

rights. If you have any doubt about that, just look at the rest of the modern world. Every constitution written around the globe since World War II recognizes the equal stature of men and women. Ours does not. That is shameful.

Among those who are hesitant to support the ERA, one of their most common arguments is that it is not necessary. People argue that women already enjoy equal rights and protections in our society, so what is the need to write it down? To them, I say think again. Although the wage gap between men and women has narrowed over time, it still exists today. In 2019, women earned only 79 percent as much as their male counterparts for similar work. This disparity is even worse for women of color. It affects women their entire lives, and it affects their retirements. Recent data show that women over 65 are twice as likely as men to live below the poverty line. We owe it to America's women—to our mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, and selves—to remedy this societal failure.

Furthermore, as it stands, women in the United States have no Federal recourse for gender-based violence. Because of that, the courts have allowed police officers to refuse to defend victims of domestic abuse and have even struck down the protections offered by the Violence Against Women Act. The Equal Rights Amendment would require the Federal Government to prohibit and penalize this type of discrimination.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg once said that, if she could choose an amendment to add to the Constitution, it would be the Equal Rights Amendment because she would like her granddaughters, when they pick up the Constitution, to see that notion—that women and men are persons of equal stature—as being a basic principle of our society. As a grandfather of two granddaughters myself, I couldn't agree more. I want them to know that, in America, they will enjoy the same protections and opportunities as anyone else.

I want every young person to grow up understanding that her dreams are within reach, that her autonomy is respected, and that her life is significant. In order to make that a reality, women need more than the right to vote, as fundamental as that is; they need a promise that they will be free from all forms of discrimination and injustice. That is why men, women, Republicans, and Democrats must come together in order to correct that silence in our Constitution—a silence that speaks volumes. We must all unite to support the Equal Rights Amendment.

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

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

HONORING OFFICER BRENT SCRIMSHIRE

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise to honor Hot Springs Police Officer First Class Brent Scrimshire, who was killed in the line of duty on Tuesday, March 10.

A native of Malvern, AR, Brent Scrimshire graduated from Malvern High School and Henderson State University.

Officer Scrimshire was an exemplary member of law enforcement. He had served on the Hot Springs police force for a number of years and was recognized as the department's Employee of the Quarter just recently in acknowledgment of his unique dedication, work ethic, and professionalism.

Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge also named him the Southwest Region Officer of the Year in 2016, which, according to media reports, he earned in part because of his lifesaving action when he helped to control the bleeding of a stabbing victim.

"Scrim" was known for treating his brothers in blue, as well as those he encountered while doing his job, with kindness and dignity. He also enjoyed being outdoors, hunting and fishing.

Officer Scrimshire deeply loved his wife and two children, who are now left behind to go through life without the devoted husband and dad they adored.

Our hearts break for them, the rest of his family and friends, and his entire family at the Hot Springs Police Department. His death is a tragic reminder of the risks our law enforcement officials face each time they put on the uniform.

I send my deepest condolences to Officer Scrimshire's loved ones. We honor his service and his sacrifice and pray all those fortunate enough to have known him will find comfort in his legacy and in the outpouring of love and support from so many.

On behalf of all Arkansans, we celebrate Officer Scrimshire's life and example of courageous, willing, and selfless public service. May he rest in peace.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, earlier today, as the Senate knows now, Leader MCCONNELL announced that we would cancel our State work period so we could continue to work on legislation here in Washington, DC, to help families and our communities get

through the economic effect of the coronavirus's spread. I am glad he made that decision, and I look forward to continuing to work on those issues for the benefit of our constituents and the Nation.

This situation calls for an all-of-government response, and it will allow us additional time to hammer out a bipartisan agreement to respond to the ripple effect that this outbreak is having in Texas and across the country.

As we continue our discussions on this legislation, I would just urge my colleagues that this is a time to put partisanship aside and stop playing politics, if there ever was one.

There is actually precedent for that. At the height of the Ebola crisis in 2014, Republicans in the Senate worked with our Democratic colleagues and President Obama to ensure we were ready to treat Texans and other Americans who needed care from that particular disease.

We need to come together to do the same now, not to use the opportunity to attack or score political points or to try to damage our opponents. Unfortunately, that seems to be the first impulse of some of our friends across the Capitol Chamber.

Most of the public concern is focused on the elderly, on cruise ship travelers, and those with underlying medical conditions, but we need to think of every family, every college student, and to make sure that everyone who is worrying about how to make ends meet during this particular crisis because they had to stay home and miss work has their concerns addressed as well. This virus could disrupt everyone's daily routine in one way or the other, and as we have seen from the departure of some of our colleagues for self-quarantining, we are truly in this together.

I am glad we will be staying in session to try to bring as much relief and reassurance as we can in this uncertain time, and I look forward to all of us, Republicans and Democrats, the House and the Senate and the White House working together to get every American ready for what is to come.

It is not just the Senate that is altering its plans due to the coronavirus. Across the country, serious measures are taking place out of an abundance of caution to keep the American people safe. Some schools are choosing to close their doors, nursing homes are barring visitors, and major events like South by Southwest in Austin are canceling.

On the global scale, we are seeing an unprecedented action, including all of Italy—some 60 million people—going on a complete lockdown.

For many Americans, it seems like this public health crisis has escalated incredibly quickly. We went from never having heard of this new virus to constant news coverage about its growing reach within a matter of weeks.

But this outbreak began long before the average American even knew it existed, and it was no accident that Chinese officials kept the rest of the world in the dark.

One of first people to sound the alarm about the novel virus—that is what they call it, the novel coronavirus—was 34-year-old Chinese doctor Li Wenliang, who, sadly, became a victim of the coronavirus.

On December 30 of last year, after seeing several patients who he believed at the time to have SARS, another type of coronavirus, Dr. Li messaged a group of medical school classmates to let them know that he had seen something new and different and potentially dangerous.

Dr. Li told them that these were confirmed cases of coronavirus infection, but the exact strain was still being subtuned. He also urged them to have their families and friends take protective measures, but these messages were soon shared much wider than the intended audience, and the Chinese Communist Party and the government quickly stepped in to stop this information from being spread. Chinese police reprimanded Dr. Li and several others for “spreading rumors” about the virus.

In the Chinese Government’s effort to carefully conceal information about the rapid spread of symptoms throughout the city of Wuhan, this amounted to a big threat. They continued to take extreme measures to assure the Chinese people that there was no need for them to be concerned. They even refused to acknowledge the risk of human-to-human transmission, which is responsible for the global spread of this virus.

While this is a novel coronavirus strain, the underlying story is familiar. Chinese officials learn about a deadly outbreak of a new virus; they try to conceal the news; they aren’t transparent with their own people, much less other countries; and when the word begins to spread beyond their borders, they try to downplay the seriousness, even going so far as to manipulate data about the number of cases or fatalities.

We saw this story line play out with the bird flu in the late 1990s and again with the SARS epidemic in the early 2000s. This is just the latest example of the Chinese Communist Party’s failure in the face of a public health crisis. They continue to deny the facts and put their pride before public safety. It is a symptom of a much larger centralized censorship that we have come to associate with the Chinese Government, one that represents a threat to the rest of the world.

Imagine if the situation were different, if the government had listened to Dr. Li’s initial warnings, if they had reached out to international aid organizations and asked for assistance, deployed additional resources to hospitals in Wuhan, and told the Chinese people to exercise normal caution.

Now, there is no way to be sure, but I imagine the current situation would look somewhat different.

China’s censorship seriously handicapped our global response to this new virus, and they continue to release inconsistent and misleading statistics about the current state of the virus.

They have reported that the number of new cases continues to decrease, but I ask you: How can we possibly trust this data? How can we know that this isn’t just the latest attempt to downplay the crisis?

While China’s lack of transparency on the coronavirus has, without a doubt, had the greatest global impact, it is not the only country guilty of misrepresenting the nature of the threat in the rest of the world.

We also suspect massive censorship from Iran, which is battling one of the world’s largest outbreaks. According to the Coronavirus Resource Center, which is operated at Johns Hopkins University, Iran has more than 9,000 cases. For reference, out of the more than 120,000 cases worldwide, China has far and away the greatest number, with more than 80,000. Italy is a distant second with more than 10,000, but Iran is not far behind.

Just as China sought to keep initial reports of the virus quiet and downplay the impact, so did Iran. The leadership in Iran urged the Iranian people to vote in last month’s sham election, saying rumors about the virus were being pedaled by the United States to suppress voter turnout. They mocked the concept of quarantines. They even exported their masks to China, expecting that the coronavirus would have no impact on their country.

As we predicted then and now know, the Iranian leaders were absolutely wrong. They are now in the throes of trying to control the spread of the virus, which has claimed the lives of more than 350 people in Iran, and that is just the ones we know about.

It is widely believed that Iran, like China, is suppressing data to make the situation seem less dire than it really is, and it is not just the civilians who are being impacted. Yesterday reports surfaced that Iran’s Senior Vice President and two other Cabinet members have the coronavirus. That comes after previous reports of other current and former officials being admitted to hospitals and at least two deaths.

The actions taken by the leaders of these countries—Iran and China—have, without a doubt, contributed to the rapid rise and spread of the coronavirus. They have concealed information; they have misrepresented the facts; and they have lied to their own citizens and the global community, all in their own self-interest.

The reflexive censorship from China and Iran put the rest of the world at greater risk, and it handicapped our preparation for ways to address it.

As our leaders, health officials, doctors, nurses, and scientists continue to work around the clock to contain this

virus, we have to have transparency, and we have to know the facts.

If we are going to have any success on a global scale dealing with the coronavirus, we need honesty and transparency from all countries.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
H.R. 6172

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, they spied on the President of the United States. They used the apparatus of the U.S. Government’s superb intelligence gathering agencies to spy on then-Candidate Donald Trump, now President of the United States. They did so in a way that was entirely predictable, entirely foreseeable, and in some ways avoidable, if, in fact, we had the right laws on the books. We don’t. That needs to change. That is why this moment is a pivotal moment when three provisions in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act are about to expire this coming Sunday, March 15.

We have known that this day was coming for many years. In fact, it was in 2015 when Congress last reauthorized the three expiring provisions on any long-term basis. The three expiring provisions are, of course, known as Lone Wolf, Roving Wiretaps, and 215. It is to the last of these three sections, 215, that I am directing most of my remarks today.

Now, 215 is only the beginning and not the end of the portion of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, also known as FISA, that needs reform. We need reform across the board, but the expiration of 215 gives us a unique opportunity to do that. We reauthorized it in 2015, knowing that it would come back again for reauthorization in December of 2019.

In December of 2019, we were in the middle of doing other things, so an agreement was made within this body that we would extend 215 and the other two provisions until this coming Sunday, March 15. So absent action by this body between now and Sunday, March 15, those three provisions of law will expire.

Those three provisions of law should not have to expire because we ought to be able to reform FISA. A number of us have been working on this not just for days or weeks or months but, literally, years. I am now in my 10th year in the U.S. Senate. Basically, the entire time, I have been working on reforms to FISA, figuring out where its weak spots are, and warning my colleagues years in advance that at some point this would be abused.