the time this country has existed. I should say in the Congress—47 years in the Senate, 6 years in the House of Representatives—more than 50 years, approximately 25 percent of the time that we have been a country. He should know something about free speech. He was the Senate floor where the great Margaret Chase Smith, a Republican Senator from Maine, talked about the value of free speech in the Senate. He was in the Senate when the Republican Howard Baker talked about the importance of the filibuster in protecting our democracy. A gimmick? I think not.

Senator BYRD was in the Senate when the debate over civil rights took place. I heard BARACK OBAMA upstairs with the press corps say: Isn't it interesting, the filibuster was used against African Americans but they worked around it and prevailed in spite of it. They didn't move to change the rules in the middle of the game.

Senator BYRD was here when DAN INOUYE, the Medal of Honor winner from Hawaii, a new Senator, came to the floor, and as an Asian American whose friends and family were in internment camps during the Second World War, he asked me about what it means to be a minority and how the filibuster should be available to protect the minority. A gimmick? I think not.

Over the years, the filibuster has proven to be an important tool of moderation and consensus, which partly explains why the Republican leadership is opposed to it. They aren't interested in moderation. They are only interested in advancing their right-wing, radical political agenda, an agenda being driven by the people who are saying we are filibustering against people of faith.

Mr. President, every day—for 23 years—with rare exception, I go to the House gym and work out. There I met Congresswoman Rush Holt. He is a nuclear scientist, a Congressman from New Jersey, Rush's father, also named Rush Holt, served in this Chamber in the late 1950s. As a freshman United States Senator, he led a filibuster to preserve wage and hour protections for American workers. Rush Holt, Jr., is so proud of his father. He talked to me about the pride he had in his father being a United States Senator, and he told me this story about the filibuster his father conducted alone to preserve the control of the Democratic leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from Washington is recognized.

MRS. MURRAY. I thank the Chair.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we are today at the breaking point of a breakdown in negotiations to end the so-called nuclear confrontation that some Republicans are driving this body toward.

I want to take a minute to thank our leader, Senator RUIZ, who I believe is really trying hard to preserve the tradition and the precedent of the Senate through good-faith negotiations. He put forth a good-faith compromise proposal only to see it rejected out of hand. This breakdown really marks a sad day for this body.

More than 200 years ago, the Senate was created as part of the Great Compromise, and for the balance of those 200 years, compromise has been central to the great work that has been completed by the Senate. The rules are set up here to assure that the Senate serves as a center for Government compromise. We have a system of checks and balances, with the Senate checking the President through advice and consent and the President checking the Congress with the use of the veto. And all the while we have an independent judiciary that is empowered to balance out the system. Those checks and balances were put in place for a reason. They promote compromise, they promote preservation of minority rights, and they ensure that our system of government works for all of the people. Unfortunately, the goal of a Senate that becomes a crisis day in this body that they are not interested in compromise on the so-called nuclear option. If this Senate does remove the last check in Washington against an abuse of power, the majority will be able to douse the fires on the Senate floor and the Federal bench anyone they want.

Mr. President, the story of Mount St. Helens is the day before the eruption, when more than 200 years ago, the Senate was created as part of the Great Compromise, and for the balance of those 200 years, compromise has been central to the great work that has been completed by the Senate. The rules are set up here to assure that the Senate serves as a center for Government compromise. We have a system of checks and balances, with the Senate checking the President through advice and consent and the President checking the Congress with the use of the veto. And all the while we have an independent judiciary that is empowered to balance out the system. Those checks and balances were put in place for a reason. They promote compromise, they promote preservation of minority rights, and they ensure that our system of government works for all of the people.

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Perhaps the best place to start really is the day before the eruption, when Mount St. Helens was really a beautiful and striking feature of landscape...
in the State that I was born and raised in.

This photo behind me shows what the mountain looked like before the eruption. As you can see, it had a nearly perfect dome, and it was recognized as one of the best symmetrical mountains in the world. It was surrounded by lush forests and beautiful streams and rivers and lakes and the area was filled with wildlife of all kinds. But it looked right beneath that tranquil landscape.

May 8, 1980, began as a beautiful, sunny morning in the Northwest. I remember it well, sitting at home with my two young children at the time. Meaning the surface, Mount St. Helens was anything but calm. At 8:32 a.m., a 5.1-magnitude earthquake occurred, and that sparked massive eruptions which would last for 9 hours. This photo shows some of what followed. Within minutes, this massive cloud of ash and toxic gas spouted 15 miles into the air. You could see it from many places in my State. A 300-mile-per-hour blast shot from the mountain, knocking down all of the evergreen stands as if they were matchsticks. From the north face of the mountain gave way to this massive mud slide, and that mud slide carried hot water and debris that it picked up over the surrounding landscape.

The mountain released 24 megatons of energy. It destroyed all forms of life within the 18-mile blast zone, including roughly 7,000 bear, elk, and deer. The scope of this devastation on that day was enormous. The hot ash from this eruption, combined with the melting snow at the mountain top, created massive mud flows. This was not just a local event. More than 500 million tons of that ash was blown eastward across the United States 250 miles away in Spokane, WA. That traveling ash turned day into night for everyone who was there, and by June, a few months later, ash could be found from Mount St. Helens on the other side of the world.

As we now mark the 25th anniversary, I wanted to come here to the floor today with my colleague from Washington State, Senator Cantwell, to pay tribute to the 57 men and women who died on that day. Some of them were there enjoying the area's beautiful scenery, some were drawn to the mountain for scientific study, and others were long-time residents who lived there who refused to give up the only homes they had ever known. When that dust settled and the mountain quieted, nearly 150,000 acres of public and private land had been destroyed.

This photo behind me shows some of that destruction. That stand of trees was blown down in an instant. The mountain's nearly perfect dome was turned into a crater. The Toutle River, which had been vibrant and green before, a great place in my State, was now a dark, gray expanse.

Then President Jimmy Carter toured the site and later remarked:

Someone said this area looked like a moonscape. But the Moon looks more like a golf course compared to what's up there.

Everyone knew that wildlife restoration would be a major challenge. With 1,200 species of plants and animals on the mountain, however, many dedicated foresters and biologists returned to the area to assess the damages and help with the recovery. One of the strongest leaders in this revitalization has been the Weyerhaeuser Company. It lost nearly 68,000 acres of forest that day, making the company the largest private landowner impacted by this eruption. The company was able to replant over 45,000 acres with over 18 million seedlings. Weyerhaeuser has been committed to restoring the area through sustainable forestry. Now, 25 years later, many of those trees they planted in the wake of the eruption are now amazingly ready for thinning, and final harvesting will begin in another 20 years which will pave the way for forest management.

The U.S. Forest Service made similar efforts. On 14,000 acres of National Forest land, the Forest Service has planted nearly 10 million trees since 1980. In August of 1982, Congress established the 110,000-acre Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument.

The monument allows unhindered access for visitors and academics. Within weeks of the eruption, signs of life literally sprouted through the layers of destruction.

As forests were replanted and vegetation again took root, the wildlife also began to return. Roosevelt elk and Columbia black-tailed deer, for example, along with small birds and mammals, reestablished their habitats.

Today the area is a testament to the enduring circle of life, as green hills and forests surrounding the forest cycle to recommence. The monument allows unhindered access for visitors and academics. Within weeks of the eruption, signs of life literally sprouted through the layers of destruction.

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Today the area is a testament to the enduring circle of life, as green hills and forests surrounding the area are filled with wildlife of all kinds. But we must do more to help protect our communities and our economies from events like this.

As a result, most people stayed away from the mountain. We must continue to support the efforts of the scientists and local officials who keep us all safe.

Unfortunately, according to a recent USGS report, monitoring of high-risk volcanoes in the United States plays a lot to be desired. Of the 169 volcanoes, 55 qualify as being a "high risk" for eruption.

After Kilauea in Hawaii, Mount St. Helens ranks second on the list of high-risk peaks. Mount Rainier, also in Washington State, is ranked third, followed by Mount Hood in Oregon and Mount Shasta in California.

Millions of people live near these mountains, making their monitoring and study a critical undertaking.

I want to personally commend the hundreds of dedicated scientists and local, state and federal officials who are keeping a close eye on these mountains in Washington State. Their work is helping to ensure that the public is better prepared for any future disaster.

We can honor those who died 25 years ago by learning from the eruption and improving our ability to predict and respond to natural disasters.

While we have been fortunate not to have a major eruption in the U.S. since Mount St. Helens, the tsunami tragedy in Asia once again reminded us of the power of events beyond our control. Now there is more to come, so together, I hope we make sure we are well-prepared, and our communities are well-protected.

My colleague from Washington State, Senator Cantwell, is on the floor. I welcome her.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore, The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleague in the resolution commemorating the 25th anniversary of the eruption of Mount St. Helens.

I thank my colleague for working on the resolution to commemorate this historic event. Not only for Washington State and the Northwest, but
for our country, May 18 marks an incredible landmark in time for people in the Northwest and certainly marks a critical response by our Federal Government. It also allows us to reflect on the progress we have made as a nation to develop a greater understanding about volcanic activity and other major active volcanoes in the United States.

For over 100 years, Mount St. Helens stood in silence, a relatively dormant peak and serene part of the Pacific Northwest. But on the morning of May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted releasing a plume of ash that filled the sky, circling the Earth in just 15 days. The destructive eruption eviscerated everything in its path and tore through miles of trees.

Today, 25 years later, the effect of the 1980 eruption remains evident, and the rumbling of Mount St. Helens over the past several months reminds many of us, particularly in Washington State, of those events on May 18, 1980. The level of activity of Mount St. Helens, combined with the unpredictability of it, makes it very special for Washingtonians. We embrace the mountain’s beauty but remain in profound respect of its power and weary of a repetition similar to 1980.

What is important to understand is that Mount St. Helens, located 90 miles south of Seattle and 65 miles north of Portland, OR, when it exploded, released such hot steam that it actually melted 70 percent of the snow and ice on top of the mountain. To give you a sense of that enormity, Mount St. Helens was, prior to this, the ninth highest peak in the State of Washington. It has now been reduced about 1,300 feet. The avalanche that was created by that explosion was close to two-thirds of a cubic mile of debris. The Geological Survey estimates that would be enough to cover Washington, DC, in more than 14 feet of ash and mud. That is basically the height of the Northwest downhill when this explosion happened in 1980.

We saw flows of rock and ice covering various parts of the north fork of the Toutle River, debris running down those pathways wherever it could go. The eruption destroyed 27 bridges that were part of our highway structure. 200 hundred homes, 185 miles of roadway, and 15 miles of railway.

What is unique about this is that Congress responded. We responded because of the devastation to the physical and environmental infrastructure but also because of the loss of life. My colleague and I are here to commemorate the events of May 18, 1980, as a particular peak in the history of Washingtonians and for our country. But as I stated this commemoration is also significant because it speaks to the advancements in science that our country has achieved in better preparing to respond to this type of emergency. I think about the science we have applied as it relates to volcano monitoring, I am confident that with similar activity and research as it relates to tsunami activity—something that also could greatly impact the Northwest—we can better prepare for an event of that nature as well. It gives me a great deal of hope that we will, through better mapping, through better geological information, better seismic information, provide Washingtonians with greater security and safety.

As most of my State will be seeing many pictures of the eruption in 1980, I thank my colleagues from past Congresses for their support in giving us a Cascade Volcanic Observatory in the State of Washington and for the work the women do in various Federal agencies that provide us better scientific information and a better warning systems for our country.