And I feel an obligation to the country to pay back, and this is the highest, best use of my own set of skills to pay back.

Judge Garland's motivation for serving as the Nation's next Attorney General is powerful, it is honest, and it is humble.

I want to close by coming full circle, so to speak. At Judge Garland's hearing, I noted that, if confirmed, he would be standing on the shoulders of predecessors like Robert Kennedy, who called on Congress to enact sweeping civil rights legislation. Well after that hearing, the committee received a letter from over 30 members of the Kennedy family, and they likened what faces Judge Garland to what faced the young Robert Kennedy as he took up his position as Attorney General. They wrote—the Kennedy family—and I quote:

> We are confronted by the same challenges today, particularly in voting rights, in the actions of some of our police officers, and in great disparities in housing, health, and jobs. Merrick Garland's record shows he is dedicated to the kind of justice that does not simply punish but lifts people up so their best selves can be fulfilled.

That is precisely the kind of Attorney General America needs and the kind of Attorney General Merrick Garland will be. I look forward to voting for him, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Ohio.

NOMINATION OF MARCIA LOUISE FUDGE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, today, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting another dedicated and talented public servant and a great Ohioan—my Congresswoman for the last 12 years—MARSHA FUDGE, to be our next Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Congresswoman FUDGE is a proud daughter of Ohio. She was born in Cleveland, grew up in Ohio, and graduated from the Ohio State University and Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. Congresswoman FUDGE has a long and distinguished career serving our State in the Cleveland and Cuyahoga County courts and Cuyahoga County prosecutors' office, as chief of staff to the trailblazing Stephanie Tubbs Jones, and as mayor of Warrensville Heights, OH.

At HUD, Congresswoman FUDGE will work to help protect our kids from lead poisoning, to restore the promise of fair housing, and to give communities the help and the resources that they need. It is a tall order. It is one she is poised to meet.

She brings to the job the unique and critical experience of serving as mayor for the kind of community that is either overlooked or outright preyed upon by Wall Street and by big investors. She understands we can't write off entire swaths of the country—whether it is a coal town in southeast Ohio or a historic industrial city like the one I grew up in, in Mansfield, or whether it is farm country around Lexington, OH, or whether it is an urban neighborhood on the East Side of Cleveland.

This champion of Cleveland understands that. She saw up close how lenders preyed on families and the foreclosure crisis that followed. My colleagues have heard me talk about ZIP code 44105, where Connie and I live, which had more foreclosures in the first half of 2007 than any ZIP code in the United States.

At the time, Congresswoman FUDGE was serving as mayor of a city fewer than 20 miles away. Today, she represents this ZIP code in the United States Congress. Those families are more than just a statistic to her. They are her constituents. They are her neighbors. They are her friends. She knows their story. She knows how, for decades, communities have watched as factories closed, investment dried up, and storefronts were boarded over. She knows how many neighborhoods and towns have never had the investment they should—from Black codes to Jim Crow, to red lining, to the discrimination that President Trump's regulators locked into place. She understands how decades of policy funneled resources and jobs away from Black and Brown communities.

A few years ago, I was talking with local health department officials in Cleveland. I asked them what percentage of the older homes that make up the bulk of Cleveland housing have dangerous levels of lead, those homes built right after World War II or before that. They said 99 percent of those homes have high levels of lead—dangerously high levels of lead.

The families in those homes are Congresswoman FUDGE's constituents. She knows what lead poison does to kids. She knows the local efforts that Ohioans are leading in Cleveland to take this on. She lifts up their voices, which have been drowned out or silenced for too long. She will be a champion for families all over the country who want to be able to afford a home without crippling stress every single month and to be able to build wealth through home ownership to pass on to their children and grandchildren.

Congresswoman FUDGE has dedicated her career to fighting for Ohioans. I am excited she is now going to use all that talent and all that passion and all that empathy to fight for her whole country. I ask my colleagues to support her confirmation to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

Mr. President, this weekend, on Saturday, we passed the American Rescue Plan that will put shots in people's arms, kids back in school, money in people's pockets, and workers in jobs. Tens of millions Americans, including more than 5 million Ohioans, are going to see money in their pockets from stimulus checks and the dramatic expansion of the earned income tax credit and the child tax credit.

This comes back to, as it always does in politics—the Presiding Officer knows—as it does in government, and it comes down to ''whose side are you on?'' as this illustrates pretty well. The American Rescue Plan. We all remember—most of us remember—4 years ago, the Trump tax cut for the rich, and the blue here is the American Rescue Plan, which we just passed on Saturday, which the House will probably pass tomorrow, and President Biden will probably sign it this weekend. The lowest numbers—the lowest 20 percent—saw their income go up by 20 percent under our plan. It is barely perceptible how much it went up under the Trump tax plan. But if you go to the top of 1 percent, you can see how much their income went up, and this is to the tune of millions and millions of dollars, and the lowest earners essentially got nothing from the Trump tax plan.

So you can see here in the blue is how our tax bill will put money in the pockets of middle-income people, all the way up—middle-income people, working-class people, the lowest income people—while the Trump tax plan, of course, was helping the richest people in the country.

We see that middle-class and working-class and low-income families are all going to benefit from the American Rescue Plan. This is a broad investment in a whole country—in the vast majority of people, who get their income not from a stock portfolio but from a paycheck. Contrast that with those who benefitted from the McConnell-Trump tax scam. The vast majority of benefits, as we all know, went to those at the top. Again, look at the top 1 percent. They got more from the Washington Republican tax giveaway than anyone else.

At the time, I remember—the Presiding Officer, I think, remembers this; he opposed that bill vigorously, too—Republicans claimed it just wasn't possible—to do their tax bill, it wasn't possible—to avoid giving tax cuts to the richest 1 percent. They just had to. We knew they were wrong then. This has proved they are wrong.

Again, look at the blue and the purple—the benefits that go to the lowest, to middle-class families, working families, and low-income families. Our rescue plan gave literally zero to the top 1 percent. They are doing just fine. The value of their stock portfolio has soared during the pandemic. We invested in everyone else, in the people who were promised more money in their paychecks from the Republican tax scam but never got those raises.

As I said, 4 million Ohioans will get a stimulus check. That is out of 12 million people in the State. Two million Ohio families will get at least a $3,000 child tax credit. They will get a check—$250 every month year round. More than half a million Ohio workers will get an expanded earned income tax credit. Those childless families—single people, childless people, some old, a

number of older Ohioans not yet quite 65—will get their enhanced earned income tax credit. Over a million delivery drivers and more than a million cashiers will get an income boost, and 800,000 home health aides get more money back in their pockets.

These are the workers on the frontlines of the pandemic. These are the people who go to work every day and expose themselves to people whom they don't know, in the course of their job. They go home at night anxious that they might be infecting their families. This is what making hard work pay off looks like. This is what investing in the country looks like. This is what a government on the side of workers and their families look like. It is about the dignity of work. It is about rewarding people that work hard. It is what we did on Saturday. It is what I said, as I was walking out of this building on the way home on Saturday, was the best day of my Senate career because we helped tens of millions of Americans. We helped millions of people in my State. We will make a difference in their lives. That is what we did on Saturday. That is what we will continue to do.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, this past Saturday, Senate Democrats signed off on the largest and most partisan transfer of wealth in the history of the U.S. Congress.

In the weeks leading up to that vote, they insisted that their $1.9 trillion giveaway would bring the relief the American people were seeking. They quoted suspect polling and anecdotes to support their ridiculous claims that the bill was bipartisan, even though they never even tried to secure bipartisan support. In fact, I would argue that Democrats threw away the idea of bipartisanship the moment they chose to use the reconciliation process to force their hand. After almost 30 hours of debate, they did just that on a party-line vote. Then the cracks in their claims of bipartisanship and necessity began to show.

Almost immediately after the final vote, the majority leader called it—and I am quoting—''one of the most progressive pieces of legislation—if not the most progressive—in decades.'' But we all know that his definition of ''progressive'' isn't compatible with the kind of targeted relief everyone here would probably agree that this country needs, had my colleagues on the other side of the aisle not seen an opportunity to fulfill the radical campaign promises that had put them into power. They chose—they chose—that power over dealing with the needs that people have.

They did what they set out to do. A fraction of the American Rescue Plan's $2 trillion pricetag would go toward that—and I am quoting again—''big, bold, urgent'' relief that Democrats spent all weekend long bragging about. I am sure you heard them as you turned on the TV. Here is the truth: Only 9 percent—9 percent—will go toward vaccines, testing, healthcare jobs; 9 percent of a nearly $2 trillion bill goes for COVID relief.

But if we want to talk about big, bold spending plans, let's talk about all those special earmarks and sweetheart deals that Democrats used to take advantage of the situation and seize even more power—again, after the power, using people as pawns to get their liberal wish list, get the money in the pipeline. Of course, you can forget that we had $1 trillion already in the pipeline that had not been spent, also putting their desired power ahead of our children and grandchildren who are going to have to pay that debt. Immoral.

In my office, we call this bill the blue State bailout. We do it for a reason. You can look at this chart. Along with that laughable 9 percent of actual COVID relief, the American people took on $350 billion in debt to cover a bailout for some of the highest spending and most poorly managed State and local governments in the country. The number is astronomically higher than even the most extreme estimates of need conjured up by leftwing think tanks. It is more than the $31 billion loss in expected tax revenue that experts forecasted. And it doesn't even take into consideration that many States don't need a bailout. Many States had success putting those five previous bipartisan COVID relief packages to work. They caught up on their tax revenue with time to spare.

But, still, that $350 billion, it served a purpose. You can see it right here. The blue States, they are getting more money. The red States, they are losing money. It created yet another expectation of dependency that mismanaged States and local governments can lean on when their out-of-control spending policies come back to bite them.

And we have learned today that the majority leader had a staff member who tweeted out that the money from this bill, it would tend to New York State's deficit—pretty much the same thing we are hearing from California and from some of the big blue cities. If you can't control your spending habits, crank up the printing presses.

The payday continued with an $85 billion no-strings-attached pension bailout that everyone from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget to the editorial board of the Wall Street Journal, to the editorial board of the Washington Post agree had nothing to do with COVID relief—nothing. It was a gift to an embattled constituency and another pernicious assertion that when the going gets tough and the money in those mismanaged funds evaporates, just call on the Federal Government and crank up the printing presses one more time. Why? Oh, we need the money. We cannot manage our budgets. We are running low on fulfilling our obligation to the pension fund. Oh, my goodness, we have so many needs.

Everybody has needs. Our children and our grandchildren have needs. They need freedom. They need Members of the Senate, Members of the House to act like adults and address the problems that are right in front of us.

When President Biden asked, back in February, what would they have me cut from this spending bill, I would have told him, let's start with this money. Let's start with the money that is going to the States to bail them out because yes, indeed, this is now the Biden blue State bailout.

Democrats' desire for a lawless and open border shone through in their unanimous refusal to accept an amendment that would have kept billions of dollars in direct payments out of the hands of illegal immigrants. This was more than just a handout; it was a signal to every person who is trying to jump the line and break the rules that we will not only tolerate it, but now we are encouraging it. Think about that. Think about that.

The rule of law is out the window. We are willing to chip away at our own security—the Democrats are—and ignore the growing crisis at our southern border—the Democrats are. And if it means we can slap a bandaid on what has become a gaping wound and call it a win in the war against poverty, the Democrats are OK with doing that. It is called spin. But it does not address the underlying issues. It doesn't address the fact that they are doing this at the expense of schools, small businesses, and families.

Democrats certainly followed through on their campaign promise to empower teachers unions. In fact, they went so far as to approve a provision that would pay schools to stay closed. All 50 Democrats voted against an amendment that would have sent new funding only to schools that have followed the science and have reopened safely.

You know, you would have thought that the Democrats would have at least done that for the children. But, no. In addition to saddling them with debt—another $2 trillion worth of debt—they encouraged the teachers unions to not go back to school. That vote put the power right where the Democrats want it—in the hands of the unions. And millions of students and teachers out there will continue to pay the mental and emotional price for this action.

This bill took so much from people who have absolutely nothing to give. Think of all those billions of dollars wasted on unnecessary State bailouts, pension rescues, and union appeasement. We had the opportunity to spend that money on vaccine distribution and

small business relief and a light at the end of the tunnel for rural healthcare systems that are hanging on by a thread.

So why did Democrats throw so much money at their pet projects? Do they really owe that many favors and paybacks? They certainly didn't pour their time and energy into those 600 pages to provide relief but to shamelessly advance their own agenda and throw aside struggling families and workers. Struggling families and workers were simply the price for getting the power that the Democrats wanted.

When I talk to Tennesseans about what happened in this Chamber last week, I tell them: You are right about what you were seeing as you watched the proceedings. You are right. Democrats took advantage of you, of your desperation and your exhaustion. They used slick messaging and wordy phrases to sell a bill of goods that treats every pet project they have and every liberal wish list agenda item as essential.

They like changing the rules. They change the meaning of words like ''essential'' because they knew that if they could make everything that they wanted essential, they could take all the power away from local, responsible governments. They could take it away from school districts and small businesses. And do you know what they are doing with it? They are going to centralize it.

See, here is the thing: You were essential to their greedy power grab. They had to have you.

They had to give their bill a nice-sounding name. They had to say certain things were essential, but you—small businesses, families, people who are playing by the rules, you were not essential to them.

See, that is what ''progressive'' means to Senate Democrats, and if we continue along this road, you are right; it will be an absolute unmitigated disaster for every single person that my colleagues across the aisle have used as leverage against responsible policy that will actually bring us out of this pandemic.

No, it is not about getting out of the pandemic. It is about power, the power that they want.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

FREE SPEECH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have spoken on the Senate floor recently on the subject of free speech as it applies to the world of digital media. The principles of free speech are timeless and are applicable to new forms of communication. Still, it is natural that new questions will arise and new mechanisms might be needed to apply those principles across new modes of communication.

What shouldn't be in question is the need for open dialogue and freedom of speech in academia. Otherwise, what does the principle of academic freedom mean if it isn't involved with freedom of speech?

All of the progress that has made modern life possible has been the result of individuals who have been able to think of things in new ways, even if that challenged an old orthodoxy. A healthy and vibrant academic environment is not afraid of those challenges.

Only stagnant, defensive, and unconfident regimes suppress speech. Think about the recent protests in Russia, Belarus, or Burma. China's restrictions on the internet and suppression of minorities show that it is threatened by contrary ways of thinking.

Which would you describe as an advanced, stable, and dynamic society: North Korea or South Korea? Obviously, that describes South Korea well. It does not at all describe that part of the Korean Peninsula north of the 38th parallel.

So what does it say about so many American academic institutions that the notion of free thought and free speech has now become controversial? What purpose do universities serve if one of the purposes is not to discuss controversial subjects? I often say my definition of a university is where controversy runs rampant.

We hear lots of rationales about why the current generation of college students needs to be protected from hearing speech that could be offensive, hateful, or just plain wrong. Of course, none of us support hateful speech. I don't support it, but I do support freedom.

If you empower those in authority to limit hate speech, whether they be college administrators or government officials, that power will eventually be abused to limit dissenting points of view of all kinds, and that is where some universities are right now.

Even in Iowa's three public universities, we have seen recent efforts to shut down mainstream, center-right views. For instance, a dean at the University of Iowa sent an email across a university platform criticizing a Trump administrative Executive order, but at that same university, when a student challenged the position of the dean using the very same medium, the student was threatened with disciplinary action.

Well, the dean has since apologized for his initial handling of the subject, so I don't raise that to pick on him. In fact, that very dean has befriended me in very many ways and in thoughtful ways as well. But it just makes you wonder if it is part of a broader cultural trend in academia, what went on in that instance at the University of Iowa.

Then there was an English professor at Iowa State University who had to be reprimanded for banning her students from writing papers expressing certain viewpoints such as opposition to abortion or same-sex marriage. The president of my alma mater, the University of Northern Iowa, had to step in to reverse a decision by the student senate denying a group of pro-life students student organization status purely because of their political views.

In each case, the university administrations of these three universities ultimately resolved these incidents well and properly so. I mention them not to pick on my State of Iowa's universities and not to criticize any university, for that matter, but because they seem to be examples of a broader trend on campuses across the country of a knee-jerk reaction to shut down speech some find disagreeable.

The best response to the expression of views that you find repugnant is speech that points out the errors of that particular way of thinking. Now, I think that is best expressed by the University of Chicago's policy, which has become kind of a gold standard for free speech advocacy on university campuses. The University of Chicago expressly prohibits obstructing or otherwise interfering with freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe.

If you are confident in the rightness of your views and you have an environment that allows free expression of those views, you need not fear speech you find wrong. Of course, that assumes that human beings are all gifted with the power of reason and can discern what is right.

Now, if it happens that that is not the case, if people cannot be trusted to listen to different views and come to the right conclusion, then there is no basis for democracy and our system of self-government, then, is fundamentally flawed.

You can shield students from hearing challenging and uncomfortable views while in college but not when they get out in the real world. Just think of these college students who are on campus. What if they had left high school for the world of work? They would be faced with all these things every day.

So what is special about a college campus? In fact, it is so special that you ought to have a discussion of all these subjects. Academic institutions that do not allow for student views to be challenged, to be tested, to be refined through rigorous debate are doing those very same students a very great disservice. These students' knowledge will be limited, then, and their views unsophisticated. Their ability to deal with different ways of thinking, which they will inevitably encounter throughout their lifetime, will be greatly diminished.

I feel sorry for students who graduate from colleges that cocoon them from controversy. Let me repeat what I said at the beginning. I have always thought of a university as a place where controversy should run rampant.

The notion that the voices students hear must be curated for their own good is concerning, not just because it has a totalitarian ring but because it is harming students in the long run, when they have to deal with the real world.