AL, and a graduate of the University of North Alabama, to work for Senator Howell Heflin.

Clearly, word got around about her talents because, over the course of her career, she went to work for Senators CARPER, EDWARDS, MOYNIHAN, JONES, and, most recently, as Senator LEAHY's deputy chief of staff, where she was an indispensable resource not only to Senator LEAHY's office but to my team and to countless other Senators.

I want to thank Senator LEAHY for parting with Ann and lending her considerable talents to the full Senate. He told me he regretted her going, but he was so glad that the Senate had seen her talents.

And thank you, Ann. Thank you for accepting this incredible responsibility. Congratulations on beginning your historic tenure, and we all wish you the best as you work to bring this great institution to life.

As we all welcome Ann to her new role, the Senate bids a fond farewell to Julie Adams and Mary Jones. Over the last 6 years, Julie Adams and Mary Jones have served as Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Senate with impeccable skill and unflappable professionalism.

Both are longtime veterans of Washington. Julie worked for many years under Leader MCCONNELL and First Lady Laura Bush, while Mary served in the White House under President George H. W. Bush and, as I remember, because I was, I guess, chairman or ranking member—I can't recall which, maybe both—as staff director of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, where she did just a great job.

Both of them are friendly and familiar faces around here in the Senate. Both have earned the respect here in the Senate of just about everyone who has worked with them.

Of course, Julie and Mary deserve special praise for their leadership over the last 12 months. As a global pandemic forced the Senate to adapt to new ways, they kept the Senate functioning in the midst of this historic crisis. And in the wake of the horrific attacks on January 6, Julie and Mary were heroic—heroic—in getting the Senate back on its feet only a few hours after the violence had been quelled.

To Julie and Mary, thank you. Thank you for all you have done. The entire Senate wishes you and your families the very best, and we look forward to seeing what the road ahead holds for both of you.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President pro tempore, now, on Senate business, the Senate will have a busy week ahead of it. Today and tomorrow, the Senate will confirm two more members of President Biden's Cabinet: Dr. Miguel Cardona to serve as Secretary of Education and Governor Gina Raimondo to serve as Commerce Secretary.

The Senate will also confirm Dr. Cecilia Rouse to serve as the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, another history-making pick who will be the first Black official to head that Department.

All three nominees are exceptionally well qualified. All have received bipartisan support in their respective committees, including a unanimous vote in favor of Dr. Rouse.

As we continue the fight against the pandemic on all fronts—in particular, the damage it has caused our schools and our economy—these nominees will have a difficult and important task ahead of them. It will be very good news once we have them confirmed and on the job.

The Senate will then return to the American Rescue Plan, comprehensive legislation that will help us crush the virus, recover our economy, and get life back to normal.

(Ms. HIRONO assumed the Chair.)

Defeating the pandemic is national priority No. 1: getting our schools to reopen as safely and quickly as possible; helping small businesses hang on until the economy can come roaring back; keeping teachers and firefighters and other essential employees on the job; providing aid to the jobless, food to the hungry, direct cash payments to millions of Americans struggling—struggling—for the cost of rent, groceries, medicine, and utilities; speeding the distribution of the vaccine, which is the cornerstone to ending this awfully dark chapter in American history.

That is what our country needs, and that is what the American Rescue Plan will achieve. To paraphrase Franklin Roosevelt, we must do the first things first.

Last week, the legislation passed in the House of Representatives. This week, the Senate will take up the measure. Let me say that again. The Senate will take up the American Rescue Plan this week.

I expect a hearty debate and some late nights, but the American people sent us here with a job to do: to help the country through this moment of extraordinary challenge; to end, through action, the greatest health crisis our country has faced in a century. And that is just what we are going to do.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on another matter entirely, voting rights, the story of American democracy is a long and messy one, full of contradictions and halting progress. It was a century and a half after our founding before women got the right to vote, another half century before African Americans could enjoy the full rights of citizenship. It took mighty movements and decades of fraught political conflicts to achieve even those basic dignities and establish the United States as a full democracy worthy of the title.

But any American who thinks that today, in 2021, that fight is over—that the fight for voting rights is over—is sorely and, unfortunately, sadly mistaken.

In the wake of the most recent election, an election that the former President has repeatedly lied about and claimed was stolen, more than 253 bills in 43 States have been introduced to tighten voting rules under the pernicious, nasty guise of election integrity.

In Iowa, the State legislature voted to cut early voting by 9 days. Polls will close an hour earlier. And they voted to tighten the rules on absentee voting, which so many—the elderly, the disabled, the frail—depend on.

In Wisconsin, Republican lawmakers have proposed limiting ballot drop boxes to one per municipality—a municipality of hundreds of thousands, and a tiny one gets the small one. I wonder why. I wonder why.

In Arizona, one Republican legislator wants to pass a law allowing the State legislators—listen to this—to ignore the results of the Presidential election and determine their own slate of electors. One legislator in Arizona wants to pass a law allowing State legislators to ignore the results of the Presidential election and determine their own slate of electors. That doesn't sound like democracy. That sounds like dictatorship.

The most reprehensible of all efforts might be found in Georgia, where Republicans have introduced a bill to eliminate all early voting on Sundays, a day when Black churches sponsor get-out-the-vote drives known as ''souls to the polls.''

We have, supposedly—supposedly—come a long way since African Americans in the South were forced to guess the number of jelly beans in a jar in order to be allowed to vote. But it is very difficult to look at the specific laws proposed by Republican legislatures around the country, designed to limit voter participation in heavily African-American and Hispanic areas, to lower turnout and frustrate election administration in urban districts and near college campuses, to gerrymander districts to limit minority representation ''with almost surgical precision,'' to specifically target and thwart Black churches from organizing voting drives—it is difficult, very difficult not to see the tentacles of America's generations-old caste system, typically associated with slavery and Jim Crow, stretching into the 21st century and poisoning the wellspring of any true democracy—free and fair elections.

We see a lot of despicable things these days, but nothing that seems to be more despicable than this. When you lose an election in a democratic society, you update your party platform and appeal to more voters. You don't change the rules to make it harder for your opponents to vote, especially not African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and other voters who have