

dissenting opinions and legal challenges to the Affordable Care Act, both highly technical in nature. Clearly, he is not against healthcare. That is really just a dumb comment. He is simply a judge, who has no role in evaluating the wisdom or efficacy of policies. His job is to call balls and strikes, as an umpire would, to decide whether something is within the law or outside of the law. I believe he will continue to do that when confirmed as a Justice on the Supreme Court.

I agree with the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, who last week said Judge Kavanaugh's qualifications are "so obvious, and his reputation so excellent, that unhinged attacks are all that remains in the far left's arsenal." I agree with him, but that doesn't mean we won't continue to hear these unhinged, ridiculous charges against a good man. Judge Kavanaugh, by all accounts, is a fair and thoughtful judge who approaches each judicial decision with precise reasoning and careful analysis. That is why the conspiracy theories will not work. They are doomed to fail, and the cracks are already beginning to show.

As I said, the Judiciary Committee will conduct a thorough and timely hearing, and then we will follow with an up-or-down vote in the committee and then on the Senate floor this fall, prior to the time the Supreme Court's new term begins in October. The eventual outcome from this process should be that Judge Kavanaugh will be easily confirmed. That is what he and I believe the American people deserve.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, almost everybody in the world knows by now that the President met with Vladimir Putin today. While nobody knows what the two Presidents said in their private meeting, what they said afterward certainly should alarm all of us.

President Trump refused, once again, to accept the fact that Russia, at Putin's order, interfered in our elections. What the President said was alarming, it was embarrassing, and it is unacceptable. We know Putin interfered, and we know he will do it again in our upcoming elections. This is from the unanimous report of the intelligence community of this country and was reaffirmed earlier today by the Director of National Intelligence, former Senator Dan Coats, who was President Trump's appointee.

In its January 2017 assessment, the IC assessed that Russian President Putin ordered an influence campaign in the 2016 election, which was aimed at

the U.S. Presidential election. That assessment described the campaign as a mix of cyber operations that were conducted by Russian intelligence services in its overt use of propaganda and fake social media accounts and trolls.

Take it from President Trump's own administration. Then-Director of the CIA and now-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo acknowledged the Russian interference. He stood by the intelligence community's assessments, and that was a year and a half ago. He even said he had every expectation that Russia would continue to try to interfere in our elections.

A few days ago, Dan Coats, who is the Director of the DNI, said:

The warning lights are blinking red again. . . . The digital infrastructure that serves this country is literally under attack.

Just this past Friday, the Justice Department announced the indictment of 12 Russian intelligence officers for hacking the Clinton campaign and the DNC. This is just the latest in a series of indictments.

Today, though, the President, while standing right next to Vladimir Putin, said that while the men and women of the U.S. intelligence community concluded with high confidence that Putin did, indeed, interfere in our elections, President Trump said:

[President Putin] said it's not Russia. I don't see any reason why it would be.

That is rather curious.

Even worse, the President stood next to Putin and said the United States was to blame for the Russian aggression. Let me repeat that. The President stood next to Putin and said the United States was to blame for the Russian aggression. This Senator believes our own intelligence community, not a former KGB spy and colonel who is bent on undermining democracy and the rule of law around the world, is whom you ought to believe.

What does a spy do? In order to achieve a spy's ends, the spy lies. That is what and how Vladimir Putin was trained, and it is obvious he is no friend of the United States.

There has been a lot of discussion about Russia, and I know that, at times, it can be confusing to everyday folks. Yet amidst all of the talk and the disinformation, it is critically important that we don't lose sight of the threat to our democracy. That is what Russian interference in our elections is. It is an attack on the very foundation of our democratic institutions. Of course, that is what Putin is trying to do—invalidate our own democracy in order to divide us; it is to undermine our own faith in our own institutions, and to ultimately undermine American leadership in the world.

This should not be a partisan issue in America, in our domestic politics. I hope we come together quickly, in a bipartisan way, to defend ourselves and to finally push back on Putin. I hope we insist that the White House enforces all of the economic sanctions the Congress has already pushed

through but that the White House has been very slow to enact. I hope this Congress is also going to enact more economic sanctions and get them to where they will really start causing a crimp in the step of the Russian leaders. Why not start freezing the bank accounts of some of its highest leaders?

First, the United States, led by our President, has to see the enemy and the threat for what they are. Now, going on 2 years into his administration, the President is unwilling to stand up to Putin—man-to-man, eyeball-to-eyeball—and to defend our country.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has been less than a week since the President nominated Judge Brett Kavanaugh to serve as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Already, praise has poured in for his legal abilities, professional accomplishments, and personal character.

Some of the most interesting testimony has come from the men and women who may know better than anyone how Judge Kavanaugh approaches his work—his law clerks. You can learn a lot about a leader by asking the men and women who work for and with him. Thirty-four of his past clerks sent an open letter to Chairman GRASSLEY and Senator FEINSTEIN last week.

Their own political and legal views are quite diverse:

Our ranks include Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. But we are united in this: our admiration and fondness for Judge Kavanaugh run deep.

They describe his commitment to legal excellence:

We never once saw him take a shortcut, treat a case as unimportant, or search for an easy answer. Instead, in each case, large or small, he masters every detail and rereads every precedent.

They also compliment the way Judge Kavanaugh conducts himself both inside and outside the courtroom. They call him "unfailing warm and gracious, grounded, and kind." They describe a "fundamental humility."

A subset of those clerks wrote a second letter. It was from every one of Judge Kavanaugh's female clerks whose current employments allowed them to sign it.

These 18 women explain: "We feel compelled to write separately to convey our uniformly positive experiences with the Judge as a boss on issues of gender and equality in the workplace."

"In our view," they write, "the Judge has been one of the strongest advocates in the Federal judiciary for women lawyers."

They explain how Judge Kavanaugh seeks out the best and brightest, how he goes above and beyond to advise and mentor all of his clerks.

Judge Kavanaugh's hiring reflects, in their words, "rare gender parity." Note

that I did not say “equity” but “parity”—25 women clerks and 23 men. In 2014, in fact, all four of Judge Kavanaugh’s clerks were women—a first for a judge on the DC Circuit. There have been 84 percent of those 25 women who have gone on to Supreme Court clerkships, thanks, in large part, to Judge Kavanaugh’s guidance and support.

Here is how they conclude their letter:

As you likely know by now, Judge Kavanaugh has two daughters, Margaret and Liza. If they decide to follow in their dad’s—and grandmother’s—footsteps and become lawyers, they will enter a legal profession that is fairer and more equal because of Judge Kavanaugh.

We have also heard from Professor Amy Chua, who has served on Yale Law School’s clerkship committee for most of the last decade. During that time, 10 Yale Law School graduates have clerked for Judge Kavanaugh, 8 of whom are women.

She emailed them to ask about their experiences. As she explained in the Wall Street Journal, they lauded his work ethic, his commitment to excellence, his humility, and his decency, and “to a person they described his extraordinary mentorship.”

One woman said:

He’s been an incredible mentor to me despite the fact that I am a left-of-center woman. He always takes into account my goals rather than giving me generic advice.

With respect to Judge Kavanaugh’s approach to deciding cases, Professor Chua pointed out that he “actively seeks out clerks from across the ideological spectrum who will question and disagree with him” because “he wants to hear other perspectives before deciding a case.”

“Above all,” she observed, Judge Kavanaugh “believes in the law and wants to figure out, without prejudging, what it requires.”

Again, we have already heard so many speak up to recommend this impressive nominee.

In the weeks ahead, we will hear more, including from Judge Kavanaugh himself, when our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee conduct hearings on his nomination. Yet I wanted to call special attention today to the warm words of those who have worked with and for Judge Kavanaugh. They have seen firsthand just how rigorously he approaches his work as a judge and how graciously he shares his time and his talent with others. Judge Kavanaugh is certainly an impressive nominee.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on another matter, fueled by American workers and job creators and assisted by the pro-growth policies of this Republican government, our economy continues to surge ahead.

Last week, we examined the Department of Labor’s June jobs report, which indicated another month of remarkable growth—213,000 new jobs. On

Friday, economists at the Florida Chamber of Commerce announced that the Sunshine State’s GDP had surpassed \$1 trillion for the first time. That is \$1 trillion for the GDP of Florida. If Florida were a sovereign nation, it would be the 17th largest national economy in the world. In the past year, Floridians, alone, have created 182,000 new jobs. It is hard to argue with the facts, but it is even harder to argue with reports that come straight from hard-working Americans.

Last month, during his visit to Duluth, MN, President Trump met with local workers and job creators to discuss tax reform and economic growth in their communities, and he heard them loud and clear. Republican policies are working.

Adam Morse, a production truck-driver for U.S. Steel Minntac, told President Trump that “the tax plan is working, and I’m seeing a difference in my paycheck.”

Ray Klosowski, Commissioner of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, says that the past year has brought significant steps forward for the port and the jobs it supports. They added a first-ever intermodal freight area, which has allowed Duluth to process containers from the west coast and significantly expand shipping capabilities. There are millions of dollars in new contracts and commitments to hire hundreds of new workers at the port. Mr. Klosowski summed it up, saying:

The customers . . . we’ve been used to—our old tried-and-true customers—have experienced expansion because of the new tax structure. . . . They’re coming to us with more business than we’ve [ever] seen in the past.

Our Democratic colleagues are still grasping for ways to put a negative spin on all of this good news and the Republican policies that are helping it along. But all around the country, Americans are trying to get their attention so that they can explain just how tax reform, regulatory reform, and the rest of our policy agenda are helping to improve their businesses and their lives.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, like any patriotic American—Democrat, Republican, or Independent—I was appalled by the press conference that capped off the President’s trip to Europe this morning. President Trump hardly pressed President Putin on a single issue, saying that “both countries” are responsible for the state of relations between the United States and Russia.

When it comes to interference in the 2016 elections, the President has managed to point the finger at just about everyone except the culprit. The one person he hasn’t blamed is the man who is actually responsible—Vladimir Putin. Rather than taking the opportunity to confront Putin and stand up in defense of the United States, rather than demanding that Putin hand over the Russian intelligence agents who were indicted last week, the President took the word of the KGB over the brave, hard-working men and women of the CIA. It is amazing. When has a President ever done something like that—believed our enemies instead of our own intelligence agents, who have worked so diligently and hard to keep us safe?

Vladimir Putin’s goal for over a decade has been the weakening of American leadership and the erosion of vital international alliances, such as NATO, that promote American values of democracy, freedom, and open markets. He has labored for 10 years, and he didn’t get very far, and now President Trump is handing him the keys to the city.

President Putin could hardly have scripted a more successful foreign trip for his interests than the one we have just witnessed by President Trump. Now, because of President Trump’s inexplicable actions, Americans and citizens of the world from one end to the other are scratching their heads, saying: What is going on inside the President’s head? Because of the President’s almost inexplicable actions, a single, ominous question hangs over the White House: What could possibly cause the President to put the interests of Russia over those of the United States? Millions of Americans will continue to wonder if the only possible explanation for this dangerous and inexplicable behavior is the possibility—the very real possibility—that President Putin holds damaging information over President Trump.

The questions of the moment—now that our security has been put at risk by the President—are these: Where are our Republican colleagues? Where are the Republicans who cheered Reagan’s famous challenge to Gorbachev to “tear down this wall”? Where are the Republicans who demanded a strong response from President Obama when Putin annexed Crimea? Where are the Republicans who surely know in their hearts that trusting Putin over American intelligence, defense, and law enforcement diminishes the standing of our great country?

Now is the time, if there ever were one, for Republicans to stand up. If we wait much longer, our global alliance will fracture; the institutions America created in the ashes of World War II will crumble; and our allies will consider abandoning us, maybe even embracing China, if the consequences—economic and military—are devastating for our country; and Putin’s Russia will emerge all the stronger for