

alongside addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, these bills can help close the disparities and gaps that exist in health care in America.

H.R. 4996, sponsored by Congresswoman ROBIN KELLY from Illinois, passed the House in September. It closely mirrors a provision in legislation I have introduced in the Senate, the MOMMA Act. This critical legislation addresses our Nation's unconscionable disparities in maternal and infant mortality by ensuring mothers can maintain access to care and prevent pregnancy-related complications.

The U.S. is 1 of only 13 countries in the world where the maternal mortality rate is worse now than it was 25 years ago. Nationwide more than 700 women die every year as a result of their pregnancy, and more than 70,000 others suffer severe, near-fatal complications. Across the country, women of color are four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified these racial and ethnic health disparities that already existed. These gaps in our health system are unacceptable.

Medicaid covers half of the births in Illinois. This policy would help thousands of mothers in Illinois and nationwide by enabling Medicaid to provide coverage for low-income mothers for up to 1 year, compared to the current limit of 60 days. It is time we turn the page on this unacceptable inequity in our healthcare system and address a real need across America.

H.R. 1585, the Violence Against Women Act was signed into law 26 years ago, and it must be reauthorized. This law has been a lifeline for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in my State of Illinois and across the country. Over a year ago, the House voted to reauthorize and strengthen VAWA. But the Republican-controlled Senate has refused to bring this bill to the floor for a vote.

For many Americans, home is not always a safe place, and the COVID-19 pandemic has presented particular challenges for people facing abusive situations and domestic violence. It is shameful that Leader MCCONNELL has refused to call this critical reauthorization to the Senate floor for a vote.

It is long past time for the Senate to renew and strengthen VAWA.

In order to proceed to the consideration H.R. 4995, the Maternal Health Quality Improvement Act of 2020; H.R. 4996, the Helping MOMS Act of 2020; and H.R. 1585, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I object to proceeding to everything en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

NOMINATION OF AMY CONEY BARRETT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on Thursday, the Senate Judiciary Committee advanced the nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett unanimously. It was unanimous because our Democratic colleagues sought to boycott the meeting. But what they basically did was expedite consideration of her nomination.

It was really kind of puzzling to see the chairs that were set aside for our Democratic colleagues filled with large, blown-up pictures, and I will sort of get to that in a moment, the false narrative that we have seen here because our colleagues cannot successfully attack the character or the qualifications of this incredible nominee to this seat on the Supreme Court.

Judge Barrett discussed everything from the separation of powers to the free expression clause of the First Amendment. Many of us marveled at her knowledge and her ability to recall facts and legal decisions without so much as even a note in front of her.

It is no surprise that the American Bar Association, which the minority leader has called the gold standard, gave her their highest rating.

The chair of the Standing Committee on the Judiciary said: "[I]n interviews with individuals in the legal profession and community who know Judge Barrett, whether for a few years or decades, not one person uttered a negative word about her character."

That assessment is in line with the glowing letters of support we have seen from her former colleagues and students whose political philosophies and beliefs fall across the entire political spectrum.

What we have repeatedly heard is about Judge Barrett's brilliance, her strong character, her great temperament, and her impressive humility. Judge Barrett, I am convinced, will serve our Nation well in the Supreme Court.

It is clear that the mountains of evidence stand in sharp contrast to the portrait our colleagues across the aisle have attempted to paint of this nominee. Democrats have tried to claim that she is somehow "too radical," despite the fact that in her 3 years on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, she has agreed with her colleagues 95 percent of the time in the 600 cases they have decided.

Back in 2017, when she was nominated to the Seventh Circuit, she was attacked explicitly because of her Catholic faith, even though our colleagues know that under the Constitution, no religious test is permissible, really suggesting that because of her faith, she couldn't follow her oath to decide cases on the facts and the law that come before her—truly insulting and completely out of character with the person we saw in Judge Barrett in front of the Judiciary Committee.

Our colleagues even went so far as to hold up a chart with more than 100 cases listed and claimed that Judge

Barrett would overturn every single one of those precedents. There is certainly no evidence of that. Nothing in the record would suggest it. With her fidelity to the law, do you think she would be so reckless? Well, of course not. There is just no evidence to support it.

But we know that because they couldn't attack her on the merits, they decided to use fearmongering instead. Through innuendo, misinformation, and intellectually dishonest arguments, they have been trying to stoke fears about how she may rule on a case she has not even heard yet. This is sort of a sky-is-falling argument, a Chicken Little argument.

It really has more to do with the way our Democratic colleagues view the judicial branch. They view it as another political branch, as opposed to an apolitical branch that is supposed to interpret the law and the facts and decide cases on their own merits.

Instead of addressing her judicial philosophy, our Democratic colleagues eagerly shared their plan, should she be confirmed, to pack the Supreme Court with additional Justices to give them the political results they cannot achieve with the current composition of the Court.

This is something that Ruth Bader Ginsburg explicitly condemned, saying that this would turn the Supreme Court into just another political body. You can imagine if Democrats, when they are in power, decide to add additional judges who may decide cases in the way they would like to see them decided, the temptation would be great for the other side of the aisle to add judges to the Supreme Court. It would completely destroy what has been rightly called the crown jewels of our Constitution, and that is our independent judiciary.

For many Americans, the idea of mutating our only apolitical branch of government is absolutely terrifying. So, not surprisingly, our colleagues across the aisle have tried to rebrand and call this rebalancing the Court. Back home, this is what we call putting lipstick on a pig.

Using words like "rebalance" is a way to obscure, really, what their goal is. They want to seize what they view as an unaccountable body and use it to secure wins they can't win in the rough and tumble of the legislative process. If you can't win an election, if you can't win a vote in Congress, well, get the Supreme Court, get the judiciary to bail you out. That is not the appropriate role of judges or the judiciary under our Constitution.

Our Democratic colleagues seem absolutely fearful about judges who will actually apply the law as written. They want somebody to impose a result that they wish were required.

They want judges to evaluate cases not by the letter of the law but through the same lens of personal and political biases. In short, they don't really want a fair and impartial judge

like Judge Barrett. They want a guaranteed result.

Our Democratic colleagues repeatedly pushed Judge Barrett to say how she would rule on future cases. They asked her to share her personal views on controversial issues. They demanded a commitment from her to recuse herself from specific cases. But, once again, Judge Barrett proved why she is the right person for this job. She followed the precedent set by former and current Justices and respectfully refrained from answering those sorts of provocative questions.

Contrary to what our Democratic colleagues believe, Supreme Court Justices are not life-tenured superlegislators. They are obligated to apply the law as written—no favors, no biases, no predetermined outcomes. That is what Judge Ginsburg said when she was confirmed, and that is why it is so important to confirm Amy Coney Barrett.

She has artfully demonstrated her understanding of the role of the judiciary and shown she has the temperament, the intellect, and the experience to serve on the Nation's highest Court.

She won't impose her personal beliefs. She said that time and again. And to suggest that she would somehow violate her judicial oath in a future case is inconsistent with everything we have come to know about Amy Coney Barrett.

She won't impose her personal beliefs. She won't try to favor one side or the other, and she won't legislate from the bench. That is exactly the kind of nominee that Republicans and Democrats should want on the High Court.

So I look forward to supporting Judge Barrett's nomination on Monday, when we finally vote to confirm her.

PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

Mr. President, briefly, on another matter, in Thursday's Presidential debate, former Vice President Joe Biden said he wants to transition the United States from the oil industry. Actually, Governor Abbott appropriately said: No, Joe Biden wants to transition hundreds of thousands of Texans from their paychecks.

What Joe Biden is sending is a not too subtly coded message that he wants to end our energy industry as we know it. This is an industry that, according to one study, directly or indirectly supports one out of every six jobs in my State and is a pillar of our State's economy.

Through tax revenue, high-paying jobs, and downstream economic gains, communities across Texas reap substantial benefits from our thriving oil and gas industry every day, and those benefits reach beyond our borders or the borders of any other energy-producing State.

That is because of the hard-working men and women on rigs, in fields, and in refineries. Because of their work, the American people have access to reliable and affordable energy.

In places like California and New York, folks can't turn on their lights,

fill up their gas tanks, or hop on an airplane without ever thinking about the men and women who made that seemingly simple task possible.

Now we are seeing our Democratic colleagues fighting to leave these energy sources in the dust. They are talking about switching to renewables, as if it were as simple as turning on a light switch.

In Texas, we literally believe in an "all of the above" energy policy. We produce more electricity from wind energy, from wind turbines, than any other State in the Nation. But we know what the reality of the kind of transition that Vice President Biden has talked about would mean. We got a taste of how disastrous it would be earlier this year.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, the need for Texas's greatest natural resource plummeted. With fewer cars on the road and fewer planes in the sky, oil and gas producers were left with a lot of supply and not much demand, and that is when the layoffs began.

A new report by Deloitte found that, between March and August of this year, about 107,000 energy workers were laid off, and that doesn't include the countless workers who had their pay cut or who were temporarily furloughed.

To make matters worse, the study found that as many as 70 percent of those jobs might not even come back by the end of 2021, and that is if we continue business as usual.

If the Vice President's plan to destroy our energy industry were enacted, these workers would have no jobs to come back to, and it would be only the beginning of the cascading negative economic consequences.

Many Americans aren't old enough to remember the 1970s energy crisis, which put our energy dependence in this country in the spotlight. The situation was so bad that gas stations were serving customers by appointment only. Some States banned neon signs to cut down on energy use. A number of towns asked their citizens not to even put up Christmas lights.

It was a cold, hard dose of reality that brought America's energy dependence to light and underscored the need to increase our domestic resources and wean ourselves off of the dependency on foreign oil. And that is exactly what we did. We placed a ban on the export of crude oil at that time to grow our reserves here at home.

With the shale revolution and technological advancements in the energy sector, in recent years, though, production has skyrocketed. Then it became abundantly clear it was time to lift the export ban, which we did.

Almost 5 years ago, I voted here in the Senate to lift that 40-year-old export ban, and until COVID-19 hit, we were seeing major gains. Last November, for the first time on record, the United States exported more crude oil and fuel than we imported.

Now that we have reached, really, what you could call energy self-sufficiency, our Democratic colleagues are eager to impose policies that would send us right back to the 1970s and that Orwellian energy crisis and wreak economic havoc in the process.

Really, I think Vice President Biden has succeeded in alienating all sides on this topic because he has been flipping and flopping back and forth about fracking bans, whether it would apply across the board or just to Federal lands. But KAMALA HARRIS, his running mate, has been abundantly clear and completely consistent. She said last year: "There's no question I am in favor of banning fracking."

But whether Democrats are talking about a transition, a fracking ban, or the Green New Deal, these proposals will kill the goose that laid the golden egg—our oil and gas industry—and send the economy into a tailspin. They would bankrupt my State, with the best economy in the country.

A study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that a fracking ban would cost our State nearly 3.2 million jobs by 2025. The annual cost of living would go up more than \$7,000. Unemployment would skyrocket, tax revenue would plummet, and the prepandemic economy that made us the envy of the world might never recover.

The only thing this so-called transition would lead to is a dire economic picture for Texas—and I believe the rest of the country as well—and unaffordable or unreliable energy resources.

I want to be clear; I support efforts to drive down emissions. That is why this shale gas revolution has been so good for the environment, by reducing emissions dramatically.

The U.S. energy-related emissions dropped by almost 3 percent last year, largely due to the increased use of natural gas for power generation.

I also support renewable energy. As I said, Texas is the No. 1 producer of electricity from wind. But even the strongest supporters of renewable sources of energy can tell you right now renewables are not capable of providing the energy that our Nation needs. As we all know, the Sun does not always shine, and the wind does not always blow. So wind turbines and solar panels can't fill the need, particularly with about 270-plus million cars on the road and an airline industry—not to mention our national defense—that depends on fossil fuels to run their engines.

Last year, renewables accounted for only 17.5 percent of our total electricity generation. For comparison, natural gas alone accounts for more than double that. While the development and expansion of renewable sources is important and something that I support, we simply can't cut our nose off to spite our face by denying ourselves access to, really, what is a gift, which is our natural resources and fossil fuels.