

States, or about Russia's ongoing cyber and military aggression in Europe. In fact, instead of addressing and responding to this Russian attack head-on, the President has incredibly been parroting Russian strategic interests instead.

Let me repeat that from my largely silent Republican colleagues—and there have been a few exceptions, but most of them will not come to the floor to even discuss this matter. The American President, the same party of Ronald Reagan, has failed to acknowledge this major attack on our Nation and has refused to take action in response. How is this possible? Why is the majority party so silent in the face of these major national security issues?

There is a simple way to resolve these questions:

First, President Trump should do what every Presidential candidate has done in modern history and disclose his tax returns. Why won't he do that? What is in there that is so worrisome to him that he has defied all requests from media and from others across this Nation for him to do exactly what every other Presidential candidate has done?

The President should also be totally cooperative with any investigation about campaign contacts, including by his former campaign manager Paul Manafort; Michael Flynn, his former National Security Advisor; and his former foreign policy adviser, Carter Page. How do we explain repeated reports of these contacts between that campaign and Russian intelligence?

The administration also needs to answer questions about Roger Stone's comments that suggest he had knowledge of WikiLeaks having and using, in strategically timed releases around periods when the campaign was struggling, the information that had been hacked by the Russians.

Tell us why the administration has criticized hundreds by Twitter when there is any perceived slight—from entire States to Major League Baseball to United Steelworkers—but not the Communist KGB agent who conducted an attack on our Nation and democracy.

We need to know why they not only repeatedly denied intelligence information about Russian attacks but, in fact, in July of last year encouraged Russia to hack into their opponent's campaign.

All of these things are being watched closely by nations around the world. Several weeks ago, I went over to Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine. One of the Polish leaders said to me: We're watching. If you don't take the Russian invasion of your Presidential election seriously, how will you take the Russian invasion of our country seriously? It is a legitimate question because the Russians are up to a strategy that we have seen over and over again. This time, the Americans were the victims.

We need full cooperation by the White House. We need an independent commission. I have suggested we pick people who are beyond reproach, people

we can trust. I mentioned General Colin Powell, a man who served our country so honorably in the military, then served in the Republican White House, and then served as a Republican Secretary of State. I would accept Colin Powell as the head of a commission to get to the bottom of this because it is a national security issue, which he has undoubtedly had some background in dealing with in years gone by.

There are many good people to turn to, but until we get the straight answers, we can expect the Russians to continue to try to find ways to invade our political process.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.  
I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### KANSAS WILDFIRES

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the historical and unprecedented wildfires that burned through southwest Kansas last week. We had fires in 21 of our Kansas counties, roughly one-fifth of our State. High winds and dry conditions caused fires of the highest classification that blazed across central and western Kansas some 30 to 40 feet high, burning more than 700,000 acres of land, making this the largest wildfire in our State's history. The Kansas Division of Emergency Management has said it could take weeks to determine the full extent of devastation from the fires. Clark County, KS, officials—that is the county that was the hardest hit—estimate a devastating loss of anywhere from 3,000 to 9,000 head of cattle. That is just in one county. As I indicated, Clark County was the hardest hit by the windblown fires, with over 85 percent of the land in the county consumed by these prairie fires. This is hundreds of thousands of acres in one county and over 700,000 in regard to our State.

On Friday, I drove south from Dodge City, KS, through range and ranchland I didn't even recognize. What used to be gently rolling prairie, dotted with herds of cattle and crisscrossed by fencing, is now reduced to blackened dust. Friends of mine lost their ranch when a 40-foot wall of fire roared out of the valley over the bluff and burned out their operation. We have unimaginable damage to land and property, but also heart-wrenching scenes of cattle and wildlife burned, wounded, and wandering.

Many Kansans lost everything. According to Sheriff John Kotron of Clark County, 31 houses and over 440,000 acres were burned there. We have longtime friends there, John and Carol Swayze. We have known them for years. John

said with tears in his eyes: "Pat, it took me 43 years to build up this operation, and it took about an hour to take it all down." Riding with Sheriff Kotron, we were assessing the town of Ashland, where a volunteer firefighting force managed to save the town when it became surrounded in flames. Some volunteers were fighting fires elsewhere in the area and learned their own homes had been engulfed and lost.

I met with brave people in the towns of Englewood and Ashland, KS, in the heart of Clark County, who had just come through frightening experiences fighting the unpredictable and unstoppable fires. Some were out driving cattle away from the fires and had become separated from loved ones. When the flames turned, they were left to pray for their safety.

Kylene Scott, with the High Plains Journal, calls it "the worst day of her life." She wrote a courageous and honest account of the day. I will read her words now:

I think I had them going the right way, then the wind switched. Now I just don't know. When I heard the crack in my husband's voice yesterday afternoon, I knew it was bad. He is normally the calm, cool, collected one.

A family friend alerted him to the fire in Clark County very near the Scott farm after we'd returned home from burying my Dad yesterday.

#### Coming back from a funeral.

When they said the closest neighbor was being evacuated he went as quickly as he could fearing for the cattle herd he'd worked the last five years to build following the death of his own Dad. I stayed behind with the boys at our house 40 miles away.

When the wind switched at my house from south/southwest to the north, I began to worry even more and called him. At this point he was waiting out the fire and smoke in the wheat field, helplessly watching the house and barn burn. I wanted to be at the farm so bad, but there wasn't much that could be done. When he made it home unscathed I was pretty happy, but sad at the same time. Knowing there was nothing we could do to fix what it took for Mother Nature mere minutes to destroy.

Fifty-two cows are on the farm, with about half or ¾ of them with young calves. Most are accounted for. All the grass is gone, as is the hay stockpile. He went and hauled water to the cows this morning and some are scorched and others have udders with burns. One cow was bawling for her missing calf. "Those poor mommas," was my text reply to him this morning.

I made my way early this afternoon to see the farm or what's left of it with my own eyes. As bad as I wanted to be down there, a piece of me dreaded the drive. The closer I got to the farm, the worse it got. Blowing dirt, darkening skies because of the dust and awful winds. I pulled in the drive, like I had done a hundred times in the nearly 20 years I have been part of the family, and I had to stop my vehicle. The tears came and the heartbreak overwhelmed me.

I thought of the old white farm house with the wonderful front porch, where my husband spent a large majority of his childhood in and around. My fondest memory is when we'd stop and see my husband's Grandma Pauline. She'd always have something sweet to eat and a cold drink at the kitchen table. The home had been around for 100 years and still had a large portion of the family momentos in it. It was reduced to ashes and rubble. All that's standing is the chimney.

I couldn't see the barn around the trees, but I again had to stop and sit when I pulled around the corner. The barn. The old barn with its red siding. I remember when my father-in-law had it painted and how proud he was because it looked so good. I remember when he laid the brick in front of the tack room and built a new door for it. My boys explored every inch of it when we worked calves last fall. You could "almost" hear the horses munching in the stalls decades ago when you stood in the center alley. Now it's just a charred pile of tin.

I realize the house and barn are just buildings. Things can be replaced. But dang, it's so hard to see it all reduced to ashes and rubble. To see part of the Scott family history, more than a hundred years, just be gone. Just like that. It's hard.

We've had incredible friends and family offering help, hay and feed, and it's heart-warming to know how much people care. Like I heard an Ashland, Kansas resident on the news this morning being interviewed, it's just what southwest Kansas people do. Help and survive.

Here is a picture that was taken on Kylene and Spencer Scott's wedding day in 2009 up here. It is a beautiful sight. Off in the distance is the Clark County Lake. It is rolling hills, cattle country, cattle, and grass. Looking at this picture now, it is not hard to wonder how this land will come back to provide for so many, as it has for generations of Kansas farm and ranch families whose sweat and blood have produced for Kansas, our Nation, and, yes, the world, as well.

There is the other picture. They got married here. It was the happiest day of their life. They saw this, and that became just about the worst day of their life. And yet, having seen this devastation firsthand, I don't wonder about Kansas and our ability to rebuild. It is in our State motto: *Ad astra per aspera*—to the stars through difficulties.

In one of the emergency management centers I met Joyce Edinger. When I asked her what I could do to help, she just said: "The Lord will provide." She had lost virtually everything. I think that pretty well sums it up. The faith of Kansans gives us courage to rebuild—the courage to come through fire. Ashland banker Kendall Kay emotionally said:

Senator, we are going to need help. We really don't want it, but we are going to need it.

I am so proud of the people of my State who have come in with that help before they were even asked. I had been in contact with all of our producer groups in Kansas—the Kansas Livestock Association, the Kansas Farm Bureau—who along with our State agencies had been leading the voluntary relief effort. I commend them for their efforts in collecting hay for cattle, as well as monetary donations, coming in from all parts of the United States, and volunteer coordination for repairs to property and fencing.

With Congressman ROGER MARSHALL of the First Congressional District, and my colleague here and friend in the Senate, JERRY MORAN, we have been in touch with the Department of Agri-

culture with regard to assistance that should be available to farmers and ranchers in counties that have suffered losses.

Here is what we are trying to fix. This fellow is walking across here to that bluff that overlooks that valley that Spencer and Kylene looked over, and this fellow here is Chad Tenpenny, my top guy in Kansas. That is me with my hands in my pockets. It is pretty rough to see ground like this that was grass and to look at the utter devastation. Folks, when that wind blows and when that dust starts up again, we could be in for even more trouble. So cleanup is under way, but we are trying to get help to cut through the redtape and get a disaster declaration.

I talked to the Governor this afternoon. Primarily, it is the Emergency Conservation Program, the Livestock Indemnity Program, and Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP, that are the key programs. It won't make people whole by any means, but it will give them hope. So cleanup is under way.

Kansas is a bootstrap State. It is not just about building new fencing. We have families who have lost the farmhouse and all the equipment they need to rebuild. Many livestock producers have had the gruesome task of euthanizing cattle that have been badly burned. We have to remove the carcasses. We have to find land for the survivors to graze. And we have a lot of uncertainty. How long will it take for the grasses to come back? When can we get rain to avoid a dust bowl? It is really too soon to tell. But we have been through disasters before. Almost 1 year ago, we had the Anderson Creek fire, and we have come through tornadoes and ice storms. Recovery from disasters of this magnitude, however, requires us to cut through the redtape. It requires getting the right information to producers so they know how to apply for aid and then to expedite it. Yes, it requires us to look at our programs to see where we can improve them.

Now, this fire has not received much attention in the national media. You see, we are a flyover State. All we do is produce food and fiber for Kansas and our Nation and for a troubled and hungry world. But I do want to commend members of the press in Kansas, especially photographer Bo Rader of the Wichita Eagle, who took this photo of my State Director Chad Tenpenny and me walking through rangeland outside of Ashland.

The Wichita Eagle has gone out of their way to show the world what this fire looks like to real people. The Hutchinson News, the High Plains Journal, and the Dodge City Daily Globe have all told and are telling this story. The same is true for the TV and the radio crews who have helped get the news of town evacuations safety notices to our people. This is what they do.

Rest assured that, as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I am

committed to the Kansans I serve. They know me. I know them.

I know that Clark County and the other 20 counties will come back. We will ensure they get the help they need. *Ad astra per aspera*—to the stars through difficulty. It is not just a motto; it is who we are.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last week our colleagues in the House of Representatives introduced the American Health Care Act—legislation that will deliver on a promise we made to repeal ObamaCare and to replace it with healthcare options that won't force people to buy an insurance product just because the government tells them to do so or penalize them if they don't but will replace it with one that actually fits the needs of their families at a price they can afford.

It is no secret that ObamaCare was oversold back in 2010 when the President said: If you like your policy, you can keep your policy. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. And by the way, an average family of four, he said, would save \$2,500. That has not proven to be true.

ObamaCare, to boot, has wreaked havoc on our economy and on American families just trying to stay healthy. In my State of Texas, it has led to fewer healthcare options, skyrocketing premiums, and deductibles so high that insurance plans are rendered almost useless. By one estimate, about one-third of Texas counties have only one insurance option, and that is the case throughout the Nation. Nearly one-third of all counties in the country have only one insurance company offering plans on their States' exchanges.

The truth is, ObamaCare has never added up to better coverage at a more affordable price; it has never delivered more options—just the opposite; and it never kept its promises when it was being sold to the American people.

Now is the time for us to do right by the American people by delivering more access to quality healthcare at a price Americans can afford.

The American Health Care Act doesn't just tinker around the edges of ObamaCare; it is a complete do-over.

This bill, for example, repeals ObamaCare's individual mandate, the requirement that you buy government-approved insurance, and if you don't, we are going to fine you. That is repealed.

It repeals the employer mandate. I still remember being in Tyler, TX, and talking to a gentleman who owned a restaurant and who said he had to lay