

determine how America should deter and defend against growing threats from the PRC.

And it is the Congress's basic responsibility to establish appropriate funding levels for our Armed Forces. So our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee will be called upon to carefully consider the requirements identified by our commanders that have gone unfunded in President Biden's budget.

They should think about the steps that could improve our ability to project power into the Asia-Pacific or the assistance that could support vulnerable partners in that region.

So remember, threats of sanctions and stern diplomatic warnings don't deter Vladimir Putin in Ukraine. Words alone will not deter Chinese aggression in Asia. The Biden administration can continue to speak softly, but Congress must ensure that America carries a big stick.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO DAN SWANSON

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, over the past 17 years, a lot has changed in the Senate. Back in 2006, we counted two future Presidents in our ranks: Barack Obama and Joe Biden. The chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Senate was the late Arlen Specter, back when he was a Republican, and I was the most junior member of that Judiciary Committee.

Well, today, I want to tell you about one thing that has not changed since those days, and that is the dedicated, diligent public service of a man who stood by my side every step of the way as I have gone from the Judiciary Committee's most junior member to serving as chair of the committee. That man's name is Dan Swanson.

Dan is the embodiment of wisdom, patience, kindness, dedication, and selfless public service. Sadly, this is his last week as general counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee.

While Dan would never say it himself—he is just too humble—the truth is, he has made an indelible mark on the history of this Nation.

For nearly two decades, Dan has been my go-to man in addressing our Nation's most complicated and urgent challenges. In every one of those challenges, he has been guided by a love for the law and a belief that our government can and should help people.

When you consider his background, you can understand. Dan is the son of two teachers, and you can see their influence in the way he engages with others. No matter the time of day, he always finds time to talk through the details of statutes and case precedent, often from memory, and never—never—loses his temper or patience.

And just about any other staffer on the Judiciary Committee will tell you: Dan is the best teacher and mentor you could ever hope for. Moreover, his integrity and intellect are respected by Senators and staffers of both parties.

He is remarkably consistent. Growing up, he was always calm and kind.

He always knew what he wanted to do. In fact, Dan's parents say he was just about 10 years old when he first told them he wanted to write laws when he grew up. While other kids were dreaming of being astronauts or athletes, Dan knew that his future was in the law.

Years later, he pursued that dream by going to Harvard Law School because he thought it would help him land a job in the Senate Judiciary Committee. He then had the courage and determination to leave a well-paying job at a prestigious law firm and accept a job as a legislative correspondent in my office. Within weeks of joining, we realized Dan Swanson was indispensable. And soon enough, we were directing the hardest assignments of all to his desk. No matter how complicated the topic, Dan always mastered it quickly. Frankly, Dan's legislative legacy is too long to list in a single speech, but let me tell you about a few notable accomplishments.

Dan is the mastermind behind what is known in banking circles as the dreaded "Durbin amendment," a financial reform that has saved consumers and retailers billions of dollars by setting limits on the so-called interchange fees which banks charge merchants every time you swipe a debit card.

I had never heard of a swipe fee or an interchange fee. And I stumbled into a meeting of the Senate Judiciary Committee presided over by then-Chairman Arlen Specter, where he described the process where retailers across America were forced into signing agreements with the major banks and credit card companies, Visa and Mastercard—agreements, which many times they never even had a chance to read. It was a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. And in many ways, it still is.

The notion is, if you are a restaurant or shop or a chain of stores and you want to use Visa and Mastercard for your customers, you have to pay what they demand, the so-called interchange or swipe fee.

It turns out, for most of these retailers, it is the third most expensive item of business. The labor costs, of course, and, of course, the basics of food in the restaurant or the supplies that are needed in stores, but the third most expensive thing, which retailers face day in and day out, are these interchange fees or swipe fees charged by the big banks and the big credit card companies.

Can you imagine taking on that industry, trying to force through reform? I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it without him. Dan Swanson understood. He reached the point where he mastered that particular area of the law to the point where we offered a change in the way we do business in America when it comes to debit cards.

It was a long process. We had to offer an amendment on the floor in the banking reform bill. And Dan, every step of the way, was my guide as to what we could achieve.

We changed the law, and we reduced the costs to the retailers and to merchants and restaurateurs of using those debit cards for that purpose. I don't have many friends in the big banking industry as a result of it, but I can tell you, we made the big banks pay \$8 billion a year that they otherwise would have collected in these swipe fees. And by not collecting them, consumers and retailers were the winners. My lead advocate in that area, my expert in that area, was Dan Swanson. He understood it, and he did it so well.

He also helped save countless lives from gun violence, a topic on which he has been my top adviser. Just last year, he joined the group that wrote the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the most important gun safety reform to pass Congress in nearly 30 years.

And Dan Swanson has also been my point person on the Federal judicial nominees for my State of Illinois. He even helped create the bipartisan process we use in our State to select candidates to recommend for Presidential judicial nominations.

Dan has overseen the confirmation process for all but two of the Federal judges currently serving in the entire State of Illinois. And the judges he has helped reach the Federal bench bring not only strong credentials and experience, they have brought vital new perspectives.

With Dan's help, this Senate has confirmed the first women to serve as judges in the Central and Southern Districts of Illinois, the first Black and Asian American judges to serve in those districts as well as the Seventh Circuit. And he was instrumental in the confirmation of the first African-American woman on the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Throughout his more than 17 years of service in my office, Dan has not only changed America for the better, he has also experienced some changes of his own.

Dan does not like to be in the spotlight. But 10 years ago—I love this story—he and his wife Priva made a splash in the Washington Post. They were on their way to the hospital for the birth of their second child, but they didn't make it in time. Little Arya was born in her parents' car. She arrived a few years after her big sister Maya, who was born in more traditional circumstances.

So while our team regrets losing Dan, I know there are two little girls, along with their mom, who are going to enjoy a summer of quality with dad, which is just up around the corner. I hope the four of them have a chance to head up to Vermont soon with Dan's parents Alan and Donna, as well as his brother Allie, to take long walks in nature, watch the Bronx Bombers play, and enjoy countless helpings of Dan's favorite: Jell-O and pie.

A writer I admire once observed:

With the lives that we live and the choices we make . . . let our goal be to give the world more than we take.

Dan, you have given everything you can possibly give to public service, and I have been a beneficiary. I am grateful. America is grateful. Thanks, Dan Swanson.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The Senator from Vermont.

UNIONS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, tomorrow morning, the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will be marking up three landmark pieces of legislation which will make it easier for workers to form unions, it will guarantee up to 7 paid sick days for every worker in America, and it will make sure that women in our country finally receive equal pay for equal work.

If these bills are signed into law, they would represent the most significant set of labor reforms in the modern history of our country and significantly improve the lives of many millions of American workers.

We are living in a moment where corporate America and the 1 percent have more economic and political power than they have ever had in the history of our country. The time is long overdue for Congress to stand up for the working families of our Nation—60 percent of whom live paycheck to paycheck—and not just wealthy campaign contributors and lobbyists.

Let us be clear. The American people are sick and tired of the unprecedented level of corporate greed they see every single day, and they are tired of the outrageous and illegal union-busting that is taking place throughout this country. They are sick and tired of CEOs making nearly 400 times more than the average worker—unheard of in American history. CEOs of major corporations now make 400 times more than their average employee. The American people are sick and tired of billions in stock buybacks going to the people on top, while millions of Americans today are struggling hard to put food on the table and pay their rent.

The American people want justice, and that is what we are going to begin doing tomorrow in the HELP Committee.

The American people look around them, and they see more income and wealth inequality in America today than ever before. Three people on top have more wealth than the bottom half of American society—165 million Americans. Three people here, 165 million people, and that gap is growing wider.

While the people on top do phenomenally well, over 18 million families in our country are paying more than half of their limited incomes on housing, which is soaring in many parts of the country, and some 600,000 Americans are homeless.

American workers want to know why—why it is that despite huge advancements in technology and worker productivity, the average worker in America today makes about \$50 a week

less than he or she made some 50 years ago after adjusting for inflation. In other words, the very rich are getting richer, and the average worker is going nowhere in a hurry.

Now, there are a number of reasons—many, many reasons—why the gap between the very, very rich and everybody else is growing wider and many reasons why wages have remained stagnant. One of the reasons, of course, is that we have a Federal minimum wage today, a starvation wage, of \$7.25 an hour—a wage that has lost nearly 30 percent of its purchasing power over the last 14 years.

Raising the minimum wage is something the HELP Committee is going to address in the near future, but probably above and beyond the need to raise the minimum wage, the most important reason that real wages are lower today in America than they were 50 years ago is the fact that corporate America and the billionaire class have been waging a war against the right of working people to exercise their constitutional privilege to form unions, constitutional right to form a union, freedom of assembly. As a result of that aggressive war against union organizing, trade union membership today is at its lowest level in the modern history of America.

In our country today, 71 percent of the American people approve of labor unions. Labor unions today are more popular than they have been in a very long time. Yet, despite that, only 6 percent of private sector workers belong to a union.

Tomorrow, the HELP Committee will be asking why, at a time of record-breaking corporate profits, why are multibillionaires and CEOs of large corporations doing everything they possibly can to deny the working people of this country the right to join a union. Why? Why in their never-ending greed are they doing all kinds of illegal actions to prevent workers from forming unions and negotiating for decent wages and benefits?

The answer to that question really is not that complicated. Corporate America understands what most people in this country understand, which is that when workers join a union, they earn better wages, they receive better benefits, and they work with better working conditions. In fact, union workers today earn nearly 20 percent more on average than nonunion workers. Corporate America also understands that 64 percent of union workers have a defined benefit pension plan that guarantees an income in retirement, compared to just 11 percent of nonunion workers. Corporate America understands that union workers are half as likely to be victims of health and safety violations compared to nonunion workers.

For all of these reasons—the fact that union workers do better than nonunion workers, have better working conditions, better benefits—all of these reasons and more are why we are see-

ing a significant uptick in union organizing in America today. In fact, it is higher than we have seen in many decades. Workers understand that when they stand together in solidarity and can negotiate a decent contract, they are going to do a lot better than when they have to go begging to their employer.

So what we are seeing today is more and more union organizing at blue-collar jobs. A couple of months ago, a factory in rural Georgia organized a steelworkers local. We are seeing it at white-collar jobs all over this country. We are seeing it on college campuses.

Furthermore, very interestingly, as healthcare becomes more corporatized in America, we are seeing more and more nurses form unions. We are even seeing doctors form unions. At the University of Vermont Medical Center, among many others, resident doctors voted overwhelmingly to form a union.

With that growth in union organizing, what we are also seeing in this country is a vicious corporate response, and that is that major corporations all across this country are taking unprecedented and illegal actions against employees who are fighting for economic justice. That is why major corporations like Starbucks and Amazon and others have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on union-busting campaigns and anti-union law firms. They hire these fancy consultants at outrageous prices because at the end of the day, they would rather spend millions and millions of dollars trying to prevent workers from forming a union than pay those very same workers decent wages and decent benefits.

Part of the corporate strategy is the reality that over half of all employers in America threaten to close or relocate their businesses if workers vote to form a union. Imagine that. You work for a company for years. You want to form a union, and then your employer says: If you form that union, we are going to China; we are going to Mexico; we are going to leave this State.

That is why, when workers become interested in forming a union, they almost always will be forced to attend closed-door meetings to hear anti-union propaganda. What employers do is bring people into a room, they have all of their executives there, and they tell them how terrible a union would be and the consequences to them if they formed a union.

As Human Rights Watch has said, “Freedom of association is a right under severe, often buckling pressure when workers in the United States try to exercise it.” In other words, yes, in America, you have the constitutional right of freedom of assembly. You have the constitutional right to form a union. But if you exercise that right, all kinds of corporate power will be thrown at you to prevent you from succeeding.

Here is something that really is quite incredible: Even when workers overcome all of these incredible obstacles