Party of China for silencing dissent and obscuring the truth about the coronavirus—where it originated. When China obscures the truth, it puts Americans in danger. Where is President Trump’s voice?

The record emerging from behind the Chinese Communist Party’s internet wall show Chinese people pleading—pleading—with the international community to expose the scope and scale of this epidemic.

But being anti-science is not just rhetoric. It hurts us. It hurts every American in many ways, and that is what President Trump and his administration do, and our Republican colleagues just blithely go along.

After months of tiptoeing around the Chinese Communist Party, after 3 years of cutting funding for our epidemic response programs, President Trump simply has left the United States unprepared to confront a possible epidemic like corona. I will have more to say this week about what the administration must do to right the ship.

NATIONAL DEFENSE

Mr. President, on another front, again, the frustration of how this administration has conducted itself is unprecedented. I know some of my colleagues like to say that it is just like Obama. It isn’t even close.

Here are some more examples, unfortunately, on the trampling of the rule of law in this country.

Emboldened by the refusal of Senate Republicans to hold him accountable in his impeachment trial, President Trump has been interfering with the Justice Department and retaliating against officials in his administration who dare testify truthfully before Congress.

In the short week that we have spent in recess, the President has managed to plunge our country even deeper into chaos and certainly has shown the need for having a trial during impeachment with witnesses and documents, getting the truth and not rubberstamping President Trump’s behavior.

The President continued to purge his administration, firing officials who refused to pledge allegiance to the President over their allegiance to the Constitution. The President classified Bolton’s book in another blatant attempt to cover up the facts. This is what dictatorships do—dictatorships. They say something is classified; they hide the truth. It is a disgrace.

The President continued to abuse the pardon power, in one instance commuting the sentence of a notoriously corrupt, former official without rhyme or reason. Maybe most egregious of all, the President, angered that the Director of National Intelligence had the gall to conduct a bipartisan briefing for the House Intelligence Committee on foreign interference in our elections, replaced him with a political lackey—a yes-man as the head of DNI, where truth needs to be spoken probably more truthfully in another place in the government. He has demonstrated his indifference in the intelligence community and is simply known as an acolyte to President Trump.

With each of these actions—I hate to say it, but that objective person will know—President Trump brings our Nation closer and closer to a banana republic, a government not of laws but of one man, a government where officials are asked to swear loyalty not to our country or the Constitution but to the President himself, a country where truth is obscured or covered up or deemed fake simply because it is not flattering to the President and is not what he wants to hear. President Trump’s decision to dismiss one of his own intelligence officials is particularly pernicious. Our intelligence community is an institution that is supposed to report on threats to our country with accuracy, without regard to politics. It is our weak truth to power, to protect us. For the President to install a yes-man at the top of the intelligence community, to politicize a part of our government designed to be apolitical, to so debase the morale of the brave men and women in the CIA and the NSA, many of whom risk their lives for our safety, is a disgrace.

There are media reports that our intelligence community has found that Putin continues to engage in activities to influence the outcome of our elections. That is reportedly what former DNI McGurie’s team was briefing Congress about.

So today, along with my Democratic colleagues on the Banking and Foreign Relations Committee, I am sending a letter to Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mnuchin urging them to impose new sanctions on Putin and his cronies using existing sanctions authority. They have it; they can do it. Let me repeat that. The Trump administration has broad authority to impose sanctions for meddling in our elections. It does not need new legislative tools or approval.

Our message is clear: Secretary Mnuchin, impose sanctions now.

No one on the Intelligence Committee, Democrat or Republican, has disputed that Russia is attempting to interfere in our elections. Most say Russia has already started to do so. So this should be an easy, bipartisan effort. We are being attacked today in real time by foreign adversaries. This is not about party politics. It is not about what Trump doesn’t want to hear. The Russians wanted him to win in 2016 and in all likelihood will want him to lose in 2020. But we swore to defend our Republic. Americans—I don’t care what their party, what their ideology—if they start believing our elections are not on the level, this democracy will be in big trouble.

I hope my Republican colleagues will join us. The administration could impose sanctions tomorrow, and it should. A repeat performance of 2016—an ongoing campaign of foreign influence in our elections—is perhaps the greatest threat to our democracy. The Founding Fathers thought so. Read what James Madison said.

Mr. President, on another front, the Secretary of State and the Treasury Secretary have identified and targeted all those determined to be responsible for ongoing election interference. Anything less would be an abdication of their responsibility, their sacred, solemn responsibility to protect and defend the United States from the serious threat to our national security and the integrity of our electoral process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

LIFESPAN RESPITE CARE REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2019

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to urge passage of bipartisan, compassionate legislation that I introduced on April 2 of last year with my colleague from Wisconsin, Senator BALDWIN, to reauthorize the Lifespan Respite Care Program. This program provides respite care to family members who are caring for loved ones with special needs. Oftentimes, they are taking care of a spouse with Alzheimer’s disease or a child with several disabilities, and it is a 24/7 job. They need a break, they need help, and that is what respite service is all about.

This is not a new program. It has long been a bipartisan priority, and our bill is widely supported by a total of 100 leading caregiver and respite organizations across the country.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee reported our bill unanimously on October 31 of last year, and we have been working since then to secure its passage by the full Senate. It cleared the Republican side of the aisle on December 17, but the bill has been stalled on the other side of the aisle due to an unknown objection by an anonymous Senator, making it very difficult to refer the bill.

Our bill would authorize $10 million annually for the Lifespan Respite Care Program over the next 5 years to assist States in establishing or enhancing statewide lifespan respite programs. Since the program’s enactment 15
years ago, 37 States plus the District of Columbia have received grants to increase the availability and quality of respite services. Failing to reauthorize this program would put this funding in jeopardy.

When respite care is the No. 1 service caregivers say they need, 85 percent of our Nation’s caregivers have not received any respite services at all. Respite care has been shown to help sustain family caregivers’ health and well-being and avoid and delay out-of-home placement for those for whom they are caring.

From families caring for children with disabilities to those caring for older adults, the need for respite care today continues to grow. Our bipartisan legislation would help the 45 million caregivers in our country who provide an estimated $470 billion in uncompensated care each year.

As a Senator representing the State with the oldest median age in our Nation and as chairman of the Senate Aging Committee, the well-being of our seniors and their caregivers is among my top priorities. The need for respite care continues to outpace available resources. This program is an attempt to provide the much-needed amount of Federal grant money toward this goal.

Along with Senator BALDWIN, this bipartisan bill is cosponsored by Senators MURRAY, REED, and SINEMA. More than 50 national stakeholders have signed a letter urging immediate passage of the bill, including the ARCH National Respite Coalition, the AARP, Easterseals, The Arc, and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. In addition, State-based organizations representing constituents across the country have also signed this letter.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have this letter printed in the RECORD.

Without objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

February 24, 2020.
Re Lifespan Respite Care Program Reauthorization Act (S. 995).
Hon. MACDONALD, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. LAMAR ALEXANDER, Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. SUSAN COLLINS, U.S. Senator, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. PATTY MURRAY.
Hon. TAMMY BALDWIN, U.S. Senator, Washington, DC.


The Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act (S. 995) to reauthorize the Lifespan Respite Care Program at $50 million over five years. We are very grateful that with your strong support, the bill was unanimously approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee last October, and we now urge the Senate to take swift action to pass the bill and also want to acknowledge and express our deep gratitude to Rep. James Langevin for his championing of Lifespan Respite in the House since 2003, when he first introduced the Life was Fund Act in Congress. He continued to lead the effort with subsequent reauthorization bills in every Congress since.

Every day, millions of American families are faced with unexpected illness, disease, or disability. A soldier is injured in war, a spouse develops Alzheimer’s or Alzheimer’s disease, or a child is diagnosed with a developmental or physical disability or chronic illness. These are but a few examples of events that can forever change an individual’s and family’s trajectory.

While each situation is unique, the one thing that they often have in common is the incredible roles that family caregivers play. Forty-three million family caregivers provide a vast majority of our nation’s long-term care, permitting individuals of all ages to remain in their own homes or a delay nursing home or foster care placements.

While the benefits of family caregiving are plentiful, so is its toll. Respite—short-term care that offers individuals or family members temporary relief from the daily routine and stress of providing care—is a critical component to bolstering family stability and maintaining family caregiver health and well-being. Respite is a frequently requested support service among family caregivers and respite programs help ensure that quality respite is available and accessible to all family caregivers. With more than half of care recipients under age 75 and more than one-third age 50, the Senate rightly recognizes caregiving as a lifelong issue and serves families regardless of age or disability.

Though the program has been drastically underfunded since its inception, thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia have received grants and are engaged in impressive work such as identifying and coordinating respite services available through various state agencies, including veterans caregiver services; helping unserved families pay for respite through participant-directed voucher programs; addressing the workforce shortage by recruiting and training respite workers and volunteers; and building capacity by awarding mini-grants to community and faith-based agencies for new services; and raising awareness about respite through public education campaigns. Enablers pay for respite through participant-directed voucher programs; addressing the workforce shortage by recruiting and training respite workers and volunteers; and building capacity by awarding mini-grants to community and faith-based agencies for new services; and raising awareness about respite through public education campaigns.

The enactment of the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act is necessary to continue this excellent momentum, better coordinate and supply respite care to our nation’s 43 million family caregivers through statewide Lifespan Respite programs and ensure that states are able to sustain the great work they have begun and still allow them to receive a grant.

We thank you for your commitment to individuals living with disabilities, older individuals in need of assistance and support, and the people who care for them and we look forward to continuing to work with you as the bill moves forward. If you would like more information, please contact Jill Kagan with the National Respite Coalition at jkagan@archrespite.org.

Sincerely,

STATE AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

AARP, ACCSES, Aging Life Care Association, Alliance for Aging Research, Alliance for Retired Americans, ALS Association, Altarum, Alzheimer’s Association, Alzheimer’s Community Care, Alzheimer’s Foundation of America, Alzheimer’s Impact Movement, American Academy of Pediatrics


STATE AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Alabama

Alabama Governor’s Office on Disability, Alabama Home Health Services, Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network, Alabama Lifespan Respite Coalition, Madison County 310 Board, North Alabama Community Care, United Cerebral Palsy of Alabama, United Cerebral Palsy of Mobile and Central Alabama, United Cerebral Palsy of Tennessee Valley, Inc., United Cerebral Palsy of Mobile and Central Alabama, West Alabama Area Agency on Aging.

Arizona

Arizona Caregiver Coalition, Benevilla, Poceda Life Adult Day Services, SunnTee Adult Day Health & School For Seniors.

California

Association of Caregiver Resource Centers, YMCA Childcare Resource Service.

Florida

Florida Lifespan Respite Alliance.

Idaho


Illinois

Illinois Respite Coalition.

Kansas

Kansas Lifespan Respite Coalition.
The old Republican slogan was “a chicken in every pot.” The new Republican slogan is “a Republican in every examination room.”

The Senate has done remarkably little legislating while under the recent control of the other party, somehow, some way, there always seems to be time to have an attack on women’s healthcare. It has come up again and again, and it is always the same basic proposition on offer: Republican politicians trying to somehow squeeze themselves in between women and their physicians.

My view is that the government ought to make sure that women can get healthcare from the doctors they trust and that politicians ought to stay out of things. Roe v. Wade says that is supposed to be the law of the land when it comes to access to abortion. More than four decades of settled law says that these are choices to be made by women and their doctors, and the ideological agendas of politicians ought to have nothing to do with it. The legislation up for debate this week, based on another far-right ideological proposition, is a dangerous, in my view, unconstitutional proposition that just throws in abortion. Amongst other problems, one of the proposals on offer this week would actually criminalize the practice of intensely personal healthcare. It would essentially say to doctors: Just throw out your training. Throw it away. Discard your medical judgment, and forget what is in the patient’s best interest.

Rightwing politicians are going to call the shots in the exam room. Doctors who provide necessary medical treatment and care that can be lifesaving could be thrown in jail if they run afoul of these new ideological government standards.

Now, this isn’t a debate just here in the Senate. There have been hundreds of bills brought forward in States across the country restricting women’s healthcare, including safe and legal abortion. Among the people hit hardest by these proposals are the millions of women in this country who aver single day walking an economic tightrope. If they can’t see the doctor they trust and if their local Planned Parenthood clinic is forced to shutter its doors because of these harsh new rules, they may not have anywhere else to turn to for vital healthcare. It is another way in which the far right and the Republican agenda supporting it goes back to the days when healthcare was really just for the healthy and the wealthy.

Bottom line: This debate is fundamentally about whether the government gets to control women’s bodies. It is a dangerous, in my view, unconstitutional proposition that just throws in the garbage can decades of settled law. This Republican majority has proved that we can always find time here in the Senate to go after women’s healthcare with ideological bills, regardless of what other healthcare challenges Americans are facing at home.

I guarantee that across this country right now there are persons lined up at

February 24, 2020

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

S1105