I yield the floor.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

PROTESTS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, before I make my prepared remarks, I would like to note the fact that this is the first time that I am returning to the floor of the Senate since the events of January 6. It was in the early morning hours of January 7 that we concluded our business and left this Chamber to return to our homes for the interim period.

We left, knowing that something terrible had happened in this building on January 6, but we didn't know the extent of it. As Members of the Senate, we were largely protected from this terrorist insurrection, which took place in this building.

It was about 2:15 p.m. on that afternoon of January 6, when Vice President PENCE was presiding over the Senate and most of us were in our seats, that there was a commotion at the Chair and the Secret Service came in and literally pulled the Vice President away from that podium and took him out the door. We weren't sure what was happening. It all unfolded quickly. There was an effort to make a quorum call to determine which Senators were on the floor. It was interrupted when a representative of the Capitol Police stood where the Presiding Officer is now seated and instructed us to stay in this room, in this Chamber, in the Senate, in our chairs. The staff people and surrounding offices were going to line the walls. This was going to be a safe place of refuge for whatever was going on.

I remember that moment particularly because something happened, which is etched in my memory. Two plain clothes officers came down into the well of the Senate and stood there, just a few feet from where I am standing. One of them had an automatic weapon around his neck. I couldn't imagine what was going on, where, in the U.S. Senate Chamber, it was necessary to have that kind of firepower.

He stayed there for a few minutes, and then we were told to leave and leave quickly. We filed out the doors and down the steps and walked across through the tunnel to the Hart building, where Members of the Senate were safely protected.

That is one of the reasons I wanted to say a word this afternoon and this morning. The Capitol Police, throughout this, were heroic. They were overwhelmed by this massive insurrectionist mob. The Capitol Police, as well as the others who joined them—the DC Metropolitan Police and other law enforcement agencies, which I don't know the names of as I stand here—I want to thank them all for literally risking their lives for me, for Members of the Senate, for our staff, and visitors.

It wasn't until the next day that we learned—that many of us learned—that a Capitol policeman had been killed—killed by this mob. My heart goes out to him and his family. I thank him and all of his colleagues, men and women, who each day get up in the morning, put on their uniforms, and come to this building to protect me and protect the other Members of the Senate and the House and all of the staff who work here. We will never be able to repay them in any words for what they sacrificed and risked on January 6, but let us never, never demean what happened that day. It was a terrorist attack—homegrown American terrorist attack.

I know we are going to spend some time discussing who provoked that attack. The Republican majority leader laid the blame, as he should have, at the feet of the President, who invited this group to Washington and then urged them to come march on Capitol Hill. I know we will go into this matter with more detail at a later point.

But the fact of the matter is, we endured a great travesty and a great violation of our Republic on that day. To think that in this building—this building that we value so much—so many people came in hell-bent on death and kidnapping and destroying this great Chamber and the building around it. It is inconceivable that this happened in America, and we have to come to grips with it in honest, truthful terms and not say: Oh, that was yesterday's newspaper, and we have to move on.

But there is good news—good news in light of the bad news that I have just recounted. The good news is that by this time tomorrow, we will have a new President and a new Vice President of the United States.

TRIBUTE TO REEMA DODIN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as we begin the Congress and prepare to welcome President Biden and Vice President Harris, I find myself thinking of the words of the 13th century Persian poet, Rumi. He wrote, ''Out beyond the ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there.''

For the moment that we are living through, I would edit his words slightly. I would say: Out beyond the ideas of right versus left, out beyond the rigid confines of our current polarized politics, there is a field of common good and common purpose. I hope we will all find the courage to meet there, to work together in this place.

At another moment of dangerous division in America, Abraham Lincoln prayed that the ''better angels of our nature'' would help us to rediscover our common bond and pull back from the brink of a civil war.

Today, the Union, preserved through that war, is battered and divided. For the first time since the Civil War, thousands of Federal troops stand guard at our Nation's Capitol to protect it from attack by American citizens.

Carpenters and other crafts people are still hard at work repairing the doors and windows and furniture smashed to bits less than 2 weeks ago by the insurrectionist mob. We must be better than this or we risk losing our democracy.

I believe that beyond the killing field of weaponized politics, there is still a field of shared dreams, which brings me to a specific reason I take the floor of the Senate today.

I come to thank a remarkable woman who has devoted countless hours over many years trying to help the Members of this Senate, Democrats and Republicans, find that field on which we can work together.

Reema Dodin has been a member of my staff for more than 14 years. She started as a law school intern in my Chicago office, and over the years, she rose through the ranks: legislative assistant; research director; Judiciary Committee staff member; floor counsel; and finally my deputy chief of staff.

For years, my person on the Senate floor has been this woman, this amazing woman. I am grateful for her service to the Senate and her service to the people of Illinois and to our Nation. But tomorrow Reema begins a new challenge as Deputy Director of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs. This daughter of immigrants will make history as the highest ranking Palestinian-American woman ever to work in the executive branch of the President of the United States.

As the liaison to the U.S. Senate, she will continue to help the Senate search for common ground on which to build a better future; only now she will be doing it from a different office, with a much better boss.

I know that she will be a tremendous asset to President Biden and the Nation. In these divided times, it is rare to find a public servant like Reema, whose excellence and integrity is so widely admired on both sides of the aisle.

No one understands better than Reema—well, perhaps two people in the Chamber might understand better—how this Senate works but only two. As the saying goes, she wrote the book on it, coauthoring an insightful tome entitled ''Inside Congress: A Guide for Navigating the Politics of the House and Senate Floors,'' published in 2017 by the Brookings Institution. It came this close to being a New York Times bestseller. But maybe still, with this speech today, it will reinvigorate sales.

As floor director for the Senate Democrats, Reema has worked closely with staff and Members on both sides of the aisle to whip bills and overcome hurdles. No matter how long or pitched the debate, she has always remained friendly, decent, optimistic, and dedicated. It was not unusual to find her still at her desk at midnight or 2 in the morning, sending her final whip alert or email of the day to Senate staffers summarizing the day's activities and the next day's Senate agenda.

Reema acquired her political and diplomatic acumen through hard work

and partly, it seems, through genetics. Her grandfather served as Social Affairs Minister for the Kingdom of Jordan under King Hussein and was involved in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations in the 1970s.

As I mentioned, Reema, like so many Americans, including myself, is a child of immigrants. Her parents both came to the United States as college students from Hebron, in the occupied West Bank.

Reema was born in North Carolina and grew up in Orange County, CA. She graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, earned her law degree from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, and we made her an honorary daughter of the land of Lincoln. She also is a Truman National Security fellow; a New Leaders Council fellow; an Aspen Socrates alumnus; a former term-member of the Council on Foreign Relations; and a member of the Jenkins Hill Society, a consortium of women in politics supporting women politicians.

Reema loves the Senate, and she loves the challenge of this great Chamber. She loves to give tours in this Chamber to those who want to know the procedure and the history of this beautiful room in American history and the Capitol of our Nation. She cares about the people who protect and preserve this building, including the maintenance people, cafeteria workers, and everyone who works here.

Even after so many years of climbing the marble staircase from the Senate floor to my office, she and I remain in awe of those time-worn steps, the colorful Minton tiles that brighten the Senate floors, and the majestic Brumidi frescos that adorn the walls.

During the recent siege of the Capitol, Reema worried for the safety of Senators and their staff, police officers, and troops who were defending this building, but she also worried about the priceless paintings, statues, and other historical treasures that had been passed down from one generation to the next as part of our national legacy.

Most of all, I know that Reema reveres the Senate as the place where men and women representing all of the people and all of the competing interests of the United States can reason and work together for the common good of our Nation.

In her personal inscription to her book on the Senate, Reema thanked me for taking a chance on folks with only dreams and no connections.

Well, Reema, tomorrow when you join the staff of the President of the United States, Joe Biden, you will have the best connections in Washington, and I know that you will use whatever opportunity presents itself on this new assignment to bridge the gaps in America and bring together the people of this country in a better, more caring nation.

I will forever be grateful for your many years of brilliant, loyal service, and I wish you the best.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WICKER). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOOKER. 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 BRIAN SICKNICK

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, in the Christian faith, there is a saying: ''Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'' I rise today to talk about that kind of sacrifice, that kind of love, and ultimately that tragedy in the death of a man who is a hero.

Officer Brian David Sicknick was many things. He was a loving son to his parents, Gladys and Charles Sicknick; a loving brother to Ken and Craig Sicknick; and a loving partner of 11 years to Sandra Garza. He loved his two dachshunds, Sparky and Pebbles, and he took great care of them.

Many of us got to know Officer Sicknick because he served in the Capitol Police Department. He was someone who loved his job and understood that every day when you put on that uniform, when you come to the Capitol of the greatest power on the planet, the United States of America, that wearing that uniform, wearing that badge, you had a sacred duty to protect this sacred space.

I am proud to say that Officer Sicknick was a Jersey guy through and through. He was born in New Brunswick, NJ, raised in South River, and he lived a life committed to the greatest calling you can have, which is to serve others, to protect others, to defend not just your Nation but her citizens. He was a member of the New Jersey Air National Guard. He loved his country. And I am proud to say he loved Jersey too. He was a New Jersey Devils fan. He proudly, in his work and commitment, served his country in the 108th Security Forces Squadron in Saudi Arabia and Kyrgyzstan.

Officer Sicknick was a reliable and cherished colleague. If you talk to those who knew him, they knew that he was a man of honor and decency and kindness. They knew he loved this job. He loved being a Capitol Police officer. He loved serving this Nation. He loved helping people. He loved his work.

That love is evident in so many stories shared by his family and friends, people who, in this time of painful grief, are still celebrating the life he lived even though it was cut short by hate. People speak to his character and the qualities, the values that made him so special. He was kind. He was patient. Like many of those who rise in their service to this country, he was humble. And he was selfless.

You talk to people who knew him really well, and they remember him as the kind of officer who would go out of his way, not just in his service to those of us who frequent the Capitol but to make sure that his colleagues, his fellow Capitol Police officers, were also doing OK. He was not just a leader; he was a servant. And they remember him living with that sense of honor and that sense of duty. They remember him as the kind of person who would stand courageously in the face of a colleague, who would sacrifice for them, who believed that service meant commitment, meant bringing your grit and your guts and your love. And that is what he did.

On January 6, 2021, when a violent mob attacked this Capitol, Officer Sicknick stood for America. He stood for this Capitol and all of its inhabitants. He was steadfast. He was courageous. He stood in the breach to protect the lives of the Members of this body, their staffs, personnel. He faced down terrorist attackers and sacrificed himself, his own safety, his own security, and ultimately his life in the name of love of country and of the countrymen and—women.

Officer Sicknick is the very definition of a hero, and he deserves to be remembered for the richness of his life, the way that he loved, and the devotion that he gave this Nation. That he is no longer with us today is a grievous tragedy, and it is also a crime. This great man was murdered. This crime demands the full attention of Federal law enforcement officials. Anyone who still harbors doubt about what happened here on January 6 should think of him.

On January 6, when extremists, when terrorists, when White supremacists attacked our Nation's Capitol, they took the life of one of our officers. They spilled his blood. They took a son away from his parents. They took a sibling away from his brothers. They committed this treachery while waving flags, claiming solidarity—some of them—with law enforcement, but it was hate—it was hate; it was hate—that brought terror to our Capitol and the death of one of our sons.

So many of the words that led up to that day, the lies that were told, the incitement and the encouragement, came from the highest office of our land to dotted members of authority across our country—these collective actions that led to the moment, the terrorists who are directly responsible as well.

In the aftermath, a hero, a Capitol Police officer, is dead— a champion, a hero. This is a senseless tragedy, an awful crime. I am not alone when I say to Officer Sicknick's family and loved ones that we—that I vow to hold those responsible for this heinous crime accountable.

We must honor Officer Sicknick's heroism and sacrifice not just with our words but by what we do here in the coming days, what we do as a nation, how we all take responsibility in the aftermath of a horrific moment.