama, almost a decade ago, signed Wall Street reform into law, a top Wall Street lobbyist said that it was halftime, meaning the game was not over, and they were going to keep fighting back.

Before the ink was dry on his signature, those lobbyists went to work trying to undo the rules we put in place to protect taxpayers and consumers. We are seeing the result of that lobbying

in Congress, and we are seeing it at the agencies that are supposed to be policing our financial industry.

Last week, the Federal Reserve announced proposed changes to what is known as the Volcker rule. We put this rule in place after the crisis to stop big banks from taking big risks with Americans' money. Those complicated, risky bets were a big reason for the financial crisis that devastated our economy, cost millions of Americans their jobs, cost millions of Americans much of their savings, and left taxpayers on the hook to clean up Wall Street's mess.

Lehman Brothers invested heavily in toxic mortgage-backed securities, eventually leading to \$32 billion in trade losses and the biggest bankruptcy in U.S. history. They took bank deposits, putting the U.S. taxpayer on the hook for those losses.

Hedge funds sponsored by Bear Stearns, which also took Americans' individual deposits, suffered massive losses on complex bets based on exotic subprime mortgages. During the crisis, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley, and Citigroup also lost big on bets backed by subprime mortgages, and Goldman Sachs had to bail out a hedge fund.

Congress instructed the Federal Reserve to write strict rules to prevent that from ever happening again—to make sure that banks use the taxpayer safety nets to serve their customers, not bet against them.

Banks should be in the business of making investments in the real economy, not casino-style trades using families' checking and savings accounts. It took agencies more than 3 years to finalize the Volcker rule, which was completed in 2013 after the consideration of thousands upon thousands of public comments. Now they want to undo it all?

The rollbacks announced last week would gut core components of the Volcker rule. They would make it easier for banks to take speculative bets. The New York Times stated that the balance of power will tip immediately to traders from regulators. It will shift the power from watchdogs to the big banks themselves, from public servants who are looking to protect the public's interests to executives who are making tens of millions—occasionally, hundreds of millions—of dollars in their trading.

Instead of establishing strict limits on banks, the proposed rule changes will ask us to trust the banks to guard against risky trades. It says: Go ahead and police yourselves. Yet we know how well that turned out the last time.

The rule changes will allow banks to more easily place bets under the guise of so-called hedging. This increases the chances of yet another scandal like the London Whale episodes of 2012 when JPMorgan lost \$6 billion in one bad bet. Do we want to make it easier for them to do it again with Americans' savings accounts? Why weaken the rules now?

It is not as if the banks are suffering under this rule. Think about how the banks are doing now. The FDIC released new data last month that banks increased their profits by 13 percent last year, and that is before accounting for the windfall from the tax bill. When you add in the tax bill, banks' profits went up 28 percent last year on top of the double-digit percent almost every year from 2010 and 2011 and 2012 and 2013 and 2014 and 2015 and 2016 and 2017.

The banking sector bought back \$77 billion worth of stock last year. Last year, the CEOs of the six largest banks got an average raise of 22 percent. These were CEOs who were already making millions and millions of dollars. Keep in mind that the average bank teller in this country makes about \$12.50 an hour. Yet the CEOs of these banks—some of them already making \$10 million and \$20 million a year—got a 22-percent increase.

This is not some dying industry that is crying out for help. If anything, it is an industry that needs a more watchful eye. The largest banks paid \$240 billion worth of fines 10 years ago after the collapse. Wells Fargo can't go more than a few months without having a scandal. Deutsche Bank is struggling with poor risk management and inadequate capital.

So why put taxpayers and bank customers at risk? We have a pretty good idea why.

Just take a look who this administration has put in charge. The White House looks like a retreat for Wall Street executives. We have former OneWest banker Joseph Otting running the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. As if the Volcker rule rollback were not bad enough, he announced last week that he wants to get banks into the business of financing payday loans. Otting has other plans to gut the Community Reinvestment Act—a 40-year-old law that ensures that banks serve their communities.

Fed Vice Chair Randal Quarles recently gave a speech, saying that, just as we predicted, the Federal Reserve wants to loosen rules on foreign megabanks—these banks that are in this country, like Deutsche Bank and Santander and some of these big banks—that have, clearly, from time to time, abused the public trust. We are going to loosen the rules that regulate foreign banks in this country? He said last week's changes to the Volcker rule were just the start. He said it was the first effort to weaken the rule.

People like Randal Quarles—people who didn't spot the crisis the last time they were watchdogs, when they were in government 15 years ago, people who profited off the very crisis they failed to prevent—may have forgotten what these risky bets did to so many families in this country. Maybe they have succumbed to the collective amnesia that affects more and more people in this town. Families in my State haven't forgotten. Workers' savings were wiped out. They watched college

accounts and retirement savings shrink and shrink. Hopes and dreams were dashed.

Americans can't afford to go back to the days when Wall Street gambled with their hard-earned money. The crisis has cast a long shadow over these families. Today, 4 out of 10 adults can't afford an emergency expense of \$400. If your car breaks down and it costs \$500 or \$600, you don't have the money to do that if you are much of the American public. You go to a payday lender who charges you exorbitant interest rates. You go back and go back because you can't get ahead.

One in four renters pays more than 50 percent in income to keep a roof overhead. One in four renters pays 50 percent in income or more to keep a roof overhead. One bad thing happens in their lives—a child gets sick; they miss work for a few days; they can't make payments because they have had broken-down cars. All kinds of things can happen. They can be evicted, and many of them are. More and more workers have irregular schedules and incomes that vary up and down from month to month. It is those Americans we are sent here to serve.

It also comes back to whose side you are on. Are you going to stand with hard-working Americans or with risky Wall Street traders? We need to go home and listen a little more to the people we serve and a little less to special interests. That is how we create an economy that values work and that serves the common good, not by falling all over ourselves in this body to serve Wall Street.

#### UNION ORGANIZING

Mr. President, last week, American workers had a victory. Boeing flight technicians in South Carolina voted to join a union for the first time, giving them a voice in their workplace and the freedom to bargain for the pay and the benefits they have earned. This will make a tremendous difference in the lives of those workers, but we know far too many Americans aren't so lucky. Tens of millions of Americans have no voice in the workplace, and when they try to organize a union, they are almost always met with resistance from corporations at every turn.

Boeing fought these workers' efforts tooth and nail. The corporate leaders used every trick in the book to try to prevent these workers from organizing and from standing up and speaking with a collective voice. It took three tries for workers to finally overcome that corporate obstruction. Their fight is not over. Boeing is appealing the results of the election in a last, desperate attempt to silence these workers.

For too many workers, hard work doesn't pay off. They are paid less, and they have little economic security. Corporate profits have gone up. The GDP has gone up. Executive compensation has gone up. Executive salaries have skyrocketed. Workers, simply, haven't shared in the wealth they have created.

More workers have no control over their own schedules. They work odd hours. They have no paid sick leave and no overtime pay. Companies use temporary workers and independent contractors to pay people less for the same work. Workers on the traditional payroll have often seen their wages and benefits stagnate and their job security whittled away. That is what happens when workers have no voice and no power in the workplace. We have to change that because it is not corporations that drive the economy; it is workers.

We know it from the way we write tax bills here. When we write a tax bill that focuses on the middle class and gives tax breaks to them, the economy grows because you build the economy up. When we pass a tax cut here, overwhelmingly, it goes to the wealthiest people and the largest corporations. The trickle-down effect creates very, very few jobs. When workers can bargain for higher pay and better benefits that reflect the dignity of work that they do, we are all better off. That is how you grow the economy.

This victory for Boeing's workers is a small but important step in the right direction. Now we need to give workers all over this country the same power in their own workplaces.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The clerk will call the roll. The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### IMMIGRATION

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I am coming to the floor tonight to talk about the issue of immigration here in the United States of America.

I think all of us are very familiar with the Statue of Liberty—a symbol we know about from the time we begin to talk, a symbol that represents much of the history of our country, where so many of us coming from every corner of the globe have family histories that involve parents or grandparents or great-grandparents or, generations ago, people fleeing persecution from around the world.

That welcoming sign—"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free"—those words inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty represent the fact that when it comes to people fleeing persecution, America is a place ready to receive them.

This isn't just something that is woven into the history of our country. It is not just something woven into the DNA of our souls as Americans. It is also woven into our laws—our national laws and our international treaties—for how to treat refugees fleeing persecution. It works like this: A family who has been in horrific circumstances can come to the U.S. border and an-

nounce that they are fleeing persecution and wish to seek asylum in the United States of America. They are then given a court date to appear to present their case. Their case has to be substantial, it has to be documented, and the court will decide whether it meets the test of whether they are legitimately in fear for their lives or for their children's lives should they return to their homeland overseas. That is the process.

But we have a new policy that was announced just in April and amplified in a speech by the Attorney General in May, last month. This new process says that when those families come to the United States fleeing persecution, we are going to proceed to take the children away from the parents while they are awaiting adjudication—the day to come before a judge to present their case on their affliction abroad.

Let me explain this in more significant terms. Families who have experienced trauma abroad are then subjected to trauma when they arrive at our border. This is the new policy that Jeff Sessions announced in April and gave a speech about in May. He called it "zero tolerance" because he wanted to put a positive spin because somehow those words carry positive weight. But let me state this: There is nothing positive about subjecting children to trauma who are fleeing trauma abroad. It is un-American. It is inhumane. It is absolutely in every moral sense wrong, and the administration knows it.

They first started debating this policy when the President came into office early last year, in January and February. They held these conversations and decided that it was way inappropriate for America to treat children in this fashion, subject these children fleeing persecution to trauma upon arrival in the United States of America, so they put it on hold for the better part of a year. Then last summer they decided they would experiment with it and have a pilot project. So at a few locations, they started this process of taking a family seeking asylum and ripping the children out of their parents' arms and sending them off to who knows where. The children didn't know where, the parents didn't know where, and the American people didn't know where, because when stories started to come up about this, the administration denied it was happening.

More and more stories started coming out. Then the administration said: We have a policy of, in some cases, taking children away from their parents in order to protect them from smugglers.

Now, I ask, does that make any sense to anyone? A family here in the United States, a family who is together—the children have the stability and security of being with their parents. They are no longer abroad. They are no longer in danger of a smuggler grabbing them or kidnapping them. And the administration says: We are protecting the kids from smugglers by ripping them away from their parents.



It is obviously such an incredibly phony story that no one would believe that story, so the administration started to wrestle with how to present this story. They came up with this zero tolerance. They really had to explain what they were doing. Here is the idea. They said: We believe that if we impose this kind of affliction on the children and the parents, families won't come here seeking asylum. So that is what this is about. This is about hurting children in order to dissuade families pursuing their rights under American and international law to ask for asylum here in the United States of America. This asylum is not granted to just anyone. People have to prove persecution abroad and a huge likely threat of injury, damage, and persecution should they return.

So now we have it. This is not a zero-tolerance policy; this is a zero-humanity policy.

When I say that we are subjecting these children to trauma, let me paint the picture for you. A family somewhere in the world has stood up to the local drug cartel. The local drug cartel has killed one or two of the members of that family and threatened the rest or gang-raped a daughter in the family and threatened to kill her and then to burn down the family's house. That is the type of trauma we are talking about.

The family says: We have to escape. We will flee. And they know that America has a Statue of Liberty. They know that America has received families over generations fleeing persecution, that this is in our tradition.

These children who have already been through so much knock on our door. They probably left their hometown and their house and just ran as fast as they could to escape before they suffered the injury they feared. They arrive here and they think: Wow, we made it. We made it through the various challenges of fleeing halfway across the world to come to America. Here, we can be treated well, be safe and sound.

They know that if they can prove their case, they can get asylum, and they have come to present their case. Then what happens? These children who don't know our country, who don't know the language, who don't know anything about how our systems work, are with their parents, and then up comes an official who says: I am taking the children away. The parents have no knowledge of where they will go. When will they be reunited? They have no knowledge of when they will be reunited. What will happen to my children? Then the parents and the children start screaming because they are terrified of being separated.

Well, we are putting these children through this trauma. So yesterday I went to Texas to try to see the facilities that are involved with this new policy. Specifically, there are two key places. One is operated by the Department of Homeland Security, and one is

operated by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Let's take a look at Homeland Security first. I was given permission to visit this facility. I very much appreciate being given that permission. This is not a picture that I took because I wasn't allowed to take in a camera. This isn't a picture of the facility that I visited, nor is this a recent picture, but I am presenting it here because this is what the big warehouse looked like that I visited. This is a general picture of what I saw.

I saw a smaller room—maybe about the size of the Senate Chamber—divided into a series of cages. Just to give you a rough approximation, these cages may be 15 feet by 15 feet with tons of people jammed in, so that if they all tried to lay down, there wouldn't be room for them to do so. They have space blankets like the space blankets in this picture. In this room I am describing, there weren't mattresses, but in this picture, there are. I will get to that in a moment. Some of the women crowded into some of these cages had children in their arms. Others were by themselves.

This is a processing facility. Next to this particular room is a much bigger warehouse room that looks more like this—a massive room. It has bigger cages that look like these cages made out of fencing.

I think about this one particular cage that I stood next to for a little while that was full of young boys. They were having them line up to prepare to get food. They had them line up by the shortest to the tallest. The littlest tyke must have been about as tall as this desk right here—I don't know, maybe 4 or 5 years old, something like that, on up through 16 and 17 years old.

What you have to realize is that some of these folks arrived as unaccompanied minors, but many of them came with their families as they sought asylum, and they had been separated from their parents. Their parents might have been in another cage somewhere across this facility, but they wouldn't necessarily be able to see them. They wouldn't necessarily be able to know where they are. They certainly didn't know what was going to happen to them.

So that is the processing side of this. After the children are separated, they are sent to a child detention center. That is the second step.

Let me go to another picture. I was standing here yesterday in front of a former Walmart. Above up where the Walmart sign would be, it instead says "Southwest Key Program." Then it says "Casa Padre." There is irony in that name, "Casa Padre." "Casa" means "house" in Spanish. "Padre" means "father," but there are no fathers there. There are no parents there—or so we are told; I wasn't able to get inside to see.

My team had contacted the Department of Health and Human Services and asked permission to visit, just as

my team had contacted the Department of Homeland Security to visit the processing center. The processing center said yes. This detention center for children said no. I thought, well, you know, as long as I am down in the vicinity, I am going to go by and just ask again because why would a facility want to have a policy of preventing Members of Congress from seeing what is going on inside? My understanding is that everyone has been turned down as far as seeing what is inside of this building.

It is reported that there are 1,000 children inside this Walmart without their parents. I think the American people have a right to know what is being done with their taxpayer dollars in treating children. Maybe if you go inside, you would see very clean mattresses and children playing games. It is a reputable nonprofit, as I understand it, that is operating this place. But what are the stories behind those children, and how long are those children there before they are shipped somewhere across the country to a foster home? They have no idea where they are going. They have no idea how they will be treated. They have no idea when they will see their parents again.

This is significant, unnecessary trauma being inflicted on children, and it is wrong. For the Trump administration to try to keep what is going on inside here a secret is unacceptable. Members of Congress need to be able to visit—not with 2 and 3 weeks' notice so the children can be shipped out and maybe the place can be cleaned up. You should have some chance to visit to see what it really looks like. How are the children really being treated? When it is rearranged, it can give you a false impression.

Members of Congress need to be able to talk to the children, to hear their stories to understand what they are going through. So I am calling on the administration to end this secrecy at these child detention centers. Apparently, there are a number of these across the country, but we don't even have that information. We don't know for sure how many children are in this former Walmart. We are told there are approximately 1,000.

Here is one thing we know: We know, because the Department of Homeland Security told us this, that they separated 658 children from their parents at processing facilities in a 12-day period in May. That is over 50 times a day that children are being ripped out of the hands of their parents, producing enormous trauma—and trauma not just for the child but trauma for the parent.

I am a parent. I have two children. They are no longer small tykes, but I can only imagine having escaped horrors overseas and then coming and having my children torn away from me, out of my arms, having my children snatched by an unknown force and sent to an unknown place.

It is important for Members of Congress, on reasonably short notice, to be

able to see what is going on in this building. So I knocked. There was a sign up here. This is probably what appears in this picture. It says: If you want to go inside, call this number. I asked people coming out: Can I come in and talk to a supervisor? They pointed to this sign. I called up, and they said they would send out a supervisor to talk to me. I waited 10 minutes and called again. They again said a supervisor would come out. I waited, and a supervisor did come out, but he didn't want to talk to me, he wanted to talk to the policemen he called.

Cop cars pulled up. He explained to the cops that he didn't want me on the property. I explained that when I had called, they said the supervisor would be happy to talk to me. I had been waiting for him, and in that sense, it was an invitation to be there. I pointed out that nobody asked me to leave the property, but that invitation to leave the property came soon enough thereafter.

Clearly the supervisor is under instructions not to share anything about how many children there are or about what is going on inside or any kind of activity. This is coming from the highest levels. When I was at the processing center, they told me that they were simply doing what they are being ordered to do from DC.

So there it is. The Attorney General and the President have created a new policy—a policy we have never seen in the United States of America of abusing children, causing trauma to children as a way to dissuade people from actually exercising their rights under our laws and under international laws to present their case for asylum.

Here are the policemen coming to talk to me. Here is the supervisor suggesting to them that perhaps he didn't want to have a conversation with a Senator trying to understand what was going on inside.

We have had various cases in our history of child-snatching. There was an article today in the New York Times that was about child-snatching during slavery, where children were ripped out of the arms of their parents and sold to far-away plantations, never to be seen again. The article went on to talk about child-snatching with Native American Tribes, where children were ripped out of the arms of their parents to be sent off to who-knows-where.

It is not an acceptable practice of any kind. It is morally bankrupt. It is harmful. We do not harm children in the United States of America in order to increase our leverage, to dissuade people from asserting their asylum rights and getting an asylum hearing. We do not do this—until now. It is morally bankrupt. It is so beyond wrong that the administration is wrapping it in secrecy, not allowing the press to see it. I am talking about without cameras—not something to violate the children's rights but to see what is going on inside. And they will not allow policymakers to see it. When

something is wrapped in secrecy like that, you know it is wrong. The administration knows it is wrong.

I call on my fellow Members here in the Senate to make it very clear to the administration that this is unacceptable. Every Member of this body and the House has every right to visit detention centers or any other immigration facility to see what is happening so that we can debate it here. We should hold a hearing in our HELP Committee—Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee—about what is going on with the organization for refugee resettlement and what they are doing detaining these thousands of children.

The reported numbers of children detained by our government—ripped out of the arms of families seeking asylum—have gone up 20 percent in 1 month. Some 10,000-plus children are being held at centers like this, foster homes, other halfway houses, and so forth around this country.

We have a responsibility in this Chamber to get to the bottom of what is going on and to put an end to it.

Thank you.

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. 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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, June 5, all postcloture time on the Wier nomination be considered expired and the Senate vote on the confirmation of the nomination; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for 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.

#### TRIBUTE TO HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to pay tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, who some here also know from his service as Jordan's Permanent Rep-

resentative to the United Nations and as Jordan's Ambassador to the United States.

The High Commissioner has held his post since September 1, 2014, and his term will end on August 31, 2018. He has carried out his responsibilities with exceptional courage, compassion, commitment, and even humor, qualities that are indispensable for any successful U.N. High Commissioner. In so doing, he has been the target of relentless attacks by government officials who abuse their authority by manipulating their countries' electoral processes and security forces to arrest, imprison, abuse, and even assassinate their critics, whether independent journalists, members of political opposition parties, or civil society activists.

In a speech delivered Tuesday at an international conference marking the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted on June 25, 2003, in response to the atrocities committed in the former Yugoslavia, the High Commissioner warned that human rights are under siege in many parts of the world, including Europe.

He said, "This anniversary could be the occasion for a polite celebration of the achievements of my Office over the past two and a half decades—and they are many. But today is not a time for soporific complacency. Human rights are sorely under pressure around the world—no longer a priority; a pariah. The legitimacy of human rights principles is attacked. The practice of human rights norms is in retreat. Here in Europe, ethno-populist parties are in the ascendant in many countries—fueling hatred and scarring their societies with deepening divisions."

No one should be surprised by this. We see the consequences every day, including in countries that are friends and allies of the United States. Legitimate dissent is labeled "terrorism." Those who defend human rights are themselves maligned and targeted. Dictators are feted, and their crimes are ignored. Xenophobia and racism are treated as legitimate responses to domestic problems.

As the High Commissioner noted, it is incumbent on each of us to defend human rights and to counter those who promote hatred and intolerance. What is the alternative? Despotism. Fascism. Isolationism. Forces and ideologies we have resisted and fought against for generations. We owe it to past and future generations, as the High Commissioner said, "to stand by our achievements and the advances which have been made." This is not only a moral imperative for upholding the values our country stands for and preserving our international reputation, but a pragmatic necessity for protecting our interests at home and abroad.

I want to thank the High Commissioner for his extraordinary efforts during the past 4 extremely challenging years. He has been a tireless, principled defender of universal human rights,