

the very best of public service, the very best of America, and the things we aspire to in this country. One story from his biography stands out. As a second-year law student, DOUG JONES skipped class to attend the trial of the Klansman ringleader of the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church, an event that shook the conscience of our country and helped launch a mighty movement for civil rights. That day a young DOUG JONES was moved by the disposition of justice, but he was left with the impression that other members of the conspiracy had escaped the reach of the law. So 24 years later, when DOUG JONES became the U.S. attorney for the State of Alabama, he pursued charges against two more Klan members involved in the bombing, winning their conviction and delivering a long-delayed but righteous justice. With his work, justice rolled down like a mighty stream. He will continue to fight for civil rights and many other issues here in the Senate. I know he cares deeply about the CHIP program, which covers 150,000 young Alabamians. I hope we can get that done for his State and this country very soon.

DOUG JONES was an excellent candidate. Like Senator SMITH, he will make an outstanding Senator—she for the State of Minnesota and he for the State of Alabama. The voices of JONES and SMITH will add to the diversity of energy of our caucus. I predict that both will become influential voices in this historic Chamber.

Each of their States had great football victories this weekend, I might add. I watched Alabama win over Clemson—sorry, LINDSEY and TIM. I watched Minnesota, my favorite team outside of the three New York teams, come in second in the whole NFC, and it got a bye week as we moved to the playoffs. So it is a great day for these two States in a whole lot of ways this weekend, and it is very good so far in 2018 with the swearing in of these two Senators.

A NEW DIRECTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in the second half of the 115th Congress now, let's talk a little bit about a new direction. Let the induction of these two Senators this afternoon be the beginning of a new direction for the Senate in the second half of this Congress.

The first half of the 115th Congress was not a year to be proud of. Partisan legislation emerged from the majority leader's office and was dropped on the floor of the Senate, sometimes merely hours before we were asked to vote on its final passage. Procedural gimmicks were used to avoid the Senate's long history of debate and bipartisanship. An economy wracked by unfairness and inequality was made even more unfair and more unequal by the Republican majority, which almost delighted in revoking consumer protections to help big business, installed a pro-corporate Supreme Court, drove up healthcare

premiums, and passed a tax bill dramatically skewed to the benefit of big corporations and the very wealthy. All in all, 2017 was a great year for wealthy Republican donors but a lost year for the middle class and the working men and women of this country.

We Democrats hope this year is different—focused on the middle class rather than the rich and powerful, focused on helping them in the ways we have done in the last decades, with both Democratic and Republican Presidents, rather than this trickle down that benefits the few at the top and does not benefit the very many in the middle.

In these first few weeks, we have a chance to start off on the right foot. We have 2 weeks to negotiate a budget deal that also must address a host of other issues, including CHIP, community health centers, disaster aid and, of course, the Dreamers.

Democrats would also like our country to make a downpayment on urgent domestic priorities like combating the opioid epidemic, a scourge that for the first time helped cause our life expectancy to decline because of the higher death rate from opioids.

We want to improve veterans' healthcare. They served us, and we must serve them. We must shore up pension plans for millions of hard-working, middle-class Americans who put money in every month and, because of the stock market crash and sometimes corporate misdeeds, aren't getting what they put in for. These items are crucial to the middle class.

Take opioids, for example. In 2016, a record 63,000 Americans died of drug overdoses, and two-thirds or more were opioid-related. It is a full-fledged epidemic that strikes the rich, the middle class, and the poor alike. It strikes urban America, suburban America, and rural America alike.

I had a father cry in my arms because his son a had decided to turn himself around and signed up for a treatment program, but the line was so long because the funding is so scarce that the young man died of an overdose before he could enter treatment. The opioid crisis is stealing our youth. We have known about it for years. It is not new. It is heartbreaking how much we know about it, but how little we have done about it.

The American people sent us here to do the Nation's business. That means addressing its greatest challenges. So let's make a real investment in this budget deal and how we treat this scourge. The budget is the right place to start.

A few years ago, we made a promise to hundreds of thousands of children who were brought to the United States through no fault of their own that if they registered with the government, we wouldn't deport them. We said: We want you to be Americans, learn in our schools, work in our companies, serve in our military. So 800,000 Dreamers came forward and did that because,

above all else, they wanted to be Americans. They don't know another country.

Now we are faced with a deadline. In a few months, protections for Dreamers will evaporate. A thousand Dreamers are losing protected status each week. It is time that Congress passed DACA protections into law and fixed this once and for all.

Democrats, including myself, led by our great Senator from Illinois, a member of our leadership team, Mr. DURBIN, have said over and over again: We are ready to negotiate a reasonable package of border security to pass alongside DACA. We believe in border security. We want to make it work. We want to make it real, not just be symbolic; we believe in it. If our Republican colleagues and the President engage in good-faith negotiations without unreasonable demands like an absurdly expensive, ineffective border wall that many Republicans publicly oppose—and privately many more do—I don't doubt we can reach an agreement on DACA that is acceptable to both sides. I would like to thank our Acting President pro tempore for his active involvement in this regard as well.

In contrast to a year of chaos and ineffectiveness—a year in which little was accomplished, and what was done was done for the wealthy and the narrow special interests—I hope this year can be one of bipartisanship, focused on improving the stock of the middle class. They are the ones hurting in America. They are the ones who need help. They are the ones who worry about the future of this grand, wonderful country.

We can start on the budget with opioids, veterans' healthcare, pensions, children's health insurance, and disaster aid. We can resolve the fate of the Dreamers and say to these hard-working kids that America has a place for them too.

Later today, the four congressional leaders will meet with Budget Director Mick Mulvaney and representatives of the White House to begin these negotiations in earnest—I hope—and will work for their success.

FOREIGN POLICY AND PRESIDENTIAL MORAL AUTHORITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, a word on national security. The Senate has a role in conducting the Nation's foreign policy, but as head of state, the President of the United States represents our country to the world. That is a very serious and very sober responsibility that requires restraint, intelligence, sound judgment, and a respect for the moral authority that comes with the awesome responsibility of being the world's sole remaining superpower.

Over the course of the past year, President Trump, unfortunately, has progressively squandered the moral authority that comes with the Presidency

of the United States—a moral authority that this country has taken generations to build, that helps us bring a light to the world and helps us economically in every other way, as the world has always looked up to America and our ideals.

Unfortunately, that moral authority is declining under President Trump's leadership—and declining rapidly. It may have reached the low point yesterday when President Trump, in tweet after tweet, offered a very poor representation of the United States to the world. More than that, President Trump's "foreign policy by tweet" is doing serious damage to the country. While we have serious issues to address abroad, President Trump seems happy with macho boasts and belligerent threats that get us nowhere. If any one of us were in a classroom with someone who behaved as President Trump has, we would ostracize them; we would straighten them out. We don't hear a peep from the vast majority of our Republican colleagues about this, many of whom are hawks.

We have serious issues to address abroad. President Trump's "foreign policy by tweet" will not advance our standing in the world. It will not reassure our allies or other nations that it is better to work with us than against us. What it will do—what it has already done, unfortunately, is unsettle our allies and embolden our adversaries. What it will do is cede leadership in the world to China, which is eagerly awaiting every opportunity to drive a wedge between our country and other countries around the world. Without a steady and reliable hand at the helm, our allies may be uncertain that they can continue to trust the United States to honor our commitments and maintain a steady course.

China and Russia are rushing to fill the void left by an unsteady United States. President Xi of China aspired to this position of being a world leader in his new year's speech when he said that China, not the United States, would be the "keeper of the international order" in 2018. If President Trump continues snubbing our allies, recklessly threatening other nations, and showing leadership on the world stage that can only be described as puerile, the world may look to Beijing, not Washington, for international leadership.

Again, I repeat: Where are our friends, the Republican hawks, who have been so concerned about America's leadership in the world, who have decried the fact that President Obama did not do enough for that leadership? If he were here, my dear friend, Senator JOHN MCCAIN, would typically stand up and speak about this, and hopefully he will be back soon to do so. But for the rest of my Republican friends, I would say with sincerity—not with partisanship, but out of love for the country and the leadership we have shown for decades and decades—that our Republican friends should, please,

tell the President: Stop tweeting; start leading.

We are almost through a calendar year of the Trump Presidency. President Trump can no longer be given the benefit of the doubt that comes with learning one of the toughest jobs in the world. My Republican colleagues should not be given a pass by the American people if they fail to speak out or take action against this behavior. Their silence, unfortunately—I have to say, I feel this sincerely—is complicity in the degradation of the Presidency and the power of this country.

The American people expect our President to represent the United States with dignity and strength. That is not what we saw yesterday. It is time we all start speaking out against it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter of resignation from Lieutenant Governor SMITH to Governor Dayton be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

STATE OF MINNESOTA,
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR TINA SMITH,
Saint Paul, MN, December 28, 2017.
Hon. MARK DAYTON,
State Capitol,
Saint Paul, MN.

DEAR GOVERNOR DAYTON: Effective 11:59 p.m. January 2, 2018, I hereby resign the Office of Lieutenant Governor of the State of Minnesota. It has been an honor and privilege to serve the people of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

TINA SMITH,
Lt. Governor.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Illinois.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has been less than 2 weeks since we convened in the Senate, and those of us who have returned to the floor of the Senate may not notice any change, but there is a significant change. If you take a close look, one desk has moved from that side of the aisle to this side

of the aisle. There are currently 49 Democratic Senators after the swearing in of our colleague, Senator DOUG JONES of Alabama. Now it is 49 to 51. It is almost as close a break as you can expect or even anticipate in a deliberative body.

It is an indication of more than just the acquisition of one additional Democratic Senator. We are moving closer and closer to parity, closer and closer to one another, and, I hope, closer and closer in solving problems. I think that was a message of the Alabama election; among other things, the American people want to see us work together. They have given us 49 and the Republicans 51. I think they expect that to be a signal that we should finally sit down and do something to solve the problems facing our great Nation. I feel that as I go home—of course, I run into my loyal Democratic friends who have their own political views, but the vast majority of people say: Can't you work together and solve something? Can't you do something for this Nation? I believe we can, and this month we must.

You see, on January 19 there is a deadline looming. It is only a couple of weeks away. On January 19, we have to make some very momentous, historic decisions about the rest of this year and beyond. One of those is where we will spend the taxpayers' dollars. How much will we spend on the defense of our Nation? How much will we spend on other agencies, which, I would add, also defend our Nation? That has to be decided by 60 votes. Do the math. As whip on the Democratic side, I have said that I learned basically all I needed to know about this job in the first grade. I learned how to count to 60.

On January 19, we need at least 60 Senators to agree on the spending program for this country moving forward, not just the Department of Defense but the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of State, and so many other critically important agencies.

The second thing we need to do is long overdue. The fiscal year, the operative fiscal year for the Federal Government starts on October 1. We are a long way from October 1, 2017. We still don't have a budget. We still have not brought the appropriations bills to the floor of the Senate for consideration.

I am not going to be partisan about this. We failed as Democrats in bringing those appropriations to the floor in a timely manner as well. We have to do something about this process, but we certainly have to face the reality that we are steaming through this fiscal year without a budget. We have taken last year's budget and continued to live by last year's budget. Reflect, for a moment, if you did the same thing for your family. If you were determined to spend in January of 2018 exactly what you spent in 2017, you would think to yourself: That makes no sense. The utility bills are different. I may have a different mortgage payment. A lot of