

Let's take a few of these just to give a sense of the scope of the threat. There are more than 15.5 million cancer survivors in the United States today; 23 million Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes; there are about 100 million adults who have high blood pressure, about 100 million more who have high cholesterol; 26 million Americans diagnosed with asthma; 44 million Americans have mental illness; 400,000 diagnosed with multiple sclerosis; and 28 million diagnosed with heart disease.

Without the protections in the Affordable Care Act, if you have these diagnoses, you likely will not be offered healthcare. That is what happened prior to the protections for people with preexisting conditions; you just weren't even offered a plan if you had some of these conditions. But if you were offered coverage, you were offered them at rates that were unaffordable.

Here is some data based on CMS's calculations around operated risk adjustment methodology. They say that for folks who have diabetes without complication, the increase in rates without protections for people with preexisting conditions could be about \$5,600 a year. If you have a drug dependence, if you have an addiction, the increase could be \$20,000 a year. If you have had a heart attack or a history of serious heart disease, your increase could be \$60,000 a year. If you have metastatic cancer, you could be paying a 3,500-percent premium; that is, \$140,000 in additional surcharge a year. Obviously nobody can afford that. That is why, if you have a history of metastatic cancer, you are not getting offered insurance unless you have that protection. Those are the stakes.

I want to make people understand that we are going to have a big debate over what Judge Kavanaugh will mean for the future of reproductive choice in this country, women's access to contraception. Those are really, really important debates. But I want everyone to understand that this case is coming; *Texas v. United States* is moving through the court system. It is moving through the court system, in part, because the Trump administration is trying to get the judicial branch to invalidate protections for people with preexisting conditions. Despite the fact that the President told us he liked that part of the law, he has now instructed his judicial department, instructed the Office of the Attorney General to try to strip away protections for people who have high cholesterol, mental illness, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, and it may mean this seat on the Supreme Court is going to decide that case. I think we can be pretty sure of how Judge Kavanaugh is going to rule. His hostility to the Affordable Care Act in his writings, his inclusion on lists by groups that have worked for years to undo these protections, and the clear signal from the President that he was only going to pick individuals for the Court who would unwind

the Affordable Care Act tell you how big the stakes are.

The Supreme Court could take away your healthcare if you have any of these diseases, and the likelihood that they will take away your healthcare if you have any of these preexisting conditions is radically increased if Brett Kavanaugh is confirmed. I announced last night that I will oppose his nomination, and I will be on the floor talking at length about many of the reasons this body should reject his nomination. At the outset, I wanted to make clear that this debate over the future of preexisting condition protections for people in this country—130 million people who have preexisting conditions—needs to be at the center of this conversation regarding Brett Kavanaugh's nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Connecticut. Certainly I am happy he is bringing to the attention of the Senate this critical issue of the future of the Supreme Court and the impact it will have on families across America. Certainly, when it comes to something as basic as our health insurance, we understand this.

There are forces at work in Washington in the Trump administration that are trying to put an end to the Affordable Care Act, and in Congress, many Members of Congress—the House and the Senate—have voted 60 times to repeal the Affordable Care Act. We barely saw it survive just a few months ago when Senator JOHN MCCAIN, in the middle of the night, came and stood in that well and voted no, along with two other Republican Senators. They saved the Affordable Care Act.

Most Americans had their own questions about the Affordable Care Act and how important it was, but they couldn't understand how the Republicans would come to us and say "Get rid of it" and have no replacement.

We realize, as the Senator from Connecticut just explained, that under the old rules with insurance companies, under the old rules, many of us were victims. If you had someone with a preexisting condition in your family—perhaps you had diabetes, perhaps your child was a cancer survivor, had asthma, or so many different things—health insurance was very expensive, if you could get it. We changed the law. We said: You can't discriminate against an American because someone in their family has had a preexisting condition. Everybody is in the same pool in America. We are going to join together.

Well, now the Trump administration has said they are going to fight that in court. They are going to try to declare it unconstitutional to protect people with preexisting conditions, so they filed a brief in a lawsuit—a lawsuit that is wending its way to the Supreme Court. When the Senator from Con-

necticut, Mr. MURPHY, came before us and talked about the new nominee to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court, it is important that he focused on the impact it could have on ordinary people.

Most Americans, put to the test, couldn't name the Justices on the U.S. Supreme Court. Well, they know it is a big Court, an important Court, the highest Court in the land, but they don't know who is there until we get into this kind of debate. As we do, people tend to learn a lot more about the Justices and what their core beliefs are.

When it comes to Judge Brett Kavanaugh, who now sits on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, he has a lengthy record—12 years of opinions as a judge, not to mention all the years before that when he was active politically in Washington, DC. Senator MURPHY of Connecticut is correct to note that his approach to the law and his approach to the Constitution do not give us great hope in preserving the protections on health insurance that are part of the Affordable Care Act. One decision by that Supreme Court could undo years of legislative work and literally remove protections from families. We are talking about that today. We should be talking about that today. But it isn't what we are voting on today, and that is why I have come to the floor.

NOMINATION OF BRIAN BENCKOWSKI

Mr. President, back on page 8 of the Executive Calendar of the United States Senate, there is a long list of nominations that are pending before the Senate, and one of these, Calendar No. 639 on the Message No. 1402, is the name Brian Allen Benczkowski, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Attorney General. You would have to search the Executive Calendar to find it, but it is going to be voted on this afternoon in the Senate.

Is it another routine nomination? Not at all. This position in the Department of Justice is the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, who is the leader and is responsible for over 600 Federal prosecutors who are prosecuting cases across the criminal spectrum from treason against the United States to the opioid crisis and everything in between—600 men and women, career prosecutors, prosecuting the laws, the cases on behalf of the U.S. Government. President Trump has suggested that he wants this man, Brian Allen Benczkowski, of Virginia, to be in charge of those 600 prosecutors.

Is this a big assignment? In the Department of Justice, it is one of the biggest assignments. This person will be directing the cases that are filed on behalf of the United States of America, critical cases for protecting our national security, critical cases relative to crimes that are being committed, critical cases when it comes to our rights as citizens. He will be leading 600 Federal prosecutors.

Is it not reasonable for us to ask a basic question about Brian Allen Benczkowski, of Virginia? We did so in the Judiciary Committee, and here is the question we asked: Mr. Benczkowski, you are seeking the position of Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division with 600 prosecutors that you will direct. Please tell the committee how many cases you have prosecuted. As a lawyer—first, how many civil cases have you tried.

The answer? None.

Oh, well, how about criminal cases? How many criminal cases have you prosecuted in your lifetime as a lawyer? None.

How many motions have you argued before a Federal court? None.

Wait a minute. You are being chosen to head up the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, and you have no experience? You have never prosecuted a case ever—never once been in a Federal courtroom, not one time?

So far, President Trump has sent us a record number of nominees for the Federal courts, and I will tell you, as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, all but a few have been approved. I think some of them are awful choices, and some are good. But the awful choices are men and women who have said and done things in their legal practice and private lives that really raise serious questions about whether they have the temperament to be a Federal judge.

With few exceptions, all of the Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee have voted every time for Trump nominees. Two exceptions were a district court nominee for Washington DC and a district court nominee for Alabama, and in both of those cases, the people who were being appointed by the Trump administration to a lifetime appointment in a Federal district court had no experience in a Federal courtroom.

I can tell you that one of the hearings on one of the Trump nominees—and I will not bring his name up for the record, but you can find it if you wish—cross-examination by a Republican Senator on our committee, Senator KENNEDY of Louisiana, was devastating. This Trump nominee couldn't find his way to a Federal courthouse with GPS. He had no experience whatsoever in trying a case, so the decision was made to withdraw his nomination. Only rarely in a year and a half have Trump nominees been so unqualified that they have withdrawn their nominations.

Now, this afternoon, we consider Brian Allen Benczkowski, of Virginia, to head up the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, a man with no trial experience—none—in a Federal courtroom, not in a civil case, not in a criminal case.

There is more to the story. Why is he here? He is here because at one point in his career he was staff director to then-Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama. He

worked on the Senate Judiciary Committee. I remember seeing him. He looked like a competent, affable Senate staffer. We didn't have any direct relationship. Now that Senator Sessions has been elevated to Attorney General, he wants this staffer, Brian Allen Benczkowski, to head up one of the most important divisions in the Department of Justice. That is his connection. That is his angel. That is why his name is on this calendar. That is why the Trump administration chose him.

If that were the end of the story, it would be bad enough—someone with no experience whatsoever prosecuting a case to head up 600 Federal prosecutors. But as they say, and as Paul Harvey used to say, there is more to the story.

You see, what happened was this—and follow me if you will. After Donald Trump won the Presidency and was in his transition period, Mr. Benczkowski left his private practice of law to be part of the Trump transition team assigned to the Department of Justice. Between November and January, the swearing-in, he served on that transition committee, trying to smooth the way for the new administration to take over the Department of Justice.

At the end, when President Trump was sworn in, Mr. Benczkowski left the transition committee and went back to his private practice here in Washington for a well-known firm. But before he returned to that firm, he asked the Trump administration and his former boss, I hope you will consider appointing me as a U.S. attorney somewhere in the United States.

Remember, he has no experience—none. He has never prosecuted a case, but he suggested that he wanted to be considered for that lower level position—compared to the head of the division—as he returned to private practice.

He went back to his law firm, and follow the story. He goes back to this law firm, and one of the partners at the law firm calls him in and says: I need you to take over a case to represent one of our firm's clients. The client is known as Alfa Bank. It is a Russian bank, and it is a Russian bank, as I describe the story, that is very significant in terms of our conversation today about the Russian impact on the U.S. election. Alfa Bank needed Mr. Benczkowski to look at the so-called Steele dossier. Do you remember that? It was the memo that came out about then-Candidate Trump and things that were alleged that occurred in Russia. Well, they said to Mr. Benczkowski: Represent the Alfa Bank because their name popped up in the Steele dossier, and we think it is terrible, and they want to consider a defamation lawsuit. So Mr. Benczkowski took on the Alfa Bank as a client in reference to allegations made in the Steele dossier.

There is more to the story. During the course of the Trump campaign, there were unexplained pings and con-

tacts between Alfa Bank and the Trump campaign computers—more than one. It is still unexplained as to why this Russian bank would have any access or communication with the computers of the Trump campaign.

The Alfa Bank is not just another corner bank. The Alfa Bank is run by individuals who are oligarchs in Russia. They are closer to Vladimir Putin than you can imagine.

This Alfa Bank is pretty well connected, and they had some communication, still unexplained, between that bank and the Trump campaign. Now, Mr. Benczkowski began representing the Alfa Bank on a question of defamation lawsuits concerning the Steele dossier as well conducting a forensic computer analysis of the server communications.

Wouldn't you think for a moment that if you were Mr. Benczkowski considering the possibility of a job in the Trump administration, you would have said to your law firm: I am not going to touch this one. We have all these allegations about Russian involvement in the campaign. We have some computer contact between Alfa Bank and the Trump campaign. We have this oligarch close to Vladimir Putin personally. We have this Steele dossier, which mentions the Alfa Bank. Wouldn't you think that the average lawyer would say to his law firm: Sorry, I am being considered for a position in the Trump administration. I am not going to get close to the Alfa Bank.

No, Mr. Benczkowski said: I will do the work for the Alfa Bank.

When the time came and he wasn't considered for the U.S. attorney spot, he was considered to head up the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, and Mr. Benczkowski filed all of these papers about all of his activities—as a Senate staffer, as a lawyer, and all the rest. It came out in the course of that that he had represented the Alfa Bank.

That is not good. It was discovered, with some background checks through the FBI, that he was in that position. He was confronted. Basically, we said in the committee: Are you going to recuse yourself from any matters before the Department of Justice involving the Russia investigation?

He said: No, I will not. I am going to stick with involving myself in the Russia investigation.

What will you recuse yourself from, in light of this representation of Alfa Bank?

I will not take up any cases involving Alfa Bank.

That is it?

That is it.

That is the best we could get from him in terms of recusing himself from any potential conflict of interest. Why is this important at this moment in time? Because at this moment in time, I don't know when Bob Mueller will complete his investigation. I don't know how the White House will react. I don't know what will happen with Attorney General Sessions, who now has

recused himself from the Russia investigation. I don't know what will happen when it comes to any threats to the Deputy Attorney General in terms of his future.

There is a possibility that if this President decides that he is going to take an action that is going to have a direct impact on the Mueller investigation and if he decides, for example, that he is going to remove from consideration of this in the future the Deputy Attorney General who appointed Bob Mueller—I am talking about Rod Rosenstein—a vacancy in that position could be filled on an acting basis by Mr. Benczkowski. He could take up that position.

Is this an important decision, then, back here on page 8 of the calendar, to be voted on this afternoon? I think it is. First, there is the obvious gross incompetence and inexperience of this man to head up the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice; second, the fact that he represented the Alfa Bank, which is under suspicion as to its activities; third, the close connection between Alfa Bank and its owners with Vladimir Putin and Russia; fourth, the ongoing investigation of the Russian involvement in the last election campaign; fifth, the threat that this could occur again in the future; sixth, the fact that we need an aggressive Department of Justice to stand up and protect our democracy and the right to vote of every single American. The list goes on and on.

This is the wrong man for this job. I cannot believe, as a proud Democratic Senator, that the Republican Party couldn't find one experienced prosecutor in the United States to take over the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice. Instead, they are going to give it to a man who has never, ever darkened the door of a Federal courthouse. That is what they are doing.

It shows you the lengths they are going to go to, and it shows you the importance of just another nomination stuck on page 8 on the calendar that will be voted on this afternoon.

Here is the question. It is a majority vote. There are 50 Republican Senators and 49 Democrats in this Chamber. Senator MCCAIN, of course, is ill and hasn't been here for several months. It is 50 to 49, among those likely to attend today. Under the rules, as written in the Senate, a majority vote can move this man forward—Mr. Benczkowski. That is all it takes. What it boils down to is whether or not any Republican Senators see a problem with this nomination. I hope that each one of those Senators will reflect on the fact that they personally know a handful of individuals, maybe more, who are more qualified to take on this critical job than Mr. Benczkowski. Please join us in stopping this nomination. Let's put somebody in this job who understands it, who has experience.

How many people would walk into a lawyer's office and say: I would like

you to represent me. Have you ever had a case like mine before?

And the lawyer says: No, I have never seen one like this and have never represented anybody like you.

And the client would reply: Perfect, that is just what I am looking for, someone who is so inexperienced and so incapable of representing me that I can't wait to pay their fee.

Let's not pay the fee to Mr. Benczkowski. Let's return him to his private practice.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a letter to President Trump urging the withdrawal of Mr. Benczkowski's nomination, dated May 9, 2018, and signed by all Democratic members of the Judiciary Committee, be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, May 9, 2018.

President DONALD TRUMP,

The White House,

Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We urge you to withdraw the nomination of Brian Benczkowski to be Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Justice's Criminal Division and to submit another nominee for this important position.

With new information about Russia's election interference continuing to come to light and with a federal criminal investigation ongoing, it is imperative that we have a head of the Criminal Division who is free and clear from Russian connections. Mr. Benczkowski's representation of the Putin-allied Alfa Bank and his refusal to recuse himself from Russia-related matters mean that he will not be able to credibly oversee the Division's involvement in Special Counsel Mueller's investigation and other sensitive matters such as the criminal investigation of Michael Cohen. Furthermore, at a time when the Department of Justice's handling of criminal matters has come under intense public scrutiny, it is essential that the Criminal Division have an experienced and well-qualified leader whose judgment and independence are beyond reproach. Mr. Benczkowski, who has no prosecutorial experience, does not meet these criteria. Simply put, Mr. Benczkowski is not the nominee our country needs at this critical moment.

The Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division must oversee and manage litigation strategy for hundreds of federal prosecutors handling a wide range of criminal cases. Mr. Benczkowski, however, has never served as a prosecutor, nor has he ever tried a case. While Mr. Benczkowski does possess experience as a top aide to then-Senator Jeff Sessions and in various Department of Justice staff positions, this does not qualify him to lead the career prosecutors of the Criminal Division. His dearth of courtroom experience makes him ill-suited for the position he now seeks.

Mr. Benczkowski also demonstrated poor judgment by choosing to represent Alfa Bank, a Russian bank controlled by Putin-allied oligarchs, in March 2017—while he was seeking employment in the Justice Department and despite public reports that the bank was under FBI investigation for suspicious computer server contacts with the Trump Organization. He continued representing Alfa Bank in April and May 2017 even while he was under consideration to head the Criminal Division. At a time when we need the Department of Justice's Crimi-

nal Division to help uncover, prevent, and deter Russian interference in our democracy, Mr. Benczkowski's choices so far have not inspired confidence that he is the right person to lead that fight.

Additionally, unanswered questions remain about Alfa Bank that should be resolved before the Senate even considers voting to confirm this bank's lawyer to a top Justice Department position. The Senate does not know if Alfa Bank has been, or still is, under federal criminal investigation, nor do we know the full story behind Alfa Bank's suspicious contacts with the Trump Organization during the 2016 campaign. The work that Mr. Benczkowski did for Alfa Bank, which included reviewing the Steele Dossier for a potential defamation suit and overseeing a forensic data firm's analysis of Alfa's computer server contacts, in no way put to rest the serious questions about Alfa Bank's activities. It would be an abdication of the Senate's advice and consent role to confirm Mr. Benczkowski without first getting answers to these crucial questions.

We are further concerned about Mr. Benczkowski's capability to serve as an independent leader of the Criminal Division. Mr. Benczkowski has worked closely in the past with Attorney General Sessions and sought his help obtaining a Justice Department job in the Trump Administration. We are troubled by Mr. Benczkowski's refusal to commit to recuse himself from Russia-related matters if confirmed, and also by the Department's refusal to identify steps that would be taken to prevent Mr. Benczkowski from learning information about Special Counsel Mueller's investigation and relaying that information to Attorney General Sessions in contravention of the Attorney General's recusal commitments. Also, if confirmed Mr. Benczkowski would have visibility into the criminal investigation and potential prosecution of Michael Cohen, who reportedly sought to pursue business deals in Russia, among other alleged activities. Attorney General Sessions has reportedly declined to recuse himself from the Cohen matter, and Mr. Benczkowski, if confirmed, could serve as a conduit of information to the Attorney General about this sensitive matter, which may implicate the Russian interference investigation. We need a head of the Criminal Division who will instill confidence that recusal obligations will be respected and that criminal enforcement decisions will be made independently based solely on the facts and the law. Because of his own inadequate recusal commitment, Mr. Benczkowski does not inspire this confidence.

Many of us know Mr. Benczkowski and we respect his public service. But we can, and must, do better when it comes to the nominee to head the Justice Department's Criminal Division. There are many well-qualified attorneys who have significant prosecutorial experience, who are free and clear from Russian connections, and whose independence and judgment are unquestioned. Mr. Benczkowski is not such a nominee. We urge you to withdraw Mr. Benczkowski's nomination and send the Senate a new nominee who meets that standard.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin, Dianne Feinstein, Patrick J. Leahy, Amy Klobuchar, Richard Blumenthal, Cory A. Booker, Sheldon Whitehouse, Christopher A. Coons, Mazie Hirono, Kamala D. Harris.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. JONES. 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. JONES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. JONES pertaining to the introduction of S. 3191 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. JONES. I yield the floor.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise to support Mark Jeremy Bennett's nomination to serve as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Mr. Bennett's nomination is how judicial nominations should work. His name was not on a rightwing wish list created by outside groups. Instead, the White House worked closely with both of Hawaii's Democratic Senators to find a consensus nominee that would get broad bipartisan support.

Senators are constitutionally directed to provide the executive branch with advice and consent. I encourage the White House to continue to consult with Members of both parties on all future nominees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to discuss my strong opposition to the nomination of Judge Kavanaugh for a lifetime appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court.

There are few issues I take more seriously as a Senator than my duty to consider and vote on Supreme Court nominees. It was watching the Clarence Thomas hearings and seeing how my voice and the voices of people like me all across the country were not being heard that got me to run for the Senate in the first place. I believe it is one of the most important jobs we have on behalf of our constituents.

During my time in the Senate, I have had the opportunity to consider nominees from Democrats and from Republicans. For each one of these nominees, I made my evaluation and based my decision on their experience and record and on my understanding of whether they would uphold the Constitution and protect our rights and freedoms.

I voted for some of them, including a nominee from President Bush. I voted against some of them, each on their merits and each based on how I thought they would serve, but this time is different. There will still be scrutiny. There absolutely needs to be. This time we know everything we need to know already. This time, the bal-

ance of the Court is on the line. We know exactly where this nominee will fall on specific issues, no matter what vague answers he chooses to deliver throughout this process. We know this because President Trump told us openly, publicly, and repeatedly.

More than any President I have seen, he has been explicit about what he expects from his nominee. He has laid out specific tests and promised to only pick nominees from a prescreened list of people who would absolutely meet them.

Here is what he has said, and here is how we know exactly what this nominee will do. President Trump has said he wants a nominee who is fully committed to overturning *Roe v. Wade*, criminalizing abortions, and rolling back women's ability to access contraception and other basic healthcare.

On the campaign trail, he promised that *Roe v. Wade* "can be changed" and that he was going to be "putting pro-life justices on the court" so that it would be overturned "automatically."

He has said he wants a nominee who would immediately declare healthcare reform unconstitutional and cut off access to care for people with preexisting conditions.

On the campaign trail, he criticized Chief Justice Roberts because he—this is him—"should have, frankly, ended *ObamaCare*, and he didn't" and promised "a strong test" for a "strong conservative" who would be different from Roberts on healthcare.

He has made it clear that he wants a nominee who would keep handing more power to massive corporations and the wealthiest Americans and keep diluting the power of regular voters. He has made it clear that he wants a nominee who would eliminate protections that preserve the air we breathe and the water we drink. He has made it clear that he wants a nominee who would roll back the rights and freedoms for our workers, for LGBTQ Americans, and for so many others.

So there is no doubt. It could not be any clearer. For a nominee who would swing the balance of the Court—I am going to believe that President Trump has told us the truth, and I am going to believe that the extreme rightwing groups who wrote this list for him are sure about where this nominee stands.

So I want to be very clear to anyone who may doubt it or who may think they need to learn more before making a decision. A vote for President Trump's Judge Kavanaugh is a vote to allow five men on the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, criminalize abortion in America, and roll back the progress we have made to help more women and girls access the basic healthcare they need. A vote for President Trump's Judge Kavanaugh is a vote to put the government, bosses, and men in charge of the reproductive rights and freedoms of women and girls. A vote for President Trump's Judge Kavanaugh is a vote to go back to the days when women had to go into

back alleys for healthcare, when women had to ask for permission, when women were shamed, and when women and girls died because of the laws of our land. We unfortunately already know all too well what this looks like because there are States nationwide where extreme politicians have chipped away at women's healthcare rights and have been waiting for exactly this moment—for someone exactly like Judge Kavanaugh—to go even further.

But that is not all. A vote for President Trump's Judge Kavanaugh is a vote to end protections for people with preexisting conditions and go back to the bad old days when insurance companies were in charge and people would have to pay more or be cut off from care simply for being sick.

A vote for President Trump's Judge Kavanaugh is a vote to give massive corporations even more power over our economy, our workers, and our elections.

A vote for President Trump's Judge Kavanaugh is a vote to eliminate environmental protections and make our air and water dirtier and less safe, erasing so much of the progress we have made in recent decades.

A vote for President Trump's Judge Kavanaugh is a vote to step back from the progress we have made to expand rights and freedoms and basic human decency to LGBTQ Americans.

I could go on, and in the coming days and weeks, as we learn even more about the ways Judge Kavanaugh will fulfill President Trump's promises, I absolutely will.

I voted against Judge Kavanaugh when he was nominated for the circuit court, and I strongly oppose this nomination now. I will be urging my colleagues to stand with me in rejecting him and calling on President Trump to send us someone who will stand with women and workers and families and who will truly commit to respecting settled law and the rights and freedoms we hold so dear.

I will be here urging people across the country to stand up and speak out and make their voices heard.

This is a critical moment right now. The U.S. Senate has the power to stop this Court from swinging against our rights and freedoms, and every Senator needs to know they will be held accountable for their vote.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany H.R. 5515.