

Let's not forget that in rural America, the primary source of jobs and income are often associated with agriculture. It is the No. 1 industry in Mississippi, employing more than 17 percent of the State's workforce either directly or indirectly.

If family farms are taxed out of business, far more than the farmers will suffer. Low-income and minority populations across rural America will lose jobs and be forced to rely on government support. I hope this is not the underlying plan of my Democratic colleagues.

Let me be clear. For those who are willing to pay for reckless spending by punishing America's farmers and ranchers and everyone who relies on them, you will be doing far more than just that. You will be running off our next generation of farmers. You will be making it easier for large corporations owned by foreign adversaries, such as China, to buy up available farmland, and you will be ensuring that every American pays more for the food they eat and the clothes they wear. The list goes on.

I know there is a deep desire on the other side of the aisle to enact a reckless tax-and-spending spree that makes Americans more dependent on the Federal Government, but family farms cannot be caught up in the administration's punitive dragnet to find ways to pay for it.

Any changes to the Federal Tax Code should be geared toward supporting economic growth and helping the next generation keep these family-owned operations alive. I hope that we can all come to our senses on this.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF BONNIE D. JENKINS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the nomination of Bonnie Jenkins to be the next Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security.

The position for which Ambassador Jenkins has been nominated is one of the most vital senior security positions in the Department of State. This individual is responsible for overseeing nuclear policy and nonproliferation efforts, directing U.S. arms sales and security assistance policy, dealing with the legacies of unexploded munitions and landmines, and orchestrating global cooperation among both allies and adversaries on critical national security issues.

As the United States is preparing for its first Strategic Stability Dialogue with Russia, which will occur later this month, it is absolutely critical we have a Senate-confirmed leader in the State Department to effectively compete with and confront Moscow's challenges to our national security. This meeting will set the tone for U.S. diplomatic efforts to limit Russia's nuclear arsenal, which is crucial at a time when we are also witnessing the initial stages of a

major build-up of Chinese nuclear forces.

I am pleased to be supporting Ambassador Jenkins's nomination for this position, and I am confident that her extensive experience in the State Department and her 22 years in the Air Force and Naval Reserves provide her with the type of background and knowledge required to meet the challenges that await her, if confirmed.

During the Obama administration, Ambassador Jenkins' spearheaded efforts to fight nuclear terrorism. She helped coordinate four nuclear security summits which sought to persuade nations around the world to secure vulnerable nuclear material that might fall into the hands of dangerous actors.

For over 20 years, she served as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Naval Reserves, retiring as a lieutenant commander. She also holds multiple degrees, including a Ph.D., a master of laws, a law degree, and a master in public administration.

Outside of government she has consistently empowered voices rarely heard in national security debates, providing a different but important perspective on how the United States should tackle the threats we confront.

The fact that Ambassador Jenkins' nomination, someone whose leadership is so essential to the State Department and to our national security, has languished on the Senate floor for 56 days is a travesty.

I urge my colleagues to support her nomination and make sure that this critical national security position is filled without further delay.

VOTE ON JENKINS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Jenkins nomination?

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

(Mr. BENNET assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. HICKENLOOPER assumed the Chair.)

(Ms. BALDWIN assumed the Chair.)

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 275 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Baldwin	Hassan	Ossoff
Bennet	Heinrich	Padilla
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Paul
Booker	Hirono	Peters
Brown	Kaine	Reed
Cantwell	Kelly	Rosen
Cardin	King	Sanders
Carper	Klobuchar	Schatz
Casey	Leahy	Schumer
Collins	Lujan	Shaheen
Coons	Manchin	Sinema
Cortez Masto	Markey	Smith
Duckworth	Menendez	Stabenow
Durbin	Merkley	Tester
Feinstein	Murphy	
Gillibrand	Murray	

Van Hollen
Warner

Warnock
Warren

Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—48

Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hagerty	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hoeben	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shelby
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Cramer	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Lummis	Tillis
Cruz	Marshall	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Tuberville
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	Young

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 100, H.R. 3684, a bill to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Alex Padilla, Jeff Merkley, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jon Tester, Christopher A. Coons, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jack Reed, Patrick J. Leahy, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin, John Hickenlooper, Angus S. King, Jr., Tammy Duckworth, Patty Murray, Joe Manchin III, Mark Kelly, Kyrsten Sinema.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 3684, a bill to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 49, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 276 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Merkley
Bennet	Hassan	Murphy
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Murray
Booker	Hickenlooper	Ossoff
Brown	Hirono	Padilla
Cantwell	Kaine	Peters
Cardin	Kelly	Reed
Carper	King	Rosen
Casey	Klobuchar	Sanders
Coons	Leahy	Schatz
Cortez Masto	Lujan	Shaheen
Duckworth	Manchin	Sinema
Durbin	Markey	Smith
Feinstein	Menendez	Stabenow

Tester
Van Hollen
Warner

Warnock
Warren
Whitehouse

Wyden

NAYS—51

Barrasso
Blackburn
Blunt
Boozman
Braun
Burr
Capito
Cassidy
Collins
Cornyn
Cotton
Cramer
Crapo
Cruz
Daines
Ernst
Fischer

Graham
Grassley
Hagerty
Hawley
Hoeven
Hyde-Smith
Inhofe
Johnson
Kennedy
Lankford
Lee
Lummis
Marshall
McConnell
Moran
Murkowski
Paul

Portman
Risch
Romney
Rounds
Rubio
Sasse
Schumer
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Shelby
Sullivan
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Tuberville
Wicker
Young

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 51.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I enter a motion to reconsider the failed cloture vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I just want to explain what happened on the floor very briefly.

At the end of the vote, I changed my response to a no so that I may move to reconsider this vote at a future time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Vermont.

REMEMBERING JOHN LEWIS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I rise on the floor today to honor the legacy of one of the country's most cherished heroes and a very dear and close friend of mine, John Lewis.

This past Saturday marked 1 year since we said goodbye to Congressman Lewis. The pain of his loss is still very fresh for both my wife Marcelle and me, as it is for millions of Americans.

He wasn't just a moral giant and a guiding light for the world, he was, as he always told me, my brother, and I still have such a sense of emotion when I think of the time he introduced me as his brother.

For more than six decades, John Lewis served the United States with an unyielding belief that we could be better; that we have a responsibility to each other and the world to live up to our founding ideals.

John didn't spend his life fighting for Democrats or Republicans; he fought for the rights of all Americans and the dignity of all human beings.

John's principles were so much bigger than party and politics. When he saw suffering, he tried to end it; whenever he saw injustice, he tried to correct it; and wherever good trouble was needed, he delivered it.

I knew John as more than just a generational leader; I knew him as a friend. And I can tell you that his dedication to justice was matched only by his fundamental decency as a person.

John and I served in Congress for more than 30 years. In those years, I

witnessed a tremendous humility and empathy that defined his lifetime of public service.

Every day, John embodied the ideals he fought for through his unfailing generosity and dignity. So I consider John Lewis a brother, and it was an honor of a lifetime to have him consider me one too.

It is—I think when we walked down the street in Vermont, I just felt suddenly so much a person because I was walking beside John Lewis.

But people are seeing where he had walked. Many Americans know the stories of John's bravery in the face of brutality. He was beaten bloody, his bones broken, in the heroic efforts to bolster the ballot box for millions of Americans.

John wasn't just on the frontlines of our Nation's great civil rights movement; he was the frontline. John was there when the Freedom Riders were dragged off their buses and beaten and arrested; John was there to lead the march from—for freedom from Selma to Montgomery, AL; and John was there when millions of Americans gathered in Washington to proclaim to the country that the time for justice and equality was now. John Lewis put his body and soul on the line for the mighty movement that changed the world.

What fewer Americans may know is that John was beloved and respected by Members of both parties. It is because he believed in his heart that our Nation's greatest challenges must be faced together, regardless of party. When he stood there beside Lyndon Johnson as he signed the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965, he was flanked by Democrats and Republicans. In that moment, he absorbed the lessons that reaching across the aisle wasn't just a political necessity, it is the way to change—everlastingly change society.

And throughout his career in Congress, John embraced bipartisanship. He built friendships with Members of both parties. For years, John led bipartisan groups of Members of Congress, including some of my Republican friends in this body, down to the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL. He wanted to commemorate Bloody Sunday and the American struggle for equal rights.

I will never forget the iconic photo of John. He is flanked on either side by Presidents Obama and George W. Bush; the three of them, heads bowed in silent reflection, arms and hands linked on the Edmund Pettus Bridge for Bloody Sunday's 50th anniversary.

John Lewis didn't just cross bridges; he built bridges. By bringing people together, he helped us forge a more perfect Union.

So it is in John's spirit today that I fervently urge my Republican friends to join me in restoring and reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act. I would remind everyone in this body that reauthorizing the VRA, the Voting

Rights Act, on a bipartisan basis is the way we have always done it. I say always done—the core provisions of the VRA have been reauthorized five times, and every single time it was with overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress.

Look at the Presidents who signed it: President Nixon, President Reagan, George W. Bush. They all signed the Voting Rights Act reauthorizations into law because they spoke of the profound importance of the landmark law for our democracy.

I was here in 2006 for the most recent VRA reauthorization. Do you know what the vote was in this body in 2006? It was 98 to 0 in the Senate. In fact, many of the Republican Senators still serving today voted yes; 98 to 0. You can't do much better than that.

So let's honor John Lewis's legacy the way he would want to be honored, with solid justified action. I am committed to working with my Republican friends to find a bipartisan compromise around my John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which I proudly renamed in his honor last Congress.

For those who knew John Lewis and for those who did not, I can say John would want us to come together and find a path forward to addressing the many threats facing Americans' foundational right to vote. I will tell you what he wouldn't accept. He wouldn't accept inaction. So let's put in the hard work and let's try to live up to the memory of John Lewis, our hero and our colleague.

Let's remember the person who took me by the arm and walked me on to the floor of the other body one day and said to everybody: I am here with my brother.

Every one of us thought of John as our brother, and we were proud of that. Let us be proud of our brother. Let's be proud of his memory. Let's be proud of America. Let's be proud of our right to vote. Let's pass and reauthorize the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PADILLA. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to join Senator LEAHY and a number of our colleagues to remember our friend, John Lewis, and reflect on his legacy.

It was a little over a year ago when John shared his final message to the American people. He wrote, "Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself."

John devoted his entire life to building that "Beloved Community." And in

his final moments, he called on all of us to carry that mission forward. He told us it is now “your turn to let freedom ring.”

We have an obligation to live up to John Lewis’s legacy—and his call to action to protect our most fundamental freedom of all: the right to vote. And we can do that by restoring and revitalizing the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

When President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law, it marked the beginning of a new era of American democracy. It ensured that our constitutional rights were not merely sketched onto a piece of paper, but enforced as well. It ensured that poll taxes, literacy tests, and other Jim Crow laws could no longer be used to deny Black, Brown, and indigenous voters access to the ballot box. In the words of John Lewis, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 “helped liberate not just a people but a nation.” It brought America closer to our foundational ideals.

But today, this monument to American freedom is under attack. At this very moment, Republican State officials are working to pass laws that make it harder for people, particularly racial and ethnic minorities, to vote.

Nearly 400 of these bills have been introduced in 48 States. Some of these laws set new limits on voting by mail, others cut hours for polling locations, but the hundreds of restrictive voting provisions we have seen in recent years have achieved the same outcome: erecting new barriers to the ballot box.

The proponents of these laws claim they are designed to help prevent so-called voter fraud. But the truth is, “voter fraud” is nothing more than a fabricated phenomenon. Nearly every investigation into the 2020 election, for instance, has found no meaningful evidence of voter fraud. The Department of Homeland Security called last year’s election “the most secure in American history.” And more than 80 judges, including many conservative judges appointed by President Trump himself, have thrown out baseless challenges brought by the former President’s lawyers.

But even though the “Big Lie” of widespread voter fraud has been debunked, many Republican lawmakers are still standing by it. In fact, they are using the Big Lie to wage an assault on voting rights in America. You see, the laws I mentioned really aren’t about securing our elections; they are about preventing eligible Americans from voting.

Under section 5 of the original Voting Rights Act, many of these efforts to suppress voters would have been prohibited by the Department of Justice or Federal courts. But that authority has been greatly diminished. In 2013, the conservative majority on the Supreme Court essentially nullified section 5 of the Voting Rights Act with its decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*. And just this month, the Supreme Court weakened a remaining key sec-

tion of the Voting Rights Act—section 2—with its decision in *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*.

This is the trend that has emerged over the past decade: State officials make it harder for Black, Brown, and indigenous Americans to vote, and the conservative majority on the Supreme Court upholds those laws by whittling away at the protections guaranteed under the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In her dissent to the Court’s ruling in *Brnovich*, Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan wrote “in the last decade, this court has treated no statute worse” than the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Those are unequivocal words. The Supreme Court has severely hobbled the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And only Congress has the power—and the constitutional obligation—to restore it to its full potential.

You know, it really wasn’t that long ago that reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act was a unifying cause. Just a few years before the Supreme Court’s *Shelby* decision, the minority leader, Senator McConnell, joined his Republican colleagues in supporting its reauthorization. In expressing his support he said, “This is a piece of legislation which has worked.”

To him, and to all of my Republican colleagues, I say: Let’s make sure it can keep working. Let’s honor John Lewis’s legacy by joining together, on a bipartisan basis, to support a piece of legislation that will revitalize and strengthen the original Voting Rights Act: the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

I am proud to be working with Senator Leahy and our counterparts on the House Judiciary Committee to update and reintroduce this bill soon. Last Congress, it received bipartisan support, and we hope that we will be able to expand that support this year. What remains to be seen is whether the bill will receive the votes necessary to overcome a potential filibuster.

For those of my Republican colleagues who have yet to decide where they stand on the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, let’s show the American people that we can stand together. This Senate has the power—and the responsibility—to protect our most fundamental right as Americans.

Let’s heed John Lewis’s call and defend it together.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, 1 year ago this week, our Nation lost a giant, a man with a righteous purpose and a remarkable legacy, John Robert Lewis, who dedicated his life to the cause of justice.

From Troy, AL, to a bridge in Selma, to the Halls of this very Congress, he put his body on the line for every American’s sacred right to vote.

John Lewis never stopped fighting because he understood that democracy is a commitment we have to make again and again and again. As he wrote in the last days of his life:

The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic soci-

ety. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.

John Lewis understood the power and the fragility of our multiracial democracy, because he did so much to build it in his lifetime. At the age of 25, he led peaceful protesters on a march through Alabama to demand their right to vote. As the world witnessed, they were attacked, gassed, and beaten by police officers.

They were attacked because the right to vote is power, and White supremacists feared the power of people of color exercising that right. But out of the pain and outrage over this Bloody Sunday came one of our country’s greatest monuments to freedom, the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

For nearly 50 years, the Voting Rights Act stood as a guardian of our multiracial democracy. It outlawed literacy tests. It prohibited voting procedures that would deny or abridge the right to vote on account of race or color. It gave the U.S. Department of Justice the power to review any new voting rules in places with a history of voter suppression and to block rules with discriminatory effects.

Critically, the Voting Rights Act recognized the important role of the Federal Government in protecting the right to vote. It helped guarantee communities of color their rightful voice in our democracy.

Over time, the Voting Rights Act was reauthorized four times, including most recently in 2006, when Representative Lewis and a nearly unanimous Congress voted to affirm the continued need for its protections. That’s right. Passage of the Voting Rights Act and every reauthorization of the Act was always on a bipartisan basis.

But in 2013, five conservative Justices of the Supreme Court overrode the bipartisan consensus of Congress. In spite of the voluminous record assembled by the Congress and the reality of the country around them, these five Justices effectively ended preclearance and gutted a key protection of the Voting Rights Act.

As the late Justice Ginsburg wrote in her dissent, it was “like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.”

Well, the storm of voter suppression is most certainly pouring over us now.

In 2020, in the midst of an ongoing global health pandemic, our Nation held one of the most successful and secure elections in our history. Voters of color made their voices heard in record numbers and confirmed again that our democracy is strongest when all eligible Americans are able to participate.

But instead of celebrating this remarkable achievement, Republican legislative leaders in statehouses around the country this year have proposed and passed bill after bill after bill restricting the right to vote and restricting access to the ballot. They are doing this on the basis of lies about voter fraud and rooted firmly in the legacy of White supremacy. They continue to do so as we speak.

The Supreme Court's most recent anti-democracy decision in the *Brnovich* case, which eviscerated a key remaining protection of the Voting Rights Act, will only embolden these attacks.

But, so far, in this Senate, our Republican colleagues have turned a blind eye, choosing to be complicit in the outright assault on our democracy. Senate Republicans have refused to even open a debate on voting rights legislation. Instead, they prefer to abuse the filibuster to enable Republican legislative leaders across the country to continue their assault.

Our democracy is on the line. The unfinished work of John Lewis remains. We must summon the courage to act. That is why I am committed to passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which will protect the right to vote for all people. I can think of no more fitting way to honor the memory of a man who chose our democracy as the struggle of his lifetime.

When I was first elected California Secretary of State to serve as the Chief Elections Officer for the State of California, I sought out the counsel of John Lewis. For more than 45 minutes during our first meeting, and time and again after that, John guided me with his wisdom, taught me by his example, and inspired me through his courage. He was always gracious with his time, warm with his spirit, and true in his conviction. And he reminded me, as he reminded so many of us, that our struggle is a struggle of a lifetime.

As he said, we cannot be afraid to make some noise and get into good trouble, necessary trouble, along the way. In fact, given the circumstances, it is exactly what we need to do today. As a bipartisan Senate, if we can, or as the elected Democratic majority, if we must, it is imperative that we pass legislation to preserve our democracy.

We must carry the torch that John Lewis carried for us for so long and build for all Americans a democracy that is as free, as fair, as accessible, and as inclusive as we can possibly make it. And we must remain hopeful in this pursuit.

You see, despite the scars that he bore and the hatred that he faced down, John Lewis was fundamentally a hopeful man, a man who never abandoned the youthful spirit that carried him across that bridge in Selma, and he always looked to the next generation for leadership, for energy, and for inspiration to carry the cause forward.

It is now on us to take up his work. There is no better way for us to honor the legacy of John Lewis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I join in the wonderful words of my colleague from California, a true leader. He is someone who has served as an election official and the secretary of state for the biggest State in our Nation. He knows how important it is to

count the votes and to make sure we allow everyone to vote.

I come to the floor today to join him and to join Senator LEAHY and other of our colleagues to honor the legacy of Congressman John Lewis and to continue his fight to make sure that every American can make their voice heard at the ballot box.

As my colleagues have mentioned, it has been just over a year since John Lewis passed. I have always been in awe of him. This past week, I had the opportunity to reflect on his monumental contributions to our Nation when the Senate Rules Committee held a field hearing on voting rights in his home State of Georgia at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, a place that commemorates the civil rights movement.

Today, as we celebrate his legacy, I am reminded of his persistence, his resilience, and his faith that this country could be better if only we put in the work. It was his faith in our country that led him to Selma, AL, where he helped lead 600 marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on that dark day that became known as Bloody Sunday. Several times, several years, including the last year that he came to that bridge before he died, I was able to stand with him on the bridge in awe of everything he had done.

The horrific events of that day shocked the Nation, with marchers attacked with clubs and tear gas. Congressman Lewis's skull was fractured. He bore the scars until the very end of his life.

Soon after, President Lyndon Johnson came to the Capitol, and, as he said, "with the outrage of Selma still fresh," urged Congress to guarantee the freedom to vote. Months later, with the help of former Minnesota Senator and Vice President Hubert Humphrey, the Voting Rights Act was signed into law.

One of the times I visited was, in fact, the 48th year anniversary of that march. That weekend, after 48 years, the police chief of Montgomery handed his badge to Congressman Lewis and apologized for not protecting him and the other freedom marchers. Forty-eight years is a long time, and it only happened because Congressman Lewis never quit fighting for progress, for civil rights, for economic justice, and to defend the voting rights of every American.

But now, more than five decades since that day in Selma and since the Voting Rights Act became the law of the land, so much of the progress that Americans have fought and even died for is at stake. Throughout our country's 245-year history, we have had to course-correct and take action to ensure that our democracy—for the people, by the people—actually lives up to its ideals.

We all had that moment, that night after the insurrection when this Chamber, which we are standing in, was taken over by those who did not be-

lieve in our election processes and in our democracy. And we not only came back to this Chamber that night, but, 2 weeks later, we stood under a beautiful blue sky and declared—Democrats or Republicans or Independents—that we stood with our democracy.

And as I said that day, that was a day where our democracy stood up, brushed itself off, and we went forward as "one nation under God, indivisible, with life and liberty for all."

That is why earlier this week, believing that the job is not done, especially when over 400 bills have been introduced across this country in nearly every State, with 28 of them already signed into law, including an egregious example in Georgia—that is why—for the first time in two decades, we took the Senate Rules Committee on the road and held a field hearing in Atlanta to shine a spotlight on what is happening in Georgia and in States across the country to undermine the freedom to vote.

We heard from State legislators and a former election official who had lost her job after a change in law meant that local election officials were taken away from their posts. And we heard from a voter, a veteran who had stood in line for hours and hours just to cast his vote. And when I asked him, when he signed up for the Air Force, was there a waiting line, he said no.

Well, there shouldn't be a waiting line to vote in the United States of America, and that is why it is so critical that Congress pass basic Federal standards—that is the For the People Act—to ensure that all Americans can cast a ballot in a way that works best for them and that is safe for them, whether it is early voting, whether it is vote by mail, which so many Americans in red States and blue used across the country during the pandemic.

And as we know the history of that, in States like the Presiding Officer's State of Colorado, or States like Utah, known as a red State, or States like Oregon, that has been the way they have been doing business safely for a long time. And many of us, for the first time, voted in that way.

But there are other ways as well, with dropoff ballot boxes. Some people have not registered way early because maybe they moved to a State, as we know happens in the United States, or maybe they are a young person at college, or maybe they forgot to register and they have to catch up and do it. None of those reasons, those simple reasons that could happen to anyone in their everyday life, should be reasons to ban people from voting, and that is why these basic Federal standards are so important.

When we were in Georgia, we heard from Helen Butler, who I mentioned was a former election official from rural Morgan County, who pointed out that it was only after Black voters increased their vote-by-mail numbers in the 2020 election that the Georgia Legislature imposed new restrictions on mail-in ballots, after all those years.

Georgia State Senator Sally Harrell also testified about how the bill was rushed through—this restrictive voting bill—through the Georgia Legislature without meaningful debate.

We heard about the provisions of the bill that basically say that non-partisan—that is already required, and that is correct—nonpartisan volunteers can't even give voters water when they stand in line, despite the fact that there were voters that we heard from the day before, with Senator MERKLEY and Stacy Abrams, and those voters stood in line for 3 hours, for 4 hours, and for 7 hours.

We heard about the runoff changes. The runoff used to be 9 weeks in Georgia. It was reduced to 28 days. And during the runoff period, you can't vote, under the new law, on Saturdays and Sundays. You can vote that way during the general election. All of this—all of this—is done, in the words of one North Carolina judge, many years ago, in a decision, who said: This law discriminates with surgical precision—literally going through ways that people voted, literally noticing that 70,000 new voters registered during the runoff, and then banning that because you have to register now 29 days ahead, when the time for the runoff is 28 days. How obvious can you get?

Where you live and what your ZIP Code is should not dictate whether or not you can vote for President or U.S. Senate or Congress or Governor or any election. We owe it to the people of this country, and to those across the country who stood in line for hours to cast a ballot, to take action and protect the fundamental right to vote.

I know a little bit about that because, in my State of Minnesota, nearly every single election has the highest voter turnout in the country. And guess what. We have elected Republican Governors with those rules that allow for more people to vote and the highest voter turnout. We have elected Democratic Governors, and we have elected Jesse Ventura. What I have noticed is not who wins, given that we are the only State in the country that has one State House that is Republican and one State House that is Democratic, given that our congressional delegation in the House is split evenly and has changed over time. It is not really who wins. It is how people feel about elections. They are part of the franchise we call democracy.

So they will come up to me and say, "You know, I didn't vote for you, but whatever; you are doing OK," or "I have this concern." But they feel like they are part of the action. That is what our goal should be, to have all Americans feel like they are part of the action.

We must meet this moment. As President Biden said in Philadelphia last week, this is the "test of our time." So what do we do? Well, first, we must pass the For the People Act, which Senators SCHUMER and MERKLEY and I introduced, along with many oth-

ers, to ensure that all Americans can cast their ballot.

It is nothing radical. You know why it is not radical? It is firmly based in the Constitution. On the basic voting rights, the Constitution literally says that Congress can make or alter the rules and the manner in which Federal elections occur. That has never been questioned. It has been affirmed time and time again.

The other bill, the bill we are focused on today, Congressman Lewis's bill, that is the Voting Rights Act, and you restore the Voting Rights Act after a Supreme Court decision struck down parts of that bill. I didn't agree with it. I agreed with then-Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's dissent, but you fix it with the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

It is now Congress's responsibility—the Supreme Court decision made that clear—to restore and modernize the Voting Rights Act and provide the Federal Government with the necessary tools to combat the assault on Americans' right to vote. We must recommit to the original goal of the Voting Rights Act to end discrimination in voting in America. We know this is something, historically, until recent years, that brought everyone together. The Senate reauthorized the Voting Rights Act in 1982 by a vote of 85 to 8, including 43 Republicans; in 1992, by a vote of 75 to 20, including 25 Republicans; and in 2006—2006—with a unanimous 98 to 0 vote, including 51 Republicans. And I don't think anyone with a straight face can say: Well, the reason we don't need to do this anymore is that we don't have any discriminatory laws being enacted on the State basis or there aren't any laws being enacted that limit voting.

Truly, maybe you should read some of the court decisions, if you think that.

I would say there is a stronger argument to do this, both sides of the aisle. John Lewis's bill is so important, and it isn't a substitute for passing the For the People bill, but we must do that, as well as include election infrastructure funding in the reconciliation bill, which I believe will be coming our way soon.

I will end with this. Last Sunday, I had the privilege of attending services at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where I got to hear Reverend WARNOCK. There was a guest preacher, but for me it was like he was also preaching. And I got to hear him say something I will never forget. He said this:

A vote is a prayer; it's a prayer for a better world, a prayer for your kids' education, a prayer that you're going to finally be able to do something about this world's environment.

So during the last election, we saw an unprecedented number of people go to the polls to do just that. Not every one of their candidates won, but they believed enough in our democracy, in the middle of a public health crisis, that they went and cast their vote.

In Congressman John Lewis's words, "The right to vote is precious and almost sacred, and one of the most important blessings of our democracy." Today, we must be vigilant in protecting that blessing.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I rise here today to give emphasis to something I think is very important—it has been done basically annually—and that is talking about our Pledge of Allegiance. It is an expression of patriotism and commitment to our great Nation.

The United States is a symbol of freedom around the world. It is a beacon for "the land of opportunity."

Today, let's reaffirm our allegiance to the United States. I urge my colleagues to pass this annual resolution that simply expresses support for our Pledge of Allegiance.

This resolution was first raised by Senator Tom Daschle back in 2002 and passed without objection. Now, nearly 20 years later, this resolution is probably more important than ever.

We have seen countless attacks on our flag and the values it represents. The American flag is a symbol of hope and perseverance across the world. Whether in Cuba, Hong Kong, or Venezuela, those suffering under tyrannical regimes proudly wave the American flag in protest.

The U.S. Senate must stand in support of the Pledge of Allegiance, one of our most powerful expressions of national unity.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 309, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 309) expressing support for the Pledge of Allegiance.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BRAUN. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 309) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. BRAUN. I yield the floor.