

Federal Government archive investigative files on the al-Qaida terrorists and foreign nationals who may have assisted. As much as we expected justice, the Federal Government denied them those records and documents that are vital to their cause.

So 17 years after this national tragedy, the appropriate declassification releasing these documents poses no threat to our national security, and there is no reason for the Federal Government to resist their requests. These files have been kept secret for too long. That secrecy contradicts the national interest. Their cause serves our national security, not only because it gives them justice individually, but it also deters terrorists in the future. Denying them access to this important evidence is unjust, unfair, and unwise.

The U.S. Government should make public any evidence of links between the Saudi Arabian Government officials and the support network inside the United States used to aid and abet the 9/11 hijackers. The legal and moral responsibility of our government is to provide its citizens with all available information regarding this horrific tragedy on September 11, 2001, particularly where there may be evidence that foreign nationals conspired within our borders to support terror with the assistance of foreign governments.

This resolution would never have been possible without the efforts of my constituent Brett Eagleson, of Middletown, CT. He was 15 years old when his father Bruce was lost to him in that massive, unspeakable destruction. He was on the 17th floor of Tower 2 of the World Trade Center. Brett was joined in his advocacy and efforts by members across the country of the 9/11 Families and Survivors United for Justice Against Terrorism. That group is a profile in courage, reliving the pain and anguish of those days in their efforts to seek justice for all Americans. They include a number of individuals whose names I wish to place in the RECORD: Mary Fetchet of New Cannan, who lost her son; Gordon Haberman of Wisconsin, who lost his daughter; Carol Ashley of Long Island, who lost her daughter; Tim Frolich, a survivor from New York City; Sharon Premoli, a survivor from Vermont; Loreen Sellitto from Florida, who lost her son; and Charles Wolf of New York City, who lost his wife. I thank each of them and the many others who supported this effort for their courage and strength.

There are so many we honor today by our passage of this sense-of-the-Senate resolution. This Senate resolution is itself succinct but significant. It resolves that it is the sense of the Senate that documents related to the events of September 11, 2001, should be declassified to the greatest extent possible; and, two, that the survivors, the families of the victims, and the people of the United States deserve answers about the events and circumstances surrounding the September 11 terrorist attack upon the United States.

Many years later, the pain and grief they endure on that horrific day is still with them. Each year in Connecticut we commemorate this day, and we will never forget. That is our resolve—never to forget, never to yield to hopelessness, never to allow our support for these families to diminish.

This sense-of-the-Senate resolution makes real the promise the Nation made to these 9/11 families. They deserve this evidence. Even if it is embarrassing to foreign governments or foreign nationals, they deserve justice.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 610 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 610) urging the release of information regarding the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks upon the United States.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 610) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of August 21, 2018, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

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

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

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak about Judge Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court.

I urge my colleagues to actually listen to Dr. Blasey Ford and treat her with the respect that she deserves. She deserves better than the setup she is walking into tomorrow.

I want to take a step back for a second and look at the big picture of what is actually going on with this nomination. We have a nominee for a lifetime appointment to the highest Court in the land who has been accused,

credibly, of sexual assault. Dr. Blasey Ford reluctantly came forward out of civic duty and said that Brett Kavanaugh tried to rape her in high school. She is now facing death threats for her courage, and her worst fears of how she would be treated by this body have come to fruition.

Another woman, Deborah Ramirez, agreed to tell her story after being contacted by a reporter—again, risking her career and her safety—and said that Brett Kavanaugh exposed himself to her face in college while laughing, as part of a game.

These accusations are disturbing enough by themselves, but the response to these allegations by our colleagues are so disappointing. Take a look at how Dr. Blasey Ford is being bullied because she told her story. Listen to how she is being patronized and dismissed by some Members of the Judiciary Committee. Look at how our President belittled and demeaned Dr. Blasey Ford and Ms. Ramirez, reminding us once again that he has been credibly accused of committing sexual assault himself and denigrates not just women who accuse him but survivors everywhere.

That is not all. The chief counsel of the Senate Judiciary Committee tweeted after Dr. Blasey Ford's sexual assault allegation: "Unfazed and determined. We will confirm Judge Kavanaugh."

According to Ms. Ramirez's lawyer, the Judiciary Committee isn't even interested in taking her claims seriously or getting information from her about her claims. Instead of getting the facts—instead of even wanting the facts—they try to dismiss this as a smear campaign and plow right ahead.

For anyone who has ever wondered why so many survivors of sexual assault don't come forward—obviously, there is trauma, but there is also the fear of this very kind of retaliation and scorn. The question I have, that I know you have: Do we value women in this country? Do we listen to women when they tell us about sexual trauma? Do we listen to their stories about how their lives have been forever scarred? Do we take their claims seriously or do we just disbelieve them as a matter of course?

I want to echo the words of my colleague from Alaska: "It is about whether or not a woman who has been a victim at some point of her life is to be believed."

I believe Dr. Blasey Ford. Here is why I believe her. She has risked everything—her own safety—to come out on the record to say Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her. She told her therapist and her husband about it 5 years ago. She told a friend about it a year ago. She told a reporter about it before Kavanaugh was ever named. She has even taken a lie detector test.

Why are my colleagues moving so fast, as fast as they possibly can, to confirm this judge?

This process is sending the worst possible message to girls and boys everywhere. It is telling American women that your voices don't matter. It is telling survivors everywhere that your experiences don't count, that they are not important, and that they are not to be believed. We are saying that women are worth less than a man's promotion. That is not how the world is in 2018, and we cannot allow this Senate, this body, to take us back to before 1991.

To those whom I hear say over and over that this isn't fair to Judge Kavanaugh, that he is entitled to due process and to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty and that Dr. Blasey Ford has to prove her case beyond a reasonable doubt, those are the standards for a trial. Those are the standards in criminal justice. We are not having a trial. This is not a court. He is not entitled to those because we are not actually seeking to convict him or to put him in jail. We are seeking the truth. We are seeking facts. We are seeking just what happened.

We, Senators—not staff members, not female lawyers—are being asked to assess his honesty. Is he an honest person? Is he trustworthy? Can we trust him to do the right thing for decades? To rule on women's lives for decades to come? Can we trust him to do that right?

This is not about whether he should be convicted. This is about whether he has the privilege to serve on the highest Court of the land for a lifetime. This is not a court of law. This is a job interview, and it is our job as Senators to assess if he is honest. Has he lied about his past? Has he misled members of the Judiciary Committee? Is he trustworthy?

One point, I think, that our colleagues are somewhat blind to, which I know the Presiding Officer is not, is that the last 2 weeks have been so painful for women who have experienced sexual trauma. Women have lived through this. So, when they are watching some of the most powerful people in this country disregard, distrust, disbelieve, minimize, devalue, unfortunately, it is painful for all of them. It is painful because you are tired of seeing the same old outcome every single time. You are tired of the scenarios in which the men are believed and the women are not. They can't believe their eyes when they see two women being treated with less respect and having less of a process than even Anita Hill received.

I quote a friend of mine, Amina Sow, who just disclosed today that she is a survivor. Her words are powerful and truthful and describe exactly the way many people feel:

The truth is our strength. We are each other's strengths. To the women who are struggling: I see you. I am sorry we have to go through this. Thank you for trusting us with your stories. I am heartened by them and honored to know about you.

I believe Dr. Blasey Ford because she is risking everything—her safety, her

security, her reputation, her career—to tell this story at this moment for all the right reasons. If we allow women's experiences of sexual trauma to be second to a man's promotion, it will not only diminish this watershed moment of the societal change we are in, but it will bring shame on this body and on the Court.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am looking forward to a hearing that we will have tomorrow at 10 o'clock in the morning, at the request of Dr. Ford, that will give all of us an opportunity to provide a fair chance to her and for her to have her say. It is important that we do this because, during the last 10 days, it has felt like a series of small earthquakes. Actions taken and blunders committed by our Democratic colleagues have destabilized the normal confirmation process and timeline.

All of this stems from the fact that the allegations made by Dr. Ford were made to the ranking member and kept by her from other members of the committee as well as from the background investigators, who, normally, when allegations come up like this, protect the confidentiality and anonymity of both the accuser and the accused until they can be properly vetted. Yet that all went by the wayside when our friend from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, sat on this letter, this accusation. So we are where we are.

As a result of the unfairness to both the accuser and the accused because of the secrets the Democrats kept, because of the way these were leaked to the press and the pledges of confidentiality were violated, we know the nominee, Judge Kavanaugh, who has had six FBI background checks in the course of his professional career, has been subjected to multiple accusations that could and should have been brought up much earlier.

As I say, if it had been handled during the normal, conventional process, it would have protected Dr. Ford, and it would have protected the nominee from this circuslike atmosphere, and we could have gotten to the bottom of the allegation. We could have, hopefully, ascertained where the truth lies. Yet, under this approach, under this current situation—again, created by this failure to release the information so it could not be investigated until after the hearing—everybody loses. I think we all recognize the basic unfairness of this process both to Dr. Ford and to Judge Kavanaugh and that it did not have to be this way.

The process, as I say, has been patently unfair. That is why my colleagues and I have been insisting on a better way forward by returning to the process that is fair to all concerned. In the dictionary definition, "fairness" is defined as the "quality of treating people equally or in a way that is right or

reasonable." Another definition is "impartial and just treatment of behavior without favoritism or discrimination."

How are we to handle this accusation and this challenging difference of position on Dr. Ford's part, who said this attempted sexual assault occurred 36 years ago, and Judge Kavanaugh, who has stated under oath that no such thing happened? How do we get to the bottom of this?

The biggest challenge we have is time because I defy any one of us to try to reconstruct what we were doing on a given day at a given time 35 or 36 years ago. It is just impossible to reconstruct with complete fidelity and accuracy.

What we really need to be thinking about, I believe, is a fair process. We have tried to provide a fair process for Dr. Ford, under these unfortunate circumstances, to tell her story, but we also need to provide a fair process for the nominee. This should not be a precedent for how future nominations will be handled. We should learn from this terrible experience and commit to doing better. One way to do better would be to return to our basic values and principles in our government and in our country, under our Constitution, which guarantee the rights of a person who is accused of a crime.

I know the minority leader—my friend from New York, Senator SCHUMER—has said to Judge Kavanaugh that this is not a court, that this is a nomination, which, I presume from that, means, well, anything goes and that there are no rules. He has been accused of a crime—attempted sexual assault—and has testified under oath, under penalty of perjury, that no such thing happened. This is a very serious matter, and we need to take it seriously and not create a new framework out of thin air, which says, somehow, if somebody makes an accusation that cannot be corroborated by anybody else 36 years later, that that somehow satisfies our notions of due process and of protecting the rights of people who are accused of crimes.

Fundamentally, this is about fairness. People who have been accused of grave misconduct have a right to due process under our Constitution. They have a right to know who their accusers are as well as the nature of the charges being brought against them and the evidence that will be presented against them. Those are basic, constitutional, American rights that are consistent with our idea of what the government's burden should be when the government is trying to deny us our right to liberty or property or even to our lives.

We also know these rights include a right to speedy proceedings without unnecessary delays. Unfortunately, there have been plenty of delays for Judge Kavanaugh. Last week, we saw Chairman GRASSLEY patiently wait and wait and wait some more while the legal team and political operatives who represent Dr. Ford strung the committee along. I am sure Judge

Kavanaugh was wondering: What in the heck is going on here?

As we all heard during a televised interview on Monday night, he, unequivocally, denies the claims that have been made against him. Again, that is a serious statement because he does so under penalty of perjury. He said: "I know what is the truth, and the truth is I have never sexually assaulted anyone in high school or otherwise." Those are strong words and direct words, and they remind us of something important. It is the truth that the Judiciary Committee and the entire country should be after—the truth. But for the truth to be our goal this week, some of my colleagues need to dial down the rhetoric and quit presuming guilt based on an accusation and nothing else.

At a minimum, a fair process requires a partial and open mind on the part of those charged with determining a person's professional fate. My fellow Senators need to remain open to receiving and evaluating credible evidence presented at the hearing. Unfortunately for our Democratic colleagues, that ship has sailed.

Long before Dr. Ford's allegations were leaked to the press and made public, contrary to her wishes, all of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle on the Senate Judiciary Committee had said that they would vote against this nomination, so Judge Kavanaugh hardly has an open and impartial tribunal deciding his professional fate and deciding whether this accusation will remain a stain on his professional career and reputation for the rest of his life.

Then, as I said, there is also the presumption of innocence. The Supreme Court has said: "The law presumes that persons . . . are innocent until they are proven, by competent evidence, to be guilty." This is a fundamental bedrock of our constitutional system. It is non-negotiable. It cannot be conveniently brushed away by our colleagues across the aisle. It is not one of several options; rather, it is guaranteed under our Constitution. The burden of proof is always on the party alleging wrongdoing, not the other way around.

We have the logical conundrum, as well, beyond the constitutional one, where Dr. Ford has testified—at least in the letter—to an event occurring. Judge Kavanaugh said it didn't happen. He said: I didn't do that; I wasn't there. So unless the burden is on the person making the accusation, how in the world could the person defending possibly prove a negative when he says that it didn't happen and he wasn't there? It is impossible. That would be a presumption of guilt, not a presumption of innocence. That would turn our Constitution on its head.

That is why it is so important for us to hear from Dr. Ford, to evaluate the strength of not just the allegations but what corroboration, what other evidence, there is in order to find the truth.

We have learned from media reports that attorneys for Dr. Ford have affidavits of additional people who know the accuser personally, but according to USA Today, these simply indicate that these are things that Dr. Ford told her friends 20 or 30 years later, not witnesses of the event that she claims occurred 35 or 36 years ago.

Let's also remember that three other eyewitnesses Ms. Ford identified have said that they have absolutely no recollection of the events that she says took place—none whatsoever. These are people Dr. Ford identified as witnesses to the assault that she claims Judge Kavanaugh perpetrated. Yet the witnesses she identified said that they have no knowledge of such an event.

We also need to remember the context in which all of this is occurring. Sixty-five women who went to high school with Judge Kavanaugh have written a letter saying that he has always behaved honorably toward them and treated them with respect. That doesn't mean Dr. Ford is not entitled to be heard—quite the contrary.

She has a story to tell. As the father of two daughters, I want to hear that story. I want to compare it to Judge Kavanaugh's unequivocal denial and judge for myself the reliability of each. As a former judge for 13 years and an attorney general for 4, I feel that doing anything less would be shirking my duty.

We owe Dr. Ford our time, our attention, and our best efforts at discerning the truth. That means her claims will be tested, examined, and new information, perhaps, will be brought to light. At least that is my hope. That is the way it should be.

We are trying to clean up the mess created by an unconventional process of leaking allegations to members of the press after the background test was completed and after the hearing occurred rather than handling it the way that, as I said, it should be. We should have started with that process, not end it here.

What the majority leader described yesterday as a disturbing pattern should never have taken place over the last few weeks. Our colleagues across the aisle, catching wind of an allegation, refused to share it with the majority and, instead, waited and then made sure that it was leaked to the press at the most politically opportune time, when it was likely to cause the maximum disruption and embarrassment to both Dr. Ford and Judge Kavanaugh. That is no way for the U.S. Senate to do its business.

A search for the truth—if that, in fact, is what we are involved with, and I hope it is—should not involve delays and the withholding of documents. It should not involve orchestrated personal attacks on Members either. It should not involve a mob rule like what we saw at the first Kavanaugh hearing. It should not involve people sending coat hangers to offices or forcing committee members to leave res-

taurants, harassing them when they are trying to have dinner with their family.

People who hold a genuine concern for Dr. Ford would have honored requests for anonymity and privacy. That is what Dr. Ford specifically requested. They would have passed those allegations to the Judiciary Committee so that an investigation could have been conducted in a more timely and confidential fashion, and then they could be addressed during the hearing, if necessary, that we had earlier this month. That standard procedure would have treated Ms. Ford as a real person, not as a political pawn, and it would have left the Democratic operatives who have now been hired to dig up dirt out of the mix.

I want to say that throughout all of this, Chairman GRASSLEY has been exceedingly generous toward Dr. Ford, as we would all want him to be, even when his patience has been tested. I want to commend him, once again, because he has had a very difficult job of trying to run the Judiciary Committee, trying to be fair to the nominee and the accuser alike when this wrench, thrown into the spokes of the committee operation, has created more of a circuslike atmosphere than a deliberative process and search for the truth, testing the background of a nominee, which is something all nominees deserve. No nominee deserves to be dragged through the mud like this.

Chairman GRASSLEY has been patient because he knows how important this is and how much is on the line, not only for the Supreme Court but also for women across this country who see a little bit of themselves in Dr. Ford and want to make sure that their voices, like hers, are always heard.

Over the last year, we have been in the middle of an important national conversation on the topic of sexual assault and the way men have treated women. As I said, I have two daughters. As I mentioned earlier, every American has a mother. Some are lucky and have a sister or a spouse or a daughter, and I think all of us would want to make sure that all of those women in our lives would be treated with dignity and respect, were they in the same position that Dr. Ford now finds herself in.

Yet it is also important to remember that every person has a father. Many are fortunate to have brothers or sons or husbands, and we would want to make sure that all of those men are also treated fairly and with respect. We would no more rather have a woman's truthful claim be ignored than an uncorroborated accusation against a man be honored. That is fairness.

As we know, Dr. Ford is a real person, and so is Judge Kavanaugh—flesh and blood. Each of them should be treated with fairness, with dignity, and with respect. It is not just one or the other, which is the false choice that many of our colleagues have suggested. We can't pick one and dismiss the other outright and claim any fairness

or allegiance to our constitutional system and due process of law if we do otherwise.

As Michael Gerson, the columnist for the Washington Post, reminded us earlier this week, somewhere along the way this process devolved into one that is no longer about just winning arguments but about demonizing and destroying other people. It is not about winning arguments. It is not about winning elections. It is not about winning votes here in the Senate. This process has devolved into character assassination and destroying the reputation and lives of real people. It is not too late to change that.

This all calls to mind that famous line by Joseph Welch, a lawyer during the McCarthy hearings. He said: "Have [we] no sense of decency . . . at long last?"

Well, I think we still do, and I hope Republicans and Democrats will prove we have a sense of decency and fairness as we approach Thursday's hearing.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise today to urge the Senate to pass the Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act. This is a bill that not many Americans have heard about yet, but it is a critically important bill for the Senate to pass and very important for the country. This bill will preserve the Justice Department's independent investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 Presidential election.

Since this weekend, there have been reports that the President may fire Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein from his position at the Department of Justice. This would be a gross abuse of power—a line that we cannot allow to be crossed without consequence. Mr. Rosenstein has a long career in public service and law enforcement. He initially joined the Department of Justice nearly 30 years ago through the Attorney General's Honors Program and rose through the ranks, serving as a Trial Attorney, as a Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Tax Division, and as a U.S. Attorney in Maryland for over a decade—a critically important job in our justice system.

As Deputy Attorney General, Mr. Rosenstein has overseen the Russia investigation led by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, which has secured indictments or guilty pleas from 32 people

and 3 companies, including Russian individuals and companies, as well as former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, deputy campaign manager Rick Gates, and other campaign advisers, including George Papadopoulos and Michael Flynn. Earlier this month, Mr. Manafort pleaded guilty to "conspiracy against the United States."

Mr. Rosenstein has played an integral role in ensuring that the Mueller investigation can continue without interference. Unfortunately, this work and Mr. Rosenstein's long and distinguished service at the Department of Justice could come to an end if he is fired by the President.

From day one, President Trump has systematically worked to obstruct Special Counsel Mueller's investigation into Russia's attack on our Nation. He has attempted to fire, to demand loyalty of, and to interfere with any official with oversight of this matter. By way of example, this is a President who fired the Director of the FBI and later admitted in a television interview that he had done so with the Russia investigation in mind. This is a President who has repeatedly attacked the very Attorney General he nominated, suggesting that the Department of Justice should do his political bidding. This is a President who has impugned the impartiality and the motives of judges who have ruled against his policies. This is a President who has continued to call the Mueller investigation a "witch-hunt" despite the fact that it has already produced dozens of indictments and guilty pleas.

In short, this is a President who believes the Department of Justice owes a duty of loyalty to him and him alone. Our Justice Department officials have a duty to serve the American people and only the American people. They swear to uphold the Constitution, not to genuflect to this President or any President.

Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein has upheld his duty to the country and our Constitution. If the President fires him, it will be yet another blatant attempt to derail the Mueller investigation, and it could very well be successful.

Rod Rosenstein supervises the Russia investigation, overseeing the work of Special Counsel Mueller and his team. He receives status reports, establishes the investigation's budget, and, according to special counsel regulations, has the power to "determine whether the investigation should continue." He therefore plays an integral role in ensuring that the independent investigation can continue to seek answers on Russia's interference in the 2016 election.

If Mr. Rosenstein were fired, it could compromise the Mueller investigation in ways the public can see and in ways we may never know through warrants that are never approved or resources that are diverted to other projects. This would be a decision by the President that would put us into uncharted

waters. It is therefore more important than ever that Congress step up and exercise the oversight that the American people expect from us and I would say especially here in the Senate.

Since President Trump entered office, the Republican majority has not discharged its duty to act as an independent check on the executive branch and on the President himself. The majority would not be able to abdicate its responsibility any longer if Rosenstein were to be fired.

Congress has a solemn obligation to act immediately—immediately—to protect Special Counsel Mueller's investigation and prevent any more interference from this administration. Senators in both parties have a duty to the American people to step up as a co-equal branch of government and ensure that the special counsel's independent investigation remains just that—*independent*.

For public officials and institutions with nothing to hide, an investigation which is independent is not a "witch-hunt"; it is an opportunity for vindication, a chance to prove that our institutions and the individuals who serve them are truly worthy of the public's trust.

At a time when the American people's confidence in our institution is low—very low—and when suspicion of wrongdoing is high, it is all the more important that the 2016 election activities of Russia, as well as the Trump campaign, be open for review. As the voice of the American people, we in the Senate must ensure that the investigation both continues and remains, in fact, independent.

The legislation to protect the Mueller investigation, the Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act, is ready for a vote by the full Senate at any time if the majority leader would permit us to do that. It is a bipartisan bill that has been approved by a bipartisan majority of the Judiciary Committee. There is no excuse not to pass this legislation immediately. Day by day, each time the President attacks Robert Mueller or Rod Rosenstein or the rule of law, we are presented with more evidence of why this legislation is needed. That is why I have again come to the floor to urge Leader MCCONNELL to bring up this bill for a vote. It is far past time to put country over party.

We must not forget that the special counsel is investigating an attack on our democracy by a foreign adversary. As a matter of national security, the American people deserve answers about what happened during the 2016 election. We cannot allow anyone, including the President, to interfere with the investigation and prevent the American people from getting those answers to very important questions.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Madam President, very briefly, I wanted to add a few comments with regard to the vote on Judge Kavanaugh

that is now before the Judiciary Committee. We are told that tomorrow there will be testimony from both the judge and Dr. Ford, but I think the evidence that is on the record so far and the new allegations that are just breaking news at this hour continue to reinforce my belief—and this was my belief a week ago, it was my belief a number of days ago, and it is still my belief today—that these allegations warrant an FBI investigation.

This would not be a new endeavor for the FBI. They do this routinely for nominees from the Supreme Court all the way down. They, of course, did an investigation into the judge's background for the purposes of this confirmation. An investigation of these new allegations would simply be an update to the background check. It would be the completion of the background check. That is why this is not a month-long or even weeks-long investigation that could transpire. I would hope—and there is still time to do this either today or even while the Judiciary Committee is hearing testimony tomorrow—that there would, in fact, be an investigation that might last a few days. We can certainly take the time to do that. When you are talking about the confirmation of a Justice on the most important Court in the country and probably the most powerful Court in the world, I am sure we could take a few more days to complete a background check investigation.

There are inscriptions on the Finance Building in Harrisburg—a building I worked in for a decade—that talk about issues like public service and what our government should be about. I think one of them applies to this circumstance, about whether there should be an investigation that would simply complete the background check on Judge Kavanaugh, which I think is necessary and reasonable and appropriate. Here is what was inscribed in the 1930s on this government building in our State capital: "Open to every inspection; secure from every suspicion." I think those few words encapsulate what we are talking about here.

I would hope that anyone—including Judge Kavanaugh but anyone who supports his nomination and confirmation to the Supreme Court—would want to have these allegations fully reviewed. I know the Senate Judiciary Committee has staff on both sides who do investigations. That is appropriate as well, but I think we have reached a point where there is such a divide here that it is hard to be confident about the fact that staffs on both sides could do a thorough investigation and cooperate to such a degree that it would be the equivalent of an FBI background check.

I think it is important that there be an independent investigation or, as I said before, and I will say it again, the completion of a background check—not a new investigation but really an update of the existing background check. I would think that anyone would want

that to be completed either prior to or even during the testimony tomorrow—it may provide a foundation for additional testimony by additional witnesses—to make sure we have reviewed every part of these allegations. I think that is fair to the judge. It is also fair to the confirmation process and, of course, fair to those who are making very troubling allegations.

If the Senate Judiciary Committee, in its review of his nomination, would be open to an investigation, I think that would reduce the likelihood, as the saying goes, that there would be suspicion. If that happened, I think the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Senate itself would be secure from every suspicion because there was a background check completed and a full investigation.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

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

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

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, moments ago, another serious allegation of sexual misconduct against Judge Kavanaugh was made public in a sworn affidavit. There are now multiple, credible, serious, and corroborated allegations against Judge Kavanaugh made under the penalty of perjury.

The new affidavit by Mrs. Swetnick calls out for a thorough, impartial, detailed investigation done by our FBI professionals, as do the allegations made by other women. Yet, currently, there is only a single hearing—tomorrow, with no witnesses other than Dr. Ford and Judge Kavanaugh—before a scheduled committee vote and a potential final Senate floor vote soon thereafter. That is not right. There is no need for such a rush. These women deserve to be heard in a fair way, and their claims must be properly investigated. Republicans need to immediately suspend the proceedings related to Judge Kavanaugh's nomination, and the President must order the FBI to reopen the background check investigation.

I strongly believe Judge Kavanaugh should withdraw from consideration, and the President should withdraw his nomination if Kavanaugh will not do it voluntarily. If he will not, at the very least, the hearing and vote should be postponed while the FBI investigates all of these serious and very troubling allegations.

If our Republican colleagues rush to proceed without an investigation, it would be a travesty for the honor of the Supreme Court and the honor of our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Nevada.

LAS VEGAS MASS SHOOTING

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, while it has been nearly a year since a madman's actions devastated Las Vegas, the shock and pain related to October 1 still remains today.

Fifty-eight innocent people lost their lives. Over 800 people were injured, and many of them continue to face a long road to physical and emotional recovery. Know that you are not alone on that road—we support you and we are praying for you.

Our community is still grieving, and it will never be the same, but hatred and fear will not win that night. That is because even though one man's horrific actions exposed humanity at its worst, what followed were countless stories of true heroism and humanity at its very best.

Las Vegas showed the world what it meant to be Vegas Strong, and I had the honor of experiencing it firsthand in the eyes and voices of those who survived and those who were eager to help others. On that tragic night, so many ordinary Nevadans made the choice to be extraordinary. Let me give you a couple examples.

They stayed on the field to help the wounded as shots continued to rain down. They took their shirts off their backs, used their belts as tourniquets, applied pressure to help stop a stranger from bleeding to death. Some made stretchers on the spot using the festival barriers. Some used their trucks and vehicles to transport the wounded to the hospital. For example, Taylor Winston, a marine and Iraq war veteran, managed to escape the gunfire. He helped several people over the fence when they took cover. Then he found an abandoned vehicle, turned it into a makeshift ambulance. After rushing multiple people to the hospital, he turned around and went back. He ultimately drove around 30 injured people to the hospital.

That night, police officers also covered concertgoers, shielded them from gunfire, and directed them to safety. Firefighters, paramedics, ambulance drivers, who had never encountered anything as horrific as that carnage of October 1, plunged into danger to save lives without hesitation, even though they were defenseless, because that is what they do.

That week I had the privilege of meeting a Las Vegas police officer, Sergeant Jonathan Riddle. He was stationed a block from the shooting scene doing traffic control. After shots were fired from Mandalay Bay, he took off sprinting toward the hotel, even though everyone else was running away from it.

Dozens of Metro police officers, including Officer Tyler Peterson, who was on his second day of the job, did the exact same thing. They rushed toward the firestorm to help in any way they could and of course to save lives.

When I visited the local hospitals, I was struck by the stories doctors and nurses shared about concertgoers who

responded bravely and admirably; stories about people who reacted to cowardly violence, stood in the face of danger to protect a neighbor, a friend, a family member, or someone they had never met.

A doctor at UMC put it best when he said, the patients showed exemplary courage. He told me he spoke to all the patients in the trauma room. Some of them were strangers who accompanied the person who sustained injuries while shielding them from bullets. He told me many of the patients in the emergency room that night said to the doctors: That person is more seriously injured than I am. Take care of them first. Come back to me later.

When I visited UMC, I had the opportunity to meet with one of the respiratory therapists who attended the concert. She showed me her phone, which had been shattered by a bullet that night. Plastic had torn through her hand, and it was embedded in her skin. What did she do? She pulled the shards out of her hand, bandaged it herself, rushed to the hospital to try to help people who she said needed more help than she did.

I am so grateful for the staff at our hospitals whose skill, whose composure and dedication saved one life after another. I am also grateful for the work of our law enforcement and our first responders on the scene. Each unit took an all-hands-on-deck approach, and everyone functioned as one team.

Instead of being frozen by the aftershock of crippling grief, Nevada mobilized and true leaders emerged. My friend Sheriff Joe Lombardo, who heads the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, is one of them, but many of the heroes who emerged in the wake of this tragedy didn't have a badge. Instead, they were teachers, waiters, security guards, and construction workers who assumed the responsibility to protect others.

Take the story of Jack Beaton, a man whose final act on Earth was draping himself over his wife to protect her from deadly bullets or John, a cab driver, who accelerated toward the screams and chaos and drove nearly a dozen people to safety.

Everyone banded together. Local organizations and businesses throughout the State and country stepped up to help. Las Vegas Convention Center's South Hall was dedicated to family reunification and support services. Airlines answered the call to provide free flights to families of victims. Hotels and casinos across Las Vegas offered free rooms. Lines of people eager to give blood twisted around Las Vegas. Some even waited in line more than 7 hours just because they wanted to help in any way they could. Just a few hours after the injured concertgoers flooded the hospitals in Las Vegas, the Red Cross encouraged volunteer blood donations. In a statement, the Red Cross said, "Last night, tragedy illustrates that it's the blood already on the shelves that helps during an emergency."

My wife Lynne and I joined the masses of Nevadans who donated blood in Las Vegas last October, and on Monday, this October 1, on this day each year going forward, we will donate blood in recognition of this anniversary. Members of my staff who want to give blood have committed to doing the same.

While it may be just a small gesture, it is an important one because when the city of Las Vegas needed help, patients needed blood, the Red Cross was able to step in because the inventory was there.

When I returned to Washington, DC, from Las Vegas last October, I immediately began pursuing every available option to provide relief for victims and their families, as well as assistance for local law enforcement and emergency responders. From pressing the Attorney General to make funding available for victims and their families and securing funding to cover Nevada's law enforcement overtime costs relating to the response to the shooting, to leading a bipartisan resolution recognizing the innocent lives which were lost, working with Senator CORTEZ MASTO to ask health insurers and our airlines to do whatever they could to help victims, I worked with this Congress and this White House to deliver resources to Nevada to try to help in any way we could.

To help Las Vegas prevent future attacks, I also spoke with the President on Air Force One on our way out of Nevada last October about the critical role of Federal funding to protect a city that welcomes over 40 million people annually.

As a direct result, the criteria used to determine funding that is allocated to high-threat urban areas for terrorism was updated, and this year Las Vegas received nearly double the amount of Federal funding compared to last year. I will never stop working to see that Nevada has the resources it needs to keep our communities safe.

As President Donald Trump said, this attack was an act of pure evil, and unity cannot be shattered by evil. He also said the bonds between the people of the United States cannot be broken by violence, and I agree with him. We are all still in this together, and together we will continue moving down the long road of recovery by honoring the memory of those lost and by holding on to the sense of compassion and community that emerged.

I, like many others, could not only feel the strong sense of family, faith, and strength in the wake of October 1, I saw it firsthand. The immeasurable pain, the suffering and devastation inflicted by one man elicited a profound, innate, and immediate human response from a city of people who stood side by side during its darkest hour to protect a friend or a stranger they had never met.

Ronald Reagan once said: "Those who say that we are in a time when there are no heroes, they just don't know where to look."

On October 1 and in the days that followed, the world witnessed a Las Vegas that they may have not known—a place that has been further defined by the heroes among us, the ones who sprang into action that night. That was truly the identity of Las Vegas. Las Vegas is resilient, and together we will continue to be Vegas Strong.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I rise today to say a few words about the two human beings who will be providing extraordinarily important testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee tomorrow, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and Judge Brett Kavanaugh, who will testify in that order.

Two human beings—it feels a bit odd in this political setting to specify their humanity, but we need to. I admit it feels strange to have to do that, but we in this political culture, in this city, and in this building, even in this Chamber, seem to sometimes forget that before this woman and this man are anything else, they are human beings.

We sometimes seem intent on stripping people of their humanity so that we might more easily denigrate or defame them or put them through the grinder that our politics requires. We seem sometimes even to enjoy it.

For the past 2 weeks we certainly have seen that happen to both of these human beings, for whatever reason—because we think that we are right and they are wrong, because we think our ideological struggle is more important than their humanity, because we are so practiced in dehumanizing people that we have also dehumanized ourselves.

Whatever else they are or have become to us, whatever grotesque caricature we have made of them or ourselves, before we are Democrats or Republicans and before we are even Americans, we are human beings. As President Kennedy said:

We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.

These witnesses who will testify in a very important hearing tomorrow, these unwitting combatants in an undeclared war—these people are not props for us to make our political points, nor are they to be "demolished like Anita Hill" as was said on conservative media the other night, nor is one of them a "proven sex criminal" as has been circulating on the left side of the internet. These are human beings with families and children—people who love them and people whom they love and live for—and each is suffering through a very ugly process that we have created.

I will not review the unseemly process that brought us to this point because that is for another time, and, in any case, it didn't start with this particular nomination. But here we are.

There was an earlier case, 27 years ago, from which you might have thought we would have learned something, but the past couple of weeks

makes it clear that we haven't learned much at all.

Consequently, there have been cries from both sides of these proceedings that each of the witnesses has fallen victim to character assassination. Both of these claims are absolutely correct, so I will say to these witnesses, these human beings, we owe you both a sincere apology. An apology is inadequate, of course, but it is a start. We can't very well undo the damage that has been done. But we can govern our own behavior as we go through this painful hearing tomorrow and in the days afterward. We must do that, lest we do any even more damage.

Some of the public comments about these witnesses have been vile. Not unrelated to those comments, each of these witnesses has reportedly been subject to death threats, and for that we should be ashamed. The toxic political culture that we have created has infected everything, and we have done little to stop it. In fact, we have only indulged it and fanned the flames, taken partisan advantage at every turn, and deepened the ugly divisions that exist in our country. These past 2 years, we have tested the limits of how low we can go, and, my colleagues, I say that winning at all costs is too high a cost. If we cannot have a human rather than a political response to these witnesses, if we are heedless to the capacity that we have to do real and lasting damage, then we shouldn't be here.

When Dr. Ford came forward, I felt strongly that her voice needed to be heard. That is why I informed Chairman GRASSLEY that the Judiciary Committee could not and should not proceed to a vote until she had an opportunity to make her voice heard, until such time that her claims were fully aired and carefully considered and her credibility gauged. This is a lifetime appointment. This is said to be a deliberative body. In the interest of due diligence and fairness, it seemed to me to be the only thing to do.

Not everybody felt this way. One man, somewhere in the country, called my office in Arizona and left a message saying that he was tired of my "interrupting our President," and for the offense of allowing Dr. Ford to be heard—for this offense, my family and I would be "taken out." I mention this with reluctance, but only to say that we have lit a match, my colleagues. The question is, Do we appreciate how close the powder keg is?

Tomorrow, we will have a hearing. Many Members of this body from both parties have already made up their minds on the record, in advance of this hearing. They will presumably hear what they want to hear and disregard the rest. One is tempted to ask: Why even bother having a hearing?

I do not know how I will assess the credibility of these witnesses—these human beings—on the grave matters that will be testified to because I have not yet heard a word of their testi-

mony and because I am not psychic. I am not gifted with clairvoyance. Given these limitations, I will have to listen to the testimony before I make up my mind about the testimony. What I do know is that I don't believe that Dr. Ford is part of some vast conspiracy from start to finish to smear Judge Kavanaugh, as has been alleged by some on the right. I also do not believe that Judge Kavanaugh is some serial sexual predator, as some have alleged on the left. I must also say that separate and apart from this nomination and the facts that pertain to it, I do not believe that the claim of sexual assault is invalid because a 15-year-old girl didn't promptly report the assault to authorities, as the President of the United States said just 2 days ago. How uninformed and uncaring do we have to be to say things like that, much less believe them? Do we have any idea what kind of message that sends, especially to young women? How many times do we have to marginalize and ignore women before we learn that important lesson?

Now I wish to say a word or two about the human beings, first on the Judiciary Committee and then in the full Senate, who will have to weigh the testimony that we will hear tomorrow and then come to some kind of decision on this nomination. The Judiciary Committee is scheduled to vote on Judge Kavanaugh's nomination on Friday. I hope that tomorrow's hearing gives us some guidance on how we are to vote. But those of us on the Committee have to be prepared for the possibility—indeed, the likelihood—that there will be no definitive answers to the large questions before us. In legal terms, the outcome might not be dispositive.

While we can only vote yes or no, I hope that we in this body will acknowledge that we don't have all the answers. We are imperfect humans. We will make imperfect decisions. This monumental decision will no doubt fit that description. Up or down, yes or no, however this vote goes, I am confident in saying that it will forever be steeped in doubt. This doubt is the only thing of which I am confident in this process.

I say to all of my colleagues, for this process to be a process, we have to have open minds. We must listen. We must do our best, seek the truth, in good faith. That is our only duty.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I rise today to object to the partisan effort to improperly "stack" two consecutive nominations for the Consumer Product Safety Commission, CPSC.

Peter Feldman has been nominated not only to fill the remainder of a term that would expire in October 2019, but also for an additional 7-year term on top of that.

Stacking these nominations contradicts the aim of the Consumer Product Safety Act, which established the CPSC as an independent agency with

commissioners serving staggered terms to prevent any one Congress from having an outsized influence on the agency.

It also violates Senate practice of considering one nomination at a time, particularly when the first term would not expire for over a year.

Both Senate Commerce Committee minority staff and the Congressional Research Service were unable to identify an analogous nomination where the beginning of a term started this far into a new Congress.

To be clear, I do not object to Mr. Feldman's nomination to the Commission. In fact, I voted to confirm him to fill the unexpired term.

However, confirming Mr. Feldman to a second, 7-year term today would undermine the CPSC's independence and set a dangerous precedent for future nominations.

The CPSC plays a critical role in protecting the public from consumer product-related injuries, and we must do all we can to defend the agency from partisanship.

For this reason, I must regretfully vote no on Mr. Feldman's nomination to serve an additional 7-year term on the Commission.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

Under the previous order, all time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Feldman nomination?

The yeas and nays were previously ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 217 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Alexander	Flake	Murkowski
Barrasso	Gardner	Paul
Blunt	Graham	Perdue
Boozman	Grassley	Portman
Burr	Hatch	Risch
Capito	Heller	Roberts
Cassidy	Hoeben	Rounds
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Corker	Inhofe	Sasse
Cornyn	Isakson	Scott
Cotton	Johnson	Shelby
Crapo	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cruz	Kyl	Thune
Daines	Lankford	Tillis
Enzi	Lee	Toomey
Ernst	McConnell	Wicker
Fischer	Moran	Young

NAYS—49

Baldwin	Cortez Masto	Hirono
Bennet	Donnelly	Jones
Blumenthal	Duckworth	Kaine
Booker	Durbin	King
Brown	Feinstein	Klobuchar
Cantwell	Gillibrand	Leahy
Cardin	Harris	Manchin
Carper	Hassan	Markey
Casey	Heinrich	McCaskill
Coons	Heitkamp	Menendez

Merkley	Schatz	Van Hollen
Murphy	Schumer	Warner
Murray	Shaheen	Warren
Nelson	Smith	Whitehouse
Peters	Stabenow	Wyden
Reed	Tester	
Sanders	Udall	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from North Carolina.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Executive Calendar No. 1111, Robert H. McMahon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 1111, the nomination of Robert H. McMahon, of Georgia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, this is my first time to address this body. Senate tradition is for new Senators to observe, listen, and learn before delivering a maiden speech, but there is precedent, during matters of great importance and critical times for the future of our country, to make remarks prior to a maiden speech. I will reserve my maiden speech for a future date, but today I am compelled by duty to our country and the people of Mississippi to speak in strong and unyielding support for Judge Brett Kavanaugh.

The Constitution entrusts the Senate with the duty to provide the President the advice and consent for a lifetime appointment on the U.S. Supreme Court. It is a serious responsibility, but the process has devolved into a purely political effort by those who want to keep Judge Kavanaugh off the Court by destroying his reputation and his character.

I have had conversations with several colleagues who tell me they have never seen such chaos and hatred as we are witnessing in this confirmation process. The fact that accusations against Brett Kavanaugh were suspiciously withheld until the eleventh hour really is not surprising. We expected something, but we didn't know what it would be, and we never expected the opposition to stoop to this level.

Let me articulate what is going on here.

Judge Kavanaugh, who has gone through multiple background checks over the years, was unscathed by additional vetting, 31 hours of questioning under oath, and more than 1,200 written questions—all exceeding anything ever experienced by any Supreme Court nominee. When it became clear that Judge Kavanaugh had a clear path to

confirmation, the opposition chose to introduce accusations of alleged misconduct that have yet to be backed by verified facts or any evidence. It seems that in their desperation, knowing he was about to be confirmed with no obstacle stopping him, they panicked. In the past 2 weeks, when was the last time you heard talk of federalism or philosophy of jurisprudence? They lost the fight on the issues. They had to try something else—thus, these eleventh-hour accusations.

Now, I want to be clear. My heart breaks for victims of assault and abuse. It is an issue that must never be taken lightly. That is why unproven accusations are so very unjust.

Faced with these disturbing accusations, Judge Kavanaugh quickly and convincingly refuted them without mincing any words. Throughout this exhaustive process, he has been very straightforward in shooting down these allegations—all under the penalty of law. I believe Judge Kavanaugh when he says these humiliating events never happened—not three decades ago, not ever.

It seems that opponents of Judge Kavanaugh are engaged in character assassination to destroy the reputation of a devoted public servant and a loving husband and father. I for one will not stand by and just watch this happen. It is an honor to serve in this body, and our debates should strengthen the integrity of this institution, which the American people have a right to expect.

The confirmation process is not easy. It should be comprehensive, detailed, and allow nominees to prove their worthiness. It should not be malicious. It should not be intentionally destructive. It should not be a weapon to use against a qualified nominee whose life has been given in service to our country's laws, the judiciary, and the American people.

Judge Kavanaugh is such a nominee. I have met him and reviewed his impeccable record of service and integrity. He is a disciple of the rule of law and judicial restraint. He is a champion of the Constitution. He believes, as I do, that all Americans are equal before the law and the courts.

On behalf of all future nominees, I want to applaud Judge Kavanaugh for standing firm and not allowing these tactics to derail his process. It is time to bring Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation to a vote on the floor of the Senate. He has earned my support. I encourage my colleagues to support him as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I have come down to the floor today to dis-

cuss a very important issue to Montanans and to many of my colleagues in the Senate, and that is the Land and Water Conservation Fund, also known as LWCF. I am joined by friends and colleagues—in fact, by the Senator from North Carolina, Mr. BURR, and the Senator from Colorado, Mr. GARDNER—who know like me, firsthand, the importance of LWCF. Why we are here today is because in just a few short days—in fact, on September 30—this program is going to expire. Without any action from Congress, a program that is widely supported, provides more access to public lands, conserves our public landscapes, and—I think this is probably Senator BURR's favorite comment about LWCF—costs the taxpayers nothing—I bet you will hear that from him in a moment—is going to expire.

Of the many benefits provided by LCWF, the most important one to Montanans is making public lands accessible. In fact, I brought a few maps of Montana to show some of the challenges we have.

This map shows all the public lands in our State. Anything that is colored is a public land. That is Forest Service, BLM, national parks, wildlife refuges, and State trust land. As you can see, there is a lot of public land in Montana.

Our public lands help to drive a \$7 billion outdoor economy, create tens of thousands of jobs, and supply about \$300 million in State and local tax revenues. As an avid outdoorsman, myself, I know firsthand the importance of our public lands. In fact, in August, back home in Montana, my wife and I did a 25-mile backpack in the Beartooth Wilderness, fly fishing at lakes above 10,000 feet. That is my idea of a great weekend in Montana. But public lands out of public reach benefit no one.

This next map shows a portion of the eastern side of our State. In Montana, much of our public land is checkerboarded. You can see it a little better here because these checkerboards are sectioned. There are 640 acres in square miles. This means that each one of those yellow squares are inaccessible in many cases to Montanans.

This is BLM-owned public land, but despite being owned by the Federal Government, it cannot be accessed by the public. In fact, a recent study by the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and onXmaps, a great Montana tech company, found that there are 1.52 million acres in Federal land in Montana alone that are inaccessible. I have the onXmaps app on my phone. If you are a hunter, fisherman, or outdoorsman in Montana, you oftentimes will have that app because it tells exactly where you are and where the lands are public and where the lands are private.

Let me put this in context about the inaccessibility of our lands. In Montana, we have more inaccessible public lands to the people than the entire State of Rhode Island—about the size of Delaware—all of which Montanans