

unemployment levels in the country. We worked to ensure extensions of emergency unemployment assistance in order to provide relief to Americans who lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

Our work together was of great importance, and I wish him the best in all of his future endeavors.

I want to turn my attention to three Members I had the privilege to work with and serve with on the Armed Services Committee.

JOE DONNELLY has been the ranking member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee. He chose this position because of the Navy's installation in Indiana called the Naval Surface Warfare Center—Crane. This installation serves as the primary engineering center for the Navy's Strategic Systems Program, which manages our fleet of ballistic missile weapons systems. I had the chance to join Joe on a visit, and I was most impressed with their capabilities but more impressed with his tireless efforts to ensure that this facility—and indeed all of Indiana—had the very best.

In addition to ensuring our men and women in uniform have the resources and tools they need—like those manufactured in Crane—JOE has always been concerned about caring for veterans and is a well-known advocate for suicide prevention programs. Indeed, it was his legislation, more than any others, that helped establish a program to assist veterans and to assist Active-Duty personnel who are coping with suicidal tendencies. That was something JOE did with great passion and great commitment and great success.

JOE assumed the seat that Senator Richard Lugar previously held and carried on the legacy of Senator Lugar's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program into the future, which today continues to secure stocks of nuclear, chemical, and biological agents around the world. His work on reducing stockpiles of these dangerous weapons is a critical component of making the world safer for generations to come.

JOE DONNELLY has done great work here, and I wish him well. He is a gentleman and someone I admire and respect immensely.

I have also been extremely proud to serve alongside CLAIRE McCASKILL on the Armed Services Committee. Claire has been a leader of the Senate effort to prevent and respond to sexual assault in our military. She was a principal cosponsor of the Victims Protection Act, a bipartisan package of reforms that represent a substantial leap forward in preventing and responding to sexual assaults in the military. It is a testament to CLAIRE's determination and hard work that these laws are in place, but, also, she was the first to recognize that our work is not done. She was continually involved in ensuring that whatever legislative initiatives we passed were actually implemented. That work is ongoing, and CLAIRE's efforts have given us a strong foundation to continue those efforts.

In addition to the Victims Protection Act, CLAIRE led the effort to reform management of Arlington National Cemetery to address significant problems with the burials of servicemembers and helped to establish a single agency responsible for POW-MIA recovery and accounting efforts.

CLAIRE has also worked tirelessly to end wasteful wartime contracting practices, following in the footsteps of another Missouri Senator and one of her political heroes, President Harry S. Truman. CLAIRE has been a steadfast advocate for oversight throughout her career, and her work to root out waste and strengthen accountability has made a difference in how effectively the government works for the American people.

Again, I wish her well in the future and know it will be a future that is also committed to service to others.

BILL NELSON has been a close and valued colleague for many years in the Armed Services Committee. He is the only Senator to have flown in space and, as a result, has been our acknowledged expert, to both Republicans and Democrats, on matters pertaining to space. His knowledge of military and civilian space issues was particularly important during our debate on replacing the Russian RD-180 rocket engine, which is used in a number of national security launches, with a U.S. variant. That debate, along with his leadership on NASA reauthorization legislation, has introduced competition for space launch to a wide array of new companies. As a nation, we are much better off for his efforts. Because of Senator NELSON's leadership, we now have a vibrant and entrepreneurial launch and satellite industry that reaches well outside the traditional national security realm and is lowering the cost of access to space.

Recently, he took on the cyber mission as the ranking member on the Cybersecurity Subcommittee. His steady hand was integral in guiding this new subcommittee during a time in which we face countless cyber threats. We will miss his knowledge and leadership as we debate pressing issues of our national security in the next Congress and Congresses to come.

He has also done able work as the lead Democrat on the Commerce Committee, fighting for consumers. And, as a strong advocate for stricter gun control legislation, we worked together on the 3D Printed Gun Safety Act of 2018 and on the Extreme Risk Protection Order and Violence Prevention Act.

I also want to thank him for his leadership in enacting the Military Lending Act in 2006, which caps the annual interest rate for an extension of consumer credit to a servicemember or his or her dependents at 36 percent. Because of his efforts, servicemembers and their families have strong consumer protections that defend them against unscrupulous lenders who unpatriotically prey upon them while they are selflessly and courageously

defending our Nation. He has done a remarkable job because this legislation truly does protect our protectors—those men and women who serve overseas—so they are not taken advantage of here, back at home.

I enjoyed our time serving together and wish him the best as he goes forward. He is a great American.

Finally, I would like to recognize Senator JON KYL. I thank JON for his willingness to serve again following the passing of Senator John McCain.

I had the privilege of serving with him in his prior stint in this body. He served for many years in Republican leadership, including as minority whip. He was also a longstanding member of the Finance Committee. I was not on this committee, but given my advocacy for extending unemployment insurance—for which there was a critical need at the time—I did have a chance to serve with him on the Conference Committee for the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012.

It was a pleasure to serve with him. He is a man of principle, a man of great decency and dignity, someone who has honored the Senate with his service, honored Arizona with his service, and makes us all very proud to know him. It was indeed a pleasure to serve, all too briefly, with him as a member of the Armed Services Committee.

I would like to thank him for his service and wish him well as he leaves this body once more. To all my colleagues, I give them my greatest respect and admiration for their service to their States, to the Senate, and to the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. My friend from Nebraska, Senator SASSE, tells me he has remarks that will take approximately 2 minutes. I have remarks that will follow that will take somewhat longer than 2 minutes.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator SASSE be allowed to speak before me and that I might speak afterward for such time as I will consume.

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

The Senator from Nebraska.

CONSTITUTION DAY ESSAYS

Mr. SASSE. I thank the Senator from Mississippi for yielding to me.

Mr. President, I rise to highlight the work of some truly impressive Nebraska high school students. In September, to celebrate Constitution Day, my office offered a challenge to high schoolers in my State to submit essays describing "The Relationship Between the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution." We received contributions from across Nebraska from students in public, private, and home schools.

Today, I am pleased to announce the three winners: Ingrid Williamsen from Logan View Senior High School in the

First Congressional District; Patrick Collins from the AP U.S. History Class at Mount Michael Benedictine in Elkhorn in the Second Congressional District; and Kate Pipher from Nebraska Christian School in Central City in the Third Congressional District.

The lessons these three Nebraska students can teach us are enduringly relevant not only for other high schoolers but in this body today. I would like to read briefly from each of their essays.

Ingrid Williamsen wrote:

The Constitution was put in place so that the rights and liberties laid out in the Declaration of Independence could be enforced. It puts limits on the government so that the government cannot infringe on the rights of the people. It gives the new government the power to guarantee the liberty of all the people. Both functions are directly tied to the Declaration.

In her essay, Kate Pipher wrote:

The Founding Fathers adopted a humble posture to both their Creator and a great humanity. They understood they did not possess the power to redefine the rights of man. Their role was to defend, discover, and reveal those rights for the citizens. The Constitution's goal is to protect the inalienable rights of every individual Image-Bearer that the Declaration of Independence lays out.

Finally, in his essay, Patrick Collins referenced Abraham Lincoln's "Fragment on the Constitution" and declared that the Constitution is "the silver frame that protects the golden apple of the Declaration of Independence. . . . Thus, the Constitution is indeed a structural embodiment of those famous Truths which we held then and hold now to be self-evident."

I am grateful to have received so many great essays from students across Nebraska. I thank all of them for their work. It is clear to me that not only their classmates but Washington and this body can learn some Schoolhouse Rock Civics from Nebraska high school kids.

I would like to congratulate Ingrid, Kate, and Patrick.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD their full essays.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE CONSTITUTION

INGRID WILLIAMSON—LOGAN VIEW SENIOR HIGH

The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution are very separate but closely related documents. They are quite similar in many ways and work together to form the backbone of the United States.

The Declaration of Independence was written to justify the Colonies independence from Great Britain. It goes further and sets forth the principals and ideas for a fair new government. The Constitution outlines how the new government would function and enforce the rights in the Declaration.

The Declaration of Independence was designed and drafted to justify the Colonies breaking away from Great Brittan. The Declaration made clear promises as to the liberties that should be given to all men, that all men are created equal, and that everyone

has the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The Declaration set limits on the government to ensure these rights are inevitable and never taken away by the government.

The Constitution was put in place so that the rights and liberties laid out in the Declaration of Independence could be enforced. It is the document that sets forth how the new government will function. It puts limits on the government so that it cannot infringe upon the rights of the people. It gives the new government the power to guarantee the liberty of all the people. Both functions are directly tied to the Declaration.

The Declaration of Independence will remain the same as it is now, it cannot be changed. This makes it a purely historical document. The Constitution is a living document and has been and can be amended. This was by design and allows both documents to better protect the natural rights of all.

The relationship between the two documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, is one that cannot be broken. Without either of them, the history and future of the United States would have a much different blueprint. They are two of the most important and endearing documents in the history of the United States. Chief Justice Warren Burger once said, "The Declaration of Independence was the promise, The Constitution was the fulfillment". The Declaration of Independence would be an unfulfilled promise had the Constitution not been put in place.

KATE PIPHER—NEBRASKA CHRISTIAN

The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution of the United States of America share a substantial relationship because they both outline basic truths for The American People that have caused our country to thrive. To begin, the Founding Fathers argue that all rights come from a Creator, not a fallible government. Then they conclude that the purpose of the American government is to secure these God-given rights.

The Declaration of Independence recognizes there are Laws of Nature that God established. These laws are principles for what is just, right, and true. They state that all people have equal standing and dignity before God. Because certain truths are self-evident, citizens carry responsibility to self-govern. They are accountable to more than a man-made government, they are accountable to a Sovereign God.

The authors of both documents recognized they were discovering, not defining the inalienable rights of humanity. The right to Life, Liberty, and Happiness outlined first in the Declaration of Independence and then again in the 5th amendment to the Constitution are God-given. The Founding Fathers adopted a humble posture to both their Creator and a greater humanity. They understood they did not possess the power to redefine the rights of man. Their role was to defend, discover, and reveal those rights for the citizens. The Constitution's goal is to protect the inalienable rights of every individual Image-Bearer that the Declaration of Independence lays out. This is the unique, profound outlook that both documents portray.

It was no accident that the men who penned the Constitution utilized many of the terms from the Declaration of Independence. The Constitution is an attempt to mirror natural law with a civil, written law. In an ideal world, the natural law of God and the law of man would align exactly. The Founding Fathers stressed that the bent of the human heart is towards tyranny. The Declaration of Independence was an announcement that the citizens of America would not

live under tyranny any longer and desired an alternative form of government. The Constitution resulted as a document that protected the young country from inevitable tyranny.

The authors of the Constitution perceived that in order to preserve the truths laid out in the Declaration and to secure the blessings of liberty for their children and following generations, a written law was necessary. The Declaration of Independence provided a mandate for government to preserve, secure, and provide the rights our generous God bestowed upon us. The Constitution fulfilled that mandate. The "We the People" from the preamble are, in essence, the same citizens who recognized their rights from their Creator in the Declaration of Independence. Acting upon the desire to preserve these rights, they crafted two humble documents that cataclysmically shaped the course of America's history.

PATRICK COLLINS FROM MR. JOHN ROSHONE'S APUSH CLASS AT MOUNT MICHAEL BENE-DICTINE IN ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

One of the most fitting metaphors attributed to Abraham Lincoln is that of the Constitution as the silver frame that protects the golden apple of the Declaration of Independence. While it certainly is apt to say that the Constitution's framework is meant to embody the political philosophy presented in the Declaration of Independence, even more important than this overarching idea is a more specific one. Most Americans are familiar with the words "we hold these truths to be self-evident," but arguably more pertinent to the relationship between the Constitution and the Declaration is an idea only discovered through a more than cursory examination of the Declaration's less celebrated portion: the 27 grievances listed against the king of England. These grievances illustrate the ease with which the British government simply disregarded the English "constitution," wherein the rights of the people and powers of the government were often vague, unwritten traditional understandings subject to individual interpretation. The first Americans knew from experience that any document or governmental structure attempting to restrict the government and preserve the people's rights would be woefully inadequate if not written frankly and followed strictly. In that sense, the Declaration is not simply about the need for independence but even more about the ancillarity of a written Constitution in preserving the desired freedom.

Understanding the importance of adhering to a strict structure, it is eminently clear that any interpretation or judicial decision that seeks to change the original meaning of this structure is misguided. Attempting to push the Constitution in a desired direction without actually changing its words, while typically well-intentioned, betrays the ideals expressed in the Declaration and fought for in the Revolution and undermines the purpose of creating a written Constitution in the first place, and yet so many still seek to do so. Our cultural misunderstanding of this portion of the reasoning behind American independence is so pervasive that a large portion of American society truly believes that the Supreme Court has the authority to create new laws and amendments from the bench. If so many Americans continue to treat our founding documents with such flippancy, we will not even realize as our leaders begin to do the same and our Constitution effectively morphs into the vaguely understood one that the British had so long ago. We have forgotten so thoroughly the grievances that necessitated independence that we would not bat an eye if our own government were to violate the same principles

of freedom today. Our Founding Fathers would cringe to see our Constitution treated more and more like the one from which they sought so furiously to gain independence at the genesis of our nation. Thus, the Constitution is indeed a structural embodiment of those famous truths which we held then and hold now to be self-evident. However, the oft-forgotten grievances in the Declaration render the need for a government and a people that hold to the original meaning of that Constitution equally self-evident to any who dare to dig deeper.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from Mississippi.

GUATEMALA

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, yesterday the Government of Guatemala took a decisive step toward regaining sovereignty. Guatemala revoked the visas of and deported 11 U.N. personnel working for the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, better known by its Spanish acronym CICIG.

Chartered in 2006 to help the Guatemalan state fight corruption, CICIG morphed into a modern-day United Nations proconsul, selectively administering justice and abusing power in ways never intended.

Voices on the political left, both here and overseas, will no doubt decry the decision by the duly constituted Government of Guatemala. I take the floor of the Senate this afternoon to state plainly my emphatic approval of this action by our Guatemalan friends.

Prior to yesterday's action, Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales had previously announced that CICIG's mandate would not be renewed after September 3 of next year. The President's decision marks a logical and welcome step toward ending CICIG's presence in Guatemala. Ultimately, an independent country has the right to decide if, and under what terms, a supranational institution can administer justice within its borders. CICIG was never meant to be permanent, and no country could accept an unending infringement on its sovereignty. Certainly, we in the United States would never consent to having an international body—accountable to no one—run our judicial system. Our Guatemalan friends have determined it is time for CICIG to leave, and they have a right as a sovereign nation to make that decision.

The initial reasons behind CICIG's presence in Guatemala cannot be disputed. Like many Latin American countries, Guatemala had suffered from pervasive corruption, and its government was in ruins from a decades-long civil war. Criminal enterprises colluded with politicians, military officers, and other government officials to bribe, cheat, and steal. Mafias, with deep tentacles into the state, acted with such impunity that Guatemala felt compelled to ask for outside help. In 2006, Guatemala and the United Nations signed an agreement meant to

“support, strengthen, and assist” Guatemalan institutions responsible for investigating crimes committed by so-called “illegal security groups” and “clandestine security organizations.” Although CICIG enjoys complete functional independence, the agreement stated that CICIG must discharge its mandate in “accordance with Guatemalan law and the provisions of the Constitution.” Regrettably, this provision has not been followed.

Despite noble goals, it has become apparent that CICIG is not being held accountable to either Guatemalan law or the United Nations. As the largest financial contributor to the United Nations, the United States has an interest in investigating the credible allegations that CICIG was grossly overstepping its mandate. After all, the American taxpayers were largely financing this enterprise.

The questionable practices of CICIG and its unelected leader have been reported in our national papers. The Wall Street Journal's Mary Anastasia O'Grady has been a close observer of Colombian jurist Ivan Velasquez, who serves as CICIG's Commissioner. Ms. O'Grady states:

Under his leadership, there is strong evidence that CICIG routinely flouts the rule of law and tramples civil liberties in violation of the Guatemalan constitution. His methods can't be supported by a republic that pledges allegiance to transparency and human rights.

Powerful institutions have a tendency to amass more powers to themselves and stretch their authority far beyond their legal mandates. Even its most strident supporters have acknowledged that CICIG now essentially answers to no one and needs to be reformed. Nowhere is this contention better supported than the CICIG-backed persecution of the Bitkov family on behalf of the Russian Government. For all its flaws, which are numerous, CICIG's decision to conspire with Russia is the most outrageous.

Igor and Irina Bitkov built a successful paper mill company, the Northwest Timber Company, in Russia's Kaliningrad enclave. This rare example of successful private enterprise in Russia was once valued at nearly half a billion dollars, but success comes with a price in Putin's Russia.

In 2005, a senior officer of the state-owned Sberbank demanded that the Bitkovs sell him a controlling stake in their company. Imagine. It is an offer the Bitkovs refused. Two years later, the Bitkovs' 16-year-old daughter, Anastasia, was kidnapped, drugged, raped, and held until the Bitkov family paid a ransom.

In April 2008, three Russian state banks—the VTB, Sberbank, and Gazprombank—forced the Bitkovs' company into bankruptcy by calling in the immediate repayment of nearly \$160 million in loans. Traumatized and threatened with detention and death, the Bitkovs decided to flee Russia. More death threats followed as Moscow opened a criminal case in 2009.

The Bitkovs eventually immigrated to Guatemala in 2009 after paying a legitimate law firm for Guatemalan passports with new identities for their protection. The Bitkovs settled into a new life that was blessedly free from Russian harassment and intimidation. Igor and Irina began teaching at a local school. Anastasia began to heal from her ordeal. A son, Vladimir, was born in 2012.

The reprieve was short-lived. VTB, one of the Russian banks, collaborated in 2015 with CICIG and the Guatemalan Attorney General to arrest the Bitkovs for passport violations. Detained in appalling conditions, Anastasia was denied medication and had a nervous breakdown. Three-year-old Vladimir was sent to an orphanage for 42 days without having contact with his parents or appointed guardians. Eventually freed by a court order and with an upper respiratory infection, conjunctivitis in both eyes, and clear physical and psychological abuse, Vladimir returned to his family. This is modern-day CICIG in Guatemala.

Under the direction of CICIG, the Bitkovs were sent to trial in February of 2017. The Guatemalan Court of Appeals, however, enjoined the Bitkovs' prosecution and stated that the family was not criminally liable for passport violations. Despite this injunction, a lower court, at the behest of CICIG, went ahead with the case and eventually sentenced Igor Bitkov to 19 years and Irina and Anastasia to 14 years in prison. Let me repeat—19 years and 14 years for passport violations. They were passports that they believed to be legitimate based on legal advice they had been given. These were infractions that are usually settled with a fine at worst, but this was all in collaboration with CICIG and the Russian accusers.

Following more convoluted legal wrangling, Igor Bitkov was released on house arrest in May, but, inexplicably, Irina and Anastasia remained in jail—more injunctions, more appeals, more tortuous legal proceedings. Irina and Anastasia were finally released on bail in mid-June. This is CICIG in Guatemala. Pushed by CICIG, the Constitutional Court, which is the highest court in Guatemala, ordered a retrial for the Bitkovs. It began last week and supposedly continues.

American taxpayers who are footing the bill for CICIG have a right to ask Commissioner Velasquez and his CICIG team: Is this the way to fight corruption in Guatemala? In short, CICIG, under the direction of Commissioner Velasquez, has gone from fighting corruption to doing Vladimir Putin's dirty work even. He has gone even so far as to persecute victims, like the Bitkovs, of corruption.

The Bitkov affair demonstrates how badly CICIG has gone astray and why President Morales is right to want it out of his country. CICIG was established to help investigate and prosecute Mafias who were entrenched in the state and able to act with impunity. Yet it gets involved in a passport