

more qualified—as the person whom he would replace in terms of experience in his field. I hope people understand that and are willing to be a little bit flexible about this.

I understand the interest groups are ginning up. Listen, we have the same thing on our side of the aisle. In full disclosure and candor, when President Obama was the President, there were interest groups on the right of center who constantly pressured Congress to oppose everything, not just legislation but also nominees. I assure you that I did not get a lot of love mail when I decided to support Senator Kerry at the time. But it was the right thing to do because he was clearly qualified, and that is who the President wanted. I hope that that is what we will do in this case in confirming Mike Pompeo, because this Nation faces some very significant challenges in foreign policy that need to be immediately addressed, and we simply cannot do that without a Secretary of State.

For me, that became quite apparent this weekend. I happened to travel to Lima, Peru, for the Summit of the Americas. The Vice President attended on the President's behalf because of the situation in Syria, and the Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. SULLIVAN, was there and did a good job, but there is no replacement for a Secretary of State. We had no Secretary of State at the summit. The key issue—one that, I think, Director Pompeo, if confirmed as Secretary, could help with—is the situation in Venezuela.

VENEZUELA

Madam President, I understand that the headlines are dominated by events in the Middle East and by the geopolitical and economic and trade conflict between the United States and China, but I do want to take a moment to talk about something that I have been speaking about on the floor of the Senate for the better part of 4½ years. It is one that I know that Director Pompeo knows well, as we have talked about it extensively, and that is the growing catastrophe that is Venezuela.

To begin, I want to say clearly that we should care about it simply because that catastrophe has become a threat to the United States and to the region.

What do I mean by that?

First, the regime in control, Nicolas Maduro's, is a state sponsor of drug trafficking. It is very simple. What I mean by that is this: Drug trafficking networks enjoy the protection of the Venezuelan Government. In fact, one of the concessions—literally, one of the contracts—that the Maduro regime gives its cronies and loyalists is drug trafficking networks.

A drug trafficker who wants to move coca out through Colombia, into Venezuela, and then into the Caribbean or Europe will find the right general or the right individual in the Maduro government, and that individual will ensure that his plane is not shot down and that, in fact, the military and the government organisms of the Govern-

ment of Venezuela—of the Government of Maduro—protect him, facilitate him. The people who are supposed to be stopping him are helping him. It is a racket. It resembles organized crime. That is what Maduro does.

We have seen an incredible surge in coca production in Colombia to historic levels over the last couple of years, and it is headed here, to a nation that is already struggling with an opioid crisis. We are about to be flooded with cheap cocaine once again, and a significant amount of it will be trafficked into this country with the aid, the assistance, and the support of the dictator in Venezuela. That is a threat to the United States and to the region.

No. 2, he is a threat to the United States and to the region because he has triggered a migratory crisis that is destabilizing all of Venezuela's neighbors, primarily Colombia, which each day is absorbing tens of thousands of people fleeing starvation and rampant disease, unlike anything we have ever seen, absent a natural disaster in this hemisphere. It is destabilizing countries that are already struggling.

Colombia is already struggling to try to deal with drug trafficking groups that are, in many parts of that country, more powerful than the government in some areas and the demobilization of the FARC and another terrorist group called the ELN. We have invested, along with our Colombian partners, millions and millions of American taxpayer dollars to help Colombia, which, just a decade and a half ago, was on the verge of being a failed state. We helped them to succeed. They are among our best allies in the world and, certainly, if not our best, one of the best, top-of-the-list allies in the Western Hemisphere. They are being destabilized because they are absorbing tens of thousands of migrants a day who are fleeing not just political oppression but starvation.

Healthcare experts are telling us that children in Venezuela will not fully develop physically to their full potential because they are malnourished today. Infants, newborns are dying in cribs and in hospitals because of a lack of medicine and because of a lack of food. These are images that we are used to seeing in other parts of the world, and it breaks our hearts when it happens somewhere else. This is happening in our hemisphere, and it is all man-made in one of the richest countries in the hemisphere—the most oil-rich country on the planet that just a few years ago was one of the most prosperous economies in the entire region.

People are starving, and they are starving because of a man-made crisis. The Maduro regime uses food as a weapon. No. 1, one of the other concessions it gives the cronies around Maduro is that if they are loyalists, he puts them in charge of food distribution. What does that mean? That means you can siphon the food into the black market where you can make an exorbitant profit. You obviously are

going to take some for yourself so that your family gets to eat.

Then they have the sick process where, in order for you to get food from the government, you have to show up with your government-issued ID in Venezuela. They know who the government supporters are, and they know who isn't. They know who turns out to vote, and they know who doesn't. It is a fraudulent election, by the way, because ultimately they will manipulate it as they have done before. So imagine that they know you didn't vote for them. They know how you voted because they monitor the machines. If you support the government, you get food, and if you don't, you don't get food. That is why he doesn't want food coming in.

The third is that we are engaged in what, I believe, is global competition or a battle between authoritarianism and democracy. There is a rise in the threat of authoritarianism in Turkey, in the Philippines, obviously in China and Russia, and in this hemisphere it is Venezuela. Venezuela is openly attacking the regional democratic order. They have basically canceled their Constitution. They have tried to replace the democratically elected national assembly. They have removed the legitimate judiciary branch and replaced it with loyalists of their own.

Fourth, there is a growing body of evidence that the Maduro regime provides a platform for the enemies of the security of the United States, including Russia and Hezbollah.

The spillover effects are undermining our efforts and the efforts of our regional partners to promote democracy, human rights, and stability in our own backyard in our hemisphere. That was apparent last week at the Summit of the Americas, where a growing number of countries—Argentina, Brazil, Peru—are making incredible strides and continue to build upon the democratic structures they have in place. The Peruvian President recently had to resign after a previous President resigned because the rule of law is working. In Brazil, it is the same thing. They are going to have elections this year in Mexico, in Brazil, in Colombia. These will be legitimate elections. They may elect someone who agrees with us 50 percent of the time, and they may elect someone who agrees with us 90 percent of the time, but they will elect someone. Yet, in stark contrast to that, is basically a coup d'état that has occurred in Venezuela, where a small group of people have canceled the democratic order or at least they have tried to.

In all of this, there is great news; that is, for the first time in recent memory, the democracies of the region have come together to act on this. It began with the so-called Lima Group, which is a collection of countries that make up the overwhelming majority of the economic power and the population size of the hemisphere. They have long banded together to criticize the democratic order. We are not even officially

a member of it, but they have been supportive of the moves made by this administration to target Maduro.

Well, last week at the summit, all the members of the Lima Group, plus two—the Bahamas and the Government of the United States—issued a joint statement rejecting the sham Presidential vote on May 20 in favor of free elections and strongly urging the Venezuelan dictatorship to release all political prisoners. The problem, as I met with members of civil society and the legitimate elected representatives in the National Assembly of Venezuela, is that we have reached an inflection point now. Statements, letters, communiqués are fine, but the time to act is now because people are dying. They are starving to death. The humanitarian crisis alone compels us to take action.

The question posed to me is: Well, what can we do? Some of the traditional ideas that people roll out there are additional sanctions. Sure, but there is more that can be done, and I want to quickly highlight what I hope will be the three things that happen.

The first is—well, let's decide first on a forum. The ideal forum to deal with this is a multilateral organization created specifically for the purpose of defending democracy in the Western hemisphere. That is called the Organization of American States. It is a group of 34 nations, and it was designed to deal exactly with this. Sadly, there is a small—and I mean a very small minority—of some of the smallest countries in the OAS, particularly in the Caribbean, that frankly have been bribed and/or compromised from voting against the Maduro regime because either they continue to receive cheap oil in dwindling amounts or their leaders in this government or the previous one basically stole the money and the oil, and now the Venezuelans know it, and they are going to release it publicly if these guys break from them. A small number of these countries representing less than 10 or 15 percent—maybe even less than 10 percent—of the population of the region have banded together to prevent the OAS from expelling Venezuela, a dictatorship, from the OAS, an organization of democracies. I don't think we should give up on the OAS. We should continue to try for the OAS to be the forum for the plan I am about to outline. But if that doesn't work, then there has to be an alternative, and the alternative should be the Lima Group, plus at least one—the United States. What I hope will happen is that the Lima Group will meet before or shortly after the May election and that it will be a meeting of Treasury Ministers, Foreign Ministers or both, which is why we need a Secretary of State to be there, to chart a regional approach on a way forward to Venezuela.

Here is what I believe that regional approach should be. No. 1 is that we must collectively announce that we are going to continue to increase in a mul-

tilateral way the pressure on the Maduro regime, and the way we should do that is by coordinating these national-level sanctions that target criminal elements of the Maduro regime—target these drug traffickers, target the people who are trafficking in the food and controlling the food distribution for their own purposes, target the shell companies they are using to make money, store their money, and hide their money. If all of these nations did that, encompassing the U.S. financial sector—the Brazilian, the Colombian, the Panamanian banking sectors, which will be critical in this—it would provide increasing pressure on that regime and on Maduro's loyalists to break. The goal is to maximize the pain felt by these corrupt, oppressive, and illegitimate government officials.

The second thing we need to do is address the humanitarian crisis, which is spiraling out of control. As I have said already, three to four million Venezuelans have fled their country to escape starvation, deprivation, violence. Neighboring states are bearing disproportional burdens, and they need help in doing so. I think we need to continue to provide that assistance.

Ultimately, the answer to Venezuela's future is not outside of Venezuela, but it is inside of it. That is why it is my hope that the priority of this new group—the Lima Group, plus at least one, the United States—would be to open up a humanitarian corridor that allows food and medicine to go inside Venezuela, and it can be distributed by a nongovernmental organization. Put the Catholic Church in charge or the Red Cross. It can't be the Maduro government; they will steal it. In fact, they will not even allow it. The Maduro regime will not allow humanitarian aid to come in because, one, they would lose the leverage of using food and medicine against their people and, two, they would have to acknowledge they have a crisis. We must do all we can to force that avenue to open so that we can deliver food and medicine to the people who are dying and starving. They are dying of simple diseases for a lack of basic medicine.

It is critical to let the people of Venezuela know that food, medicine, and international aid are ready to be delivered to their country by putting up pictures of the trucks and the warehouses showing that all of this food and all of these medicines are ready to come in, and the only thing standing in the way is the corrupt, evil government that today has empowered itself in their nation.

The third thing we need to be doing as part of this plan is preparing to help rebuild a free and democratic Venezuela after Maduro leaves power. The third goal I hope this gathering will reach is a consensus and an agreement that we will set up the equivalent of a Marshall Plan for Venezuela that includes investment from the Inter-American Development Bank and significant contributions from the United

States and our partners to help rebuild the disaster and the catastrophe that the Maduro regime will leave behind.

We also need to help empower legitimate institutions. When we talk about the Venezuelan opposition, what we need to understand is that these are not rebels in a mountain; these are the National Assembly elected by their people. It would be as if a parallel Senate were created and we were no longer paid salaries, had staff, often no longer allowed to meet, and our laws were no longer given the force of law. That is what has happened, but the National Assembly is there. We need to support them. We need to make clear they are the legitimate representatives of the Venezuelan people—the only leaders in that government today, along with some of the Governors who were legitimately elected under the Venezuelan Constitution. They are having a problem, by the way. When they show up at our Embassy in Venezuela, they are being denied visas to travel abroad. At a minimum, we should be granting them visas to travel abroad, recognizing them as fellow Parliamentarians who have a right to speak on behalf of the people of Venezuela.

The other thing we need to do is cooperate with the real equivalent of a Supreme Court—many of whom are now in exile but who continue to meet. That is their credible and legitimate judicial system, and we should be cooperating with them and helping them. They have all sorts of information about corruption that implicates Venezuelan activities in the United States.

I will close with this. The dictatorship in Venezuela knows and the people who surround Nicholas Maduro know they are on borrowed time. It is our obligation to expedite that, not through a military intervention, not through simple unilateral sanctions—which I support, and we are prepared to continue to do—but ideally through an international, multinational, regional effort in which the United States is a partner with our allies in the region. We should continue to pressure the regime with sanctions, to deliver humanitarian aid inside and outside of Venezuela, and to create the mechanisms to rebuild that country's institutions and its economy. This is an opportunity for regional leadership.

At a time when democracy and authoritarianism are in conflict all over the world, this is an opportunity to deliver a decisive blow to authoritarianism in our hemisphere. It cannot happen with America alone, but it cannot happen without American leadership. This is the plan I hope we will pursue. This is the method I hope we will use, but to do it we need a strong leader at the Department of State to be a catalyst for all of this. This is why I urge my colleagues to rally and support doing something about Venezuela, and one of the best ways we can do that right now is to confirm Mike Pompeo as the next Secretary of State.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, NASA is a science agency. Its mission is to advance science, technology, aeronautics, and space exploration and enhance knowledge, education, innovation, economic vitality, and stewardship of the mission. That is the mission. That is why past NASA Administrators have been accomplished leaders in the fields of government, aviation, and science.

The NASA Administrator in President Obama's administration was Charles Bolden. He has a master of science degree. He was an astronaut and commanding general in the U.S. Air Force. President George W. Bush had two Administrators during his Presidency. Michael Griffin was a physicist and aerospace engineer who helped to design missile defense technology satellites early in his career. Sean O'Keefe was an engineer in the Navy who worked on nuclear submarines. Before leading NASA, he served as Deputy Director of OMB, Secretary of the Navy, and Comptroller for the Department of Defense. Daniel Golden was a mechanical engineer who previously had been a vice president at a space and technology company. He was nominated by President George H.W. Bush and also served under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Richard Truly served as vice admiral in the Navy before he became the first former astronaut to head the space agency under George H.W. Bush.

The reason we are having a robust debate about Mr. JAMES BRIDENSTINE to lead NASA is that this is the first time in history we have someone without similar qualifications to run such an important agency.

JIM BRIDENSTINE, the nominee we are considering, served as a Navy pilot, and I thank him for his service, but that does not qualify him to run NASA. Just because you know how to fly a plane does not mean you have the skills and experience to lead the Federal Government's space agency.

I am not alone in that opinion. A NASA consultant wrote that Mr. BRIDENSTINE does not have "significant knowledge and experience with how NASA works" or "deep technical knowledge in aerospace systems."

There are a lot of things a NASA Administrator has to do. Most of it is governed by law, and I expect anybody who is confirmed will follow the law, but the most solemn and serious responsibility that the NASA Administrator has is final launch authority. A launch is a culmination of work by thousands of people over many years. If something goes wrong, we could lose a payload that is worth millions of dollars or is, in fact, irreplaceable. People could die. That is why this job requires someone with good judgment and an understanding of all of the elements that go into a space launch. That is why we have always had NASA administrators who have demonstrable exper-

tise in these fields. It is downright dangerous to have someone without this expertise with this kind of authority. Frankly, it is even more frightening to have a leader who has made a career out of ignoring scientific expertise.

JAMES BRIDENSTINE is a climate denier with no scientific background who has made a career out of ignoring science. Now I also don't have a scientific background, but I defer to scientists. I rely on the scientific consensus, and the scientific consensus is not what Mr. BRIDENSTINE says, which is that it is sort of difficult to tell how much climate change is attributable to human activity. The scientific consensus is that climate change is caused primarily by human activity, and JIM BRIDENSTINE doesn't say that is true, and that is terrifying. Forget our views for the moment about what kind of energy picture we think America should pursue. This is about whether you are going to rely upon people who actually know things or you are going to rely upon your own politics and ideology. When you have final launch authority, you better rely on science.

During his confirmation hearing, Mr. BRIDENSTINE testified that he did not know about the scientific consensus on climate change. He suggested there were other contributing factors that played more of a role, but the fact is this. Almost every climate scientist—97 percent of all climate scientists, to be exact—have concluded that humans are the primary cause of climate change. So there are two explanations for his answer. Either Mr. BRIDENSTINE has not bothered to read up on the scientific consensus on the most pressing scientific issue of our generation or he does not agree with that scientific consensus. Either explanation makes him unqualified to run NASA.

I want to end by reading a few quotes from one of my Republican colleagues. My colleague said that NASA is "the one federal mission which has largely been free of politics, and it's at a critical juncture in its history." He also said any NASA Administrator would need to have the "respect of the people who work there from a leadership and even a scientific perspective." He also said Mr. BRIDENSTINE would add to the politicization of NASA and that NASA, at this critical stage in its history, can't afford that.

I agree with my Republican colleague. I urge every Member of the Senate to give NASA the leader it needs and to vote no on this confirmation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, later today this body will vote to confirm my friend JIM BRIDENSTINE to be the next NASA Administrator. In that position, he will be in charge of rebuilding a space program that reflects the pioneering spirit and determination of the American people. I have known Congressman BRIDENSTINE for a long time,

and I know he is just the man for this really important undertaking.

Let us review his record. The record shows that JIM BRIDENSTINE's service to our country is matched only by his eagerness to press the boundaries of sky and space.

JIM BRIDENSTINE is a veteran Navy pilot who flew combat missions in Iraq and in Afghanistan. He logged 1,900 flight hours over his 9 years of Active service, and he is still a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Following his military service, JIM BRIDENSTINE worked as the executive director of the Tulsa Air and Space Museum. He even owned a team in the ambitious but short-lived Rocket Racing League.

Since his first term in Congress 6 years ago, Congressman BRIDENSTINE has served on the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. From that position, he has been a thoughtful leader on American space policy as it relates to national security, commerce, and weather forecasting.

The name of his latest bill on these subjects speaks to JIM BRIDENSTINE's ambitious vision for the future: the American Space Renaissance Act. If ever there were a need for a renaissance in space, it is now because who can deny that ever since Neil Armstrong's fateful "one small step" in 1969, America has, in some respects, been retreating from space?

Just 12 years separates the start of the space race from man's first footfall on the Moon. It has been almost 50 years since then, and it is unclear that we could go back to the Moon if we wanted to in a short period of time. As Vice President PENCE pointed out recently, we have not sent an American beyond low-Earth orbit in 45 years.

In a humiliating reversal of sorts, America now relies on Russia to carry our astronauts to the International Space Station because we shuttered our own shuttle space program in 2011. In other words, after America won the space race and after America won the Cold War in one fell swoop, we gave away the distinction of manned space flight to the second-place finisher.

NASA's decline and disrepair is a great tragedy, but it is not all I see when I survey the horizon, and I know this is true of Congressman BRIDENSTINE as well. I see no reason why America, in all of her ingenuity and might, cannot be the dominant leader in space once again. Indeed, I see plenty of areas where this transformation is already underway.

In government, President Trump has signaled his commitment to American leadership in space by relaunching the National Space Council, which met for the first time last fall. Outside of government, private enterprise is pressing the boundaries of commercial space flight every single day. In the deserts of Utah, innovators like ATK are pioneering the next generation of rocket engines and space superiority capabilities. Just yesterday, the world watched

in awe as a SpaceX rocket flung a planet-hunting NASA satellite into orbit. Its mission complete, the rocket booster piloted itself back to Earth for reuse, landing nimbly on a drone ship floating out in the Atlantic Ocean.

Achievements such as these prove that Americans are still awed, still starstruck, by space exploration and all the opportunities it provides.

A new era of leaders can restore this sense of ambition in government. In the halls outside this Chamber, the Senate has a constant reminder of the importance of the space program. I refer to the commemorative mural this body commissioned in the wake of the Challenger disaster.

The mural depicts the crew looking expectantly, hopefully, off into the future. Behind them is the shuttle that carried them to Heaven, and the world is in their hands.

The Challenger Seven gave their lives in order to advance America's space program. They knew the risks—greater practically than those associated with any other profession on Earth or beyond it—but they also knew the mission was worth it because it contributed significantly to their Nation and to all mankind.

What will it say about us if we fail to carry on the mission they undertook, if instead of exploring the infinite frontier, we remain here below, passing the torch of exploration to some other power? I don't want to contemplate that future, and I don't want to believe the American people do either.

Claiming our right to a place in the stars will require an effort spanning many years and several Presidential administrations. We can begin that undertaking today by confirming a leader with a remarkable record of service to our country, a vision for the American space program that is big not small, and a genuine faith in his country that is as boundless as the heavens. That man is JIM BRIDENSTINE. Let's confirm him. Let's confirm him today.

I urge my colleagues to confirm JIM BRIDENSTINE without obstruction, without delay.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, thank you for acknowledging me and letting me speak on behalf of our nominee to be Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo.

I did not know Mike Pompeo well. As a matter of fact, I am not sure I ever met him until he was nominated. I just want to say to the people in this body, I don't think anybody would view me as an apologist in any way for the administration, and I view Mike Pompeo as a highly qualified nominee. I spent a lot of time with him privately and on the phone. He did, I thought, an excellent job in his hearing.

We have had a tradition of confirming people to important positions. Just to give a little history, John Kerry was confirmed as Secretary of State by Republicans and Democrats

by a vote of 94 to 3. Obviously, John Kerry, my friend, no doubt, had been involved in partisan activities. He ran for President. He is someone, no doubt, who I am sure has said things people did not agree with.

Secretary Clinton was confirmed as Secretary of State by a vote of 94 to 2—no doubt, the same case. I am sure she said things many Republicans disagreed with when she was a political person as a U.S. Senator running for President.

Condoleezza Rice was confirmed to be Secretary of State in a vote of 85 to 13, and Colin Powell was unanimously confirmed as Secretary of State. So we have had a history of the last Secretaries of State to be overwhelmingly confirmed.

I realize we are in an atmosphere now where that is just not going to be the case. I realize that my Democratic friends in many cases feel that in supporting Pompeo, it is a proxy for support of the Trump administration policies, which many of them abhor. I understand that. There will be a few Democrats who I believe will support him.

I want to say to people in this room, our President has very entrepreneurial tendencies. He talks to people on the phone late at night. He comes in in the morning sometimes with differing points of view than he had the day before. We had evidence of that recently on Syria, where one day, we are going to leave Syria, and the next day, General Mattis and others intervened, and thankfully we are going to stay there and complete the work we are doing against ISIS.

I would argue to people here that we need to have someone like Mike Pompeo, who serves the Nation so well.

This is a person, by the way, who graduated first in his class at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, in 1986. He served as a cavalry officer patrolling the Iron Curtain before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He also served with the 2nd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, in the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division. After leaving Active Duty, Mr. Pompeo graduated from Harvard Law School, having been editor of the Harvard Law Review.

Sometimes we meet people in life who are just sharper than we are, who have had an incredible academic background. I can't even imagine having accomplished some of the things he has accomplished in life.

I know the Presiding Officer served, thankfully. We appreciate that he served in our military. People who have served in the military typically have more respect for diplomacy than those who have not because they understand that their diplomatic effort, if successful, is the thing that keeps our men and women out of harm's way. They know that. Pompeo is committed to that. He was there at the Iron Curtain and understood what diplomacy did to free people and keep conflict from occurring. I know he is highly committed to that.

We have had cultural issues at the State Department, there is no question. I think everyone understands that. Our former Secretary of State is someone with whom I had a good relationship. No doubt there were some things that were left undone at the State Department. We have a lot of positions that are unfilled. All I can say is that I know our nominee is highly committed to promptly filling those positions. We have some culture issues there as a result. We do, there is no question. We know that. We acknowledge that.

As head of the CIA, every month Mike Pompeo sits down with CIA employees in a casual setting where they call him Mike, and they talk with him about what is going on. He is a person who knows how to build culture. He has done so at the CIA. He understands the importance of the professionals who have committed their lives—just like the Foreign Service officers at the State Department—to the CIA. So we have someone who I know is going to build culture. We have someone who I know is committed to diplomacy.

Let's talk about where we are in the world today. We have crises all over the world. We have issues with North Korea, Syria, Russia, concerns about some of the things China has done, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq. Who in the world can possibly know more currently about where we are than our Director of the CIA? I can't imagine there is a person in Washington who has more current knowledge about threats—the people involved in those threats, the people we can use to help us deal with those threats—than the Director of the CIA. There could be no one here more qualified or more knowledgeable to step in immediately and deal with the kinds of issues we have to deal with around the world.

Look at what has happened in North Korea just recently. We know that the back channels to North Korea have always been through intelligence. We understand that. He was exactly the right person to be there to talk and do the precursor work that needs to be done. Many others need to be involved—Secretary of Energy, Secretary of Defense; many other people, obviously—but Director Pompeo was exactly the right person to go and demonstrate his ability to be dealt with with respect.

I will be leaving this body in 8½ months. It has been the greatest privilege of my life to serve here. As I said to my Republican colleagues yesterday at lunch, I actually think the talent and the caliber of people here in the Senate have risen since I have been here. I think we have the best group of Senators today serving in the Senate that we have had since I have been here. I see a crop of people running for these seats, and I think it may even improve next time.

It pains me to know that my friends on the other side of the aisle know that this is a qualified person, this is a person who has demonstrated incredible