

just learned of the birth of TAMMY DUCKWORTH's child. It is a milestone. TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a few hours ago, became the first Senator to give birth while in office. We are very glad to hear that she and her newborn daughter are happy and healthy.

COMMONSENSE VALUES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, like all of my colleagues, I spent the past few weeks crisscrossing my State meeting with constituents. I am always struck by their commonsense values. Folks want to be able to afford quality healthcare. That is probably their greatest worry. They know healthcare is so vital to them and for families. They know costs keep going up. They are worried about premiums, especially after the Republican Congress has done so much to sabotage our healthcare system; talking about tearing down the healthcare system but never building it up in any way.

Folks also want a good job with decent benefits and higher wages, but they are not seeing much of that in the wake of the Republican tax bill. In fact, many of them are disappointed that they are not receiving more. They are seeing corporations buy back a lot of their stock, which boosts compensation for executives and shareholders, but they don't see that much of a bump in their paychecks. The bottom line is, they are asking: Why are the wealthy getting so much more money in the tax break than we are? I have heard that from one end of my State to the other.

Another problem: folks want to be able to send their kids to school and know they will be safe. I talked to one mom whose daughter just doesn't want to go to school after what happened in Parkland. She is afraid. She is 7 years old.

A few weeks ago, I marched with hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in the March For Our Lives. Their energy and optimism and dedication give me hope that finally the time has come for Congress to take meaningful action on gun safety.

Another example where our Republican colleagues who run this Senate haven't done enough—not close to enough—is on the issue of gun safety. On these issues and more, the Republican majority has done very little. What they have done has been on behalf of entrenched special interests: tax cuts for corporations and the super-wealthy, gutting healthcare to pay for more tax cuts, and holding back on commonsense gun safety laws like universal gun safety checks because the NRA opposes it.

The American people are fed up with large, special, and powerful interests getting their way, while average folks get left behind. That is what I heard while traveling my State.

In November, the American people will have a chance to move this country in a dramatically different direction, away from the corporate special

interest-driven politics, away from the swamp—I will talk more about that later, but President Trump has made it worse, despite claims that he is making it better—and toward politics that work for the middle class and those struggling to get there. The enthusiasm among so many Americans—not just core Democrats but others—of going to the polls and making their voices heard because they want a change in direction in this country was heartening and strengthening to me. The Democratic Senate minority is working to get away from those special interest politics. That is what a Democratic majority will deliver if elected in November.

NOMINATION OF ANDREW WHEELER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this week the Senate will consider several nominations, including the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to be Deputy Administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Wheeler—not atypical of this administration, not atypical of the dense swamp that they have made a whole lot worse—is, what else, an industry lobbyist who has worked on behalf of big polluters and climate change deniers. He spent years working to undermine or lobby against environmental protections he may soon oversee. As a lobbyist, he helped raise money for a few Republican Senators who sit on the committee that recently approved his nomination. Swamp, President Trump? You are creating it; you are making it a lot worse.

Wheeler's nomination fits the pattern in the Trump administration of nominating industry lobbyists to lead agencies that are supposed to be a watchdog over those very industries. The nerve it takes for President Trump and his allies to preach “drain the swamp” after all the President has done to fill the swamp since coming to Washington. His Cabinet is filled with multimillionaires, hedge fund managers, corporate executives, and former lobbyists with sprawling conflicts of interest. Mr. Wheeler is only the latest in a long line of swamp nominees. I will be opposing his nomination.

EPA ADMINISTRATOR PRUITT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the Wheeler nomination sheds even more light on the current storm surrounding EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. If there was ever somebody who characterizes the swamp, it is Scott Pruitt, and all Americans should believe that, regardless of your views on the environment or whether wind or solar or natural gas or oil or coal is the right form of energy.

What Pruitt is doing is just incredible. In a relatively brief tenure at EPA, he has amassed an embarrassing list of scandals. He has ordered the construction of an expensive soundproof office at the EPA for reasons un-

known, when none of his predecessors, Democratic or Republican, saw any need for such a facility. He has typically flown coach when paying for travel out of his own pocket but elected to fly first class when the taxpayers foot the bill. After moving to Washington, Administrator Pruitt rented an apartment for a cutrate price from—guess who—an energy lobbyist and former campaign donor who represents multiple clients with businesses before the EPA during Pruitt's tenure.

The level of hypocrisy in this administration is staggering. President Trump says he is going to drain the swamp. Pruitt characterizes the swamp in just about all of his actions, and Trump sticks by him. If you want to drain the swamp, Mr. President, get rid of Mr. Pruitt.

Unfortunately, President Trump has stood by Pruitt, despite obvious abuses of the taxpayers' money and trust. Why? Well, he likes what he is doing to unwind critical environmental protections on behalf of powerful industries.

The bottom line is simple. President Trump is so beholden to the special interests that supported Administrator Pruitt and his extreme, anti-green, industry-driven agenda that he is willing to turn a blind eye to serious ethical problems. If Big Oil and Big Gas are happy with EPA Administrator Pruitt, so, it seems, is President Trump.

In supporting Administrator Pruitt, President Trump is lowering the bar of government ethics and accountability to the floor. What abuse of the American people's trust will President Trump not tolerate if Administrator Pruitt is allowed to continue in his position despite flagrant graft? How can the President, with a straight face, say he aims to drain the swamp when he allows a man like Pruitt to stay? How much will President Trump let the standards for ethical conduct in his administration deteriorate?

I say to President Trump: The corruption and incompetence of this administration has reached a fever pitch.

President Trump, if you truly mean to drain the swamp—and it doesn't seem that you do—you ought to fire Administrator Pruitt immediately. Accept his resignation. Let him leave, which alone will clean up Washington in a way that Pruitt has not cleaned up our environment.

CBO REPORT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on the CBO report.

Today CBO came out with a report that revised its projections of the deficit, saying they have “increased markedly” since the Republican tax bill added about \$1.9 trillion to the deficit. By 2020, the annual deficit will surpass \$1 trillion.

It is a reminder of just how wrong the predictions were that the Republican tax bill would somehow pay for itself. It is also a reminder of how unconcerned the current Republican Party is about deficits.

When it comes to tax cuts for big corporations and the rich, deficits are no impediment, but now that these tax cuts are in place, I predict that deficits will once again morph into a dire problem, a scourge on the Nation, an excuse for Republicans to target Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

That has been the playbook since the Bush era: explode the deficit with tax cuts for the rich and powerful, then use the deficit they created as a reason to cut Social Security and Medicare.

Lo and behold, this week the majority in the House will vote on a balanced budget amendment—a way for Republicans to force cuts to Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security. It is hard to believe they can say it with a straight face, but we will hear Republican Members say this week that Washington needs to get its fiscal House in order, only a few months after they added \$1.5 trillion to the deficit by tax cuts that mainly benefited the wealthy and the powerful. It is the height of hypocrisy.

The American people deserve better than this patronizing Kabuki theater. They deserve a Congress squarely focused on helping the middle class, not the powerful, not the special interests, not those at the very top of the economic ladder. So far, this Republican Congress has shown it is not up to the job, and every day more and more Americans realize that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HIRONO. 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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Claria Horn Boom, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to place a maile lei on the lectern during my remarks.

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

REMEMBERING DANIEL KAHIKINA AKAKA

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I rise today in remembrance of Senator Daniel Kahikina Akaka. Senator Akaka, who served in the Senate for 23 years and sat at this desk, passed away on Friday morning, with his wife of nearly 70 years, Millie, and his extended family at his side.

Since his passing, people across Hawaii have shared their memories of and tributes to Senator Akaka. Each of their stories has a common thread—Senator Akaka's dedication to living with "aloha." Senator Akaka embodied the "aloha" spirit. From meeting nearly every Hawaii family who came to his office for a Capitol tour to serving as a tireless advocate for veterans, the Native Hawaiian community, and Hawaii families, Senator Akaka's care, empathy, and compassion were evident to everyone who knew him.

When I was elected to the Senate, I requested Senator Akaka's desk to be my desk. I did this because it represented continuity as Senator Akaka's successor, and the desk is a symbol to me of his years of service and the "aloha" he had for this body and the people of Hawaii.

The last time I saw Senator Akaka was at last year's American Logistics Association Hawaii conference. This gathering brings together Hawaii businesses from across the State to market their products for sale to military commissaries. Over 20 years ago, Senator Akaka worked with small businesses and the military commissary network to create this conference because he understood how much receiving a commissary contract would mean to Hawaii's businesses, especially Hawaii's small businesses.

The conference started with one small table with a few products and grew to an entire ballroom full of local products and entrepreneurs. Last year, the conference was named for Senator Akaka.

That is who Senator Akaka was. He brought people together to solve problems and create opportunities. His legislative style wasn't flashy or over the top. He put his head down and got to work, and he built relationships with colleagues to get things done.

Senator Akaka's work on behalf of our Nation's veterans also reflected his persistent, effective style. After serving in World War II, Senator Akaka went to college under the GI bill and became an educator. As chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, he was a strong advocate for expanding the GI bill for a new generation of veterans. He authored the post-9/11 GI bill, which was signed into law in 2011.

Senator Akaka also championed the cause of the Filipino veterans of World War II in Congress. These veterans fought for the United States but were denied the benefits and citizenship they were promised. Senator Akaka introduced legislation that would restore these veterans' benefits and, with his leadership, this bill passed the Senate.

Later he and Senator Inouye successfully included language in the 2009 stimulus bill that provided onetime payments for these Filipino veterans through the newly created Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund.

Senator Akaka also introduced bipartisan legislation to allow these veterans to reunite with their children and families in the United States. While this bill did not pass, President Obama established through executive order the Filipino World War II Veterans Parole Program in 2016 to allow the children of these veterans to reunite with their parents in the United States. Some of these veterans have been waiting for decades to reunite with their children.

Although Senator Akaka had retired, his insistence on bipartisanship helped to build broad support for President Obama's decision to issue this Executive order.

Senator Akaka was also instrumental in building support to award the Filipino Veterans of World War II the Congressional Gold Medal that passed in 2016, after years of continued effort.

Senator Akaka was also a champion for America's Native people and served as chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. As the first Native Hawaiian to serve in the U.S. Senate, Senator Akaka fought to expand funding for Native Hawaiian healthcare, education, and housing programs.

In 1993, President Clinton signed into law Senator Akaka's apology resolution, which acknowledged the Federal Government's role in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. The resolution's unanimous passage marked the 100th anniversary of the overthrow and was a watershed moment for Native Hawaiians. It served as the first official admission by the United States of the role it played in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Senator Akaka later worked on the Hawaiian Home Lands Recovery Act. This law required the United States to make the Hawaiian homelands whole by ensuring a repayment of lost use of lands originally set aside by Congress but which were nevertheless transferred to or otherwise acquired by the Federal Government.

The apology resolution and the Lands Recovery Act provided the foundation for Senator Akaka's namesake legislation—the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act, often referred to as the Akaka bill, to establish a process to secure Federal recognition for Native Hawaiians to achieve parity with the Alaska Natives and American Indians.

When I served in the House of Representatives, I introduced the House companion to the Akaka bill and testified about the importance of passing this legislation in both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate. Senator Akaka reintroduced the Akaka bill for more than 10 years, but it did not pass before he retired.