

Last week I had the pleasure of visiting the Iciek Dairy Farm in Gladwin, MI. It was incredible to see firsthand how this family-run dairy has grown from a small farm of a few dozen cows to a large, modern dairy operation with 700 cows and seven full-time employees.

Today, the Iciek Dairy works with the Michigan State University Extension program to help mentor new businesses and farmers who are just starting off with their own small dairy operation. Michigan's farmers and farmers all across our country feed our country and people around the globe, and we must do what we can to support them. Our agricultural businesses rely on the ability to access the resources they need to keep growing, creating jobs, and contributing to our economy.

Access to these resources can be especially challenging for new small farm operations that are just getting started, including those small farms that make up 82 percent of Michigan's agricultural producers. Small farms that are just starting up or are facing tough economic conditions sometimes struggle to find and secure affordable credit. That is why I am working across the aisle with Senator TILLIS to urge congressional appropriators to fully fund the Farm Service Agency loan programs as Congress considers government funding bills for 2018.

The Farm Service Agency works with lenders to guarantee and deliver small dollar loans to the small farms that need them the most. When a farm has no other options, Farm Service Agency loans and guarantees can help farmers cover urgent operating costs for feed, seed, and fertilizer to get them through the season. Without these loans, farmers could lose their ability to purchase equipment and other necessities for the planting season and could be forced to curtail their operations.

Currently, more than 2,300 farms in Michigan have Farm Service Agency loans totaling over \$630 million. Across the country last year, the Farm Service Agency made and guaranteed a total of 39,650 loans totaling \$6.3 billion. It is critical that Farm Service Agency funding reflect expected demand for loans so that small farms can continue to have this crucial lifeline.

This program is in such high demand that just last year the Farm Service Agency ran out of money to finance its operating loans, including more than 1,000 loans that had already been approved for small farmers. This led to a backlog of loans, and farmers were forced to wait for months until Congress passed emergency funding to get the loans they needed for their day-to-day operations.

Access to capital is critical across a range of businesses, but it is incredibly important to our farmers. They can lose out on an entire growing season if they cannot buy the equipment and the supplies they need while they wait for Congress to fund the Farm Service Agency.

Today, ensuring that the Farm Service Agency has sufficient funding is even more critical, especially following President Trump's proposed \$4.7 billion cut to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Like our small businesses, students, and families, America's farmers deserve to have affordable loan options, and they deserve our attention and our support. I urge my colleagues to join me in asking for robust Farm Service Agency funding so we can continue to support our farming communities as they support and sustain us each and every day.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as we come back into session after a 2-week State work period, I think we need to take stock of what we have been able to accomplish in working together during the last few months.

Through the efforts of the administration and in working with Congress, we have been able to greatly lessen the regulatory burden on many American job creators, which is something sorely needed while our economy has been bumping along at, roughly, 2 percent growth of our gross domestic product since the Great Recession of 2008. We have confirmed a ninth Supreme Court Justice, and we have seen strong, credible action taken against people like the terrible Assad regime in Syria.

It is important to remember, as folks continue to judge the current administration and its foreign policy in particular, how we got here and what this White House inherited after 8 years of the Obama administration.

As President Obama left office, he left in his wake fires burning around the world. There is no better example than the Middle East. President Obama celebrated the Arab Spring as a testament to the power of a democratic voice, but he did little to help our partners across the Middle East and North Africa find stability and prosperity. Along the way, he made the world a lot more dangerous for all of us by his inaction or, in some cases, by his actions. Libya is one of the most tragic examples.

Without his coming to Congress but instead going to the United Nations for a resolution, under President Obama's watch, the country fractured after he helped to launch a poorly conceived military campaign that helped depose Muammar Qadhafi, with no plan at all as to what to do afterward to stabilize the country. Apparently, despite all of President Obama's criticisms of President Bush's 2003 invasion of Iraq, he learned very little from it, and terror-

ists, including ISIS, jumped at the opportunity to fill the vacuum in Libya.

Later, the American Consulate in Benghazi would be attacked, resulting in the deaths of four Americans, including that of Ambassador Christopher Stevens. That was the result of President Obama's failed strategy in Libya.

To the east, as 2016 came to a close, Syria was embroiled in even more disarray, more bloodshed, and more violence than when the civil war initially broke out. President Obama promised the world—now infamously—that should the Syrian Government use chemical weapons that at that point a red line would have been crossed. We know how that turned out and so do the citizens of Syria and so do, importantly, other thugs, autocrats, and dictators around the world—red lines crossed but not enforced.

President Obama's threats went unanswered. Russia became bolder in its support of Assad as it became clearer that the United States would not intervene. Now, in light of years of inaction by the previous administration, we have a refugee crisis in the Middle East and throughout Europe. Millions of people have been displaced both internally and externally across Europe. We have a war criminal leading the Syrian Government who has repeatedly used chemical weapons and indiscriminately killed civilians, including children, in a region even further from any measure of stability than when President Obama took office.

Yet, instead of developing a strategy, instead of listening to his own military and national security leadership, President Obama and his team perversely opted to strengthen our adversary Iran. The ill-conceived JCPOA deal cemented the status of this state sponsor of terrorism as a future nuclear power as it released billions of dollars in sanctions relief to the regime and empowered our enemy to engage in even more terrorist activities abroad and around the world. After 8 years of the Obama administration, the bottom line is, our foremost enemy in the Middle East became stronger, not weaker.

On top of all of that, President Obama pushed aside our strongest ally in the region—Israel—time and time again to appease nations that were working against us. That is simply not how the United States should operate in its leadership role around the world.

I could go on and on about the foreign policy failures of the last administrations with respect to the Middle East, but it is not the only region in worse shape. Under President Obama's watch, Russia invaded Crimea and eastern Ukraine. It repeatedly threatened NATO member states and ramped up its cyber espionage to influence and undermine public confidence in free and fair elections both in the United States and in Europe. Along the way, our allies in Europe were cast aside rather than assured of our support—all with Russia's mounting aggression close by.

In the Pacific, China continued to advance its regional dominance by making claims to islands disputed by our allies, going so far as to convert sand bars and reefs into island military bases—some with 10,000-foot military-capable runways right there in the South China Sea.

Finally, North Korea continues to develop and test its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities with the threat of soon being able to use both to reach the continental United States. North Korea carried out four nuclear tests during the Obama administration. That is simply unacceptable.

The truth is, after two terms of inaction, no coherent strategy, and leading from behind, our allies and partners around the world questioned the commitment and power of the United States and our ability to defend our national interests around the globe.

I, personally, am thankful for what we have seen President Trump accomplish so far, even in a short period of time. His tough but honest discussions about America's role in the world are appreciated not only by those of us here at home but by our allies and friends around the world who have been hungry for American leadership.

When Assad crossed a line the entire international community deemed abhorrent, President Trump, unlike President Obama, took action. Unfortunately, President Trump has inherited foreign policy predicaments that were created by both the action and inaction of his predecessor around the world. My hope is, President Trump will continue to work with the great team he has assembled to make sure U.S. interests are put first and that America continues to exert its leadership role around the world.

The truth is, a strong America and an America that leads is a stabilizing and peacekeeping influence around the world. Just the opposite is also true. As America retreats, there is no other country that can fill that leadership vacuum. It is inherently destabilizing, and it is an invitation for bad actors around the world to take advantage of that power vacuum.

I look forward to working with the administration, as well as all of our colleagues in the Congress, to help keep Americans safe by making clear that we will back up and support our allies and partners abroad and send a powerful message to those who threaten our interests.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I support Mr. Rosenstein's nomination

to be Deputy Attorney General. Not only is he a very experienced and accomplished attorney, he has served in the Justice Department for almost three decades under five Presidents, but he served as the U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland under both President Bush and President Obama—a very rare record of service. During his nominations hearing to be Deputy Attorney General, Mr. Rosenstein promised us that he would “work to defend the integrity and independence of our justice department, to protect public safety, to preserve civil rights, to pursue justice, to advance the rule of law and to promote public confidence.”

However, many Members have mentioned they are concerned about the FBI Director's announcement of an investigation of Russia. And during his nominations hearing, Mr. Rosenstein was repeatedly asked if he would commit to appointing a special counsel to handle any investigation in this matter. I was impressed with his unfailing commitment to independence when he answered these questions.

Rather than prejudice investigations before he knows the facts, he unwaveringly promised to make decisions only after thoroughly reviewing all the relevant information in a particular case. He committed to not prejudice the situation before he knew the facts. And he committed to conducting every investigation with independence.

I personally believe Mr. Rosenstein possesses the necessary independence to conduct any investigation of this type. He told us he had never met with Russian officials nor has he spoken to the President or Attorney General about this matter. And he spoke in great length about his career-long commitment to independence and to conduct his work free from political concerns.

In fact, we already know that he has a well-known reputation for independence. In 2012, Attorney General Holder specifically asked Mr. Rosenstein to handle a special investigation into leaks of classified information because of his reputation for independence and impartiality.

When Republicans suggested a special prosecutor might be appropriate, members of the Judiciary Committee assured us that none was necessary precisely because Mr. Rosenstein was at the helm of the investigation. One member of the Committee described him as a “scrupulous man” and “independent.” There was “no reason to believe why [he] cannot work with the FBI and assemble a very strong prosecution team where warranted.”

Mr. Rosenstein is still scrupulous and independent. If Mr. Rosenstein could conduct an investigation with independence under Holder then, he can certainly do it now. Furthermore, Mr. Rosenstein comes with high recommendations from a bipartisan list of former Attorneys General and Deputy Attorneys General. And he comes with high recommendations from his home state Senators, current and former.

Former Senator Mikulski wrote the committee and told us that he will be a “strong, experienced leader at the Department of Justice who is fair and committed to the equal application of our laws” and “In these polarized times, now, more than ever we need a strong, experienced leader at the Department of Justice who is fair and committed to the equal application of our laws. I hope the Senate will confirm Rod Rosenstein for this important position.”

After Senator CARDIN described all Mr. Rosenstein's professional accomplishments when he was introducing him at the hearing, he said, “What impresses me the most, he has done this in a totally non-partisan manner.” And concluded by saying, “I think Mr. Rosenstein is the right person at the right time for Deputy Attorney General.”

Finally, James Cole, President Obama's Deputy Attorney General, wrote to inform the committee that Mr. Rosenstein will respect the need for the Department “to not only enforce the laws, but to also maintain a level of independence that enables it to have credibility in the eyes of our citizens.”

From all I see and know about him, I believe Mr. Rosenstein will keep his promise for integrity and independence. He promised us if he is confirmed as Deputy Attorney General, “all investigations under my supervision [will] be initiated and conducted in a fair, professional, and impartial manner, without regard to political considerations.” We can't ask for anything more. I urge all my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm Mr. Rosenstein to be Deputy Attorney General.

I yield the floor.

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.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time postclosure on the Rosenstein nomination expire at 5 p.m. today and that, if confirmed, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume consideration of the Acosta nomination.

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).