

a half, the United States has been a no-show, allowing others to engage in our absence. During this time, the United States has missed opportunities to add its voice and engagement to essential conversations on economic integration, the promotion of justice and the rule of law, durable solutions to crisis, and citizen engagement that impact the entire African continent.

China has been active. We have been missing.

We must get ourselves back into the game in the continent, and the nominee under consideration is well positioned to do this. Ambassador Sullivan has held numerous positions focusing on advancing U.S. interests in Africa. She has served as Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana and the Republic of Congo and as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs. Ambassador Sullivan is an experienced diplomat who knows and understands the continent and has demonstrated leadership skills that will serve us well at the AU headquarters.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes on cloture and yes on the confirmation of Ambassador Stephanie Sullivan to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the African Union. Let's get this done, and let's get this done today.

With that, I yield the floor.

VOTE ON PIPE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Pipe nomination?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN), the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 38, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 188 Ex.]

YEAS—55

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

Van Hollen	Warren	Wyden
Warner	Welch	
Warnock	Whitehouse	

NAYS—38

Barrasso	Fischer	Ricketts
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Budd	Hoeven	Rubio
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lee	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lummis	Sullivan
Cramer	Marshall	Thune
Crapo	McConnell	Tuberville
Cruz	Moran	Wicker
Daines	Mullin	Young
Ernst	Paul	

NOT VOTING—7

Braun	Hagerty	Vance
Britt	Johnson	
Graham	Menendez	

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 action.

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 senior assistant legislative 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 nomination of Executive Calendar No. 590, Stephanie Sanders Sullivan, of Maryland, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be Representative of the United States of America to the African Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Charles E. Schumer, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jack Reed, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Baldwin, John W. Hickenlooper, Brian Schatz, Christopher Murphy, Richard J. Durbin, Jeanne Shaheen, Margaret Wood Hassan, Alex Padilla, Mazie Hirono, Sherrod Brown, Tina Smith, Catherine Cortez Masto, Jeff Merkley.

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 nomination of Stephanie Sanders Sullivan, of Maryland, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be Representative of the United States of America to the African Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN), the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT), the Sen-

ator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 189 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Sanders
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	Kelly	Schumer
Butler	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cardin	Lujan	Smith
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Collins	Merkley	Tillis
Coons	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warner
Duckworth	Murray	Warnock
Durbin	Ossoff	Warren
Fetterman	Padilla	Welch
Gillibrand	Peters	Whitehouse
Hassan	Reed	Wyden
Heinrich	Romney	

NAYS—40

Barrasso	Grassley	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hawley	Risch
Boozman	Hoeven	Rounds
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Daines	Moran	Young
Ernst	Mullin	
Fischer	Paul	

NOT VOTING—7

Booker	Graham	Vance
Braun	Hagerty	
Britt	Menendez	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 40, and the motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Stephanie Sanders Sullivan, of Maryland, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be Representative of the United States of America to the African Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

RIGHT TO CONTRACEPTION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session and resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 4381, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 400, S. 4381, a bill to protect an individual's ability to access contraceptives and to engage in contraception and to protect a health care provider's ability to provide contraceptives, contraception, and information related to contraception.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

RIGHT TO CONTRACEPTION ACT

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I rise today in proud support of the Right to Contraception Act, straightforward legislation that would protect individuals' right to access contraception and providers' right to provide it.

Our bill wouldn't force anyone to take or provide contraception if they don't want to, but it would help ensure that those who do can without the government getting in their way.

As Republicans continue their assault on our fundamental reproductive rights, this bill is critical to safeguard the right of all Americans to access contraception.

I look forward to saying more about this important legislation later on, but first I am glad to be joined by many of my Democratic colleagues who will come to the floor to speak on this bill. They know how vital it is that we protect the right to contraception, starting with my colleague from Massachusetts, my partner on this bill, Senator MARKEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, thank you to my partner Senator HIRONO from Hawaii and to all of the Senators who today are going to lead on this issue of ensuring that people in the United States have access to contraception. I am joined by Senator SMITH from Minnesota. But we will be joined by so many others out here on the floor because this Friday, June 7, will be 49 years since there was a decision made in the *Roe v. Wade* question before it got repealed in 2022—49 years, from 1973 to 2022.

And the Supreme Court, 59 years ago to this day, June 7—the Supreme Court recognized in *Griswold v. Connecticut* the right of Americans to use contraception. Just a few years later, in 1972, the Supreme Court expanded on that holding and wrote:

If the right of privacy means anything, it is the right of the individual, married or single, to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as the decision whether to bear or beget a child.

That was the Supreme Court in 1972.

In recognizing the fundamental right to contraception, the Supreme Court affirmed what we know: The right to contraception is essential to Americans' health and freedom. This decision was a step toward freedom and away from decades of reproductive coercion rooted in this Nation's history.

In 1927, the Supreme Court in *Buck v. Bell* approved forced sterilization in a decision steeped in ableism. Federal funds were used to sterilize 100,000 to 150,000 women, half of whom were Black. Teaching hospitals in New York and Boston experimented on Black and Puerto Rican women as practice for medical students. In recent history, immigrant women in detention faced forced sterilization, and Black, Brown,

immigrant, disabled, LGBTQ, low-income and rural Americans still face significant—and sometimes insurmountable—barriers to getting reproductive care.

Left up to the extremism of the far right, they would let this injustice grow deeper into the American soul. Just 2 years ago, the Supreme Court majority did so when they took settled precedent and placed it on shaky ground.

In *Dobbs*, the Supreme Court majority overturned decades of settled precedent to strip away the constitutional right to abortion. On June 24, 2022, Americans had one less right than they did on January 23, 2022.

In his concurring opinion in *Dobbs*, Justice Clarence Thomas distilled the threat to American freedom. He outlined a long-held rightwing reactionary belief that Americans had too many privacy rights under the Constitution, that the Supreme Court erred in recognizing those rights, and that the Court should take them away. The rights he was talking about? The right to marry whom you love and the right to contraception.

Justice Thomas put that in his concurring opinion, a preview of what he wanted the Supreme Court to take up in future years.

Emboldened by the Supreme Court, States across the country have limited or prohibited access to contraception. Texas Republicans gutted Medicaid coverage of emergency contraception. Idaho Republicans blocked health clinics in public schools from providing contraception. And Republican Governors are vetoing State efforts to protect the right to contraception.

The threat to contraception is not hypothetical; it is a real threat that requires a real response here on the Senate floor. We must guard against efforts to oppress, suppress, and repress reproductive freedom for people and their healthcare providers.

That is why I proudly introduced the Right to Contraception Act with my colleagues MAZIE HIRONO and TAMMY DUCKWORTH.

The Right to Contraception Act guarantees Americans have the freedom to get contraception and for health providers to give it; the right to contraception free from Federal and State government threats; and the dignity to choose what contraception works best for them and for their families.

Passing the Right to Contraception Act would provide clear and unequivocal safeguards for a right that Americans have relied upon for nearly 60 years. It would keep government intrusion out of the deeply personal decisions people make about their health and their families. It would mean moving toward reproductive justice and freedom for everyone in our country.

Now, my colleagues across the aisle are trying to argue that this legislation restricts parental rights and religious liberties. That is completely un-

true. The only restrictions that are being debated today are the ones that Republicans and MAGA extremists want to place on access to contraception.

Democrats are here today to defend reproductive freedom. This bill is about ensuring liberty, the liberty that comes with having full access to healthcare options.

Today, we have an opportunity to pass the historic piece of legislation, the Right to Contraception Act. This vote asks a simple question of each Senator and each American: Do you support Americans' freedom to make their own decisions about their health and social and economic freedom or not? Which side of that question are you on in our Nation?

For many of my colleagues and for the vast majority of the American people, that answer is easy, and it should be easy. At its best, this institution has affirmed the rights of every American. On this floor, we have expanded access to healthcare, battled against racial segregation, and protected same-sex marriage.

And today, we have the opportunity to protect the right to contraception. We have the opportunity to show the American people that we will fight with them and for them for reproductive freedom.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting yes to pass the Right to Contraception Act. Vote yes to ensuring that reproductive health freedom and justice is the law of our land.

We cannot allow our country to go into the "Wayback Machine," to go back to 1965, to go back to before *Griswold* was decided. That is what MAGA rightwing Republicans want to have happen in our country, and it is just absolutely unacceptable.

So today is the day of reckoning. Today is the day we will have the vote out here on the Senate floor to show which direction you believe our country should be headed.

I thank Senator SCHUMER for making it possible for us to have this debate today. I think it is going to be a very meaningful one that will ultimately help to clarify for the American people whose side each of the Senators are on in terms of their families, their family planning, the decisions they have to make for themselves.

So I thank you. I thank Senator HIRONO and Senator DUCKWORTH for their leadership and Senator MURRAY, of course, historic leader on all of these issues. And I am looking forward to the discussion—the debate—today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Ms. BUTLER. Madam President, I rise today to join my colleagues in calling for the passage of the Right to Contraception Act.

I would like to start, of course, by thanking Senators MARKEY, HIRONO, and DUCKWORTH for their work in championing legislation that preserves

women and families' right to plan a pregnancy on their own terms.

Now, basic reproductive and sexual healthcare tools like contraception, like STI prevention, and like fertility treatment are under immediate threat, further reducing patients' options when and whether to start or grow their families.

In Arizona, every Republican in both legislative Chambers blocked legislation to protect access to contraception.

In Oklahoma, we have seen the Republican legislature there advance legislation that could create a database of women who obtained an abortion and could make IUDs and emergency contraception inaccessible.

In Tennessee, House Republicans voted down a bill in committee that would have made clear that the State's abortion ban would not jeopardize access to contraceptive care or fertility treatment.

In short, at every opportunity, extreme MAGA Republicans haven't stopped their unconscionable campaign to chip away at a woman's access to basic healthcare.

According to 2022 data from the Kaiser Family Foundation, 90 percent of females aged 18 to 64 have used contraception at some point during their reproductive years—90 percent. If we were to let those extremists have their way, it would mean millions of women in our country being left without options and forced into unwanted pregnancy and other situations that we may not be prepared for.

Now, my State, California, has been a leader on the frontlines of reproductive freedom. Five months after the Dobbs decision, California voters overwhelmingly chose to amend the State constitution and unequivocally protect the right to abortion and contraception.

This week, I heard from Martin Orea and Emily Oh from Southern California, first-year students attending Santa Monica College and Irvine Valley College, respectively. Together, they serve as the Youth Health Equity and Safety Ambassadors for Essential Access Health, a nonprofit dedicated to championing quality sexual and reproductive healthcare for all.

They wrote to me saying:

Access to contraception is not just a health issue—it's a lifeline for our autonomy and future. Access to contraception is about giving us the power to shape our destinies.

When we have the tools to manage our health, we can stay in school, build stable families, and contribute positively to our communities. The ability to get contraception enables us to lead healthier, more productive lives and achieve our dreams.

It is about fostering personal responsibility, stability, and economic self-reliance.

When I came to this Chamber, I made a promise. I made a promise to be urgent in my efforts to protect the rights of young people like Martin, Emily, and others in their generation who are tired of being ignored and dismissed. We cannot fail them or let them down in this moment.

I close, urging my colleagues to join in and ensure that attacks on contra-

ceptives do not go unchecked. We must support this legislation and safeguard contraceptive care for the millions of young girls, women, and patients across the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, I rise today with my colleagues to urge all of my colleagues to vote in favor of the Right to Contraception Act.

At its core, this bill is based on a very simple value. The value is that every individual should have the right to make decisions about their lives, their medical care, their families, and their bodies.

Passing this bill would not only protect the right to get birth control free from government interference, but it would protect this core American value because if you don't control your reproductive life, you don't control anything about your life.

This is a bipartisan issue at least in the Nation, if not in this Chamber. Over 80 percent of Americans support access to birth control, including over 70 percent of Republicans, but despite this overwhelming level of support, many of my Republican colleagues seem set to block this bill today. You know, I wish I could say that I was shocked, but there is a direct through line we see between Senate Republicans and Donald Trump in confirming Trump's extremist, anti-choice Justices, overturning Roe, and bringing us to this day. So this is not an accident; this is a plan.

In the era of chaos ushered in by the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, the Republicans' refusal to protect access to birth control is just another example of this cruel and reckless approach to women's health, and every day, we are confronted with the grave consequences that overturning Roe has had for Americans.

Today, one in three women of child-bearing age lives in States with a Trump Republican abortion ban, and from those States, we hear the stories of the impact of that on people's lives—women trying to get reproductive health care and being turned away, sometimes until their conditions become life-threatening; doctors trying to provide healthcare that they feel is best for their patients but they can't because of the fear of prosecution. It is clear that the people responsible for this either don't understand women's health and bodies or they just don't care.

Now, people access contraceptive care—birth control—for a whole host of reasons, including to treat conditions like ovarian cancer, endometriosis, and migraines. Laws and regulations that restrict access to birth control harm people. They harm people, and they harm their families. That is why this is so important.

The Right to Contraception Act protects more than just your right to make your own decisions about wheth-

er and when and how to become a parent; it protects your right to chart the course of your life and to make decisions without politicians and judges interfering. So when Republicans vote no, what they are saying is that they want to be in charge of your freedom, your autonomy, and your personal dignity.

You know, you may be thinking as you are listening to this debate: I mean, why is this law necessary? I mean, what is out there? Who is out there who is actually trying to restrict access to contraceptives?

Well, the reality, colleagues, is that this is happening. You can see it in Republican efforts to redefine some contraception, like IUDs or the morning-after pill, to redefine those kinds of contraception as abortion—based not on the science, not on the best medical expertise, but on their political views. You can see it in their relentless efforts to defund Planned Parenthood and to cut title X funding.

Now, colleagues, title X is the bipartisan law that was signed by President Nixon. It is the only Federal program dedicated to providing comprehensive family planning and preventive healthcare. Title X helps low-income people afford wellness exams, cervical and breast cancer screenings, testing for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. It also provides basic infertility services. It is a godsend for over 2.5 million Americans. Most of them are without any health insurance and are under the age of 30. We should be supporting title X and not tearing it down.

Many of you know that long before I came to this body, I worked at Planned Parenthood. When I was there, I saw every day what it means to get access to basic reproductive health care, how that frees people to be able to live the lives that they choose, and how much they depend on those services. Now Donald Trump and extreme Senate Republicans have created a healthcare crisis by banning abortion for one in three women of child-bearing age in this country.

If my Republican colleagues are really interested, truly interested in helping women and families, you would vote for this bill, this Right to Contraception Act. You would vote for it today. I am here to tell you that actions speak louder than words. A "no" vote means that you don't trust women to make our own decisions about our bodies, our health, and our lives. So I urge you to join us in voting yes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, for years, people were accused of being hysterical for saying Republicans would actually take away people's reproductive freedoms. The prevailing Republican position to ban abortions in almost every instance, with no exceptions, was so outrageous, so cruel, so unpopular that people said: Well, they

would never actually go through with that.

But, 2 years ago, it finally happened. Roe fell, and tens of millions of women across America lost their right to reproductive freedom overnight.

Now, once again, people question whether Republicans will actually go through with the thing that they say they want to do: It is too morally extreme; it is too politically risky. But the fact is, Republicans have shown no restraint whatsoever when it comes to shredding people's reproductive rights.

Overturning Roe was never going to be enough. The project also includes banning birth control and IVF. It doesn't matter how outrageous it is. It doesn't matter how unpopular it is. It doesn't matter that 92 percent of Americans support birth control and that almost 90 percent of women have used it at some point. It doesn't matter that women and families would lose the ability to plan whether and when to have kids. Dismantling reproductive freedoms is central to the Republican agenda. Aside from tax cuts for billionaires, it is kind of their main thing.

No right or freedom, no matter how basic or popular, is off limits until Congress enshrines that right in Federal law. The Right to Contraception Act does exactly that. It enshrines in Federal law the right to birth control, and it protects doctors who are simply doing their jobs by providing it.

This should not be controversial. No matter where you stand politically—if you want several kids or if you want none at all, whether you are religious or an atheist or somewhere in between—this is about the basic principle that people ought to be able to decide what is best for themselves, their bodies, and their families. Yet, over the past 2 years since the fall of Roe, Republican lawmakers in at least 17 States—Nevada, Arizona, Virginia, Wisconsin, Louisiana—have repeatedly killed efforts to protect access to contraception, and Republican-led legislatures in States like Missouri and Idaho are pushing bills to block access to various forms of birth control, including Plan B and IUDs. All the while, you have Donald Trump openly toying with a national contraception ban.

So to say the future of birth control in the United States is in serious jeopardy is not partisan spin. Republicans continue to work at this goal. They want fewer rights, less autonomy, less freedom. The only way to counter their crusade against people's fundamental freedoms is to enshrine this right in Federal statute.

The really cool thing about the Senate floor is this: This is the place where you find out what people actually think. There was a memo from the NRSC—an interesting memo. A lot of people are talking to the media near the train about what they think about contraception, but in 2 hours, we get to know what you think about contraception. We get to know whether you actually want to enshrine this right in

Federal statute or you don't. That is the beauty of this place, and that is the beauty of this bill at this time. Everyone will go on the record.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I want to thank all of my colleagues who are here on the floor and thank Senator HIRONO, who has led this legislation, along with Senator MARKEY.

As you just heard, today, every Senator is going to be confronted with a very simple question: Should Americans have the right to contraception, the right to birth control—IUDs? Plan B?

Now, that really should not be a hard question. In fact, most Americans thought this matter was settled. After all, nearly 60 years ago, the Supreme Court decided *Griswold v. Connecticut* and affirmed Americans' right to privacy, including the right to contraception.

Today, the right to contraception is overwhelmingly popular. The vast majority of the American people, our constituents, supports this right. So this should be an easy vote. This bill should pass with flying colors. It almost shouldn't be necessary. Yet Republicans have been making clear that a bill like this is not only necessary but urgent.

Not only has Justice Thomas signaled an interest in reconsidering *Griswold* and not only have Senators said *Griswold* was unsound, but there are Republican bills right now with large GOP support that would severely undercut the right to birth control, like the Life at Conception Act, which is supported by more than half of the Republicans in the House, including the Speaker. That GOP bill would enshrine the truly extreme doctrine of fetal personhood nationwide. That would not just ban abortion, it would outlaw emergency contraception like Plan B, and it would outlaw IUDs.

You don't have to take my word for it. I chaired a HELP hearing yesterday on the damage of Republicans' anti-abortion attacks over the past 2 years, and I asked the Republicans' own witness directly: Do you view IUDs as abortion? The answer was yes.

Let's be crystal clear. IUDs and Plan B do not cause an abortion. That level of disinformation is chilling, and it cuts to the heart of the issue about what many Republicans really think about contraception.

So every time Republicans try to say no one is coming for your birth control, well, what about every Republican pushing for fetal personhood? Seriously. Let's say Republicans succeed in making fetal personhood the law of the land. I mean, they have already succeeded at overturning Roe. So if Republicans enact fetal personhood, what happens to all of the women with IUDs? Make no mistake, that isn't simply some provocative hypothetical. If Republicans actually pass the Life at

Conception Act, this is a question millions of women will have to grapple with.

Now, I don't expect an answer from Republicans, and I don't expect every Republican to be as forthcoming as their witness yesterday when it comes to where they stand on the right to birth control, but we are putting every single Senator on the record today when we vote on the Right to Contraception Act.

This bill is as exactly straightforward and as common sense as it sounds. It simply codifies Americans' right to birth control into law. That is it. And you don't have to take my word for it; read it. It is 11 pages.

To me, this is not just a messaging bill; it is a meaningful way to protect a really fundamental right. But it is absolutely right that how each of us votes will send a message. So what message do my Republican colleagues want to send to the American people? What message do we want to send to our constituents: that we support their right to birth control—that we support access to IUDs, to Plan B—or that we are OK with taking that right away and letting politicians make medical decisions for women in this country?

I know where I stand—with the overwhelming majority of people who support that right. Soon, we will know exactly where every Republican Senator stands as well.

Whatever happens with this vote, Democrats are going to keep pushing in full force to hold Republicans accountable for their extreme policies and the harm they are causing. We will work to restore abortion rights in this country and to protect women's reproductive rights across the board.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I am here today with the same concern that we heard from my colleagues—that this country is failing women in New Hampshire and across the country when it comes to protecting our fundamental freedoms—fundamental freedoms like the right to contraception, which we thought was safe just a few short years ago.

From the beginning, the right to full access to contraception was hard fought. Since that right was first recognized by the Supreme Court in *Griswold v. Connecticut* nearly 60 years ago to the Affordable Care Act's expansion of contraceptive coverage in 2010 requiring insurance companies to pay for it, there have been incremental yet vital steps forward for women to determine our own reproductive futures. It put us on a path to making sure our daughters and granddaughters had more fundamental rights, not fewer. But as with so many things, this progress has been met with resistance.

In the year since the Affordable Care Act, attacks on contraception have increased at both the State and Federal levels.

Like many Americans—like those of us here today—I was very alarmed when Justice Thomas wrote in his concurring opinion in the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* ruling that the Court should "reconsider" its ruling in *Griswold v. Connecticut*—should reconsider women's rights to access to contraception. That is my editorial analysis of what Justice Thomas was saying.

Then, of course, just last month, the former President, Donald Trump, implied that States should be allowed to decide access to contraception, potentially setting a dangerous precedent that would harm millions of women and families who rely on contraception. And we heard Senator MURRAY talk so eloquently about how the laws are being interpreted to raise concerns about access to contraception.

And as Senator SCHATZ said so well, we have heard people suggest that our concern about access to contraceptives is really a scare tactic. But for all of us who worked for years trying to protect *Roe v. Wade* and the right for women to make our own healthcare decisions, we heard that same argument for decades on the *Roe* decision: The Supreme Court is never going to overturn that; we have already heard the Justices say that is settled law. Well, we saw what happened in the *Dobbs* decision.

These threats against women are felt acutely in my home State of New Hampshire, where our critical family planning providers can't make ends meet because elected officials continue to block Federal and State funding vital to ensuring that Granite Staters have access to reproductive care.

That care doesn't just encompass contraceptive services—though that is critically important—but it also includes basic reproductive education. It includes things like breast cancer screening and sexually transmitted disease screenings and treatment.

By throwing up roadblock after roadblock, MAGA Republicans are showing that they don't really care about women's health or our personal freedoms. They are taking us backward when women want and deserve to go forward.

These efforts follow a concerning pattern—that women's rights are negotiable; that they can easily be taken away; and that women's lives and our freedoms to decide our own futures are not valued.

So to address the women and families who are on the frontlines of this partisan onslaught, let me just say that I understand the anxiety, the fear, and the hopelessness that comes from watching your rights be stripped away.

To Zoe, who is a recent University of New Hampshire graduate—she wrote so powerfully about the positive experience she had with a family planning provider in New Hampshire, saying:

Without access to birth control decisions about my future would always have an element of uncertainty lingering.

But because Zoe had access to a family planning provider, she was empowered to make her own decisions, to have control over her own future.

To the women in New Hampshire who have written me—to say, for example: I'm worried about which rights would be taken away, or: I feel that women don't have equal rights, and: How did it come to this?—to the women not ready to start a family, to those whose families are just the right size, and to all the young women, like my granddaughters, who have fewer freedoms now than their mothers did at their age, I say to you: I hear you, and I feel that pain.

As we vote today, history is watching us. We can't sit back and watch while reproductive freedoms backslide because access to contraception is a fundamental right, and no one—not a sitting Supreme Court Justice, not a Governor, not a Member of Congress—should be allowed to decide whether or not a woman chooses to use contraception and determine her own future. That highly important and deeply personal decision belongs to the woman and to the woman and her family—to the woman alone.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, we are living through a new era in a fight for reproductive freedom.

This month marks 2 years since the extreme conservative majority on the Supreme Court struck down *Roe v. Wade*. This decision, which was enabled by Donald Trump and my Republican colleagues, has been an absolute disaster for our country.

Republican lawmakers have stripped abortion access from millions of women. They have made clear that they won't stop until they get a national abortion ban. This is all part of an extreme agenda that will go even further—a mission to take away basic freedoms for women all across our country.

We have to step up and protect reproductive health now. Contraception could be the next frontier in that fight.

Republican Governors in Virginia and Nevada have vetoed bills to protect access to birth control. The Arizona legislature has blocked similar legislation. That is why I am proud to be a co-sponsor of the Right to Contraception Act.

This legislation is very simple. It guarantees every single American the right to access contraception and ensures that healthcare professionals can provide it without interference from extreme Republican politicians.

Birth control is a pillar of reproductive health care. It is safe. It is effective. It gives millions of women control over when they want to start a family. And some contraceptives have an array of other health benefits, like helping to prevent certain kinds of cancer.

Birth control also helps expand economic opportunity for women all across our country. Access to birth control is linked to better educational outcomes, more professional opportunities, and higher lifetime earnings.

For all those reasons, access to contraception is an issue with overwhelming bipartisan support. More than 90 percent—90 percent—of Americans believe that everyone should be able to access the contraceptives they need.

We must take every measure to prevent dangerous bans on birth control, especially because barriers and access disproportionately impact our most vulnerable communities. Black, Hispanic, low-income, and uninsured women are more likely to have issues accessing and affording contraception. Every person should be able to receive this essential care and have the freedom to plan for their future however they see fit.

I call on my colleagues to vote in favor of the Right to Contraception Act. Republicans are bent on taking away reproductive freedoms for women everywhere, and we need to stop them from turning back the clock.

We should also not stop at contraception. We must work to expand access to all sexual and reproductive health services. That means abortion, contraception, gender-affirming care, maternal healthcare, and so much more.

Starting a family is one of the most important—and, clearly, one of the most personal—decisions that a person can make. And politicians should be absolutely nowhere near it.

Let's guarantee women have the reproductive freedom that they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise at a very serious moment in our history. I want to thank Senator HIRONO, Senator MARKEY, all of our colleagues, for joining together in reality—not only speaking out but standing up for women across the country, for families, for everyone who wants the capacity to have their own freedom to make their own healthcare decision, their own personal decisions about their lives. That is really what this is all about.

Let me first back up in the big picture because we know for 50 years, *Roe v. Wade* protected our freedom to make our own healthcare decisions. Then 2 years ago, because of a new Supreme Court majority appointed by Donald Trump—gone.

I was a college student when *Roe v. Wade* was decided. I can't believe that women today—that my daughter; that my granddaughter, as she grows up—may have fewer freedoms than I did all those years ago.

Today, 21 States now have near-total bans or severe restrictions on abortions. That means one out of three women now live under extreme and dangerous abortion bans.

And we know who to blame because he said it. Donald Trump—MAGA Republicans—he said himself: I was proudly the person responsible for ending *Roe*, proud to put the lives of millions of women at risk, proud to take this freedom away.

And if you think Donald Trump and Republicans are going to stop there, then you haven't been listening to them.

First, their ultimate goal is to have a nationwide ban. Under a nationwide ban, all of Michigan's hard work—our election to protect our freedoms in the Michigan Constitution that we passed 2 years ago—will be gone. None of that will matter, and we can't let that happen.

But as we are here talking about today, Republicans have indicated they want to go even further in their assault on reproductive freedoms. Rightwing judges and Republicans across the country are attacking access to contraception.

I never thought, Madam President, in my wildest dreams that I would be standing on the floor of the U.S. Senate talking about efforts to take away my right, your right, any woman's right, any person's right to make their own decision on when to have a family, on contraception. But right now, in States like Virginia—not very far from here—Nevada, and Arizona, Republicans are working to block protections for birth control right now.

Justice Clarence Thomas, as has been quoted on this floor today, has called on the Supreme Court to reconsider the constitutional freedom to access contraception in America.

Let's be clear: Birth control is a key part of a woman's healthcare. It is important for reproductive decisions, for treating medical conditions, for decreasing the risk of cancer, and, most importantly, it is a personal decision.

This is a personal decision. Americans don't want politicians—anybody here—or judges and their doctor's office in their medicine cabinet or in their bedroom.

They want to make their own decisions. They have every right, in America, to make their own decisions about their healthcare, their life, and their future. That is as basic as it gets in America. We talk about the freedoms that we have in this country, and that is pretty basic: to make your own decisions on your own healthcare.

Well, we are here on the floor as Democrats to say: We couldn't agree more. We could not agree more. This is absolutely fundamental. And that is why we need to pass the Right to Contraception Act now. Everybody on this floor is going to have a chance to either vote to do that or not.

This critical legislation will guarantee the right—the freedom—to contraceptives, a right that was decided by the Supreme Court nearly 60 years ago. We can't let Republicans turn back the clock. We need to defend Americans' freedom to make decisions about our own healthcare, our own lives, our own futures. Protecting contraceptives is an essential part of that. It is a basic part of that for us, and that is why we are here. Reproductive freedom is something we should all embrace as a basic American freedom.

I hope colleagues will join us in moving forward on this essential legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise in support of the Right to Contraception Act.

I would like to thank Senators MARKKEY, HIRONO, MURRAY, and DUCKWORTH for their leadership on this bill. Senator HIRONO is here. Senator CANTWELL is also with us, who has been such a strong supporter of this bill.

We are at a pivotal moment for women's rights in this country. This month marks 2 years since the Supreme Court issued the ruling shredding half a century of precedent protecting a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions. This ruling was against the wishes of somewhere between 70 and 80 percent of Americans, who believe that a woman's most personal decisions about her healthcare should be made not by politicians but by a woman, her doctor, her family.

In the wake of this disastrous ruling, women have been at the mercy of a patchwork of State laws that are creating chaos when it comes to accessing reproductive health care. Since the Dobbs decision came out, extremist judges have attempted to ban mifepristone, undermine IVF, and even criminalize doctors. Legislatures have introduced bills to criminalize doctors for simply doing their jobs. Twenty-one States have fully or partially banned abortion, and the number of U.S. patients traveling to other States for abortion care has skyrocketed to one in five.

This is unacceptable. My daughter should not have fewer rights than her mother or her grandmother.

So what is next? Well, what we must do is to codify *Roe v. Wade* into law, but as we work to do that, we have something else we have to watch out for, and that is that some Republican political leaders have called for restrictions even on contraception.

In his concurring opinion in the Dobbs case, Justice Thomas actually laid out a roadmap for how the Court could overturn the right to contraception. He said that the Supreme Court "should reconsider" whether the Constitution protects the right to access contraception.

This Friday marks 59 years—59 years—since the Supreme Court recognized the right to access contraception, but the current Court has made it clear that it won't hesitate to overturn decades of precedent in other contexts.

This threat is not hypothetical. In the wake of the Dobbs decision, nearly 20 million American women live in what we call contraceptive deserts, where they struggle to access birth control. I am thinking about Delilah, who lives in northern Texas. There are no health centers in her county and the dozen surrounding counties. To talk to a doctor about birth control, she has to

travel more than 400 miles, nearly 7 hours. There is Maya, who lives in Arizona. The wait times at her nearby health centers are so long that she needs to request an appointment at least 3 weeks in advance. Then there is Leah, who lives in Ohio. She has access to a clinic but has to take time off work to go to appointments—something she can't always afford to do.

State-level efforts, including recent Governor vetoes of right-to-contraception bills, are making the problem worse. We saw this in Nevada and just 2 weeks ago in Virginia. In Wisconsin, we saw the Republican-controlled State legislature refuse to hold a vote on the Right to Contraception Act. We have seen Missouri and other State legislatures attempt to cut off public funding for widely used contraceptives like IUDs and Plan B.

While 14 States, including my home State of Minnesota, protect the right to contraception, that is simply not enough. We cannot settle for a situation where women in Minnesota have more rights than women in Missouri.

With so many extremists racing to the State capitols to see who can be the first to take women's rights away, it is clear that we must explicitly protect the right to contraception. The American people agree. Recent data shows that more than 90 percent of Americans support access to contraception. That is why we are calling on our colleagues to pass the Right to Contraception Act.

This legislation is hardly radical. It simply ensures that women will be in the driver's seat when it comes to their health by codifying the right to contraception outlined by the Supreme Court nearly six decades ago—the same right Justice Thomas and others want to strip away. Specifically, this bill safeguards a patient's ability to seek contraception and a healthcare provider's ability to provide these critical services. Because the right to contraception cannot be an empty promise, it gives the Justice Department, patients, and doctors the power to make clear that no one can infringe upon the right to contraception.

I will note that 2 years ago, the House passed this legislation on a bipartisan basis. It is time for this body to do the same.

For the last 2 years, women in this country have faced an unacceptably uncertain future. These attacks on reproductive freedoms—on freedom for healthcare—have no place in America. Women are not second-class citizens.

The bill we are considering today represents a better path forward, a better future. The question that we must all answer is, Will we take that path or are we going to turn this over to this Supreme Court which has created a patchwork of laws that have allowed some States to try to criminalize doctors; that have allowed some States, through their courts, to ban mifepristone, a drug that has been found safe in dozens and dozens and dozens of countries? We have to decide.

So we have an opportunity today to make clear where we stand as a nation. I call on my colleagues to do what the American people overwhelmingly support and pass this bill into law.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I join my colleagues out here on the floor. I thank the Senator from Minnesota for her unbelievable advocacy on behalf of women and healthcare and for her constant leadership on this issue, and I am glad to be joined by my colleague from Hawaii, who also has been such a great leader—both of them serving on the Judiciary Committee, the frontlines of making sure that women's rights are protected. I thank them so much.

Most Americans alive probably don't remember a time when they didn't have the freedom to use birth control. We hear a lot about family planning. Well, what is family planning if you don't have access to contraception? Most people don't remember a time when they didn't have the freedom to decide whether and when to have children.

In Idaho recently, they have banned abortion. Now several of the State's colleges have banned their staff from even speaking to students about contraception. Imagine keeping college students in the dark about something as basic as a healthcare service.

We heard from an OB/GYN doctor from Idaho who moved away from their State after their reproductive care law, like so many other physicians have done in other States, and one thing really stuck out about what she told us. She said that anti-choice activists really stood out to her because they told her that "they're not done."

After Texas banned abortion, the State's Governor said women should just use emergency contraception to avoid getting pregnant, but Texas had already stopped covering emergency contraception under their State-funded family planning programs.

Madam President, when they say they are not done, I believe them.

In Iowa, the abortion ban is blocked for now, but the State attorney general temporarily paused a public funding program that helped pay for emergency contraception for rape victims, and 362 reimbursements have been delayed.

Madam President, I believe them when they say they are not done.

In Arizona, where abortion rights have been in legal chaos due to a practically Civil War-era ban, Republicans there unanimously blocked a vote to protect the right to access contraception.

In Virginia, people still have abortion rights, but the Governor chose to veto a bill to protect and expand birth control access just hours before the deadline.

So, yes, they are not done.

In Florida, where a near-total abortion ban just went into effect, law-

makers granted so-called crisis pregnancy centers a fivefold funding increase. These centers pretend to be real clinics while spreading misinformation about reproductive care, including contraception.

Across the country, anti-choice organizations are pushing false claims about contraception, fighting access to contraception, and basically even saying that birth control should be illegal.

So they are not done, and that is why we are here today.

The Supreme Court took away our constitutional right to abortion, and according to one Justice, they said they are not done.

So the point is that a woman cannot even be sure she can depend on the miracle of IVF to start a family.

America needs to know where people in this institution today stand on the reproductive rights of women, on family planning, on giving us access to contraception.

Today in my State, the State of Washington, abortion and contraception are protected by law, but this bill is important to my State because healthcare laws in nearby States affect our delivery-of-care system.

The University of Washington just this week released a study that showed that our State's abortion providers have seen a 50-percent increase in out-of-State patients since the Dobbs decision. Now, if you think about it, if you have seen a 50-percent increase in out-of-State patients, it means you are seeing more patients. What is the effect of seeing more patients? The study also found that all patients are getting abortions about 1 week later than they were before the Dobbs decision, which is dangerous on the healthcare delivery side.

Washington saw the largest increase in patients from those States who had banned abortion, States like Texas and Idaho, Louisiana and Florida. Now imagine if they carry this further and ban contraception too.

Our State doesn't want to be impacted in the delivery of care. It wants people to be able to see a physician when they need to see a physician, get the care when they need to get the care.

If we want to keep the right to contraception, if we want to keep the freedom to choose when people want to start their families, if we want to keep OB/GYNs in our national network system, we need to codify this right here today. We have to protect this right so the Supreme Court can't take it away.

I am glad to be a cosponsor of the Right to Contraception Act. I certainly look forward to voting on this legislation and urge my colleagues to do the same.

It seems not that long ago when our country recognized, in *Connecticut v. Griswold*, that we had this right. When we have been talking about it for the last many years now, really, as so many people came before Congress to be a nominee for a judicial branch,

they have all said: This is all settled law—oh, yeah—*Connecticut v. Griswold*.

We always ask that question. Why? Because *Griswold v. Connecticut* was a decision based on contraception that gave you this right to privacy.

Now, all of a sudden, not only was that ignored by the Supreme Court—it was amazing when you think about the time before that. People didn't have access to contraception. It became such a day-to-day part of our lives. If it is such a day-to-day part of our lives and the delivery of healthcare, then we should have the courage to say so and vote this way today. If people don't, it is because they aren't done, and they don't want to protect this. And I guarantee you, families deserve the privacy of knowing when and how they want to start their families.

I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and support our healthcare system that has been working very well with the support of contraception.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I want to thank all my colleagues who came to the floor of the Senate yesterday and today with the fierce urgency of now to urge passage of the Right to Contraception Act.

This month marks almost 2 years since the Supreme Court's disastrous Dobbs decision, resulting in women in half the country having fewer rights than women in the other half of the country. What kind of a country is that?

I thought this was a country founded on equal protection and equal rights—not according to this Supreme Court.

Dobbs wreaked chaos in its own right, overturning *Roe v. Wade* and eliminating a constitutional right that I had for almost 50 years. But it also foretold more chaos to come. In his concurrence in the Dobbs case, Justice Thomas specifically called for "reconsidering" *Griswold v. Connecticut*, the 1965 case protecting the right to contraception. When a Supreme Court Justice says he wants to "reconsider" a case, that is a signal that he wants to overturn it. It is bad enough that they overturned *Roe v. Wade*'s 50 years of a constitutional protection. Now they want to overturn *Griswold*. That is a 59-year precedent protecting our right to contraception.

We have what I have described as an out-of-control Supreme Court majority that has no problem overturning decades here, there, and just about everywhere based on their ideological agenda.

Justice Alito, meanwhile, respects his wife's right to make her own decisions, but he has no problem telling millions of women—the rest of us—what to do with our bodies. I mean, just think about it. Do you see the irony of it? Do you see the hypocrisy of it?

And just this year, both of those Justices—I am talking about Justices

Alito and Thomas—suggested that the Comstock Act, a Civil War-era law—Civil War, I mean how far back are they going to go—could be used to restrict access to reproductive care nationwide. This crusade against reproductive rights by these Justices and the rest of their cohorts, I have to say, really comports with the Republicans' obsession with power and control over women's bodies.

As they work toward a national abortion ban, Republicans and their allies on the Supreme Court have given us every reason to believe contraception is also on their hit list. Republican States across the country have already blocked or rolled back access to contraception.

You have heard from my colleagues. Virginia's Governor vetoed a right-to-contraception bill just last month. Earlier this year, Arizona Republicans blocked a similar bill in their State. Oklahoma's Legislature advanced a bill that could ban access to IUDs and emergency contraception.

The list goes on. They are very specific about the kinds of contraceptives that we should have access to.

So this whole desire that I really can't figure out on the part of the MAGA Republicans and their supporters on the Supreme Court really comes down to power and control over women's bodies. That is what it is.

Madam President, contraception is healthcare—essential healthcare—that millions of people across the country rely on, not only to decide if and when to become pregnant but also to treat medical conditions, regulate hormone levels, and more. And that is why the vast majority of Americans support the right to contraception.

The current assault on women's rights is horrifying, but it is not new. Our country has a long and dark history of exerting control over women. For much of our country's history, women were denied a fundamental right to vote. They didn't have a right to own property. They couldn't open bank accounts. The list goes on. Some women of color faced forced sterilization and coercive contraception testing. That is the dark history in our country of controlling women and our bodies.

These attacks on women and our freedoms were wrong then, and you would think, by now, we would have learned a thing or two to protect all of our rights—but not this MAGA-majority Supreme Court. The attacks we are facing today are a reality.

The right to control one's own body, free from government interference, is as fundamental as it gets. That is why it is critical that the Senate pass the Right to Contraception Act.

Our bill is simple. It would protect an individual's right to access contraception and a provider's right to provide it. It wouldn't force anyone to take or provide contraception if they don't want to, but it would ensure that those who do can, without the government

getting in their way. It would ensure people can access the healthcare they need, from IUDs and birth control pills to emergency contraception, like Plan B, and more, especially for women of color, women with disabilities, LGBTQ people, and those from rural communities who have difficulty accessing this kind of care. They already face increased barriers to accessing contraception.

This bill shouldn't be controversial, but Republicans have become so obsessed with controlling women's bodies that they refuse to protect even the most basic freedoms.

To my Republican colleagues, I ask: What is with this obsession with power and control over women's bodies?

Democrats know that women, not politicians, should be the ones making decisions about our bodies and our healthcare, and we are doing everything we can to protect and strengthen the reproductive rights of all Americans, including the right to contraception.

We are going to vote on this bill today, and I urge all of my colleagues, with the fierce urgency of now, to stop taking away ever more rights of women in this country—women and others in this country—and vote for this bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I am thrilled to be joining Senators MARKEY, HIRONO, DUCKWORTH, and all of my colleagues today in support of the Right to Contraception Act.

This month marks the second anniversary of the Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, which upended a woman's right to choose and paved the way for former President Trump and anti-choice politicians to further erode women's rights in this country.

We knew these anti-choice Republicans wouldn't stop attacking reproductive rights after *Roe* fell. We knew they would keep trying to diminish our freedom to make decisions about our own bodies, including the right to attain and use birth control.

You don't have to take my word for it. Look at what is happening in States across the country, as you heard from my colleagues. Even though the right to birth control has strong bipartisan support, anti-choice lawmakers are passing bills left and right to chip away at access to contraception.

And listen to the leader of the Republican Party. Just 2 weeks ago, former President Trump said he was open to restricting women's right to contraception if he wins another term. For the anti-choice right, this is about controlling women.

On the other hand, my fellow pro-choice colleagues and I believe in reproductive freedom. We are working every day to protect access to birth control and other basic forms of women's healthcare, and we are making real progress here.

Last year, the Food and Drug Administration approved Opill, the first-ever over-the-counter birth control pill. Once it was approved, Senators MURRAY, HIRONO, and I, along with others, pushed the manufacturers to make sure that Opill is widely accessible without a prescription. It is now available online and in stores across the country.

We are not alone in this fight. The Biden-Harris administration has worked hard to expand access to contraception and make it more affordable for American women. We have made important progress, and we have seen that the anti-choice movement won't stop coming after our reproductive rights. That is why we have to pass the Right to Contraception Act and protect access to birth control in every State across our country.

We know that, despite dishonest efforts from anti-choice politicians to label it as dangerous, birth control is an essential part of healthcare. And for me, contraception was about my healthcare, as it is for millions of women in America.

I will tell you what, to my female colleagues here, if a man were able to give birth, we would have universal healthcare by now. But we don't because they don't feel it; they don't see it. So they disregard it, and they disregard the impact to women and the essential care that we need when it comes to our bodily health.

That is why this legislation is so important. It would protect the fundamental right to access essential healthcare. It would empower women in Nevada and across the country to make decisions about their own lives on their own terms. And it would make it clear to anti-choice candidates, like Donald Trump and his anti-choice followers, that messing with the right to contraception is not on the table.

My colleagues here and I will never stop fighting to reinstate the rights anti-choice politicians have stripped away from millions of women, and we will fiercely—fiercely—defend the rights women still have, including access to birth control. That is why we are here today.

I get asked quite often: What are you doing about it?

This is it. There is a role for Congress to play, and we are doing it. But there is a role for everyone who cares about this issue—no matter your station in life—to do something about it, to advocate, to be a part of a solution or policy change in your State or in your local community. There is a role for everybody and a responsibility. This is about women's rights. This is about women's freedoms in this country, and that is worth fighting for.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The junior Senator from Iowa.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE
CALENDAR—S. 4447

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4447) to allow women greater access to safe and effective oral contraceptive drugs intended for routine use, and to direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on Federal funding of contraceptive methods.

Ms. ERNST. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

The junior Senator from Iowa.

RIGHT TO CONTRACEPTION ACT—
MOTION TO PROCEED

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4447

Ms. ERNST. The so-called Right to Contraception Act goes far beyond the scope of providing access to contraception. It is important the American people understand what the Democrats are peddling.

Senator MARKEY's bill creates a precedent to mandate access to abortion drugs for women and girls of all ages. It also allows taxpayer dollars to be funneled to organizations like Planned Parenthood.

The bill removes conscious freedom protections, which allow our doctors and nurses to maintain their religious and moral beliefs while practicing medicine, a right that we are all afforded in the workplace which should be upheld.

I would like to remind my Democrat colleagues of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act—or RFRA is what we call it here. It is a law that was championed by Senator CHUCK SCHUMER more than 30 years ago.

The majority leader has really come a long way, hasn't he? Just like President Biden who used to be pro-life. Religious professionals and organizations across the country rely on RFRA for protection from broad government overreach. Yet the Democrats are willing to upend that precedent for politics and, more importantly, for abortion.

Let's be clear what is going on here. From the Senate to the White House, Democrats do not have anything to run on—no agenda that resonates with the American people. So instead, they are fearmongering in the name of politics.

Fortunately, Republicans have a solution: the Allowing Greater Access to Safe and Effective Contraception Act.

Like 90 percent of Americans, I believe routine-use contraception should be safe and accessible. That is why I have long worked to increase access to safe and effective over-the-counter oral contraceptives.

With my bill, we are ensuring women 18 and over can walk into any pharmacy, whether in Red Oak, IA, or Washington, DC, and purchase a safe and effective birth control option.

This Republican bill creates a priority review designation for over-the-counter birth control options to encourage the FDA to act quickly.

I am encouraged that as of this year, the first, but the only, over-the-counter option on the market has been approved. But having just one over-the-counter product on the market is just a starting point.

We need more options that are truly effective for women—women in rural areas, women facing domestic violence.

In addition, my bill brings much needed transparency and accountability in Federal spending to better understand where gaps are occurring and also to ensure dollars are actually going to supporting women and families.

GAO will take a 15-year look back at total dollar amounts for contraception reimbursement, inventory stocking, provider training, and patient education efforts to help better inform us as lawmakers and you as taxpayers on where and how our money is being spent.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 418, S. 4447; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I have great respect for my colleague from Iowa, our neighbor to the south, but we just disagree on this issue.

I think that this is an attempt by Republicans to claim that they are increasing access to contraception when, in fact, this bill does not accomplish that goal at all. And I also think our Republican colleagues believe that they have a message problem when it comes to women's health when, in fact, they have a policy problem. And I regret to say this bill is not going to fix it.

One in three women in this country face barriers to accessing prescription contraception, and only half of women that are interested in over-the-counter birth control pills can afford them. But instead of addressing this very real and very well-understood challenge, this bill does nothing to improve access to contraception. It does not address the lack of insurance coverage for prescription and over-the-counter birth control—carve-outs that Republicans have repeatedly supported which make contraception more expensive for patients.

It does not protect patients from efforts to roll back the ability of providers to prescribe birth control. It

does not enable patients to know what is best for themselves to get birth control without unnecessary barriers.

Instead, the bill directs the FDA to prioritize review of applications to convert prescription contraception to over-the-counter; but, in fact, an over-the-counter birth control pill has been approved for almost a year and has been available in stores since March of this year. And this bill does nothing to get that product into patients' hands. In fact, it explicitly restricts access to this important product for young people.

This bill also directs a study, a Federal funding for contraception. We don't need a study to tell us that there are problems here. We know what the problem is. We know that President Trump's anti-abortion Justices at the Supreme Court and Republicans' years of policies here in Congress and in State legislatures around the country have restricted access to birth control.

In addition, this bill reinforces the misguided view that emergency contraception causes abortion. That is not what the science says, and it is not what doctors say.

If Republicans truly support increased access and fewer barriers to contraception, then they should vote for the Right to Contraception Act. Our bill would actually guarantee the right for people to obtain and use contraceptives and for health providers to provide contraception, contraception information, all free from government interference.

The Right to Contraception Act is the bill that we all need to support, and I look forward to voting for this bill this afternoon. And for these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The junior Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, I am disheartened to see my colleague from Minnesota rise in opposition. I respect her greatly as well, and we do disagree on this issue. But, unfortunately, given the nature of this political exercise, I am not surprised.

This was never about finding real solutions. This was always about fearmongering and election-year stunts.

My effort, one that many of my Republican colleagues support, is a commonsense solution to give women more access to over-the-counter birth control options and bring accountability to government spending, not about finding loopholes so we can find a way to fund those drugs that cause abortions.

Despite attacks from the same far left that promotes drugs that endanger women, encourages the death of the unborn, I will always stand up for families. And as a mother and a grandmother, alongside my fellow Republican Senators, I will continue to protect life, while supporting policies that equip women to raise children to live the American dream.