

produce energy with vastly inferior environmental standards. Again, common sense.

Blackouts and brownouts are simply unacceptable in an energy-rich nation such as ours. And, again, it is about global competitiveness. Almost everything we do requires energy. If we are going to compete in a global economy, we need low-cost, dependable energy so that we can outcompete the rest of the world.

Instead of overregulation and Green New Deal-style mandates, we need to take the handcuffs off our energy producers, and we need to allow American ingenuity to continue to do what they can do better than anyone else in the world: produce more energy more cost-effectively, more dependably, with the best environmental standards. That is the right approach—not an approach of overregulation that handcuffs our energy producers.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

REMEMBERING PATRICK GOTTSCH

Mr. RICKETTS. Madam President, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of a great Nebraskan and great American, Patrick Gottsch.

Growing up on his family farm in Elkhorn, NE, Patrick learned to love rural America and the Western lifestyle. His father grew corn and had a cattle feedlot. After college, he worked as a commodities broker for 5 years in Chicago and in Omaha.

On the day his daughter was born, Patrick came down the hill from the hospital and saw a guy trying to put a satellite dish together. He decided to help. After 6 hours of work, the dish was installed, and Patrick was hooked on satellite television.

Patrick then started E.T. Installations, which was a pioneer in the home satellite industry. During this time, Patrick first began exploring the idea of a TV channel devoted to the issues and interests of rural America, but at that moment, it was only a dream. Patrick worked hard making that dream a reality.

In 1991, Patrick moved to Texas. He worked as the director of sales for Superior Livestock Auction, which pioneered satellite marketing in the livestock industry. Because of Patrick's innovations, Superior Livestock became the largest livestock auction enterprise in the country.

In 2000, Patrick decided to take a leap of faith. He committed full time to the task of creating a 24-hour TV network for rural America. He called his company Rural Media Group.

Patrick Gottsch's dream was becoming a reality. Rural Free Delivery Television, RFD-TV, launched with DISH Network in September of 2000. Distribution quickly increased. Today, RFD-TV is available in more than 50 million homes nationwide.

Patrick's Rural Media Group continued to expand, adding RFD The Magazine, RFD HD, Rural TV, Rural Radio, and the RFD-TV Now app.

In 2017, Patrick launched the Cowboy Channel, the first 24-hour network devoted entirely to Western sports like rodeo. The Cowboy Channel is now the official network of ProRodeo, bringing the talents of world-class cowboys and cowgirls to people all over the world.

In addition, Patrick last year launched the Cowgirl Channel, dedicated exclusively to women in Western sports and the modern-day cowgirl.

Patrick Gottsch loved rural America. He loved its people, its values, and its lifestyle. His visionary leadership brought the best of rural America to tens of millions of homes around the world. He reconnected the city and the country. His contributions to broadcasting, ranching, rodeo, and business will long be remembered.

My wife Susanne and I send our condolences to Patrick's beloved wife Angie; his three daughters, Raquel, Gatsby, and Rose; and his grandchildren.

I am grateful to Senator HYDE-SMITH for leading the resolution to honor Patrick Gottsch's life and legacy.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Madam President, I also rise today to honor the life and legacy of my friend Patrick Gottsch, the founder and president of Rural Media Group, who passed away May 18.

Mr. Gottsch was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and friend who dedicated his life to supporting and promoting rural America through television.

Patrick was born on June 3, 1953, in Elkhorn, NE, and raised on his family's farm and cattle operation. From a young age, he learned the value of hard work, perseverance, and the unique value that rural communities bring to our Nation.

Having worked as a commodity broker on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, in home satellite sales, and as director of sales for the Superior Livestock Auction, he founded Rural Free Delivery Television, RFD-TV, in 2000. And it is on my TV every day.

Rural Media Group grew to additionally consist of many other things, including the Cowboy Channel—one of our very favorite—giving rural America the visibility it lacked through traditional media outlets.

Rural America owes much to Patrick's innovation and his tenacity. Not many people have the ability to articulate and describe the true essence of how special life in rural America is like Patrick did. Rural communities are the heartbeat of our Nation, often overlooked but essential to our Nation's survival and prosperity.

Patrick gave rural America a voice. In an increasingly urbanized world, Patrick reminded us of the value of rural America. He advocated for the 2 percent of Americans who feed the other 98 percent. He reminded Americans that our clothes and food don't magically grow on shelves at the store.

We honor Patrick Gottsch for his unprecedented work to promote the American rural way of life that my family and I get to enjoy every single day. He was truly a great ambassador for rural America, and I know he would want us to continue to tell the story to the entire world.

I offer my deepest condolences to the Gottsch family during this time, and I will strive to honor Patrick's legacy by stressing the continued need for access for rural and agricultural media and programming for all Americans. May Patrick's determination, love for rural America, and persistence in telling the great story of rural America never be forgotten.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3696

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise today in the Senate to pass the DEFIANCE Act, a bipartisan bill that provides a remedy for victims of non-consensual sexual exploitation deepfakes.

I want to thank the Senate cosponsors of this legislation. They include my ranking Republican Member, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, as well as Senators KLOBUCHAR, HAWLEY, KING, and LEE. This bill is truly bipartisan.

I have been proud to partner with New York Congresswoman ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ, who introduced this legislation in the House of Representatives with four Republican and four Democratic cosponsors. As you can see, in both the Senate and the House, this is a bipartisan measure. When I describe it, you will understand.

Sadly, Congresswoman OCASIO-CORTEZ, herself, is a victim of what is known as explicit deepfakes. I commend her for her work and courage to create tools for victims in the fight against this despicable conduct.

The spread of these deplorable deepfakes is like a fire burning out of control. What used to take extraordinary technological expertise and a lot of time can now be done with the push of a button. Countless apps can swap someone's face onto another person's body or can digitally remove someone's clothing. These apps are often advertised as harmless entertainment. But when explicit images are produced and shared without the consent of the person depicted, the harm is very real. The exploitation of young children, the exploitation of women is really the price that is being paid for this.

Imagine losing control over your own likeness and identity. Imagine how powerless victims feel when they cannot remove the illicit content, cannot prevent it from being reproduced, cannot prevent new images from being created. The negative consequences to the victims can be profound. Victims may draw into silence themselves by withdrawing from online spaces and public

discourse as a protective measure. They may endure threats to their employment, education, or reputation; or suffer additional criminal activity, such as extortion and stalking. Some experience depression, anxiety, and fear of being in public. And in the worst-case scenario, victims are driven to suicide.

Representative OCASIO-CORTEZ recently described her own reaction to being depicted in sexual deepfakes without her consent. She said: “There’s a shock to seeing images of yourself that someone could think are real.” She described how it resurfaced trauma and haunts her thoughts. Once deepfakes are seen, they cannot be unseen. As she put it, “deepfakes are . . . a way of digitizing violent humiliation against other people.”

Prominent women are often the target of nonconsensual sexually explicit deepfakes—singers, actors, politicians alike. You cannot escape the conclusion that these images are intended to diminish and shame women.

But, sadly, the victims can be anyone. There are many distressing reports this year of middle schools and high schools struggling to respond to the spread of sexually explicit deepfakes of students.

In March of this year, at least 22 students at the Richmond-Burton High School, in McHenry County, in my home State of Illinois, learned they were depicted in deepfakes circulating online. One of the images was a doctored version of a photo of two female students taken at the school prom. The perpetrator digitally removed their clothes to make it appear they were unclothed. The prom is supposed to be a joyous rite of passage for teenagers, a happy memory they keep for the rest of their lives. Now that memory has been stolen from these two young women.

Sadly, we are seeing an explosion of images like these. One researcher found that the number of nonconsensual pornographic deepfake videos available online has increased ninefold in the last 5 years. Such videos have been viewed almost 4 billion times—4 billion times.

Monthly traffic to the top 20 deepfake sites increased by 285 percent from July 2020 to July 2023, and search engines directed 25.2 million visits to the top five most popular deepfake sites in July 2023 alone.

Tragically, under the law now, the victims have no legal remedy. Time and again, victims are told nothing can be done to help them because existing laws simply do not apply to deepfakes. This is not just a gap in the law. It is an omission that shows a blatant disregard for the trauma to children, women, and girls who are victimized by this crime.

But this DEFIANCE Act will change that. It will give the victims a day in court. Once this bill is signed into law, victims finally will have the ability to hold civilly liable those who produce,

disclose, solicit, or possess sexually explicit deepfakes while knowingly or recklessly disregarding that the person depicted did not consent to the conduct.

I am proud to have collaborated with survivor advocates on this bill. Their lived experience and leadership have shaped this bill. This bill was carefully crafted to comply with the First Amendment.

As the Center for Democracy and Technology wrote in their letter endorsing the bill, it is constitutional because it addresses “a uniquely compelling problem with a narrowly-tailored solution.”

In addition to the CDT, the DEFIANCE Act is supported by the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, the Sexual Violence Prevention Association, the National Women’s Law Center, My Image My Choice, PACT, Rights4Girls, and many others.

Congress has waited too long to act. Can you imagine, in your own family, if it was your wife, your daughter, your niece, or some young woman that you love who was exploited this way, who had to see these images and try to erase them from their minds, who realize that they have no power now under the law, no power to protect themselves? They are helplessly exploited and their lives have been changed for the worse.

We waited far too long to act. This is a bipartisan measure in both the House and the Senate. It is past time to give victims of nonconsensual sexual exploitation and explicit deepfakes the tools they need to fight back.

Madam President, notwithstanding rule XXII, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 3696, the Disrupt Explicit Forged Images And Non-Consensual Edits Act of 2024, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask consent that the Durbin-Grassley substitute amendment at the desk be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Wyoming.

Ms. LUMMIS. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I strongly support the intent behind this legislation. We must combat the deeply harmful practice of nonconsensual deepfake pornography. It is as serious as the gentleman from Illinois just described.

But I am troubled that this bill, as currently drafted, is overly broad in scope. The expansive definitions and wide net of liability in this bill could lead to unintended consequences that stifle American technological innovation and development.

By extending liability to third-party platforms that may unknowingly host this illicit content, I worry this bill

places an untenable burden on online services to constantly police user-generated posts. Even platforms making good-faith efforts to remove illegal deepfakes could become inundated with frivolous litigation.

A more prudent approach would be to tailor legislation to focus on publishers and knowing distributors. And such legislation exists. It is the Cruz-Klobuchar bill. We must ensure that, in our noble efforts to prevent abuse, we do not inadvertently impose overbroad restrictions and spur excessive lawsuits that would chill the development of American emerging technologies.

I stand ready to work with my colleagues to find this crucial balance.

For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I am disappointed, seriously disappointed. When we talk about these young women and young children being exploited and have bipartisan legislation before both the House and Senate to deal with it, it is important that it be characterized properly.

First, there is no liability under this proposed law for tech platforms, despite what the Senator from Wyoming said.

And, secondly, the idea that the people would suffer with civil liability here, when they didn’t know what was going on—listen to the language of this bill: The victims have the ability to hold civilly liable those who produce, disclose, solicit, possess sexually explicit deepfakes while knowingly—while knowingly—or recklessly disregarding that the person depicted did not consent to the conduct.

The two major issues raised by the Senator from Wyoming are both addressed in this bipartisan measure.

There are people who will shake their heads and say: Can’t the Senate even address this issue of the sexual exploitation of children and young girls and attempts to ruin their lives? Can’t they even agree on a bipartisan basis to come up with an answer?

We did. We have a bill that does it, and it has been stopped.

We are not going to stop our efforts, Madam President. This is a cause worth fighting for, and we are going to really appeal to those across America who believe as we do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 359

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, for more than a year, the Supreme Court has been embroiled in an ethical crisis of its own design. Story after story about ethical misconduct by sitting Supreme Court Justices has led the news for months.

For decades, however, Justice Clarence Thomas has accepted lavish gifts and luxury trips from a gaggle of fawning billionaires. The total dollar value of these gifts is in the millions—one