

main Justice and the Attorney General—in order to try to tackle and turn our city's public safety situation around.

Today there are critical issues facing this country—urgent issues facing this country—that deal with the relationship between our communities and law enforcement agencies. If there were ever a time when we would want to have a confirmed Attorney General in office without question marks surrounding when that confirmation will take place, it would be now.

Over the last few months, we have seen a series of controversies that have torn at all of us as we have watched challenges and distrust between communities and law enforcement agencies. In early August, Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old, was shot during a confrontation with an officer in Ferguson, MO. That shooting spurred nationwide protests and concerns against what many in Ferguson and elsewhere viewed as overly aggressive tactics by the police.

A month prior to the death of Michael Brown, Eric Garner died as a result of a police chokehold in July in New York when he was confronted over the selling of untaxed cigarettes. There have been similar instances in Cleveland and Madison. It is not limited to one part of the country. It is not limited to North, South, East, or West. There have been similar instances that have raised serious concerns about the connection between law enforcement and communities.

There have also been horrible atrocities committed against members of the law enforcement community, the deaths of two NYPD officers, Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, who were shot pointblank weeks ago in New York City while they sat in their patrol car. Yesterday, as we heard reported, there were shootings of police officers in Ferguson, MO.

These instances in cities around the country demonstrate a significant level of tension and even distrust between the police and communities they serve, which are often minority communities or communities of color.

I am here to say these tensions do not have to exist. They can be bridged. They can be solved. But it takes a fully functioning Department of Justice with a leader at the helm who has been confirmed to solve these issues.

The Department of Justice has, throughout history and today, played a critical role in investigating cases such as this and some of the situations I mentioned. The DOJ has been able to come in and be involved and provide some calm to situations, provide some level of confidence that there would not be a sugarcoating or an effort to sweep legitimate questions into the closet in the community.

In the State of Virginia, there is currently a DOJ investigation concerning the police shooting death of John Geer, an unarmed Caucasian who was shot on the steps of his residence in August of

2013. Local officials in that county have welcomed the involvement of the Department of Justice because they knew that citizens would have a greater confidence in the outcome if it was being done by someone other than the officials who had been elected locally.

There is a critical need at this point to provide some confidence to communities that have questions about the relationship between their own concerns and the service of law enforcement departments, just as law enforcement departments want to have a way to build bridges with the communities they represent.

Loretta Lynch understands the significance of the Attorney General's role in these situations. She testified that one of her key priorities would be to work to strengthen the bonds between law enforcement personnel, whom she has worked with during her entire career, and the communities they serve which she well understands.

Last week, the DOJ released a report from their investigation into the Ferguson policing practices that laid out a number of significant concerns that, if left unaddressed, will continue to lead to distrust in Ferguson and elsewhere. A strong Justice Department that can help mediate and bring the sides together is a part of the solution.

I raised these issues only to highlight that right now we are at a critical time in the Nation's criminal justice system. A delay of confirming an Attorney General for 4-plus months is never warranted, given the importance of the position. A delay is not warranted in this case, given these strong credentials of Loretta Lynch, but the delay is especially unwelcome, given the urgent need to have leadership at the Department of Justice. They can try to calm any potential situations and build confidence in communities and among law enforcement agencies.

We need our incoming AG to be on the job, taking on these challenges in a manner that will bring different aspects of the community together, to make changes as necessary and to strengthen the equality of our criminal justice system for all.

Of course, beyond the issue of community policing, we face so many other challenges, such as national security and terrorism, and in that respect the Eastern District of New York, which is where Ms. Lynch has served, has had one of the most significant dockets of antiterrorism cases of any jurisdiction in the country. She is an expert in those areas. Cyber security, the very human trafficking issues we have been discussing on the floor today, are issues Ms. Lynch has worked on significantly in her role, protecting voting rights, and so many more.

Ms. Lynch is a no-nonsense, hard-working prosecutor known for her aplomb, her demeanor, her intelligence, and her ability to work with a wide variety of stakeholders. I am absolutely confident Ms. Lynch will approach these issues with the same

focus, fairness, and expertise with which she has approached her work in the past.

I stand today to urge my colleagues to not wait, and to support Loretta Lynch as our next Attorney General. It has been said to the point where it is a cliché, but nevertheless a true one, that justice delayed is justice denied. The refusal to confirm a leader to head the most important law enforcement agency in the United States is a delay of justice that for many seems to be a denial of justice. We can rectify that concern in communities across this country if we act with dispatch to confirm a person who is eminently qualified to hold the Nation's highest law enforcement position.

With that, I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senator from Mississippi has graciously allowed me to speak before him, and I ask unanimous consent that Senator WICKER be recognized immediately upon the conclusion of my comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we have been working on the issue of human trafficking on a bipartisan basis for almost a year, and it is usually bipartisan.

I know when we included my amendment on the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, most Senators voted for it. Only 20 current Republican senators voted against that victims act, and the rest voted for it. All the Democrats voted for it.

But on this issue today, the Judiciary Committee reported out a comprehensive bill with strong bipartisan support. We did that last fall. This year we reported out a less comprehensive bill with fewer protections for those at risk of human trafficking, and despite that setback, I agreed to keep working across the aisle to make it stronger, including the crucial prevention piece that was in last year's committee-reported bill.

We have been on this bill for 3 days. I think we can all admit the progress has been thwarted by the inclusion of a divisive provision that would limit the services available to victims of human trafficking.

I wish to propose a way forward. I know all Senators want to work together to end human trafficking. And just as we saw on my bill, the Violence Against Women Act, 78 Senators voted for that act with its provision on trafficking. We want to support a bill that will pass the Senate.

I filed a substitute amendment, Senate Amendment 300, to get us around