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Let me read it again. This is what Chairman GRASSLEY said—now chairman, then a member of the Judiciary Committee: “In order for the Senate to fulfill its constitutional duty of advise and consent, we must get all of [Elena Kagan’s] documents from the Clinton Library and have enough time to analyze them so we can determine whether she should be a Justice.”

Senator GRASSLEY is a good man. Senator GRASSLEY has a real sense of integrity and fairness. That is why so many of us are wondering why there is such a double standard right now. We hope he will join Senator FEINSTEIN in a joint letter, just as Senator LEAHY and Senator Sessions came together on such a letter a while ago.

Senator CORNYN at the time, now the No. 2 man in the Republican hierarchy here in the Senate, said: “I think it would be a mistake to hold the hearing until we’ve had a chance to see [Elena Kagan’s] documents and any other documents that might exist . . . [and] we’ve had an adequate time to review the documents.”

This happens especially when it comes to judges. The double standard of the other side is enormous. When they are in the minority, they profess strong arguments, push us to go along, and usually we do. But now that they are in the majority, it is as if there is a whole new world and what happened in the past doesn’t make a darn bit of difference. That is not fair. That is not right.

We, on this side, have had enough of the other side’s hypocrisy on judges. We know there is a push by the hard right to fill the bench so they can achieve their agenda, which they could never achieve—even with Republican majorities in the House, Senate, and Presidency—through the elected bodies.

The kinds of attitudes that we have seen by the conservative Justices—which we believe Judge Kavanaugh might well accede to, and that is why we want a hearing—are not what America wants on issue after issue after issue. This is the hard right’s No. 1 goal.

They embraced Donald Trump only after he agreed to a list of 25 judges that the Federalist Society and Heritage Foundation suggested; both are far away from where Americans feel on issues like healthcare, government involvement, and choice. That is when they embraced him.

There is huge pressure; I get that. We have pressure on our side too. But the double standard is so glaring, so unfair, that it is appalling.

People say: Well, on judges, it has been tit for tat. It really hasn’t. It

really hasn’t. Leader Reid changed the rules after four vacancies existed on the DC Court of Appeals because Republicans wouldn’t put them in. It was a 60-vote rule, but we kept it open for the Supreme Court. Leader MCCONNELL changed that. Leader MCCONNELL, unprecedentedly, let Merrick Garland stew and not have a hearing.

We understand the pressure, but it is not good for the Republicans, and it is not good for comity in this body, which we are seeking. I see the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. We are trying to get comity on appropriations. Stuff like this poisons the well. It does.

Just last week, we witnessed the firsthand importance of reviewing a nominee’s full record. The White House was forced to withdraw the nomination of Ryan Bounds for a seat on the Ninth Circuit after abhorrent writings from his college newspaper came to light. If the college newspaper writings of a potential appellate judge are significant enough to disqualify him from consideration, how can my colleagues on the other side argue with a straight face that Judge Kavanaugh’s record should not be fully considered before the Senate moves forward on his nomination to this Nation’s highest Court—one of the most powerful institutions in the world?

There is a lot we don’t know about Judge Kavanaugh. We are learning more about him each day. Just a few days ago, for example, we learned he had expressed skepticism about the Supreme Court that held President Nixon accountable. It is another example of Judge Kavanaugh expressing the view that Presidential power should be virtually unconstrained. One that is still amazing to me, and I would like to see if there is more of it in his records because it is so extreme a view, is that Judge Kavanaugh suggested a President can ignore a statute he “deems”—his word—unconstitutional even if a court ruled it was constitutional. That is like a King, not a President. We have the rule of law here.

He said sitting Presidents should not be subject to an investigation of any kind, other than an impeachment inquiry by Congress.

Judge Kavanaugh’s belief in unchallenged Presidential power is so ingrained that he has even questioned the constitutionality of what he calls the “independent regulatory state,” a phrase that sounds awfully familiar to the hard-right myth of a deep state.

This is a radically activist view for a judge who advertises himself as someone who will merely interpret the law as written. Congress has, by law, given certain agencies varying degrees of independence from the Executive. That started in the 1890s. That is not new, and there is an ebb and flow to it. Sometimes Congress feels the regulations have gone too far and push back; sometimes they feel they need more, and they push forward. There has been an ebb and flow in history since the 1890s, but almost no one has said—ex-

cept the hard right and deep state people—that there shouldn’t be regulations.

If Judge Kavanaugh has his way, agencies that have been somewhat independent with good success, such as the Social Security Administration, the SEC, the IRS, and the FBI, would be subject to vast political influence from the White House. That is exactly the opposite of what Congress has provided by law.

Senators and the public will have to make up their minds about what Judge Kavanaugh believes, and they will have to think of it in the broad, long-term context but also in the context of this President, who seems to have less respect for the rule of law, less respect for separation of power, and less respect for anyone who stands in his way than any President I have seen in my lifetime.

Everyone will have to make up their minds about that. I understand that. That is what we are here for, but it seems clear that in the context of Judge Kavanaugh’s writings about the Presidency, that the statement questioning the Nixon decision reflects his actual beliefs. That is why we need to obtain, analyze, and scrutinize his record. That is our job as U.S. Senators, a job Members from both sides of the aisle used to agree on.

THE PRESIDENT’S FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, just a few points as I see my colleagues are waiting. I wish to make a few points on Iran and President Trump’s tweets. First, it seems the President is desperate to distract the American people from last week’s performance in Helsinki. He always seems to do this: He runs into trouble, and he creates a whole new firestorm somewhere else. It is his MO. It is not the way we have seen government work in the United States, but that is what he does. He is the President.

Second, the tweets suggest a pattern in President Trump’s foreign policy in which the President uses heated rhetoric with foreign capitals to inflame and intensify tensions so later on the President can pretend to ride in and save the day with a more measured tone. It is sort of like a Kabuki play. It screws up our foreign policy.

We saw this play out in North Korea. President Trump repeatedly insulted Kim Jong Un on Twitter, only to declare world peace once the two of them had met. It seems as if the President’s foreign policy is to commit arson so he can play the firefighter. He lights the fire and then puts it out and gives himself a huge pat on the back.

Not surprisingly, this reality TV foreign policy hasn’t produced the concrete results we are all looking for and must secure. It has been 2 months since the President met with Chairman Kim. Yet we have seen little in the way of irreversible steps toward

denuclearization. We don't even have details on the agreement. Secretary Pompeo went over there and was just given the cold shoulder. Kim wouldn't meet with him and said nasty things about him. Still, the President claims—I think he is alone here—that the North Korean summit was a huge success.

Certainly, the world is a safer place without President Trump and Chairman Kim trading barbs on social media. Those tactics make America weaker. We all want diplomacy to succeed. We all want a strong deal with North Korea, but the cessation of rhetorical hostilities is no replacement for concrete, verifiable steps toward denuclearization.

The same holds true for Iran. I hope the President isn't reaching into the same old social media playbook, using rhetoric as a replacement for the hard work of diplomacy.

I yield the floor.

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, FINANCIAL SERVICES, AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 6147, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6147) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Shelby amendment No. 3399, in the nature of a substitute.

Murkowski amendment No. 3400 (to amendment No. 3399), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, this week the Senate takes another step toward regular order in the appropriations process in the Senate.

The package before the Senate today contains the fiscal year 2019 appropriations bills for the Subcommittees on Interior; Financial Services; Agriculture; and Transportation, Housing and Urban Development. We have not debated an interior appropriations bill on the floor of the U.S. Senate in nearly 10 years.

The Financial Services appropriations bill has not seen floor action in several years either. Why? Because year after year, party-line votes in committees represented the end of the line in the legislative process. Yet here we are today debating both of these appropriations bills and more on the Senate floor.

So what changed? What changed was the mindset of appropriators on both sides of the aisle who embraced a willingness to sacrifice partisan riders and priorities outside the committee's jurisdiction for the good of the process. Together we have committed to do

what is good for the process because we want to do what is right by the American people.

This approach is yielding meaningful results thus far. The Interior and Financial Services bills in this package both won the unanimous approval of the Appropriations Committee, which is generally unheard of—unanimous, Madam President. We haven't seen that level of support for these bills in quite some time around here.

The Agriculture and Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bills also garnered unanimous support of the Appropriations Committee.

I want to take a minute to commend the chairmen of these subcommittees—Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator COLLINS, Senator HOEVEN, and Senator LANKFORD—for their leadership in the process. I also, again, thank Vice Chairman LEAHY and the ranking members of these subcommittees for their hard work. These Senators have worked together to produce strong and, I believe, bipartisan bills.

This broad bipartisan support paved the way for the full Senate's consideration of these bills, and I thank Leaders MCCONNELL and SCHUMER for agreeing to bring this package to the floor.

As we begin debate this week, we can leverage our recent success in passing appropriations bills. Just last month, the Senate passed a package of three fiscal year 2019 appropriations bills with overwhelming support. This support was facilitated by an open amendment process and a willingness to work together to address legitimate Member concerns. As a result, the process was both open and, I believe, disciplined.

More importantly, it was successful, passing by a vote of 86 to 5—yes, 86 to 5.

The bill managers on both sides of the aisle will seek to replicate this process and success with the package now before the Senate. We ask for the continued cooperation of all Senators in this effort.

Critical mass, that is what we are building in the Senate—critical mass for returning to regular order in the appropriations process.

By completing our work in a deliberate and timely manner on this package, we can turn next to the Defense and Labor-HHS-Education package. While completion of our work on the current package will mean we have passed more than half of the 2019 appropriations bills, the lion's share of discretionary spending, as my colleagues know, is contained in the Defense and Labor-HHS bills. That is very important to all of us here, very important to our constituents, and very important to our country.

Again, I encourage our colleagues to participate in this process and help sustain the momentum we have generated thus far. We have a lot of work to do, but we are making real progress. I hope my colleagues find this encouraging. I certainly do.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I am pleased to join my friend, the senior Senator from Alabama, Chairman SHELBY, as we prepare to debate the second set of appropriations bills to reach the Senate floor this session. Senator SHELBY has noted that this is a change in recent years. I commend him, and I commend both Republicans and Democrats who have worked together in the way we used to and now are again. This minibus contains four important bills for fiscal year 2019: the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill; the Financial Services and General Government bill; the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies bill; and the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development and Related Agencies bills.

Now, that was something significant to be on the Senate floor in past years. What is even more significant—and Chairman SHELBY would agree with me—each of these bills was reported by the Appropriations Committee unanimously. Every Republican, every Democrat voted for them. They fund programs that provide important services to the American people across the country. They invest in the future of this country.

Let me take one example, the Agriculture appropriations bill. This bill is a win for farmers, for families, and for rural communities through its investments in rural development, housing, food, nutrition, agriculture, research, and clean water programs. Every State in this Nation—yours, Chairman SHELBY's, and everybody else's, and of course my own State of Vermont—has rural communities and farm economies that benefit from these important programs, every one of us does.

The Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development bill will make critical infrastructure investments across the country and, of course, also in my home State of Vermont. It includes \$10 billion in new funds—new funds—to help address our crumbling bridges and railways and roads. Let me just say, if I might be parochial for a moment, what that means in Vermont. It will help invest in safety improvements on Amtrak's Vermonter and Ethan Allen lines but also will make much needed repairs to our railroads and bridges. These increases in every one of our States are a direct result of the bipartisan budget deal reached earlier this year, and they are critically needed.

I have been here for over 40 years. What Senator SHELBY and I have done is we have brought the Senate back to the way it used to be to actually get things done with Republicans and Democrats working together.

Improving the Nation's infrastructure was one of President Trump's key campaign promises. Unfortunately, he criticized the very budget deal that made these increases possible. He proposed cutting—not increasing—funding