

Labor, and Pensions Committee—the Health Committee. I asked Senator Kennedy if I could possibly serve on this committee to help fight for health and education and labor, and he arranged that. I will never forget having his voicemail on my phone saying: Yes, you are a member of the committee.

A few months later came the real surprise. Senator Kennedy was struggling with the brain cancer that killed him later that year, and through his team, he asked me to take on one of his civil rights bills, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

That was to end discrimination for LGBTQ Americans in employment, give them a fair chance to get a job here. Well, this is something that had been part of our Equality Act in Oregon. We had gotten that done, and because I helped lead that fight, he asked me to take over and lead the fight to end employment nondiscrimination.

That was 2009. It took 4 years of work—work with the community and work with our legislators inside this building. Then, finally, in 2013, the time was ripe to put it on the floor and have this debate. This Chamber, with the supermajority, bipartisan vote, said, yes, let's end discrimination in employment, and we passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

Then I went over to the House, and it died without consideration. I got together with the advocates and asked, where do we go from here with the House not acting? Do we simply continue to reintroduce the Employment Non-Discrimination Act—which had been first introduced in 1996, first considered on this floor and almost passed just one vote short in 1998. Do we continue to do that?

Out of that conversation, we developed a different vision. Let's do a full Equality Act like Oregon has done, like a number of other States have done and end discrimination not just in one sector or another, not just in places of accommodation, not just in financial transactions, not just in serving on a jury, not just in terms of housing, not just in terms of employment, let's base the Equality Act on providing the full spectrum, the full measure of protection for opportunity.

I thought that was a pretty good idea. Later that year, I introduced the Equality Act in partnership with many others. We laid out that first Equality Act in the Johnson Room—the Johnson Room, which looks out at the Supreme Court and reminds us of 1964. In 1964, when the Civil Rights Act was passed, driven forward by President Johnson, who came from Texas, who came from the South, and said: It is time to end discrimination in the United States of America based on race and gender and ethnicity. He drove that legislation through, and it has been a foundation we haven't questioned since because we know it is right. We know it is part of

this journey of the United States of America going back to our Declaration of Independence, going back to our Constitution—a vision of opportunity for all and liberty for all.

We know it was imperfect, and we have worked now for almost two and a half centuries to perfect that vision of opportunity. Senator Ted Kennedy once said: “The promise of America will never be fulfilled as long as justice is denied to even one among us.” The promise of America—that promise of America that Thomas Jefferson so eloquently put, in 1776—is a vision where we are all created equal, with “unalienable Rights . . . Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

How can that vision be propelled, sustained, and promoted if, in fact, as you pursue your life, the door is slammed shut on you, saying, “No. There is opportunity for that individual but not you,” and the door is slammed shut—liberty for that person but not you, and the door is slammed shut.

We have come to understand that is just wrong. It is completely incompatible with the vision that was laid out, the vision of our Declaration and the vision of our Constitution.

In fact, in this Chamber, we start with a pledge, and we talk about one Nation under God with liberty and justice for all. Classrooms across the country start their day with a pledge of liberty and justice for all, but what is liberty if the door is slammed shut? That is the denial of liberty. That is the opposite of freedom. That is the crushing of opportunity.

So the story of America goes forward. The fight goes forward. We had the 1964 Civil Rights Act that was a culmination itself of decades of work. We had the voting rights struggle during the same time period, and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. We fought a number of battles—battles of discrimination against those with disabilities. We fought for workers' rights, but our LGBTQ brothers and sisters still face discrimination all across this country. We are still in a situation where so many doors are slammed shut.

We have had a lot of progress in the last 10 years. Ten years ago, we had the Defense of Marriage Act, and now we don't. We had don't ask, don't tell in the military, and now we don't. We had only three States that recognized same-sex marriage, and now it is the law of the land as the Supreme Court weighed in and said it is required by the vision of our Constitution.

Discrimination in all kinds of ways is still legal in 29 States—more than half the country. In more than half the country, you can be married in the morning, denied service at a restaurant for lunch, fired from your job in the afternoon, and kicked out of your apartment that night because discrimination is still legal against LGBTQ Americans in 29 States.

LBJ gave a definition of freedom. He said: “Freedom is the right to be treated in every part of our national life as a person equal in dignity and promise to all others.” Discrimination is the opposite of freedom.

Let freedom ring in this Chamber as we introduce the Equality Act later this week. Let freedom ring down the hall as the House of Representatives holds a debate in committee and on the floor in the months to come, and when that freedom bell rings so loudly that they pass that bill, the Equality Act in that Chamber, let them bring it down this hallway right into the Senate; that we might debate the same and put an end to the extraordinary, disgraceful discrimination that still marks the lives and slams the doors shut on millions and millions of Americans every single day.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:27 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, March 12, 2019, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DAVID BERNHARDT, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, VICE RYAN ZINKE.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JOHN LINDER, OF GEORGIA, TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY.

INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

JENNIFER D. NORDQUIST, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE UNITED STATES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR A TERM OF TWO YEARS, VICE MATTHEW T. MCGUIRE, TERM EXPIRED.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

JOHN MCLEOD BARGER, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE A GOVERNOR OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE FOR A TERM EXPIRING DECEMBER 8, 2021, VICE LOUIS J. GIULIANO, TERM EXPIRED.

THE JUDICIARY

RAINEY R. BRANDT, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSOCIATE JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FOR THE TERM OF FIFTEEN YEARS, VICE JUDITH NAN MACALUSO, RETIRED.

SHANA FROST MATINI, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSOCIATE JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FOR THE TERM OF FIFTEEN YEARS, VICE ZOE BUSH, RETIRED.

MICHAEL S. BOGREN, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN, VICE ROBERT HOLMES BELL, RETIRED.

JEFFREY VINCENT BROWN, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, VICE MELINDA HARMON, RETIRED.

STEPHANIE DAWKINS DAVIS, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN, VICE GERALD E. ROSEN, RETIRED.

BRANTLEY STARR, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, VICE SIDNEY A. FITZWATER, RETIRED.